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UNV-led water project in Eastern Chad (Abbay Bogale/UNV, 2008)

Installing, maintaining and servicing water supply and sewerage equipment

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During fair weather, most of us take water and sanitation for granted, counting on the water taps and lavatories to work properly when we need them. But after a heavy rainfall, we want the people who provide these services to be on the job and in peak performance.

The United Nations Mission to the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad (MINURCAT) in Birao, CAR and Abeche, Chad, benefited from the skills and services of at least two UNV Water and Sanitation Technicians.

At their respective duty stations, they performed all tasks related to the Mission’s water supply and sewerage works from installing, maintaining and servicing the equipment, to operating the controls. The technicians put in and coordinated new water supply and sewerage works ensuring they met the safety standards in accordance with international codes and regulations. They also inspected work done by civilian contractors.

UN Volunteer Jeremiah D. Kollie, from Liberia, was based in Birao. “When I arrived in MINURCAT in 2008, I was the only water and sanitation technician,” he recalls. “I had to set up water and sanitation facilities while working at headquarters and maintaining the annex where senior members of staff had their offices.”

Jeremiah worked throughout Eastern Chad including at many camps for internally displaced persons. With colleagues, he also assisted in renovating a local hospital in Birao. “For me, they were great experiences,” says the UN Volunteer who considers Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi among his role models.

As well as overseeing the day to day operations, water and sanitation technicians must carry out any emergency maintenance services that are required. UN Volunteer Amoko Jacquelyn, from Uganda, was a UNV Water and Sanitation Technician based in Abeche in 2011. “Without a doubt my most memorable experience was as (Officer in Charge) during a period of some of the heaviest rains in Abeche,” said Amoko.

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-- Amoko Jacquelyn, UNV Water and Sanitation Technician

“The bulk of water supplied to MINURCAT premises is by tanker from the vendor’s well,” she recalled. The access road to the well in ordinary dry weather is a stable murram located about 300 metres off the main road. After heavy rain, the ground turns to mud, with some sections as impassable as a swamp.”

The road could not take the weight of even their light water trucks. “The direct result was that we ran out of water in the main camp and for three straight days there was an extreme water shortage,” said Amoko. “The even bigger challenge was finding a fast, workable and effective solution.”

After weighing the pros and cons, Amoko’s colleagues took up her suggestion to stabilize the section of the road where the trucks had been getting stuck time and again. “And everything returned to normal, she said. “One of the things I am most grateful for during this period was the support and encouragement I received from colleagues. It made a lot of difference.”

Bio: Jeremiah D. Kollie, as a UNV Water and Sanitation Technician, brought more than 20 years of experience to his UNV assignment based in Birao, Central African Republic. He studied General Construction in Graduate School at the William V.S Tubman Technician College in Monrovia, Liberia. In addition to his graduate studies, Jeremiah holds specializations in Water Treatment Plants (two from Israel and two from Germany).

Bio: Amoko Jacquelyn, a civil engineer from Uganda, served as a UNV Water and Sanitation Technician based in Abeche, Chad for ten months.

Sustainable Development Goal: