



Jason William Gbambi, a national volunteer, is thoroughly enjoying his assignment with the UN Mission in South Sudan.

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## "Being a UN Volunteer is about embracing the community"

Jason William Gbambi is a national UN Volunteer Outreach Officer serving with UNMISS. In the below interview, this committed South Sudanese tells us why volunteerism motivates him. He also elaborates on why he believes that his work in the mission's Conduct & Discipline Section truly honours the values that the United Nations stands for across the world.

### **Can you share the highlights of your assignment as a UN Volunteer and a bit about what you do every day?**

I have been a Community Outreach Officer with UNMISS for the past three years. I constantly interact with local communities, women's groups, youth representatives, students, traditional leaders, faith-based organizations and government stakeholders across South Sudan to educate them on the core values the mission stands for.

Perhaps the most vital part of my daily work is interacting with women and raising awareness on sexual exploitation and abuse. I assure them that while their primary physical protection is the responsibility of the South Sudanese government, UNMISS is here on the ground to safeguard all civilians,

including women.

“ I do my best to win the hearts and minds of people and create an atmosphere where they can freely tell me their issues or concerns. --Jason William Gbambi, national UN Volunteer Outreach Officer with UNMISS, South Sudan

Another important aspect of my daily job is to train external partners and community leaders on how they can prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. These are difficult topics to discuss, but once I build a rapport with the people I'm sensitizing, it's very rewarding to see them respond positively.

#### **How has your work impacted on peace outcomes for the people you serve?**

In my opinion, my engagement has gone a long way in enabling communities as well as external stakeholders understand the effects of sexual exploitation and why we must work together to eliminate this scourge from South Sudan. I also feel that my mandate presentations have made diverse audiences in often remote field locations understand what UNMISS is here to do; they are now aware that the mission is indeed their partner for a durable peace here.

Most importantly, I am sure that the work I and my colleagues from the Conduct & Discipline Team are doing empowers women who are survivors of such exploitation or abuse to speak up and speak out. We give people hope that one day this young nation will be prosperous and peaceful.

#### **How does UNMISS value your contributions?**

I have encouraging supervisors and colleagues from different countries who greatly value my natural understanding of South Sudanese customs and the overall culture. I learn from them and vice versa. These open, versatile team dynamics help all of us to perform our best.

#### **What have your greatest challenges and lessons been? How has COVID-19 impacted your work?**

In terms of challenges, I think when I started working with community members on such sensitive issues, there was the strangeness of a South Sudanese man speaking with women about UN values and principles which may differ from traditional and cultural norms here. However, I've managed to overcome any resistance I have faced.

Another challenge for us as a team was the COVID-19 pandemic; we had to stall much of our face-to-face outreach for the greater part of a year. The virus has had another, more disturbing effect: many vulnerable girls and women have had to resort to transactional sex work, due to the loss of livelihoods during lockdown. This has made the Conduct & Discipline Team's work even more cogent. Now, more than ever, we need to reach out to communities to make sure that such vulnerabilities are addressed and safety nets are put in place.

**What would you say to young people considering a career in peacekeeping and volunteerism?**

“ Being a UN Volunteer is a calling. Volunteerism is all about the community, about dealing with problems and successes together. If there is any young person who wants to make a difference, who wants to build a better world, then I would hugely recommend becoming a part of the UN Volunteer programme and serve for peace. Being a UN Volunteer with UNMISS has been one of the most meaningful journeys of my life. --Jason William Gbambi

*This story was originally published on UNMISS website in the link below.*



<https://unmiss.unmissions.org/%E2%80%9Cbeing-un-volunteer-about-embracing-community%E2%80%9D-jason-william-gbambi-unmiss>



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