

29 May 2014



UNV action team at Kissy Hospital,
Sierra Leone. (UNV, 2008)

Official Message from the United Nations Volunteers on the occasion of the 2014 International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

Today is a day to pay tribute to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations for their professionalism, dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. Of the almost 19,000 non-uniformed members of personnel who are currently serving in UN peacekeeping missions all over the world, nationals and internationals combined, over 2,000 are UN Volunteers.

Peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective tools the United

Nations uses to maintain international peace and security throughout the world. UN Peacekeepers provide security and the political and peacebuilding support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.

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UN Volunteers embrace volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognize it in its diversity as well as the values, such as free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity, that sustain it.

Of the almost 19,000 non-uniformed members of personnel who are currently serving in UN peacekeeping missions all over the world, nationals and internationals combined, over 2,000 are UN Volunteers. Deployed across ten peacekeeping and six political missions, these volunteers serve in different capacities depending on their professions, skills and experience.

To view a video message from Richard Dictus, UNV Executive Coordinator, please visit: youtu.be/K1qOOAMy_ho

Before becoming a UN Volunteer, Janosch Kullenberg, from Germany, had done research on the Protection of Civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Today, Janosch is with the Civil Affairs section in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC (MONUSCO).

“As corny as it may sound, it was my dream to apply my regional experience and language skills (French and Swahili) to UN peacekeeping,” Janosch said. He was specifically recruited to conduct a best practice review on one of MONUSCO’s innovative protection instruments - the Community Liaison Officers (CLAs).

Developed in 2010 by MONUSCO’s Civil Affairs section to function as an interface between the Mission and the Congolese population at the field level, the Mission’s 202 CLAs are Congolese national staff, primarily deployed with UN peacekeepers in more than 70 military bases across Eastern DRC.

“On a personal level, working with and on CLAs has been a rewarding experience, because they have an impact and have effectively contributed to closing the gap between peacekeeping and local communities,” said Janosch. “I feel incredibly honoured to be in the middle of that process and

to have the opportunity to reflect and draw lessons from it.”

As a Civil Affairs Officer assigned to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in Central Equatorial State, national UN Volunteer Scopas Manas is part of the peacekeeping team currently attempting to settle a dispute in which local farming communities are trying to keep armed nomadic cattle-herders from driving herds of over 10,000 head of cattle through cultivated crop fields.

The South Sudanese UN Volunteer has established a very strong working relationship with state institutions as well as civil and military stakeholders.

“My regular and various meetings with officials at all levels, ranging from local chiefs to the Governor of the State, and with various sectors, including political parties, academic and religious institutions, among other civil society organizations, enable me to contribute to UNMISS efforts to strengthen peace, build capacity and prevent violence around the State,” said Scopas.

UN Volunteer Mayumi Yamada, from Japan, a Recovery, Reintegration and Peace Building Officer with UNMISS, facilitates and supports the humanitarian operations in the Mission’s Topping civilian protection site which currently shelters 14,520 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Juba. Just last week, Mayumi oversaw the distribution of food packages of sorghum and cooking oil and non-food items such as mosquito nets and soap to 14,413 people from 4,353 households.

In addition to UNMISS, the successful three-day distribution involved the participation of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Intersos (an Italian humanitarian organization), the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), Recovery, Reintegration and Peacebuilding (RRP), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Police (UNPOL), Formed Police Units (FPU), and J3 Military Operations and J9 Civil Intra-Military Cooperation Forces.

“I am one of the survivors of the 1995 earthquake in Kobe who was saved by volunteers,” said Mayumi. “That is why I serve now as a UN Volunteer. I really wish that all IDPs survive through difficult times and, in the future, can serve their nation, or wherever they are needed.”

UN peacekeeping has evolved tremendously since the establishment of the United Nations after the Second World War and, ever since its first involvement in peacekeeping in 1992, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

programme has kept a steady pace with these developments. Recently, this has included an ever growing emphasis on employing and developing local capacities for peace (following the 2011 UN Secretary General (SG) Report on “Civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict”), the involvement of women (following the 2000 Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security), and on environmental sustainability (following the 2007 SG appeal to all UN entities to become climate-neutral and 'go green'), to name but a few.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) offers a good example of how developments in peacekeeping have occurred and UNV has kept pace. MINUSMA was established under the first UN resolution (Security Council resolution 2100 (2013)) which integrates a mandate for a peacekeeping mission to protect cultural and historical sites from attack, in collaboration with UNESCO, and for the mission to operate mindfully in the vicinity of cultural and historical sites.

UN Volunteer Assistant Culture Officer Nadia Ammi, from France, is assigned to the Mission’s Environmental and Culture Unit to help implement these particular provisions of the resolution.

As well as being a liaison with the UNESCO office in Mali and with relevant technical sections of the Mission, she is responsible for ensuring that MINUSMA personnel receive training on protecting Mali’s cultural heritage, from the tangible, such as buildings, monuments and artefacts, to the intangible, such as language, ceremonies, rituals, traditional knowledge and conflict resolution methods. Nadia has been coordinating the Culture Unit’s knowledge management where she created its database, and takes part in outreach activities with the Mission’s public information office.

“I’m thrilled to be part of such an exciting programme, especially in Mali, where culture is so deeply rooted in the population and traditional practices are often used as a way to resolve conflict between communities,” said Nadia. “Being the first incumbent in this post that is part of a new unit for culture, my work encourages me to develop initiatives and autonomy.”

UN Volunteers not only provide solid professional expertise to the Missions and their host populations, but also open a window for non-traditional staffing, adding to the diversity of the civilian component of UN Missions by retaining people from the private sector and national professional associations, from human rights, environmental and women’s organizations, and from many other walks of life from all over the world.

UN Volunteer Legal Advisor Ioba Embalo (Guinea-Bissau) is assigned to the

United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) where he contributes to the development of the Haiti National Police.

“Since the seminars and training on the promotion/protection of human rights that I gave to 174 police officers from Port-au-Prince from July 2012 to February 2013, there has been a visible and progressive decrease in the number of disciplinary and judicial cases registered against police staff, and particularly in the areas where staff benefited from the seminars,” he said. “Thanks to this, we can say the Haitian National Police is contributing to re-establishing the rule of law.”

As a UNV Research and Training Gender Officer with the MONUSCO, Yvonne Nadege Nguele, from Cameroon, is in charge of organizing training and workshops about gender issues for Congolese police and military as well as civil society actors. As well as giving the training at various training centres, she prepares all necessary background documents and sometimes represents her office at meetings within MONUSCO and with various external partners.

UN Volunteers embody the values of good citizenship, civic responsibility and personal participation that form the basis of many of the sub-components of modern, multidimensional peacekeeping.

“My duties organizing elections allow me to play a key role in MINUSTAH’s Hinche regional office where I am assigned,” said UN Volunteer Electoral Coordinator Souley Garba, from Niger. Souley provides logistics and security assistance to the Permanent Electoral Council, the Haitian body responsible for conducting and supporting the country’s electoral process.

As interesting as his regular duties are, Souley enjoys spending his spare time on voluntary activities such as raising public awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention and showing youth how to lead more environmentally sustainable lives by reducing, recycling and reusing their things. Souley’s favourite endeavour right now is working with a local association of national volunteers to set up a model Green Economy as was so much discussed at and since Rio+20 talks.

A product of his own invention and 95 per cent of the costs of which he funds personally, Souley hopes the micro project will result in a working micro Green Economy which will provide income and employment while it enhances energy and resource efficiency, results in low carbon emissions and pollution, reduces environmental and ecological risks, and is socially inclusive.

From protection of civilians to demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, from land claim settlement to rule of law, from humanitarian assistance to cultural heritage preservation, none of it would take root without a strong underlying fundament of volunteer commitment, solidarity, and the will and belief that the people themselves can change things for the better.

United Nations Peacekeeping
www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/

United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)
www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/unmiss.unmissions.org

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/minusma.unmissions.org

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)
www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/monusco.unmissions.org

United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)
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