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UN Volunteer Giorgio Alegri taking part in his first Joint Protection mission, which aimed at investigating alleged grave human rights violations. (UNV Programme, 2015)

When moving from one village to another one, we realized how our presence was crucial

Bangui, Central African Republic: I am Italian and define myself as a "soul traveller". Prior to moving to the Central African Republic (CAR), I have been working, living and studying overseas for the last 10 years. Over the time, I developed expertise in the areas of capacity building, migration, and human trafficking across different countries mainly from South/Southeast Asia, and Africa.

Upon completion of my studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution at the University of Queensland in Australia (2011), I reiterated my commitment to promote the respect of human rights. As photojournalist both in 2011 and 2012, I documented and provided first-hand accounts of human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. More recently, I served as humanitarian worker in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As UN Volunteer in charge of Human Rights Officer, I joined the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) since last April 2015. This is the first time that I am involved in peacekeeping operations. In my opinion, being a civilian peacekeeper together with the military and police personnel from more than forty countries is a challenging but enriching experience.

The mission has been established only recently, and this is why coordination and communication among colleagues across different sections and components are extremely crucial.

I already had the opportunity to participate in my first Joint Protection mission, which aimed at investigating alleged grave human rights violations. Along with my colleagues from Human Rights and Child Protection Section, I conducted confidential interviews with victims and witnesses, as well as advocated for the promotion and respect of the dignity and human rights of detained persons.

What stroke me the most is that when we moved from one village to another one, we realized how our presence was crucial. Not only did we investigate any human rights abuses, but we also contributed to bring hope to the people. The expression of optimism spread over people's visages.

As UNVolunteer, I was extremely glad to be part of the team deployed to some very remote areas and to share my expertise while conducting interviews, and meeting with internally displaced people, local authorities and ex-Seleka (the alliance of rebel militia factions that overthrew the Central African Republic government in March 2013).

While being based in the capital Bangui, I also support the Reporting and Documentation Unit in other daily tasks such as drafting a variety of reports and researching/analysing key information related to human rights issues.

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