

Portrait of Marie-Jeanne LAMAH

UNPOL officer Marie-Jeanne LAMAH is a Guinean woman from Guinea-Conakry, a West African nation with striking cultural similarities to the DRC. She is the Team Leader of the Mission's Formed Police Units, based in Kinshasa. Despite her jovial and sympathetic countenance I can't help thinking she is a woman of strong character. Would you tell us a bit more about your duties, Marie-Jeanne? *"I am mainly responsible for liaison between the Kinshasa-based Formed Police Units and all other MONUSCO offices, and I am also in charge of patrol planning in the context of protecting United Nations personnel and facilities. My other duties include the protection of civilians and donation actions to support orphanages."* She says she was designated by her country to serve with the United Nations, in the context of peace consolidation in the DRC. *"I am on my second tour of duty in the DRC, the first being from March 2012 to March 2014. I have been on this second one since I came back to the DRC in August 2015."*



Her superior, Martin Faye, chief of the Kinshasa sector, tells us, *"UNPOL officer Marie-Jeanne LAMAH impresses first with her dynamism. Very active and enterprising, she participates in all activities but mostly, she is fully involved with planning and organizing. Always jovial and with great interpersonal skills, she plays a unifying and rallying role both within her unit and within the whole UNPOL family in Kinshasa. Her numerous human and professional qualities, and particularly her open-mindedness, professionalism and commitment, have led to her recent appointment as Team Leader of the FPU in Kinshasa. She constantly commits herself to the Mission's success as well as the well-being of all its members, and does so in a selfless and disinterested manner."*

Let us now hear Marie-Jeanne as she speaks of her personal journey to the United Nations. *"I studied social sciences, and upon graduation in March 2003, I was recruited into the Guinean police force and then rose through the ranks, achieving officer rank. I was first assigned to the Mobile Company for Intervention and Security (CMIS). In 2009, I served as president of female police officers, within the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD). Afterwards, I served as general coordinator of the Conakry Autonomous Port brigades, and then as head of the second brigade at the same port."*



Well, I think we can say that Marie-Jeanne's previous command functions in her country had prepared her for current responsibilities within the UN Mission in the DRC.

When asked to describe her relationship with her colleagues, she says, *"My relations are good but not easy, as I am the only woman in my unit. Initially my male colleagues thought it was not a job for a woman. So this often caused a bit of frustration among them. But fortunately over time, they came to recognize my abilities and, especially, all the passion and respect I have for this profession."*

Here is what her UNPOL colleague Mustapha YAHYA has to say about her: "Though *Marie-Jeanne my colleague and team leader, she is above all my sister and friend. She is very professional in accomplishing her tasks. She manages, motivates and animates the team. She monitors performance and is capable of managing priorities and difficult situations. She guides the team towards the desired results. She develops a relationship based on mutual trust and accessibility, while maintaining her position as manager. I am sure that it is a great honor for all members of our office to work on the same team as Marie-Jeanne LAMAH.*"

Is working in a multicultural environment a chance or a brake? *"Working in a multicultural is an opportunity for me to discover the cultural dimension of other countries."*

What is your view on the general situation in the DRC? *"The current general situation in the DRC is very worrying because of the failure to hold elections on time. This has led to two dialogues, one facilitated by the African Union and the other by the CENCO. I hope that the ongoing discussions will help the DRC to find a solution to this problem in order to bring peace and joy back into the hearts of the people of this country."* Do you think the UN is doing well or not enough in the DRC? *"UN efforts are to be encouraged especially with respect to the protection of civilians, so as to secure and preserve a peaceful environment for the development of the DRC."*



This month we are celebrating International Women's Day; what does that say to you? *"Women's Day is a day of events throughout the world; an opportunity to take stock of the situation of women. It remains today burningly relevant, and we will need to celebrate it so long as full equality between men and women is not achieved."*



Do you pay attention to gender balance in your actions? "**Yes, indeed the fact that I chose to work in this police branch (public order maintenance), a job that many consider to be a male job, is a way for me to experience gender balance. Also, I wanted the two units I am in charge of to be gender-mixed – that is men and women together. Finally, as I plan tasks, I ensure these are distributed equitably between men and women**".

Do you have other activities outside of work? "**Yes, football and walking.**" Marie-Jeanne is married and the mother of two children. "**When I am with my children I do my best to make them happy. First of all I take my leave every 3 or 4 months and once at home, I dedicate all my time to them. I drop them off at school, cook for them and have them take mini walks on weekends. Especially since I started the mission, because they, too, contribute greatly to my mission by their acceptance of my absence**" from home.

What memories of the DRC will you keep in your heart? "**Plenty of good things: tourist sites, the culture, even if not everything is rosy**"

By Jean-Pierre Elali
Translated by Tom Tshibangu