

Volunteers

Story

05 September 2017

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Beyond the call of duty, turning inmates into tailors sowing clothes for local market in Liberia

My volunteer experience goes back to my home country, Zimbabwe, where I served as an HIV/AIDS peer educator from 2004-2007. Besides working as a Corrections Officer, I used to educate the local population on HIV/AIDS, public health, and community development. Before this assignment with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), I also served as a Government Provided Personnel (GPP) Corrections Mentor with the UNMIL Corrections Advisory Unit.

Henry Tambade from Zimbabwe (far left), Corrections Training and Development Officer, UNMIL, with UNV colleagues in Liberia.

My name is Henry Tambade (Zimbabwe). I am an international UN Volunteer stationed in Monrovia, serving as Corrections Training Officer with the [United Nations Mission in Liberia](#) (UNMIL) since September 2013. I have a degree in Adult Education which I obtained from the Midlands State University in Zimbabwe in 2010. I also have a diploma in the same field obtained in 2005 from the University of Zimbabwe. I have 23 years of experience working as a Prison Officer and 16 years working as both a Training and Development Officer and a Project Management Officer.

My daily duties as a UN Volunteer involve designing, developing, and implementing training programmes within the UN Mission. My work has had positive impacts on the capacity of trainers within the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR). They can now independently conduct job analysis and needs assessments, as well as design, develop, conduct, and evaluate their training programmes.

I have been involved in the establishment of the Corrections Female Association (COFA), an organization that has been created to bring together female Corrections Officers for the purpose of designing development projects that benefit female Corrections Officers as well as female inmates. COFA also works closely with female Corrections Officers from other law enforcement organizations in Liberia.

I also supported the project design, development, and establishment of vocational skills training for inmates and Corrections Officers at Monrovia Central Prisons (MCP). This vocational skills training project is available to male and female inmates while serving their sentences. The goal of this project is to empower inmates as part of their rehabilitation and to ensure their successful reintegration as law abiding citizens.

One of the outstanding memories I have involves providing skills training to serving inmates who are now qualified tailors who can sew new clothes for the local market. The zeal shown by these inmates to successfully complete the training was so touching that I would find myself trying to do more to support them. Being a UN Volunteer provides a lifetime of satisfying experience because it gives opportunities to assist others to improve their lives.

I supported inmates by selling their products to UN staff whose loved ones were happy to receive clothes produced through the programme. I still proudly wear the outfits I purchased from them. The training has been beneficial to inmates. Although such projects are simple, it is heartwarming that these projects are changing people's lives by bringing hope to them. Some inmates also benefited from adult literacy programmes, which will be useful after serving their sentence. It is possible that one day they will be able to continue to use these new skills to help themselves provide for their families once they are released from prison.

Finally, my message, particularly for Liberian men, is to allow their spouses to be employed in law enforcement agencies so that there is an equal representation of both sexes in these organizations. This will allow qualified women to fulfil leadership positions where gender equality is an objective. I experienced some situations where female recruitment candidates withdrew from a process because of their spouses. I would like to encourage organizations in Liberia, including the government, to continue to design and implement smart strategies in order to further promote gender mainstreaming and ensure that proper representation of males and females is achieved.

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