



Landry Irambona, UN Volunteer serving with UNDP Burundi.

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UN Youth Volunteer lending a helping hand in Burundi

As we mark International Youth Day 2021, Landry Irambona, a UN Youth Volunteer serving with UNDP Burundi, shares his experience lending a helping hand to people in his home country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit his native country of Burundi, Landry Irambona found a way to help respond to this crisis through the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

As a UN Volunteer with UNDP Burundi, Irambona took up the opportunity to serve as a Finance Assistant for the Global Fund to Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, where he has been providing invaluable services during the pandemic.

“ When I heard about UN Volunteers and saw that I

“ could serve during the COVID-19 pandemic through volunteering, I did not hesitate to apply. I’m grateful I got this opportunity to pour my heart and engage in this noble service to my home country, Burundi.”

Irambona supports procurement and payments for critical medical equipment and supplies. He also helped develop a new system to verify disbursements for mass campaigns and thus reduce delays in payments.

“I am humbled to have contributed to the fight against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as well as the COVID-19 response. I have played a key role in preparing payments for COVID-19 response kits purchased to be distributed to the Ministry of Health. These kits included masks, hand sanitizers, as well as messaging flyers that were distributed to communities as COVID-19 prevention measures,” he says.

COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on communities and economies everywhere. Millions of people are losing their livelihoods every day. Weak and overstretched health systems have seen governments divert most of their resources to addressing the effects of the pandemic, threatening to derail the fight against other life-threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Additionally, disruption of health services has kept away many patients struggling with these diseases, while lockdowns and supply chain interruptions have limited the delivery of essential medicines to those in need.

“ It is an honour and a great joy for me to get this opportunity to show care and concern for people in need during the pandemic, using my skills to make a difference in their circumstances.”

Marginalized communities have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. This is why the work being done by Irambona and other volunteers like

him to help leave no one behind remains extremely important.

Amidst containment measures and isolation brought on by COVID-19, Irambona has also learnt more about himself and developed a deeper appreciation for humanity and teamwork. "I have also been discovering more about myself, learning and growing professionally and personally while sharpening my leadership skills," he says.

“ The battle is not over yet — there’s still a lot to learn and a lot to be done. However, all of us can do something. As Arthur Ashe once said, ‘Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.’”

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• COVID-19 • Coronavirus • International Youth Day • Youth • HIV/AIDS

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