



At 74, Dr Rudolf Maulany has served as a UN Volunteer for more than 10 years. Currently, he serves with the UN Mission in South Sudan as a UN Volunteer Medical Doctor, based in Rumbek.

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Rudolf Maulany, medical doctor and veteran volunteer: "My dream is to continue till I'm 76"

Rudolf Maulany just can't get enough of UN volunteering on the international stage. At 72 and serving as a UN Volunteer and medical doctor in South Sudan, Dr Maulany has retired twice. Twice, he has opted for a return to the action. And, if he can have it his way, there is more to come.

"If I'm still healthy, my dream is to continue to serve as a volunteer till I'm 76, if possible. If not, I'll have to hope to be reborn to have a new shot at it," the veteran volunteer says.

Having "retired" for good in the Netherlands in 2016, his adopted home country since 2003, Rudolf was no longer fettered by the time limit for UN volunteering in the field that applies to others, non-pensioners. That same year, he jumped at an opportunity to make Rumbek his base for a new adventure, and he hasn't looked back since.

“It is quite challenging to work in multicultural environments with different languages and limited facilities and sometimes far away from family and friends, but overall, I believe that my more than 10 years as a UN Volunteer has made me a happier and more fulfilled person," Dr. Maulany ponders.

Some family, notably his own son and daughter, he may have left behind while also serving in both Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and in two duty stations in Timor-Leste next to his native Indonesia, but not Lisbetty, his wife and partner in crime. In fact, she is his equal in terms of volunteering.

"She has been a UN Volunteer and medical doctor here in South Sudan since 2016 as well, first in Bentiu and currently in Juba. Before that, she did three stints in Timor-Leste (2007-2012) and one with the peacekeeping mission in Liberia (2015-2016). I guess that makes us a rather unique couple," he ventures.

It may not, however, be that hard to guess what Rudolf has found most challenging during his current assignment in South Sudan. Yup, it begins with COVID and ends with a number.

"It has been stressful, but so far, we have been able to manage cases and prevent the virus from spreading too much," he says, adding that he and his medical team went through another difficult patch in early 2017.

"We had several emergency injuries and patients with medical conditions that required evacuation, but fortunately all went well," Rudolf recalls.

Now, Dr Maulany wouldn't be Dr Maulany if he had not done some extracurricular volunteering, on top of being officially retired and a UN Volunteer, that is.

"Together with other UN Volunteers at my duty station, I have been involved in blood donation drives and the building of wells in a village called Makuririck, providing 300 families with water," he says. "While in Timor-Leste, I raised funds which provided scholarships for youth in local communities and was engaged in nature conservation efforts by means of reforestation to prevent erosion."

Small wonder, perhaps, that Dr Maulany has been duly recognized for his contributions when it comes to "serving humanity", as he calls it.

"I was once invited by the president of Timor-Leste to receive an award for having been selected as 'Outstanding Volunteer of the Year' at the president's palace. I'll never forget that moment," Rudolf says proudly.

Unique as Dr. Maulany's long time as a volunteer has been, he does share one experience with millions of people keen on overseas adventures: the huge benefits of speaking several languages. Without such skills, and seemingly limitless time and energy, Rudolf may never have embarked on his UNV odyssey.

"Apart from being a doctor, I have also worked as a freelance translator of medical textbooks. It was this experience that handed me my first opportunity to be a UN Volunteer, as a translator for the electoral team in Timor-Leste," he reveals.

It almost goes without saying that Dr Maulany finds time for productive non-volunteering activities as well. Heeding the advice of French writer Voltaire, who once famously said that "We must cultivate our own garden", that's what he does.

"People my age like gardening. I plant banana, cassava, guava, mango, papaya and other fruits and vegetables and share the harvests with my friends."

Hardly surprisingly, Rudolf Maulany highly recommends that everyone give volunteering for the UN a chance and has even handily summarized his top three pieces of advice for aspiring do-gooders.

“ "Make your dream come true, keep improving yourself continuously and enjoy your life."

It's that simple.

This [article](#) was first published by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.



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