

Volunteers

Story

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## **In Ethiopia, volunteering supports nutrition emergency response in Somali Region**

The Somali region of Ethiopia covers the south eastern part of the country. Since 2015, the region has been affected by severe droughts after the failing of consecutive rainy seasons due to the climate phenomena El Nino and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). As the food crisis unfolded, the situation was aggravated by a spiralling outbreak of Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD), affecting particularly young children and women. This was the time when UN agencies, including UNICEF, brought in expert volunteers to support the humanitarian response, including Richard Machokolo who is one of the international UN Volunteers.

Hotspot priority woredas (districts) in Ethiopia as of June 2017.

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Richard has been working with UNICEF Ethiopia's Somali Field Office as a Nutrition Specialist since December 2016 where he has been engaged in the implementation and coordination of the nutrition emergency response. He joined UNICEF at the peak of the food and nutrition crisis and has provided technical support at all stages of the emergency response led by the Somali Regional Health Bureau, in collaboration with UN Agencies, non-governmental organizations as well as *woreda* (district) health staff.

Richard capitalized on his strong partnership and coordination skills when he played a key role in providing technical support to emergency nutrition response. Richard's and other partners' efforts resulted in a timely and effective delivery of life saving nutrition services to children and women during the 2017 drought emergency in Somali region.

The assignment also provided great learning opportunities for Richard, in particular in terms of understanding the needs of the most vulnerable people.

From the beginning, I tried to understand the problem from the perspective of the affected people. Engaging closely with emergency-affected communities enabled me to gain a better understanding of the complex issues drought-affected people are facing, and what is required to address these issues.”

Looking back at having volunteered with UNICEF Ethiopia for almost a year, Richard still feels positively challenged and very motivated by the resources and support which UNICEF continues to provide, “UNICEF provides international humanitarians with exposure and opportunities to acquire a wealth of experience in a very short time. I feel very well supported and ready to actively participate in responding to ongoing and emerging humanitarian issues affecting women and children.”

Richard believes that volunteerism is a powerful tool to solve the challenges of humanity,

Despite the huge challenges for children and women in Somali region, I always felt that as a volunteer I was able to make a real contribution to saving lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people.”



This story is published as part of the campaign for [International Volunteer Day 2017: Volunteers Act First. Here. Everywhere.](#)

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