Providing food assistance to refugees in Chad

Refugee camps are difficult places to live. UN Volunteer Zo Eorintany (Madagascar), a Programme Officer with the World Food Programme (WFP), says: “A large number of refugees, women and men, run small businesses or raise animals bringing revenues to them. Most education and health care staff are refugees who assist in food distribution.”

Iriba, Chad: Zo Eorintany from Madagascar is a UN Volunteer with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iriba in Eastern Chad where she has been assigned since July 2010. Before going to Chad, she worked with WFP in her home country for eight years, and says, “I felt, I could help somewhere else, where people would be even more in need.”

Zo has a background in law and dreamed of becoming a magistrate. But when she joined WFP in 2002, her path took another direction. “I really believe in what WFP does, because we provide food assistance directly to refugees,” she says.

The UN Volunteer remembers, looking down from the plane as she arrived in Iriba, “All I
saw was a few houses in the middle of the desert! Coming from a different environment, I had to make an effort to adapt. To get closer to the population, I learned Arabic to show that I am open-minded enough to integrate and work hard with the community. At first, people were wary, but now, everybody knows my name in town”.

As a Programme Officer, Zo coordinates and follows up on activities run under the food assistance programme. This includes building the capacity of personnel and partners. After almost three years, she still carries out her volunteer tasks with passion. “We provide food assistance directly to 68,000 refugees spread over three refugee camps,” she says. “I assist with feeding activities for women and children to help prevent malnutrition and reduce child mortality. I also coordinate the school feeding programme. In the area of my operational responsibility, WFP supports 28 schools by providing high-energy meals to 6,000 children every day throughout the school year.”

Refugee camps are difficult places to live. This UN Volunteer admires the residents’ courage. “The people are very active, open minded and have developed a real strategy for surviving,” she states. “A large number of women and men run small businesses or raise animals bringing revenues to them. Most education and health care staff are refugees who assist in food distribution.

Zo’s dream to bring assistance to people in need has come true through her assignment as a UN Volunteer. “Being able to understand people’s expectations and needs provides personal and professional satisfaction.”

Thanks to her longstanding interest and experience as a volunteer with grassroots communities in her homeland, Zo gained the skills she needs to be effective in her current assignment in Chad.

Bio: UN Volunteer Zo Eorintany (Madagascar) has a degree in Law and Business Administration. She likes challenges and always tries to be creative as she finds herself in the service of others.

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