

# UNV DRC *in focus*



## UN VOLUNTEERS in the field

The quarterly newsletter of United Nations Volunteers (UNV)  
programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

# Editorial

It is with great pleasure and pride that I write this editorial. I have over the past eight years had the honour and privilege to manage the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in Afghanistan, Sudan and now in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). I have over the years witnessed incredible dedication, determination and professionalism from United Nations Volunteers working in these countries. The group being highlighted in this issue of “UNV DRC in Focus” are men and women who all have responsibilities and functions that require them to live in remote places, to operate far from other international colleagues, and to interact very closely with the communities in which they live.

These men and women are often the first and only contact with the wider world that local communities ever see and interact with. Be it local populations, refugees, internally displaced populations, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or local state partners, these actors have as interlocutor a United Nations Volunteer who has accepted the challenge and in so doing represents not only their host agency but by default the entire United Nations system

and at times the “international community.” It is clear that assignments such as these are difficult, even trying, but it is also clear from the testimonies you will read that these assignments are also some of the most rewarding both professionally and personally. The recurring message is one of growth from those who accept these incredible challenges. Growth that translates into revised world views, renewed determination to excel and a realization that challenges also represent opportunities.

I hope that as you read these amazing stories you too will be moved, impressed and struck by the courage and selflessness that these individuals demonstrate in the execution of their assignments as UN Volunteers. It is clear that not everyone can do this, and it is also true that without these men and women the mandates of the host agencies could not be implemented in full.

**Marc Spurling**  
**UNV Programme Manager**  
**United Nations Organization Stabilization**  
**Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO)**  
**Democratic Republic of the Congo**

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**Ali Fofana,  
UNV Civil Affairs Officer**

# Volunteering in a conflict zone

*Since the atrocities committed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) against civilians in 2008, the districts of Haut and Bas Uele are still in the grip of instability. The security situation there remains a constant concern for humanitarian workers. Ali Fofana, however, did not hesitate one second to accept his transfer. This UN Volunteer, serving at that time as Civic Education Officer in Lubumbashi, was reassigned to the Civil Affairs Section in Dungu (Orientale Province) in 2010.*

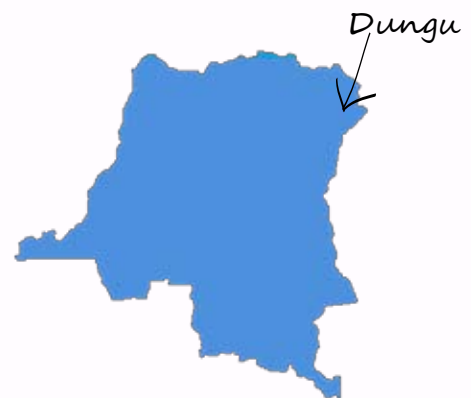
## TAKING PROTECTION TO REMOTE AREAS

In Dungu, Ali works as a UNV Civil Affairs Officer for the districts of Haut and Bas Uele. His role is to ensure the protection of civilian populations, including communities living in remote areas. "My assignment requires me to regularly go on mission," he says. "I perform about two to three mandatory missions per month depending on the section's agenda."

Deployment in the field is essential to achieve protection objectives: the missions provide access to the most remote areas in order to meet civilian populations and assess their situation and needs in

terms of protection.

The missions Ali Fofana takes part in Dungu are either joint protection missions or assessment missions. Protection missions are conducted in areas classified by MONUSCO as "must protect" areas for the protection of civilian populations against abuses where humanitarian and security needs have been identified. As for assessment missions, they are aimed at collecting information from the field such as human rights violations, behavior of local authorities, acts of sexual violence and abuses in order to assess the situation for further protection operations.



Dungu is a territory in the Haut-Uele district in the north-eastern area of the DRC. The centre of the area is difficult to reach due to a bad road network and the security situation. An LRA massacre against civilians in Faradje in 2008 created a humanitarian crisis in the region, resulting in the displacement of thousands of people fleeing to remote areas.



Members of a joint protection mission in a meeting with the chief of Nandike town located 155 kilometres from Dungu.

Due to the security situation, missions are escorted by the military and living conditions during missions are often very basic. “On a mission we live like the military,” says Ali. “We sleep in tents and we bring with us everything we need for the duration of the mission, which can last several days: a sleeping bag, a camp bed, food, Dettol to purify water, etc.”

#### DAILY LIFE IN THE FIELD

“In Uele, I am having a special experience,” Ali says. The professional and personal environment here is among the most drastic in the DRC. Ali has to be able to work under constant stress and pressure. “We all live, civilians and military, in MONUSCO headquarter in Dungu. We work every day of the week, including the weekend, and often leave the office late at night. The only social activity we have is a Happy Hour on Friday evening, but we must be escorted by the military

*“My contribution as a Volunteer? It is my commitment and desire to give others the desire to volunteer: We have come here to help others!”*

to go there. There are not many opportunities to disconnect from the workload apart from sports, interacting with colleagues at the MONUSCO base, and keeping in contact with family abroad.” Yet poor road conditions, ever-present insecurity linked to armed groups in the region, the poor coverage of communication networks and the difficult access to drinking water contribute to a tough living environment.

#### A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

Despite the daily challenges Ali values this unique experience: “I came to Dungu to get closer to the reality in the field and to the vulnerable populations while putting into practice knowledge gained from my studies.” Summarizing his experience, he says: “Being a UN Volunteer in Dungu is not an easy task because of the many challenges in the field. Endurance, patience and love for what we do are prerequisites to deal with stress and difficult living conditions. The work is certainly tough but fascinating on the whole.”



Ali standing with women representatives of Ibambi in the territory of Wemba.



**Sergio Guerra,  
UNV Convoy Leader**

# Volunteering on Central African roads

*It is at the wheel of a MONUSCO 6x6 truck that Sergio Guerra has been assigned as a UNV Convoy Leader. His work is neither common nor easy: travelling around the Congo and neighbouring countries to deliver cargo to all MONUSCO bases. With the soul of a backpacker, Sergio has combined his passion for driving with his desire to become a volunteer. He answered our questions.*

**What is your volunteer assignment?**

“As leader of MONUSCO convoys, my responsibility is to manage the planning, loading and dispatch of vehicles and drivers while ensuring the safe transportation of cargo according to the priority of the load. Before departure, I decide the itinerary, calculate the number of miles per day, the amount of fuel to take with us and so on. During the journey, I process the clearing of the cargo to cross borders, foresee the downtimes on the way, etc. For this kind of assignment, I need to work closely with my supervisor who I call as soon as we have a problem or encounter anything unexpected on the road.”

**Tell us more about the job?**

«I spend most of my time on the road, conducting two to three convoys per month. We depart from Entebbe, Uganda, where I am based, and head to different regions of the Congo: Kisangani, Goma, Beni, Bukavu, Mahagi, Aru and many other places. A convoy is made up of between two and 12 trucks depending on the size of the cargo to be delivered.”

**How long are you on the road?**

“Travel time depends on the distance. For example, from Entebbe, it takes around six days to reach Goma and ten days to reach Kisangani. My longest journey lasted about a month on



“I like my job and I do what I like! I like trucks, large vehicles, cargo, trailers, machines, and so on. I truly enjoy being on the road.”

the road; I had to deliver cargo from Entebbe to Beni. From there, we loaded new cargo for the South African contingent who was reassigned to Goma. We made two trips to deliver all the cargo. Then once in Goma, I was sent to the MONUSCO base in Kigoma, Tanzania, to collect containers. To get there, we passed through Rwanda and Burundi.”

**Can you describe the driving conditions on the region’s roads?**

“Well, very bad, usually, which makes driving very difficult. Congolese roads are full of pitfalls and surprises. I remember having led a convoy to Bunia via Mahagi during the rainy season. The roads were muddy and slippery and we had to drive incredibly slowly, between 5 and 10 kilometres per hour. Although it is only 200 kilometres between the two communities, it took us two

days to reach our destination! At some point, we found a civilian truck stuck in the middle of the road. Hard pressed for time, we disconnected our trailers and sent one MONUSCO truck ahead to help the civilian truck and open the way for us. Then we connected our truck together again with a chain and climbed up the hill.”

**It must be exhausting...**

“Indeed, driving on roads in poor condition is extremely tiring. Since there is only one driver per vehicle, we have to pay attention to driver’s fatigue: when we are tired, we just stop and continue on our way the next day if the road conditions and the security situation are okay. In some situations, days can be extremely long. For example, when we were sent to Bunia, we drove for 17 hours non-stop, from eight in the morning straight through to one at night. Given the road conditions and the

security situation in the region, we could not stop driving until we found a safe place to park our trucks. In general we sleep in our trucks because we cannot leave them behind. Sometimes we sleep two to three days in our trucks.”

**You must see many different places and beautiful landscapes; do you have any stories to share about this?**

“Yes, I do! The convoys often pass through national parks, where the only other vehicles allowed to enter are safari vehicles, full of muzungu (foreigners in kiswahili language) tourists. One day, I was driving from Nebi, in Uganda, and I passed by a national park. The road was fantastic and flat. As I got closer to a group of trees beside the road, I saw a big elephant 50 meters away. It reminded me how lucky I am to be on these unique roads passing through such dramatic places.”



*“Civilian trucks often do not want to let us go; they prefer to keep us behind them in case they get stuck,” explains Sergio.*

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Philippe



Sage

# Volunteering in camps for internally displaced populations

*Clashes between the the rebel March 23 Movement (M23)1 and the army in North Kivu since last April resulted in thousands of internally displaced people (IDP) fleeing to refugee camps in Rushuru and Masisi.*

*Sage Mulinda and Philippe Batumbula, both national UN Volunteers, served as Community Service Assistants for UNHCR in the IDP camps. While helping families in distress in the camps, Sage and Philippe experienced a deteriorating security situation and were evacuated to Goma where they have been reassigned. Both hope to go back soon to the camps in order to continue their work in the field with displaced populations.*

## WORKING IN IDP CAMPS

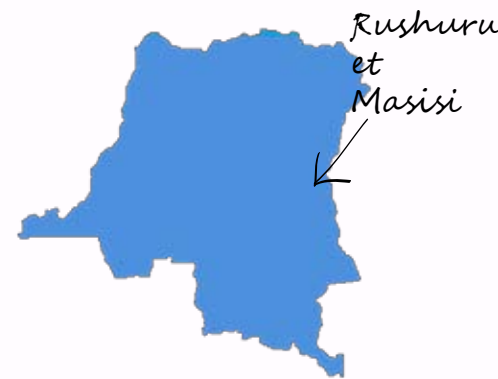
**I**n Masisi, Philippe’s work took him to five IDP camps, the largest of which housed 3,000 people. “In the camps I was working with vulnerable groups. I was in charge of identifying and assisting internally displaced children, in particular unaccompanied children and those born in the camps. One of my major concerns was to secure that they had priority in housing and received sufficient food.”

As more and more people arrived in the camps each day, the situation was becoming more insecure. Sanitary conditions were deteriorating, food intake was decreasing and there was a lack of housing, making assistance

to newcomers tricky. “Before being evacuated from Masisi, we were facing a humanitarian situation: there was a massive influx of IDPs in camps who had fled fighting and there was widespread fear of a rapid advance by the M23, causing panic among both local and displaced populations,” recalls Philippe.

**B**efore the town fell into rebel hands, Sage used to go every day to camps set up for IDPs near Rushuru . Sage would meet with those who were displaced, assess their situation, try to resolve problems between neighbours and follow up on specific legal, medical and psycho-social cases. She

IDP Camp in Masisi. Picture S. Liechti



Rushuru and Masisi are two territories in North Kivu along the Rwandan-Congolese border. Over the past twenty years, both have been the epicentre of clashes between the Congolese army and militias. These on-going conflicts are exacerbated by economic and political interests.



*In his free time, Sage helps a displaced woman clean a latrine at the Kiwanja (Rushuru ) camp: hygiene of latrines in the IDP camps is crucial to prevent waterborne diseases.*

constant stress and insecurity. “Here, we do not think of danger or fear,” says Philippe. “We seek first to respond with assistance to the IDPs’ needs.” According to Sage: “Families arriving [in the camps] have fled their homes and have experienced traumatic events. They are vulnerable and need help: we need to listen to them, be understanding in relation to what they have suffered and assist however possible.”

**Philippe Batumbula**  
**Community Service**  
**Assistant**  
**UNCHR**  
**Masisi**

**Sage Mulimba**  
**Community Service**  
**Assistant**  
**UNCHR**  
**Rutshuru**

helped new households to make sure they could access food. The task was not only physically, but also psychologically challenging. “The intense calls from the displaced for assistance, my fear that their needs wouldn’t be covered, as well as the lack of concentration while hearing gun shots from clashes nearby were causes of stress. I had to learn how to deal with that in order to solve conflicts between the former displaced and the newly arrived. There started to be tensions

between displaced populations, especially over food rations. My involvement was crucial to calm things down and restore social cohesion in the camp.”

**A VOCATION TO HELP OTHERS**

**P**atience, empathy and tolerance: those are essential qualities that allowed Sage and Philippe to focus on helping people affected by crisis, despite

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) UNV Field Unit in the DRC has been mobilizing Congolese nationals as UN Volunteers to be deployed with United Nations agencies and programmes across the country. In 2012, twenty-four national UN Volunteers are serving in the sectors of community mobilization, humanitarian assistance, participation and capacity building.



*Sage assists a child born of rape: in areas affected by armed conflict, women are used as weapons of war and are frequently victims of sexual violence.*

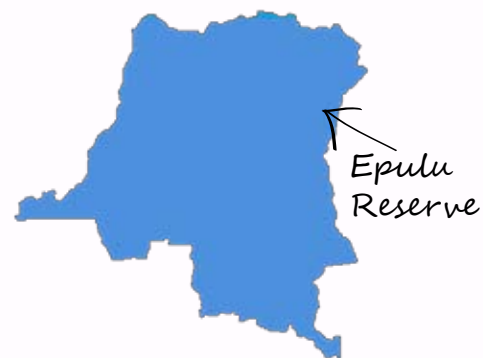




**Nathan Reyes**  
UNV Human Rights Officer

## Impressions from a joint protection mission

*Canadian Nathan Reyes participated in a joint protection mission to Epulu, a town in Mambasa territory, Ituri District (Province Orientale). Epulu was attacked by Mai Mai rebels at the end of June 2012. Epulu is the heart of the Okapi Fauna Reserve and once was the home of offices and the museum of the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature. Below Nathan gives a moving account of his first joint protection mission in the field.*



### THE ATTACK ON EPULU

In the early hours of the morning on 24 June 2012, the town of Epulu was attacked by a group of approximately 30 heavily armed Mai Mai Lumumba - formerly and still commonly referred to as Mai Mai Simba - under the command of Paul Sadala, alias Morgan. Four kilometres east of Epulu, a second group lay awaiting a signal to join the first; the ensuing incursion lasted 35 hours.

burned alive. Over 50 women and girls were raped while dozens more were taken as sex slaves. At least 100 civilians were taken hostage, the Okapi Fauna Reserve offices and museum were ransacked and burned, numerous houses and boutiques were pillaged, and 14 Okapi (an

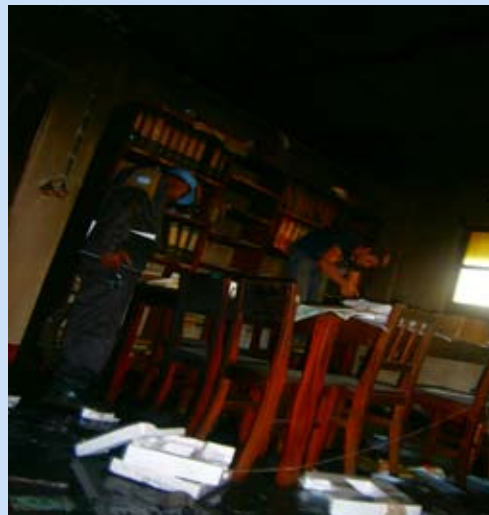
The Mai Mai Lumumba operating in the territory of Mambasa have become infamous throughout Ituri District for their ruthless and senselessly violent incursions. The June attacks on Epulu and nearby Babama – the twelfth or thirteenth such attack since March 2012 – were no exception. Civilians were killed; two were



*The Epulu Reserve administrative office after being burned down.*



*Nathan conducts an interview with locals.*



*Nathan in the heart of the investigation.*

endangered, zebra-like species) were slaughtered. Over two months after this attack, the populations of Epulu and surrounding villages remain haunted by what befell them and by the fear that it may well happen again.

#### SETTING UP A JOINT PROTECTION MISSION SHORTLY AFTER THE ATTACK

I had the opportunity of representing the Joint Human Rights Office for Ituri and informally co-leading the joint protection mission that was subsequently undertaken to Epulu from 2-5 July 2012. Having arrived in the field so shortly following the attack, we were able to speak not only to authorities, civil society and witnesses, but equally to victims of various violations, to their families and to escaped hostages, among others. As I cautiously made my way through the burned remains of the Okapi Fauna Reserve offices, I was taken aback at seeing the ground littered by bullet shells like popcorn on the floor of a cinema. A mound of ashes still lay in the town centre where two people had been burned alive while their fellow villagers had been forced to watch helplessly. Never had I seen such devastation so closely, so intimately.

#### FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Being exposed to such recent devastation cast a somber light on my experience participating in the mission. On the one hand, the mission was stimulating and fruitful. On the other hand, it was painful, tragic and bewildering. So senseless was the extent of violence delivered upon an utterly innocent civilian population. What could cause such hate – or worse, indifference – to take root in one's heart as to make one capable of committing such atrocities? This mission was perhaps what first made me realize what every UN Volunteer (particularly those serving in the east of the DRC) is

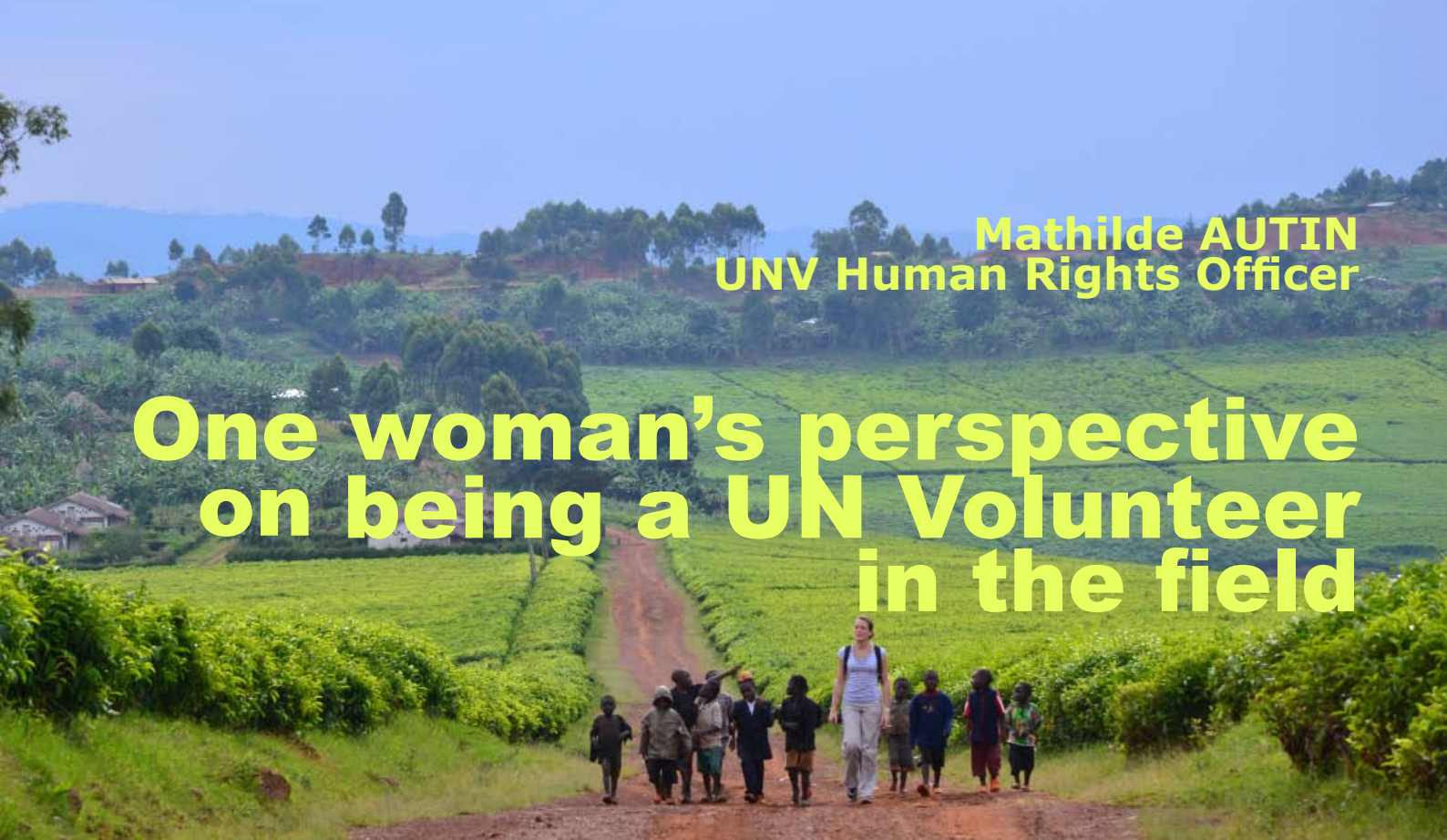
doubtless confronted with: the necessity to manage the balance between becoming overwhelmed by the horrors one is exposed to and allowing oneself to become utterly desensitized. Still today I strive to find this line, this balance. I believe I am coming close, and thankfully have fellow UN Volunteers to help me find my way.

My first joint protection mission was unequivocally an educational and inspirational experience. The official lead of the mission quickly adopted me as his informal co-lead, giving me a degree of responsibility, involvement, ownership and gratification in this mission that I had not expected to find as a UN Volunteer. Nightly discussions among mission participants allowed me to better understand protection challenges and mechanisms and their concrete applications than I ever could have through months of abstract training. However, I did miss out on some fascinating conversations that took place while we were in the car; I was driving and had no choice but to focus on dodging the innumerable potholes and obstacles as I navigated nearly 700 kilometres through some of the densest jungle in the world!

I rightly imagined that in becoming a UN Volunteer and Human Rights Officer in the DRC I would experience growth. Today, I can assure you that while the knowledge I take away from this is considerable, it is but the tip of the iceberg; I am growing not only as a field officer and a jurist, but as a human being.

**Mathilde AUTIN**  
**UNV Human Rights Officer**

# One woman's perspective on being a UN Volunteer in the field



*Mathilde Autin, a French citizen, has served as a Human Rights Officer in the Joint Office of Human Rights (UNJHRO) in Butembo, North Kivu Province since August 2011. Below Mathilde answers questions about her perspective on volunteering in the field.*

**In a few words, could you give a description of your work in Butembo?**

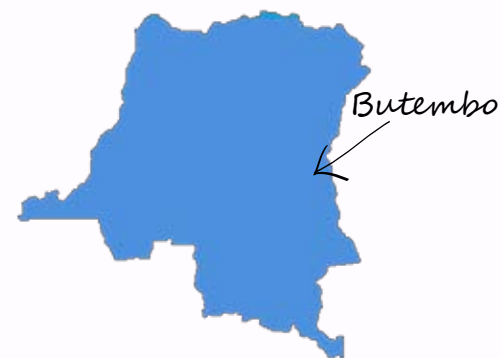
“An important part of my job as Human Rights Officer is to investigate and report all violations of human rights committed in the city of Butembo and Lubero territory by public officers and by armed groups and to monitor these cases at judiciary level. The role of UNJHRO is also to promote human rights through training and conferences for a wide range of audiences, such as the army, political and administrative authorities, civil society actors and NGOs. Therefore, I go on mission about one week every month to Lubero, and more frequently I make one-day missions near Butembo, according to field requirements.”

**What motivated you to accept a volunteer assignment in the field?**

“Above all I wanted to get involved more directly and specifically in the protection of human rights while being in contact with people and partners in the field. I was particularly interested in UNV’s programme because it is not only a professional commitment but also a strong personal commitment and an intense human experience: we are not only in touch with the culture of our host country, but also interact with many colleagues and friends from different backgrounds.”

**What are the enrichments and difficulties at a personal level of such an experience?**

“Working in a duty station such as



Although Butembo is an important commercial centre, the city remains undeveloped and is deeply rooted in rural life. Years of war, insecurity, population movements and the destruction of economic and basic infrastructure have hindered the socio-economic development of the city. Nowadays Butembo is relatively quiet even though the city is surrounded by areas marked by insecurity.

Butembo is first and foremost a human enrichment, through direct exchange with local communities and immersion in the local culture and Congolese society. It also gives you a different perspective on your own culture and opens your mind. If I had to name one difficulty, it would be sometimes just a feeling of isolation, especially since I'm the only UN Volunteer in Butembo and I have not yet had the chance to know other colleagues outside of North Kivu."

**And is being a woman challenging in your work or integration into the local community?**

"Being a woman has never been a problem. On the contrary, I think it would be rather an advantage both on personal and professional levels. It helps with interlocutors to put them at ease and to break the ice in social contexts."

**Speaking of social context, how do you spend your leisure time?**

"My daily life is mostly predominated by work. Moments of free time are an opportunity to meet friends and make occasional excursions in the immediate surroundings of the city. Leisure activities are scarce in Butembo; there is no infrastructure for sports or relaxation. Nevertheless, we have recently set up a Welfare Committee at MONUSCO in Butembo. I'm part of the committee and we will be organizing activities soon. As for my involvement with local communities, I haven't been able to get

involved in any volunteer project as I am too busy with my job, investigating in the field and conducting interviews. However, I would like to get involved with local associations working on women issues. Maybe later when I have time..."

**In your opinion, what are the qualities needed for this kind of assignment?**

"I think it is important to be flexible and to listen in order to adapt to the environment in which we evolve professionally and personally. You need a sincere commitment to the people we have the responsibility to protect. And maybe a dose of humour, because it can be useful!"

**So far, what has been your most striking experience in Butembo?**

"Rather than a particular experience, it is mainly small victories in our daily work, especially when we put an end to situations in which people were victims of gross violations and we made a visible difference and immediate improvement for these people. These are small steps because the fight against impunity is a long process, but it is really rewarding."



*Mathilde takes part in a joint protection mission in the south of Lubero territory.*

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**Abassi Barri**  
UNV Logistic Assistant

# Living the volunteer life 100 percent



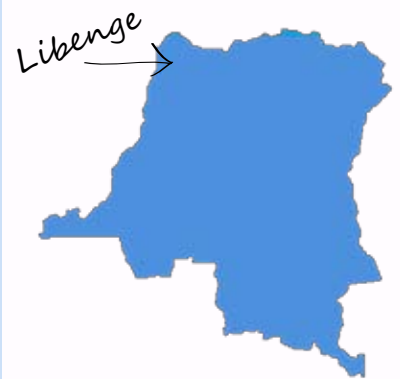
*Barry Abassi has been a logistics assistant for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Libenge, a town in Ubangi District of Equateur Province, since January 2012. He tells us about the various facets of his daily life and his volunteer work in rural areas.*

In my capacity as a UNV Logistics Assistant, I am responsible for logistics, procurement and asset management for UNHCR's operations in connection with the repatriation of Congolese refugees living along the Ubangi River in the Central African Republic and Congo Brazzaville. Working in logistics in Libenge is challenging given the lack of products and services, the remoteness of the area and the natural constraints.

Volunteerism is becoming an important part of my life here. I try to be personally committed in my work and in improving the quality of life of local communities. As an example, when we replaced the straw houses with baked brick houses in refugee return areas,

I personally prepared the clay-based mix for making the bricks.

The head of the office and I are the only two expatriates working in Libenge. We lead a villager's life, so to speak. In Libenge, there is not much entertainment nor are there places to meet after work and the communication network is unreliable, making calling abroad extremely difficult. It was, therefore, very important to commit myself to social and volunteer projects so as to integrate into the local community and overcome the lack of recreational and non-work activities. If I did not get involved in local initiatives, my life in Libenge would be limited to an office – home routine. Among other things, I



Libenge, with 27,000 inhabitants, is a small city of fishermen and farmers along the Bangui River. Libenge has faced a humanitarian situation since 2009 when more than 129,000 people from the DRC fled into Congo Brazzaville and the Central African Republic due to ethnic clashes over fishing and agricultural rights.

am currently helping raise awareness among youth about entrepreneurship. Since being here, I have helped a youth association to organize themselves to clean the streets of the city. This association is now well rooted and a couple of weeks ago, they opened a community restaurant.

In addition to my personal commitment, along with other colleagues, we organize a weekly football match on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The idea at the beginning was



*A construction kit is delivered to a disadvantaged family in Libenge.*

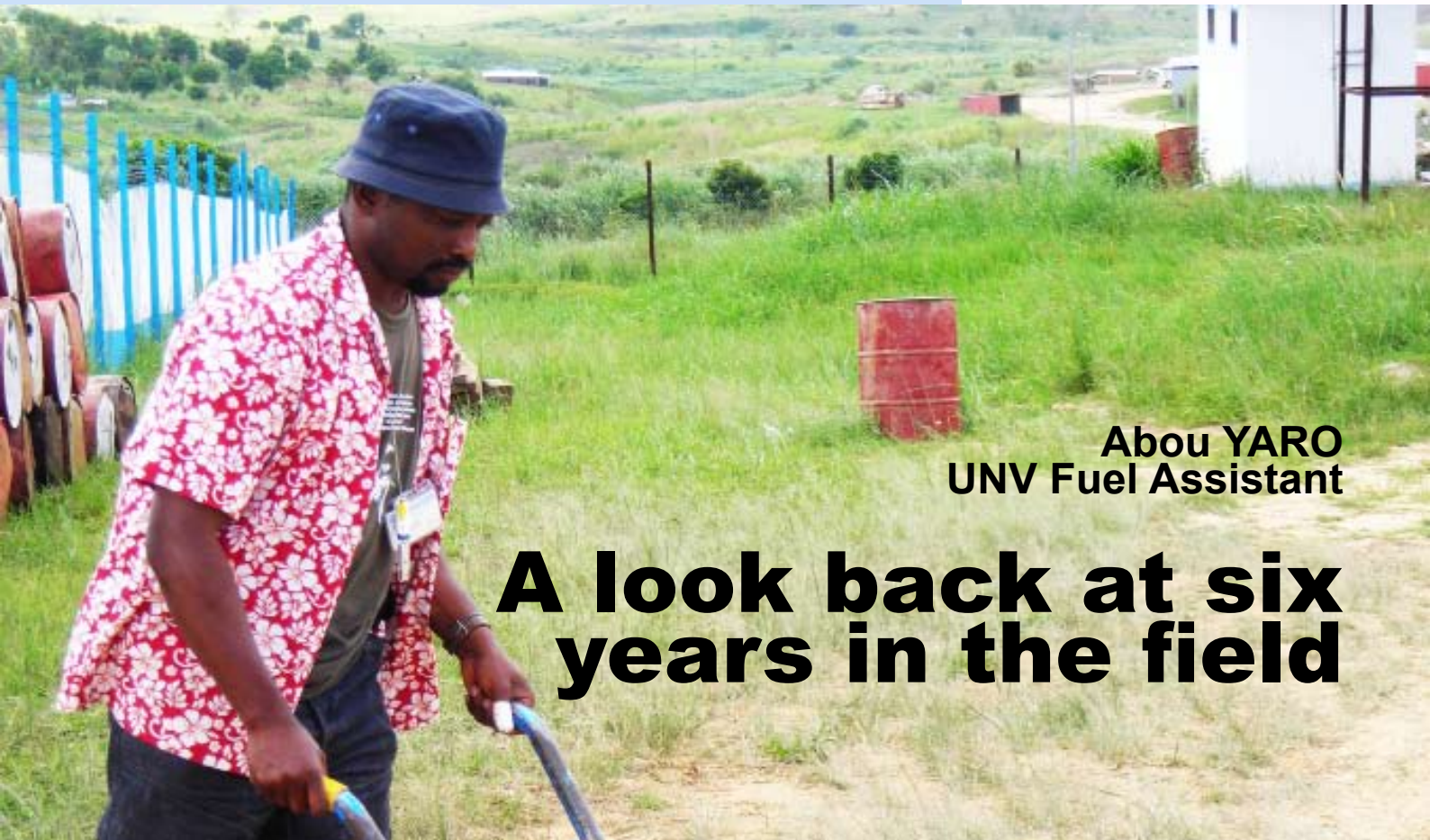
*“We have contributed in a way that revitalizes local communities. It is a very rewarding feeling to actually contribute to local development.”*

to have a joint activity with local NGOs. The initiative has been growing, and we have started to organize matches between different teams, such as the villagers against humanitarians. Now we are also playing football with the local youth every Saturday afternoon.



*Abassi lives in his office, which he dubbed his “five-star office.” His bed nestles beside his desk.*

The various initiatives we have undertaken have infused energy and a fresh breath into the city. The city has high poverty rates and high levels of inactivity. And it is very gratifying to see that our actions have a visible impact on communities and that we can share with people what we know. Volunteering is a unique experience and I feel proud of what I do.



**Abou YARO**  
**UNV Fuel Assistant**

## **A look back at six years in the field**

*Abu Yaru served as a UNV Fuel Assistant in Manono for six years. Before leaving the DRC on 31 August 2012, he wanted to share his experience as a volunteer with us.*

**M**y name is Abu Yaru, and I have just finished my volunteer mission after six years and one month of service. During these years, I had the chance to be assigned as UNV Fuel Assistant in three different places: Bunia for 11 months, Kinshasa for 15 months, and finally Manono for four years, where I spent most of my time.

**W**hat is Manono, you ask? Manono is what is known as a “remote location” and has its share of good and less good sides. Firstly, the office in Manono is one of the smallest MONUSCO sub-offices, with few international staff. Initially, we were five, then we were reduced to three, and lastly two. I cannot pretend that living in Manono was easy: we had to travel for three kilometres in search of water for bathing; oh yeah, and that was in two day intervals. Not to mention

lack of electricity, because there is virtually no power in Manono. Social opportunities as well as travelling outside of Manono were, in turn, very limited. You can say I lived a quiet life, above all during the weekends when local staff got to go home! In these moments, it sometimes seemed that I was cut off from the world. There were also the minor annoyances of everyday life such as snakes entering my apartment in the evenings. Well, at least I got visitors.

**N**evertheless, all of this never made me dislike life in Manono. Actually, my volunteer experience was wonderful. It allowed me to re-focus my thinking and be more open-minded toward people of other cultural backgrounds. During this period, I learned a lot, especially about myself and my ability to relate with other cultures. I was integrated



Manono, a port city of 37,500 inhabitants, is located in Katanga Province, on the west bank of the Lukushi River. Manono was badly affected by the Second Congo War (1998-2003). Many buildings and facilities were destroyed during this period, including the hydro-electric system supplying power to the region.

into local life, I made friends there and I used to play games with youth during the weekends. My door was always open for them. In Manono, I made sure to have something to do every minute of my life, just to keep my mind busy.

On the professional level, this experience was very fulfilling as well. At first, I was recruited as a Fuel Assistant. This is my area of expertise. However, as MONUSCO reduced its staff in Manono, I was given more and more responsibilities. And during the last two years, I was acting as Sub-Office Manager and Air Operation Assistant. Looking back, I think my greatest achievement has been to have worked in the field for MONUSCO during the national elections of 2006 and 2011, particularly regarding the logistics organization required by these types of elections in such a remote area as the region of Manono.

Last but not least, I did not become a UN Volunteer by coincidence. In fact, I chose to become a volunteer because I truly believe in doing something for a positive change. Indeed, before becoming a UN Volunteer, I served for 15 years in the Sudanese military undertaking United Nations peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Throughout these missions, I had been in contact with people who, in one way or another touched my life: local people, civil society and volunteers, to mention



*Abu takes inventory of fuel barrels after a delivery to the MONUSCO base in Manono.*

a few. I witnessed the excellent work they did in the field and then I decided to retire from the army and become a UN Volunteer. Before concluding my story, I would like to say that these past six years spent as a UN Volunteer, even though in isolated areas, have been a great experience and I encourage Volunteers to go to the field.

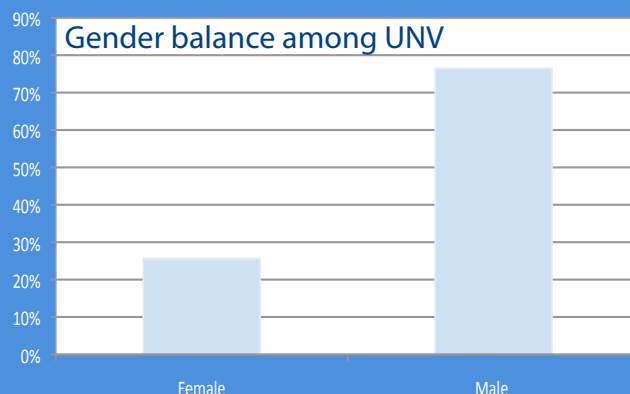
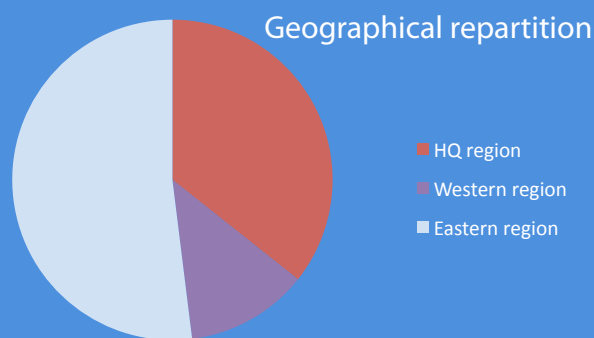
*Thanks to all !*

## UNV in the DRC in figures

Currently, there are **628 UN Volunteers** working in **31 duty stations** in the DRC.

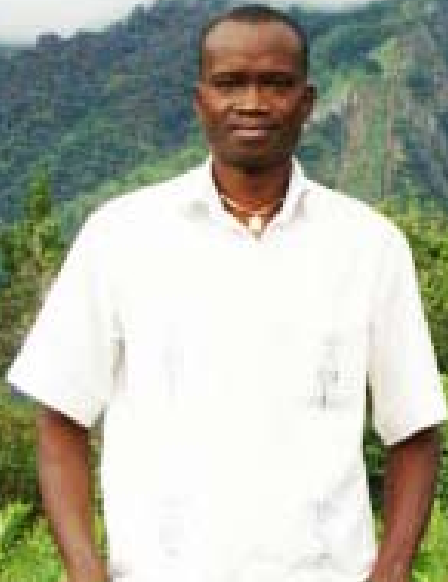
Of these, **547 UN Volunteers are serving in MONUSCO** and **81 in UN Agencies** across the country.

The UN Volunteers in the DRC represent **over 100 different nationalities** and are assigned in different areas, ranging from human rights officers to supply managers, and electoral observers to press officers.





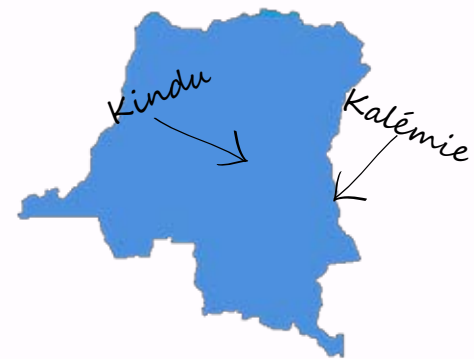
# Where are they now?



**Abou Mouhilou Seidou,  
Former UN Volunteer :**

**“The field is an ideal place for a volunteer”**

*UNV traced Abou Mouhilou Seidou, formerly a UN Volunteer in the DRC, to his new post in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Before his new assignment, from May 2006 to December 2009, Abu served as a UNV Public Information Officer for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) [since July 2010 renamed the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo MONUSCO]. Based in the field, he used to work in Kindu in Maniema Province and Kalemie in North Katanga Province. He tells us about his UNV experience.*



**What was your assignment as UN Volunteer?**

“I served as a UNV Public Information Officer for MONUC’s Department of Public Information in Maniema and Kalemie. I was in charge of, among other things, ensuring that people understood the mandate of the mission, helping change behaviours through advocacy for peace and social cohesion, coordinating local Radio Okapi, contributing to publications of the mission, being the spokesperson for the mission in my area of responsibility, and so on.”

**What was your most enriching achievement as UN Volunteer?**

“There is one in particular that will

always be kept in my mind. During a mission in the village of Kipaka, near Kasongo, I noticed that children were mostly in the street on a school day. Parents did not find it necessary to send their children to school if afterwards they would end up unemployed anyway. Parents preferred to keep their children with them to help with their daily activities.

Then I thought of my own son attending school in my own country at that time, and that those children did not deserve to be denied an education. So I decided to organize an awareness activity about the right to be educated. I came back with women journalists from the region to conduct awareness sessions in

«The field is the ideal place for a volunteer. If you have to choose between the field and the office, do not hesitate: choose the field! That’s where you can really translate inspiration into action. It is an enabling environment that allows you to share other realities and develop strong volunteering values»

local languages, through the community radio.

After a few sessions, the villagers said that if these women have become such bright journalists through going to school, this meant that their children could do so if they also went to school. The result for the next school year? There was not enough space to accommodate the many new students at the village school and authorities had to hastily send more benches to the classrooms.”

**What has been your path after being a UN Volunteer?**

“Having returned home, I worked for some time as Director of Publications for a newspaper in Cotonou and for a communication agency. However, more than one year ago, I decided to become a UN Volunteer again and since then, I have been working as Information and Advocacy Officer at the UNV Support Office of ONUCI.”

**Would you like to share your thoughts about your UNV experience?**

“My UNV assignment within MONUC was a fundamental step for me and greatly shaped my budding career. As a volunteer you learn a lot by serving others. But volunteering is also a vocation which requires conviction for helping others. If you come without that conviction, you are sure to miss your vocation because it is not easy to serve others.

More than anything, this experience allowed me to discover other realities in the field that have impacted my personality too. Since then, I see life differently, with a stronger feeling of solidarity. I feel more a part of society: I feel I can contribute something and this also helps me grow. Even though I know one cannot change everything around them, you can always help improve things.”



*Abou with orphans from Zawadi Centre in Kalemie.*



*Abou conducts an awareness raising activity in Lubutu.*



*Abou conducts an interview with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the time, William Lacy Swing, in Kindu.*

# The UNV Team in DRC

## UNV Support Office of MONUSCO

### Regional Office in Entebbe



Marc SPURLING  
UNV Programme  
Manager



Sandrina Da Cruz  
Administrative Officer



Tobias Wollnick  
Administrative Officer



Diana Matar  
Database Developer

### Office in Kinshasa (Western region)



Maryse Boulanger  
Administrative Officer



Zabibu la Banzira  
(Bijou)  
Administrative Assistant



Maurice Mulumba  
Administrative Assistant



Didier Kabeya  
Administrative Assistant



Alexandra de Bounonville  
Public Information Officer

### Office in Goma (Eastern region)



Lani Gamboa  
Administrative Officer



Saidath Nganizi  
Administrative Assistant

## UNDP UNV Field Unit



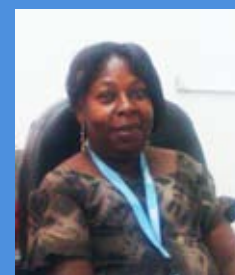
Richard Grieco  
UNV Programme Officer



Henr-Gauthier Fene  
Fene  
UN Volunteer in charge  
of the National Volun-  
teering Programme



Meschac Kamanda  
Country Operations  
Assistant



Brigitte MAMFWA  
Country Operations  
Assistant

