



UN Volunteer Khurshid Dilresh (second from left) carries out basic firefighting training for Fire Safety Assistants.

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Ensuring safety of air operations in South Sudan

I am working as a UN Volunteer Fire Safety Officer with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. During the civil unrest of 2013, I remained in the mission throughout that period to ensure the safe operation of UNMISS air assets. It was a time when everybody in the mission worked tirelessly to relocate casualties from conflict areas across the country to save human lives.

Juba, South Sudan: I am working as a UN Volunteer Fire Safety Officer with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). My main field of work is Aviation, though I also have knowledge of structural fire safety.

I come from the Pakistan administered State of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. There are many reasons why people set out to leave their homes and families, travel half-way around the world to war or strife-ridden countries, and immerse themselves in the endeavour of development and betterment of others. Mine was for the need to serve a noble cause to just help others, as I think that social work is the only action that gives your life meaning.

My first deployment as a UN Volunteer was in Wau, Western Bahr al Ghazal, where I had the challenge to establish safe operations for UNMISS' air assets. After safety visits to Aweil, Kwajock and Wau, I assessed the risks and recommended appropriate mitigation measures, including suitable fire extinguishers, fire equipment and fire appliances. I also provided basic firefighting training to South Sudan Civil Aviation firefighters.

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After one year I was deployed to Juba to assist the Fire Marshal in day-to-day activities, including inspection of helipads and runways at different locations, conducting fire investigations to establish the causes of fires, and fire safety surveys at airfields/helipads to make the appropriate preventive recommendations. In addition, I advised on the improvement, replenishment and replacement of fire equipment, materials and chemicals, and carried out the technical evaluation of fire equipment to be procured.

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During the civil unrest of 2013, thousands of people were killed and more than 1.6 million were displaced. Every non-critical staff member was relocated to Uganda or was sent back home. Being a critical staff member, I remained in the mission throughout that period to ensure the safe operation of UNMISS air assets. It was a time when everybody in the mission worked tirelessly to relocate casualties from conflict areas across the country to save human lives.

The benefits of volunteering are enormous. The right match can help you make friends, reach out to the community, learn new skills, and even advance your career. Volunteering can also help protect your mental and physical health.

This UN Volunteer assignment has taught me how to work under extreme physical and mental stress in hostile environments for prolonged periods. It also allowed me to develop group facilitation skills, the ability to deliver presentations, and to make the appropriate decisions so that all aviation development and training deliveries are undertaken in line with established standards and regulations to safeguard the interests of the United Nations.

Bio: *Khurshid Dilresh is a certified firefighter from the Civil Aviation Training Institute (CATI) in Pakistan. During his UN Volunteer assignment, he has had the opportunity to improve his skills in Safety Management Systems (SMS), Advance First Aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and humanitarian work. He started his career with the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority in 2002, and served for 11 years. Accepting the offer to become a UN Volunteer, he resigned from the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority in 2013.*

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