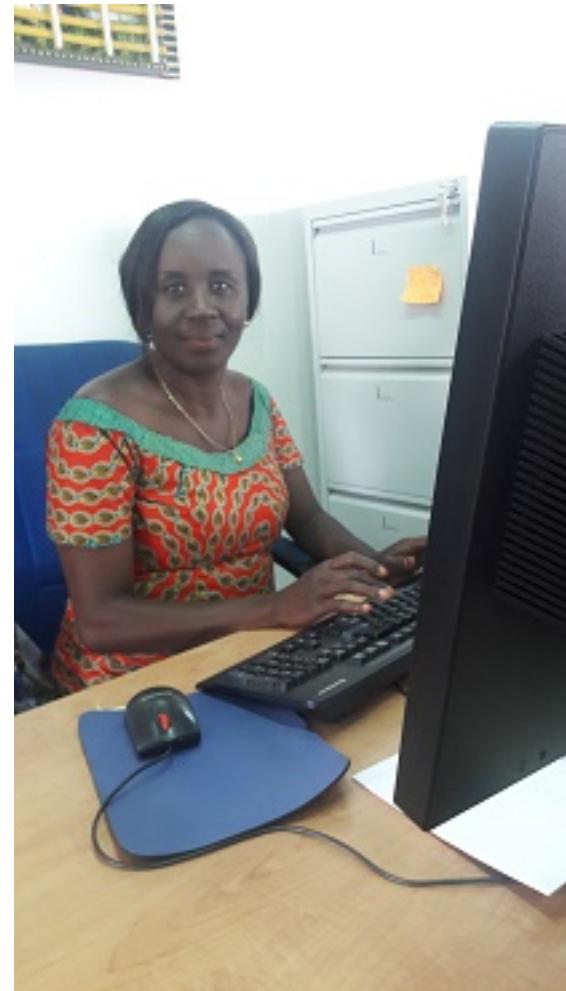


Portrait of Florence Luanzo Masika

Florence Luanzo Masika is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She was recruited in Lubumbashi in 2005 as Humanitarian Affairs Assistant. Her job consists in assisting the Section in implementing its action plan with a view to attaining its goals: supporting civil society organizations, conducting monitoring during the election time. Florence Masika said in an interview given to us: *"I also work in collaboration with humanitarian agencies. So, I conduct field missions, sometimes in most difficult conditions and dangerous areas. I conduct situational analysis for the internally displaced persons... I submit my reports to the hierarchy for solutions to be found. This is a very exciting and challenging work insofar as it helps make a difference in the Mission and communities. We have early warning systems and when it comes to responding, I consider myself to be the happiest person because through my job insofar as I provide assistance to people in serious need".*

Guirane Ndiaye, chief of MONUSCO-Lubumbashi office who has worked with Florence for nearly 10 years had this to tell us about her: *"I have known Florence for several years when I was serving as Human Rights coordinator in Lubumbashi. I saw her early steps in the mission. I am very appreciative of her manner and working methods. She has a keen sense of team spirit, she heeds advice from her supervisors. I have been working in close collaboration with Florence. On many occasions, she has acted as officer in charge in the absence of her supervisors; I assure you she is always up to the task. Her contribution to the realization of quick impact projects is laudable. She is the one who prepares all the Qips for the Lubumbashi office. We have never received complaints from our partners against her. Florence loves well done jobs and is ready to do the extra mile; she volunteers to travel to areas of difficult access. She travelled to Mitwaba, Malemba Mkulu several times".* This is how her office chief concludes: *"Florence is on every front. She is modest, discreet and has a very*



conciliating nature, never encourages disputes among colleagues. She is of great worth to the Mission. I strongly believe her colleagues of the Civilian Affairs section would make the same testimony about this staff member.”

Some of Florence's colleagues also had this to say about her: “*Florence acts like a mother to us. She is always listening to others; she is always willing to find a solution for other staff. She never raises her voice. We are not saying she is a saint, but she is really a nice person.*”

Florence Masika, please tell us, did you personally make the choice to serve the United Nations or it happened by accident? “*Hummm... it was neither my choice or by accident; I may say, it was the continuation of what I was doing before being recruited by MONUSCO. Prior to joining MONUSCO, I had worked in Kivu for an international NGO, known as “Solidarité” equally as Humanitarian Affairs assistant. I worked for four years, which made it easier for me to take up the Humanitarian Affairs Assistant position with MONUSCO. That is why I am talking about continuation.*”

Florence, what do you think about the multi-cultural environment in the Mission, is it a good prospect or a barrier for you? Laughs and astonishment.. “*What? a barrier ? It is not actually. It is rather an opportunity to learn. It is true that we do not have the same background; we do not share the same beliefs or traditions and customs. I confess this is a real school. We learn from each other. As an example, I have learnt here that I should not judge people on the religious ground, or based on their way of dressing. I have even adopted the west African way of dressing as in Lubumbashi there are many west African colleagues.*”

There is currently an unstable political situation in DRC. Do you have any view regarding this? “*I am seriously worried. The situation is not encouraging and I do not see any good coming out of it. We hear news such as jailbreaks, the Kamwina Nsapu militia's killings.... I gather the future is bleak with civil society organizations supposed to act like a church in the middle of the village, but are unable to play their role; which is serious cause for concern. I hope God will spare this country; I love so much, a chaos.*” Without any bias, Florence, do you honestly think UN is doing good job or not much in DRC? “*UN is doing everything in its power to implement its mandate. I am sure it is not easy. UN and DRC government should avoid being at daggers drawn with each other.*”

Do you live with your family here? “*Yes, I live with my family in Lubumbashi. I am married and have two children: one daughter and one son.*” Do you have activities, other than your job with the UN? “*My husband has a farm a few kilometers away from the town. Every weekend, we visit it and I do some farming activities which I enjoy. Besides, I love cooking. All my family are aware of it. Besides, on my fifties, I love music, more*”

particularly the Congolese Rumba and Jossard Nyoka Longo's music. I also love the opera." What about the gender balance, do you take it into account in your activities? "Yes, whenever our section organizes awareness-raising activities with civil society organizations, I always make sure that the gender balance be taken into account."

Do you have a dream for your country, the DRC? If yes, what kind of dream is it? Staring at me, she says: "*Of course, I have one! A very big one indeed: peace everywhere and at every level. I dream of a prosperous, strong and united DRC in which there are no more displaced persons or armed groups; a more beautiful DRC as foreseen in its national anthem.*"

Par Carine Tope R'ridasi
Translated by Alphonse Yulu Kabamba