

Volunteers

Story

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UN Volunteer advances new technologies for food security in Eastern Africa

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving and changing lives by delivering food assistance and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. WFP's Regional Bureau Nairobi, Kenya (RBN) provides support to eight countries in the Eastern Africa region as of 2018; namely Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. This region accommodates several challenges of displacement and hunger caused by prolonged conflict, political instability, economic collapse, seasonal droughts and floods and active terrorism. Some 23 million people have been facing severe food insecurity in the area, resulting in the profound need for extensive humanitarian assistance.



Takako Kaneda (Japan) serves as a UN Volunteer Logistics Officer with WFP under the Human Resource Development Programme for Peacebuilding and Development. Here, she gives an interview at the 6th Africa Logistics Conference in Nairobi, Kenya.

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 (UNV, 2018)

Takako Kaneda (Japan) serves as a UN Volunteer Logistics Officer with WFP under the Human Resource Development Programme for Peacebuilding and Development. Dedicated to project and information management, HRD-UN Volunteer Takako Kaneda provided technical support to those WFP country offices in the Eastern Africa, including the most volatile countries Somalia and South Sudan.

Takako engaged in capacity building and offered innovative approaches to integrate technology and data-driven decision making into logistics forecasting, monitoring and operations. She also played a pivotal role in coordinating and facilitating high-level donor meetings, scoping missions, workshops and the 6th Africa Logistics Conference.

The opportunity to work as an UNV encouraged me to learn the spirits of changing lives through volunteerism. Moreover, the WFP RBN Office inspired me to learn how to oversee logistical connections at the regional level and explore innovative initiatives.

WFP in the Eastern Africa has implemented one of the largest and most vigorous humanitarian logistics operations in the world. For instance, logistics for the South Sudan emergency operation is the most complex and dynamic.

Considering the landlocked geographic location, food and humanitarian relief items are supplied through three main corridors from Uganda and Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan. To ensure maximal operational agility, a combination of heavy-tonnage aircraft, helicopters, river barges and boats, and road transport are used to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Road accessibility is often impeded and unpredictable due to the seasonal rainfall and persistent conflict; hence, airdrop operations is adopted to deliver to the most hard-to-reach area. However, the air delivery cost is

significantly higher than other delivery modes.

To increase the operational and cost efficiency, WFP RBN proactively incorporates some potential new technologies to revolutionise humanitarian food assistance which opened Takako's eyes and became a key focus during her assignment.

She wrote concept notes and drove three scoping missions looking at the viability of new technologies and solutions, such as the Blockchain and the Supply Chain Resilience Modelling tool (SCR). Especially on the SCR, which is developed by WFP funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), Takako sought an application of the new solution and facilitated cross-cutting sectoral collaborations with OCHA and HELP Logistics (a programme of the Kühne Foundation), and managed to conduct the first application mission in Kenya.

Takako also assisted in the conceptualization of seven innovative initiatives to integrate advanced technologies into WFP operations, such as All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), airships, drones, water distribution trucks and environmentally-friendly plastic briquettes for humanitarian utilization and supply chain optimization.

Preparation of the 6th Africa Logistics conference was Takako's key achievement in terms of impact and capacity-building. She led and actively facilitated two days of the conference, which WFP co-facilitated with University of Nairobi, Humanitarian Logistics Association, Inter-Agency Working Group for East & Central Africa (IAWG), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), and HELP Logistics.

After several postponements due to security tensions caused by the Kenyan presidential election in 2017, the conference provided a platform for 155 speakers and delegates from local municipalities, donors, academics, private sector and humanitarian entities to exchange ideas for future humanitarian supply chain challenges and achievement towards the SDGs. Takako played a key coordination role and successfully promoted a participatory group discussion, a social networking platform and idea exchange with private companies and academia on innovative solutions.

The conference triggered advance discussions between the WFP RBN and two commercial manufacturers of ATVs to bring their technology in a humanitarian context. In July 2018, one of the pilots was implemented in Uganda, with drivers were trained in ATV operation and handling. With the successful test, WFP has currently deployed the ATV vehicles in South Sudan since the late 2018.

Takako was highly satisfied with her volunteer experience and is pleased that some of her projects have continued since her assignment ended. For example, her monthly supply chain KPI dashboard continues to be used to inform data-driven decision making in WFP RBN.

Throughout the UN Volunteer assignment at WFP RBN, I was amazed by the diversity of people and the established culture of embracing different and mutual perspectives in the humanitarian environment.

Takako's assignment contributed to the achievement of SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, as well as SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. WFP is the leading agency of SDG 2 for saving lives and changing lives by delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.

This article was prepared with the kind support of [Online Volunteer Helen Maccan](#).

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 2: Zero hunger](#), [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#), [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)

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