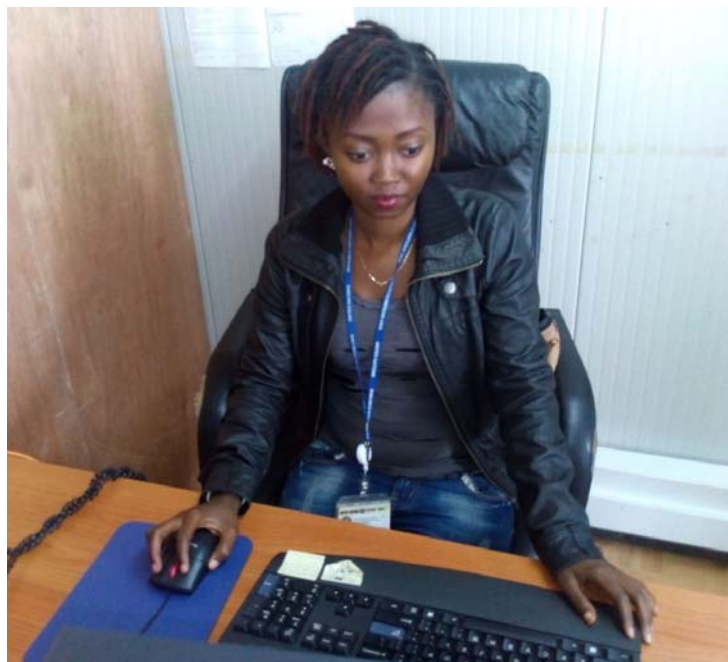


## Portrait of Sarah SANGARA, the “rare jewel” of CITS/Goma



Small in stature, always well dressed...with her jeans, ankle boots or branded sneakers, Sarah Sangara never goes unnoticed. Not only is she beautiful, but she is the only young girl in an office full of men, and that office is CITS/Goma.

From sun-up to sun-down, this little woman gleefully capers around the TKM compound, one of MONUSCO headquarters in Goma, to fulfil her duty. The office closest to the CITS office in that compound is Radio Okapi and given its specific activity, namely information, Radio Okapi is therefore the office which needs CITS service most and so has close contact with Sarah through work. Though Sarah Sangara looks calm, she is a hard worker.

She is always willing to serve, promptly and with professionalism. On Wednesdays, for the video-news conference between Goma and Kinshasa, Sarah is always there, in the Himalaya conference room, with headphones firmly on her head and several remote controls in hand, ready to intervene in case of a technical glitch. But who is Sarah Sangara, this “rare jewel” who is the pride of both female and male staff of MONUSCO/Goma as an IT specialist?

Sarah was born 24 years ago in North Kivu’s volcanic city of Goma. That was on 20 April 1992. After her primary education in Goma, she and her family fled the war, which was then in full swing in the country’s east, and found refuge in the capital city Kinshasa. While there, little Sarah received a part of her secondary education. Then when a wind of peace blew again over North-Kivu, she returned to her native region where she eventually completed her secondary education in Biochemistry at the Metonia institute of Goma.

As you can see, Sarah is a woman with a leaning towards sciences and you will understand why. After she completed her secondary education and passed her school-leaving examination, her parents sent her to neighboring Rwanda in 2010, where she entered the Kigali Independent University ULK. And there, what did she do? She undertook computer science studies. ***“For four years, I learnt computer science while at***

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***the time working in this same field... This helped me to improve my knowledge in computer science and to gain experience in this field," Sarah Sangara says.***

After obtaining her degree in 2014, she returned to Goma. And it wasn't long before Lady Luck smiled on her, for MONUSCO was then recruiting IT specialists. Sarah applied ...and then ... Bingo!!!!!! She found out she was among those selected. *"For me, it was a real boon,"* says she, *"to be able to immediately put into practice the knowledge I have gained at university"*.

Once the contract signed, she was notified of her Terms of Reference, which read as follows: Handle customer service, email management and United Nations applications at the local level, as well as the video and audio conference. And clearly, she has been carrying these duties with dedication. Her colleagues, her supervisor, everybody recognizes her professional skills. Abdellatif Drissi, the head of the Communication Section, is full of praise for her: ***"I am very satisfied with Sarah's work. She reports to work on time; she is cooperative and willing to go the extra mile. Even after work hours, she is right there whenever she is needed. Sarah is always willing to learn, and I see this as an asset."***

Laban She-RONGERO MAHAMBIA is a colleague of Sarah's. He depicts her as follows: ***"Sarah is a girl unlike others; she is hard-working and brave, and she has the qualities of a leader. She is different from others girls due her bravery and her ability to take on even the most challenging tasks. And working in a male-dominated unit does not frighten her at all"***. And he adds: ***"She takes her work very seriously"***. These comments are echoed by Radio Okapi journalists who frequently use Sarah's service. Christian Mapendano is one of these journalists. According to him, ***"Sarah is always ready to be of service. She really shows professionalism and dedication in her work. She is always attentive to the needs of her colleagues. She will help you not just with your computer software problems, but if necessary she will go beyond her prescribed duties and help you with your hardware problems as well. And she never gives up until a solution is found, making sure that her colleagues' work is facilitated through her service"***. Gabriel Wamenya, another journalist, tells us that ***"Sarah impresses her colleagues by her professional skills. He points out however that "she needs to cultivate the spirit of diversity, because the United Nations for which she works is a mosaic of diversity"***. According to him, Sarah is somewhat uncommunicative, despite her undeniable professional skills. Asked about it, Sarah admits that she is shy. ***"I am not a reserved person but rather a shy one,"*** she says. ***"To avoid making any mistake while working, I concentrate on the task at hand to the extent that it gives the impression that I am not interested in what is happening around me. But those people who know me well know I am an open-minded person"***.

And when I ask Sarah if she feels that her work contributes to the consolidation of peace, which is the core mission of MONUSCO in the DRC and especially in North Kivu, her answer is clear: ***"Through my work I provide important IT support to staff members, thus allowing information to flow swiftly, first,***

***among MONUSCO personnel, and second, between MONUSCO and UN Agencies, and third, between MONUSCO and the UN headquarters in New-York. I think such support is invaluable".***

And what does Sarah think of the United Nations Mission in the DR Congo? Answering that question, she says the Mission does a lot for the Congolese people; especially by combating armed groups and ensuring the protection of civilians, which are the priority of this mission.

Now, outside of the workplace, what do you do in general, Sarah? ***"My favorite pastime is playing sports,"*** Sarah says, explaining that she often plays basketball and loves watching films, too. But since there is no cinema hall in Goma, Sarah watches video films at home instead.

Sarah also enjoys cooking. She is single and still lives with her parents, and so she says she often helps her family with chores around the house. And if tomorrow she gets married, will her IT job be compatible with her life as a couple? There will be no problem at all, she says. ***"As long as there is a balance between work and family life, harmony will always prevail"***. Is that your conclusion? Yes, she says with a smile on the lips.

Sy Koumbo S. Gali