



UN Volunteer Akissi Ghislaine-Aurelle Kouame (centre) with local and administrative authorities, a representative of Cas Kananga and the Moroccan contingent responsible for escorting during monitoring activities for the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) project.

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Female UN Volunteers on the frontline to protect civilians in Africa

Civilian populations, especially women and children, are the ones who suffer the most when armed conflict, political and social upheavals break out. As a response, the protection of civilians has been at the heart of UN peacekeeping. Over the past decades, UNV has mobilized thousands of UN Volunteers to support peacekeeping operations in war-torn areas, especially in Africa.

In 2019, over 1,500 UN Volunteers are assigned to peacekeeping operations worldwide, of which 1,317 are serving in Africa. In West and Central Africa specifically, they play an active role to protect the most vulnerable, through various assignments in Human Rights, Civil Affairs, Political Affairs and Logistics. In addition, a significant number of UN Volunteer Movement Control Officers and Air Operations Assistants provide technical support to facilitate and coordinate the movements of peacekeepers and civilian personnel of the missions.

With a view to leaving no one behind in the promotion of peace, the United

Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme encourages the participation of women in peacekeeping operations, in professions and careers that are traditionally dominated by men. To date, 36 percent of all UNV assignments in peacekeeping are carried out by women, and UNV strives to increase this ratio over the next years.

In West and Central Africa alone, UNV supports three major peacekeeping operations which have the protection of civilians at their core, in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mali.

MONUSCO

UN Volunteer Akissi Ghislaine-Aurelie Kouame, based in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, is one of the 435 UN Volunteers who support the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

She coordinates information and communication meetings between MONUSCO and community leaders, and mobilizes members of community organizations, associations and local institutions in civil protection initiatives.

As she puts it, “the soul of volunteerism is in the field”. She enjoys working on the ground, supporting the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) project of MONUSCO, along with peacekeepers and other civilian staff.

“ I am in charge of administrative tasks related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Congolese ex-combatants, as well as their repatriation and resettlement. I am also monitoring projects created to fight and reduce community violence.”

In April 2019, Akissi Ghislaine-Aurelie organized a working session with local administrative authorities on the proposed settlement of customary conflicts for the Kamuina Nsapu militia in Dibaya, a territory where the population suffer from violence by militia groups. Her main task is to help UN peacekeepers promote dialogue in the region. She reports that 1,000

people were reached by the CVR project, left the militia groups and joined their respective communities.

According to the administrative, local and customary authorities, the project has contributed to significantly reduce conflict in this territory.

MINUSCA

In the Central African Republic, 231 UN Volunteers support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA).

UN Volunteers like Etsuko Yamada, Political Affairs Officer helping increase ownership of the peace process by communities exposed to the resurgence of violence, are instrumental to the successful implementation of peace and development activities.

Following the signature on 6 February of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR-RCA) between the Government and 14 armed groups, Etsuko Yamada was responsible for raising awareness on this agreement amongst local communities and authorities.

In April 2019, she organized a two-day workshop for community leaders, where she introduced 'Supporting the Central African Republic towards Peace and Reconciliation', a session aimed to improve understanding and implementation of the peace agreement by people in the local communities.

Sixty people participated, including the Mayor, the Central African Republic's Armed Forces (FACA), community, religious, youth and female leaders, as well as local and international NGOs.

“ I hope that this workshop deepens their understanding of the peace process, and that they encourage any small actions for the implementation of the APPR-RCA,” says Etsuko.

MINUSMA

With the current deterioration of the security situation in Mali, and an

increase in the number of civilian victims, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) also counts on the support on UN Volunteers to achieve its civil protection mandate. Currently, 177 UN Volunteers provide direct or indirect support to civil protection.

Ayaba Lonlon Vedome is a UN Volunteer Operations Officer at the MINUSMA Regional Joint Operations Centre (RJOC). Part of her work is to keep the MINUSMA management aware of all information related to peace and security that can impact the mandate of the mission. She also ensures coordination efforts with other sections and activities, including medical operations from Mopti (northeast of Bamako) to other regions.

“ I intervene when a crisis occurs, alerting senior leadership, documenting their decisions and following up on the implementation. After long hours of planning, meetings, road accessibility audits, coordination with the Force and the Police, I feel the strength and value of my contribution to peacebuilding in Mali.”

Speaking at the photo exhibition featuring female volunteers working with MINUSMA, Joanne Adamson, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Mali stated:

“ Women volunteers contribute every day to making communities more resilient in times of crisis, support the peace process in Mali and take all necessary measures to improve gender equality and to address the issue of violence against women.”

Since January 2019, 840 UN Volunteers, including 788 internationals and 52 nationals contribute to peace efforts with MINUSCA, MINUSMA and MONUSCO.



• UN Peacekeeping • UN peacekeepers • Mali • Central African Republic • Democratic Republic of the Congo

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities](#)
[SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#)