During her two year assignment as Joint Procurement Coordinator in Malawi, UN Volunteer Lilian Byansi, (Uganda), put in place "Delivering as One" reforms that resulted in savings of more than $US3 million for the overall UN system there. (Photo: United Nations Resident Coordinators' Office, Malawi, 2015)
UN Volunteer helps save UN in Malawi over $US3 million

Lilongwe, Malawi: “When I set out from Uganda in 2013 to take up my UNV assignment in Malawi as a Joint Procurement Coordinator, my family and I wondered what I could offer. I did bring 17 years of national and international experience in procurement and supply chain management. But when I learnt more about the nature of my assignment, relating to the ‘Delivering as One’ (DaO) reforms, I realized the role was the first of its kind.

I was meant to support the UN in Malawi in its efforts to simplify and align operational activities for development, a process of reforms launched in 2007 being undertaken across the UN system. Thankfully, the UN agencies in this “self-starter” country were committed to increase their efficiency and effectiveness by harmonizing their business practices and operations.

As a result, from procurement activities by late 2015 we had saved US$1,168,838.30 and we expect savings amounting to US$3,689,164 by end of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) period in 2016. Savings are being used by UN agencies to fund more programme activities.

The purpose of my assignment was to introduce innovations to support UN agencies in Malawi in joint procurement and contribute to the Business Operations Strategy (BOS). The Operations Management Team (OMT) in Malawi developed the strategy to ensure savings are quantified based on agreed work-plans. Operational costs for all agencies were reduced, best business practices were followed.

It was challenging for an outsider like me, to quickly understand the different specific UN agency mandates, procurement rules and regulations, and respective business processes.

I was thrilled when Malawi was recognized as a pioneer country on Long Term Agreements and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) uploads via the United Nations Global Market (the common procurement portal of the United Nations system of organizations), because of improved access and distribution of procurement information. For every initiative a monitoring mechanism was developed to maintain the agreed service levels with the improvement plans in some cases to ensure uninterrupted service standards.

This assignment was certainly a challenge for me, and it was also exciting. It is rewarding to see the results of my work being shared with UN Malawi and UN globally, and to know that I have made a significant contribution to development.

My future dream is to become an international civil servant.”

Complimenting Lilian on an exemplary volunteer appraisal performance, Geoff Prewitt,
Chief of the Development Programming Section at UNV headquarters, described her achievements as a source of pride for UNV.

“You are the backbone of the Procurement Task Force in Malawi, pioneering innovative practices in the field of procurement and sharing the same with the global UNDP procurement community of practice,” he stated. “Through your analytical and organizational skills you have been able to save costs in key procurement areas.”

The UNV Chief of Development expressed his confidence that excellence will be a cornerstone of Lilian’s career path, and his hope she will continue to demonstrate the values and ethos of volunteerism throughout.

From Malawi, Lilian went on to a detail assignment in Tanzania where she assisted UNDP with procurement and logistics matters related to the general election there, duties in which, according to the ensuing country reports and exchanges, she continued to carry out distinguish herself.

By the end of her deployment, her assignment was a success story and this UN Volunteer had become a role model.

Bio: Lilian holds a Master’s in Business Administration (MBA), a Post Graduate Diploma in Project Monitoring and Evaluation, has completed various specific trainings and certifications in procurement and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply.

Sub-Saharan Africa

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