

26 October 2022

Milton Mashatise, UN Volunteer Remote Java Developer



Milton Mashatise, UN Volunteer Specialist, serves with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), based in Zimbabwe.

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UN Volunteer with UNCTAD supports information technology for humanitarian relief systems

Milton Mashatise, UN Volunteer Specialist, serves with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as a Remote Java Developer, based in Zimbabwe. He supports information technology systems for humanitarian relief systems. Milton believes in giving back to society, developing new skills, learning

from different cultures and completing each project milestone with a celebration!

Milton found out about UNCTAD in 2018 through the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) Programme's partnership with a revenue services organization that he was employed with in South Africa. His desire to give back to society along with his wish to get diverse experiences and grow as a person - made him opt to serve as a UN Volunteer.

“ During my assignment with UNCTAD, I contributed to the development of a cloud-based version of the ASYCUDA relief emergency consignment web application, a project managed by UNCTAD in Malaysia. The system's goal is to mitigate the effects of custom delays to provision international aid when a country is affected by a humanitarian crisis. --Milton Mashatise, UN Volunteer Specialist with UNCTAD

The cloud version supports business continuity in case the national customs system of a country affected by humanitarian crisis is unavailable. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is a partner of this project. This web application assists OCHA and other agencies who deliver humanitarian relief.

Developing software application systems requires domain knowledge of processes and an expertise of technical specifications. Milton applied his previous experience with the revenue services organizations to his benefit. The customs environment in Zimbabwe coupled with his technical exposure ensured success in his UN Volunteer assignment. It empowered him to ask questions when seeking clarification of a process - how to make emergency relief consignments work most effectively.

Commercial trade experiences delay due to regulatory complexities when importing goods. Such challenges are further magnified during humanitarian crises as customs are inundated with massive flows of relief consignments in a limited time. Delay from these challenges negatively affects the humanitarian supply chain increasing storage charges and making perishable goods and medicine unusable.

Milton supports the in-house Programme Management and Information Systems under the ASYCUDA Information Systems in Malaysia. He began this assignment in October 2021 and due to travel restrictions, he works remotely rather than at his duty station in Kuala Lumpur. The 2021 inception of a cloud-based version of the system is currently in its final stage. Writing, documenting, testing the code, and responding to stakeholder feedback are Milton's project responsibilities.

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“ Working remotely was not new to me. Telecommuting epitomizes the role of software developers. We are usually in the background - making things happen behind the scenes and contributing to day-to-day operations, and the long-term organizational goals. --Milton Mashatise

Team members work in different time zones and use communications platforms such as Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp.

“ It was hard to make my toddlers understand that being at home does not mean that I am not working. I had to set up a dedicated work area that was out of bounds for the rest of the family. --Milton Mashatise

To overcome unreliable power supply and Wi-Fi at home, Milton procured an inverter, which provides a relatively inexpensive power solution. Growth happens outside of comfort zones, reflects Milton. He started his assignment as a Java developer and later became a Vue.js web developer. This growth, he attributes to his supervisor, who helped Milton expand his skillset while contributing to the success of the project.

Milton's UN Volunteer assignment encapsulates Sustainable Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals. The relief consignment system will allow OCHA and partner agencies to collaborate with stakeholders including customs authorities, carriers, traders, and donors to help alleviate human suffering and rebuild communities in a timely manner when humanitarian crises occur.

“ Throughout the project, the small wins in achieving milestones felt satisfying and increased my confidence. Seeing the complete system, I hope this has a positive impact for our society. -- Milton Mashatise

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)