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Angela Tovar, UN Volunteer Child Protection Officer, UNMISS



Angela Tovar (Colombia), UN Volunteer Child Protection Officer with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), raising awareness of violations of children's rights.

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"As UN Volunteers, we have immense challenges, but infinitely stronger is our passion and commitment to protection of children"

In 2015 and 2016, I was offered an opportunity by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to join missions in Afghanistan and Ecuador respectively; at the time, I declined. In 2018, however, I made a life-changing decision to join the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) as a UN Volunteer Child Protection Officer in Malakal, located in the north-east of the country. My name is Angela Tovar from Colombia, and this is my story on how becoming a UN Volunteer changed my life, and subsequently other people's lives, for the better.

The activities I am engaged in at the Child Protection Unit are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically with SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The unit's work in Malakal meets one of the major targets specified under this goal, which is to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children.

To follow up on such cases, we participated in integrated mission patrols, by river, air and road. We visited protection of civilians sites, where displaced people have sought sanctuary with the UN, and participated in working groups with partners. On the ground, we worked in teams with other substantive sections such as the Human Rights and Civil Affairs Divisions, the Gender Unit, and other areas with the same mandate as UNMISS – of protecting civilians and contributing to building durable peace in the country.

When you go through an experience like this, the opportunities to learn something new and share this wealth of knowledge with others are vast. Every day, you realize that the possibilities of change are endless.

“ As volunteers, we are not only here for career reasons, but because we have hope – that the work we do has a positive impact on the people and the communities with which we engage. As UN Volunteers, we have immense challenges, but infinitely stronger is our passion and commitment for protection of children, and for peace in South Sudan and ultimately, the world. --Angela Tovar, UN Volunteer Child Protection Officer with UNMISS, South Sudan

Working in South Sudan, we are faced with different challenges, however the positive experiences from my assignment far outweigh these.

One of my most memorable engagements was facilitating activities marking the celebration of Red Hand Day, which is the International Day against the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers.

Prior to the main event on 12 February 2019, the unit, in collaboration with South Sudan People's Defense Forces, Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) convened an awareness-raising conference on 11 February at the Ministry of Information, Malakal. This aimed to draw the attention of all the relevant stakeholders to the grave violations perpetrated against children in situations of armed conflict.

To mark Red Hand Day, the Child Protection Unit organized a procession in Malakal town, as well as a friendly football match and play at the Malakal Sports Stadium. The event saw citizens marching with UN peacekeepers, the humanitarian community and state dignitaries. Had we not worked as a mission team, the success and impact of these activities would have not materialized.

Apart from that, the unit is engaged in a number of activities, including, but not limited

to, capacity building, awareness raising, engagement and advocacy with the affected parties. We nurture children who are free from affiliation to any armed group or force, reminding that not only are they the future of the country, but also its present.

“ My favourite quote is, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." From a young age, I always felt that my purpose in life was to support, help and serve other people. I grew up in a family environment that taught me that as humans; we are all equal and deserving of the utmost respect.
--Angela Tovar



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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)