



Solomon Oseghale Momoh is a UN Volunteer Protection Officer with UNHCR in Tanzania. His volunteer service includes analyzing gaps in refugee protection assessments.

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"Passion is what drives us to serve refugees"

This is a story of two UN Volunteers who protect the rights of refugees in Uganda and Tanzania. Mariko Otake from Japan and Solomon Oseghale Momoh from Nigeria are with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Their passion for the refugee cause is what drives their motivation to do what they do.

Mariko Otake is a UN Volunteer Associate Protection Officer with UNHCR in Uganda. Her area of focus is the West Nile region — particularly Adjumani district, which is home to 19 refugee settlements and over 222,000 refugees.

Working closely with local government, partners, and refugee community leaders, Mariko makes sure the well-being of refugees is on top of the agenda.

She creates sustainable support systems within refugee communities by connecting local community members to refugee-led organizations.

Uganda hosts over 1.6 million refugees, primarily from South Sudan and the Democratic

Republic of Congo.

Mariko regularly communicates with youth and women refugee committee leaders and has created a mapping of community organizations that are led by refugees.

About supporting refugees, Mariko says, "This is what I am passionate about."

“ I want to promote the protection of refugees and encourage solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons through my UN Volunteer assignment.” Mariko Otake, UN Volunteer Associate Protection Officer with UNHCR Uganda.



Mariko Otake (standing on the left) UN Volunteer Associate Protection Officer at a session with refugees and local community members in Uganda. @UNHCR, 2023.

Solomon Oseghale Momoh's journey as a UN Volunteer began with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Tanzania. From there, he joined UNHCR as a Protection Officer also in Tanzania.

One of Solomon's most memorable experiences to date was witnessing the positive impact of a protection assessment in 2023.

Though he was not directly involved, the gratitude expressed by the refugees after the assessment highlighted his work behind the scenes. Solomon prepares reports and analyzes gaps in such assessments, which help make informed decisions about refugee rights.

Solomon believes that every contribution, whether from professional staff or volunteers, has a profound effect on the population they serve — such as his reporting on improving the lives of refugees. It brings smiles to their faces, he shares.

Through his volunteer assignment, he has developed interpersonal and people management skills.

“ To potential volunteers, whether your role is compensated or not, take every task seriously and strive to gain as much experience as possible. You never know what the future holds.” Solomon Oseghale Momoh, UN Volunteer Protection Officer with UNHCR, Tanzania.

Both Mariko and Solomon acknowledge the challenges that come with their volunteer assignments. Nevertheless, they believe their passion for supporting refugees is what motivates them to keep going. In the end, it's volunteering that gives them this space to make a difference.

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