



Omotola Akindipe, UN Volunteer Associate Reporting Officer for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Angola, interviews refugees on various topics, including mental health and shelter requirements.

## Communication gives inclusion a boost in Angola

Omotola Akindipe, serving as a UN Volunteer Associate Reporting Officer for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Angola, takes time to speak with us about his volunteer assignment. On the occasion of International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2019, the theme being ‘Volunteer for an Inclusive Future’, Tola explains how volunteerism and inclusion go hand in hand.

### **What is a regular day as a UN Volunteer for you?**

I work as part of the External Relations unit at UNHCR in Dundo, Angola. However, I cover more areas, and am in the field regularly. I oversee the general reporting in Dundo, and this includes thematic reports such as on shelter and mental health. I am also responsible for internal and external communications, particularly with partners and the government. I manage media relations and I am the focal point for interagency meetings.

In Dundo each day is different and the pace here is very fast. One day I could be leaving at 5am to follow the repatriation convoy as it heads to the border of DRC Congo. Another day

I could be receiving a high-level delegation and managing their visit as the focal point. Yet on another day, I could be on the way to Lóvua settlement to work on a story and documentary of a businesswoman or livelihood mobilisers. Or, I could be in the office attending meetings with partners, government officials or taking part in cross-border meetings with UNHCR DRC. No day is the same, but they are all busy and meaningful to the work of the UN and in assisting those displaced persons in the region.

“ I want to ensure that people have opportunities to be able to better themselves. I enjoy reporting stories told by beneficiaries to people across the world.

### What motivated you to become a UN Volunteer?

I like to help people and ensure that they have the opportunities needed to grow. It is a way of giving back as I was given opportunities to better myself and I believe that everyone deserves such a chance. I also love the concept of volunteerism, which enriches our societies and brings people from all backgrounds together to make our world a better place. As such, becoming a UN Volunteer enables me to achieve both areas of my interest and have a greater impact on communities around the world.

### The International Volunteer Day (IVD) theme for 2019 is about ‘inclusion’, how relevant is ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘SDG 10’ to your volunteer assignment ?

Inclusiveness and the SDG 10 are extremely relevant to my work. Volunteering for UNHCR, I am here to assist refugees, but this is not done in a top-down approach, we include them in our planning. For instance, I work with refugee journalists and have trained them. When it comes to their shows and message delivery, we work together and ensure that content is produced in all the major languages that are spoken in the settlement as there are many refugees who do not speak the national language. Promoting this level of inclusion means that our output is more effective.

“ Ensuring that everyone has access to opportunities is an important step to reducing inequalities

SDG 10 is also very relevant. Indeed, to reduce inequality policies should be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations. I work directly with refugees in a refugee settlement and the various trainings, job opportunities and assistance that are offered enable refugees to improve their wellbeing

after facing war.

### **Describe how you impact your community through volunteerism.**

The communities I work with are diverse and do not include only refugees, but other stakeholders such as partners and government officials as well as the host communities.

There are several ways that I impact the communities I work with to ensure that there is a reduction in inequalities. Due to the location of the refugee settlement and UNHCR's Global Compact on Refugees, which promotes assisting host communities, whenever I draft agendas for external visits, I always include a visit to a host community. This is important, as members of the host community, who are often in a vulnerable state, can talk about their concerns and needs. A positive impact of this, for example, has been that a government school was built in one community and the quota for state teachers for the rural region has increased.

From the communication perspective, we only used to send general reports and information in English. However I introduced a system where such information would also be in Portuguese and French. This means that refugees, many colleagues and government officials can consume our information and become informed stakeholders in an accessible language.

I conduct a lot of interviews and make sure to include people who speak different languages, people of different genders and professional backgrounds. The impact of this is that whenever I am in the settlement, everyone approaches me because they know that regardless of their background, I will listen to them.

 <https://www.unhcr.org/united-nations-volunteers.html>



• UNHCR • IVD2019 • #volunteer4inclusion • SDG10

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#)