



MONUSCO

Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies
pour la Stabilisation en République
démocratique du Congo

United Nations Organisation Stabilization
Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Portrait of Jean Roger Kuate

Issues of sexual exploitation and violence in peacekeeping missions have recently been the subject of particular attention on the part of the United Nations.

Acts of misconduct by some staff members unfortunately harm the image of the entire Organization, to such an extent that, in some countries, the UN is completely discredited. And it is to combat such misdeeds that a Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU) exists in all peacekeeping missions. MONUSCO's Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT) is thus working tirelessly to instill good manners in military and civilian personnel. When we asked MONUSCO CDU chief to designate a deserving staff member in his unit, this is what Ms. Adama Ndao told us: *'I would propose to consider Jean Roger Kuate who is in charge of training. He was the first trainer in MONUSCO CDT office. He has contributed to the development of training strategies and materials for protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). He was recently consulted to make a contribution to the online training course qui is now undergoing experimentation. In Goma and in the North-Kivu office, he trains all categories of personnel (Military, civilians and police officers) as well as colleagues from UN agencies, contractors as well as security agents. He also trains trainers, military focal points, police personnel and civilians across the Mission. He has done a lot for the Mission but speaks very little of himself.'*



So here we are in front of you, Jean Roger, what do you have to say in your defense? *'It is true that I don't like talking about myself, but since I must, I would say that I arrived in the DRC in February 2006, from Niamey where I worked as UNAIDS Country Coordinator. My work consisted in designing preventive strategies for all forms of misconduct and in particular sexual exploitation and violence, which represents an enormous scourge affecting many peacekeepers and which deeply impacted the implementation of MONUC's mandate.'*

Thank you, Jean, for these clarifications. Will you now tell us how you joined the United Nations? *'For a long time, I had cherished the dream of working for such a prestigious organization. My experience with the United Nations started in 2004 in Liberia where I opened the HIV/AIDS Section within the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). My work consisted in promoting HIV/AIDS prevention among all personnel of the United Nations Mission, stimulating, encouraging and conducting*



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voluntary, confidential HIV testing accompanied by counseling among staff, and supporting the local response against the AIDS pandemic in the country. In 2006, I was hired as Trainer for the Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT) in Kinshasa and became the first trainer to be recruited to put the strategies and training tools in place in this Section. During that year, I trained over 15 000 peacekeepers. In 2007, more than 23 000 peacekeepers received training on prevention of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and violence. Assigned to the North-Kivu office since 2014, I not only provide quality assurance on all aspects of the training in the area of Conduct and Discipline within the Mission, but also on community outreach."

His colleague Godia Buanga portrays him as follows: "*Jean Roger is an excellent trainer. He knows how to grab and hold the attention of his audience. He is constantly in good spirits and always to circumvent the unexpected with lots of optimism. A strong team player, he pays attention to the problems of those around him. He is ready to help and listen to the people in need.*"

Doctor, you do not just raise awareness; concretely, what do you do when you receive allegations of misconduct by one or several staff? "*Concretely, when the team receives an allegation of professional misconduct, I look into it and decide on its admissibility before forwarding it to the central unit for evaluation. As appropriate, an investigation will be opened and the case recorded in the database. If it is a case of sexual exploitation or abuse, I immediately send an immediate alert to the central section for activation of the Immediate Response Team (IRT), which is an immediate reaction mechanism designed to assist the victim and to collect information if need be.*"

We then spend a minute or two discussing the frequency of their interventions. On average, he tells me, CDT, in North Kivu, receives roughly 15 allegations each month, about 10 of which will be retained and treated as allegations of misconduct. These allegations are classified into two categories: category-I (serious) and category-II (minor) misconduct allegations. They include misconduct such as traffic violations, thefts, and different types of violations of the rules. Even if category-I misconduct cases are fewer, they receive a great deal of attention because of their very devastating impact on the Organization. That is why, he tells me, the team is very careful when it comes to offenses relating to sexual exploitation and violence, serious infringements of regulatory or administrative texts of the Organization, cases of conflicts of interest, acts of mismanagement, benefit fraud, sexual harassment, abuse of privileges and immunities, noncompliance with private and family obligations, etc.

All this is rather generic; could you, my dear Jean Roger, be more explicit and tell me about some of the cases you have personally handled? I know it is not going to be very flattering for us but, let's go ahead and clear the air. "*We have had cases of rape, sexual relations with children (persons under 18 years of age), sexual relations in exchange for cash or gifts, sexual relations with prostitutes, thefts, accepting bribes in exchange for recruitment, fake diplomas and other fake documents to have access to some benefits, falsification of documents to get some favor from the Organization, abusive use of the Organization's tools, misuse of the working space for other purposes like sexual relations (Sic),*

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discrimination, abuse of power, sexual harassment, failure to take care of one's children or to pay one's rents or debts, lack of integrity in one's work and life, breach of confidentiality, trafficking UN information, car accidents and other violations of traffic regulations, sale of military combat ration, violation of curfew rules, visiting off-limit areas, etc....". Headaches after a workday must be a common experience among members of your team! Does the Organization supply you with aspirin, you know in the same way the rest of us are distributed water? No? Well, you should file a complaint on grounds of failure to provide assistance, because you are in danger, my brother. Having said that, may I ask you if you have ever had to deal with an angry staff member who, perhaps, thought you were meddling too far into his/her private life? "**In general, it doesn't happen, because those who denounce often do so without informing the person concerned. Sometimes, it is during or after the investigations that these persons find out they have been denounced. Moreover, even if the staff member learns that we have a case against him/her, he/she knows that we, CDT, have no authority to conduct the investigations, which reassures him/her even if without relieving his/her anxiety. On the other hand, we do sometimes incur the wrath of some colleagues who think we are interfering in their private life when, for example, one of their colleagues comes to us to complain about their conduct and wants us to intervene so they can change that behavior before it generates into misconduct. Often we are obliged to play a role of mediation while reminding them of the need to respect UN rules. However, with regard to acts of sexual exploitation and violence that may be committed by MONUSCO staff, we do not hesitate to remind the staff at all times that when working for the Mission we have no private lives. We work 24/7 and our personal and professional lives are intertwined. UN rules govern our lives both in the workplace and outside.**" Actually, this is quite understandable. Wherever we are in the Mission, whatever we do, people look at us as being fully part of the UN and reflecting the UN values.

Jean Roger is Cameroonian national from the western highlands of his native country. He is convinced that the UN is doing the best it can in the DRC. When he compares the current situation with the situation he found upon his arrival in 2006, he has no doubt about the pertinence of the Mission's presence for the populations. Outside of work, he loves doing art. "**With the help of a young student from the Fine Arts Academy in Kinshasa, I learnt sculpting wood. I spend my free time reading and doing research. Some of the research I have done in several African countries has led to the publication, recently, of a book entitled: "Widowhood rite, therapeutic rite in Africa. An ethno-psychotherapeutic perspective.**" What, what, what? Would you please repeat? If I understand correctly, it is a study about women whose husbands have died, and the songs and dances performed during the funeral and mourning rituals, and you have sort of looked at all that through the eyes of a clinician? I am so stunned that I'm not sure I have spoken English here! I must have translated literally from Wolof. You know, there are things one can only express in one's mother tongue. You mean you have nothing better to do during your leisure time? "**Yes, of course, I dedicate part of my free time to orphanages and also to volunteer activities in support of disadvantaged children and youth for their harmonious development.**" My dear, you are really depressed; I am talking about leisure activities here! It seems like you need to see a psychologist for urgent help. Sorry, I forgot you are a psychologist yourself –which is not so surprising to me. In my early



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youth, I was hyperactive and I would see a shrink once in every 15 days. And I can assure you, the guy was more deranged than me. I had to get calm and wise so I didn't have to visit him. You know, Jean, you remind me a little bit of that good doctor. So get your mind off these issues of psychology; free your neurons and enjoy life to the full, by Jove! "***I'm also being trained on video filming and editing, which is a passion.***" Now, that is leisure activity! Do you live in the DRC with your family? "***Unfortunately not; I am married and the father of 5 children for now.***" Hold on a second: when you say "***for now***", does it apply to "***I am married***" or to "***5 children***"? You must be clear with me. I was clear; I said "***enjoy life to the full***", and not "***fill the world***". What does your wife think of your "***for now***"? "***She trusts me and she admits that I am a good person...***(Laughter) ! ***Oh, yes ...I am blessed to have grown up in a context where, for example, cooking, doing house chores, washing dishes, and cultivating the fields was not considered by my mother to be women's work. Everyone did the exact same work and so both boys and girls could be seen working in the fields or my father cooking for his 11 children.***" I now understand better your "***five for now***", but you know, you are not obliged to do as your father did. Times are tough nowadays. "***Having grown up in such an environment, it is a bit difficult for me, for example, to attribute certain activities exclusively to men or to women or to play down the role of women in our societies.***"

Okay, but you didn't tell me about music and dance, apart from the mortuary rites (and I don't like these stories). After all, we are in Congo, the motherland of the rumba. "***I really like Congolese music and dance. I am fascinated by the passion with which the Congolese people love their music and dance. This passion for their culture is a vehicle that can help them nurture further a love for the country if the Government assists them. Among Congolese music legends, my favorite are the veterans such as Franco, Tabu Ley, Simaro, Joe Kester, Papa Wemba, etc., and also the younger generation including M'bilia Bel, Tshala Muana, Koffi Olomide, Werrason, JB Mpiana, Fally Ipupa, Lokua Kanza... Congo should continue to invest in the field of art because many young people look up to artists as their role models, and this is very important for a people in search of points of reference.***"

One day, we will leave (I'm trying my hand at poetry). What memories will you take with you of the DRC? "***I will remember the courage of the Congolese people; a people who always have faith in the future; a people who, even though suffering, are determined to move forward; a people who remain proud of what they have; a people who never give up. I will also remember the bravery of these troops who, despite their being described, rightly or wrongly, in negative terms, wade into battle and defend their territory, often with no food in their stomachs and without logistic support. I will also remember the joy on people's faces when the DRC successfully faced the other African soccer teams during the CHAN in Rwanda and won the Cup.***" I give up; you're better at poetry than I. To think that the perfect man is hiding in MONUSCO!

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