



A Heartwrenching Encounter in an IDP Camp in Uganda

UNV Perez Abeka, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR Kitgum

During my field trip to one of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in Kitgum district where I work as UNV Field Officer – Protection with UNHCR, I had a chat with one category that my colleagues refer to as “Perez’s friends”, and these are children.

I know a little Acholi and Luo, but I’m not very conversant with them, and the first time I uttered some friendly and polite words in my Kenyan Luo, I left

why a seemingly Acholi woman like myself, given my dark complexion, seem to be missing out on some simple semantics!

I had to consult my colleagues who persuaded the children to gather for a chat with me. I’ll not highlight further my escapades, but I learned two lessons; one that a language barrier can bring disgrace and embarrassment and not to open my mouth when not sure of

real name), of about ten years of age who was amazing!

Her courage and articulation of her camp life experience was very touching indeed. Her mother, a widow, had informed her about the calamity that had befallen their village, labelling it as a ghostly place where all her relatives including her own father had been killed.

Turn to Page 8



Wearing faces alight with an unquenchable joie-de-vivre in spite of the difficulties of camp life, children at Palabek Ogili share a light moment

children mesmerised and confused. With the belief that I would make some sense with my snapshot sentence, I smiled widely as I said the words; little did I know that I was issuing some inappropriate words with my heavy dialect.

I was left mouth gaping and hands outstretched in a bid to greet the children who had taken off; some laughing, while others looked on in disbelief and with sympathy wondering

what to say especially to the children and secondly; to invest in consultation with persons familiar with a particular environment for information gathering purposes.

Back to the story; after attaining some confidence building courtesy of my colleagues, I decided to engage the innocent boys and girls in talk about their experience of camp life. Although the majority were innocently naive, I came across a young girl, Atim (not

IN THIS ISSUE :

A Heartwrenching Encounter in an IDP Camp in Uganda..... Pg 1

Foreword by the UNV Programme Officer..... Pg 2

Word from Mr. Theopane Nikyema, Resident Representative..... Pg 3

Inaugural World Indigenous People Day Celebrations in Karamoja..... Pg 3

SGBV Project Launched in Lira... Pg 4

Welcoming the Next Generation of Cisco Curricula..... Pg 5

Pictorial..... Pg 6

Turning the Spotlight on Children in Northern Uganda Pg 7

Bidding Farewell to Outgoing UNV Volunteers..... Pg 7

Tale of a UNV Volunteer serving in Timor-Leste..... Pg 9

Promoting Reproductive Health for Displaced Persons..... Pg 10

Humour..... Pg 11

Poet’s Corner..... Pg 11

Visit to UWEC to Monitor MDG Facility Project..... Pg 12

Foreword by the UNV Programme Officer



Dear readers,

I am truly delighted to introduce yet another edition of *The Volunteer*, the flagship publication of the UNV Programme in Uganda. As typified by earlier editions, this release is yet another exciting read,

managing to recount some of the contributions being made by the UNV Volunteers who comprise this vibrant community here in Uganda.

We have grown in number and diversity over the past few months. As of August 2007 our numbers were close to seventy (70), with 24 internationals and 45 nationals. With respect to gender, there was a corresponding 50:50 ratio of females to males. We have also had emissaries from Uganda being assigned duties as international UNV volunteers in various countries around the globe. In September 2007 we welcomed two new personnel to our Country Office, Ms. Barbara Hilda Mirembe as the UNV Country Operations Associate as well as Mr. Moses Tumusiime, a former UNV himself, who is now serving as UNV Programme Assistant. But like the unstoppable ebb and flow of the tide, while many were joining our family, we have had to bid farewell to a number of our dear colleagues whose time with us had come to close of which we have included some tributes to them in this newsletter.

As foretold in the previous edition, this time *The Volunteer* has focused on Northern Uganda and more so the activities that our UNV Volunteers and partner organizations have engaged in for the sake of humanity and the environment. From a first-hand account of the tribulations faced by children in Internally Displaced Persons' camps, to a poetic narration of how camp life in itself is, several other interesting stories are highlighted within these pages. And how many of us have ever given thought to the gender-specific needs of women living in war-ravaged areas? Please find out more about some of the progress being made in fulfilling these needs. It is not all about war and conflict though, and thus I encourage you to peruse an account of the highly colourful and joyous Indigenous Peoples' Day celebrations, spiced with dance and music, that were held in Karamoja, North-eastern Uganda. More information on the developments of our UNV-CISCO partnership in Uganda as well as the witnessing of the environmental fruits from the work of various volunteers who participated in the International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2006 celebrations have been added to make this a rich package.

And in the first instance ever of what we intend to be a regular inclusion in our subsequent editions, we have turned the spotlight on the noteworthy activities of Ugandan UNV volunteers posted internationally, with a firsthand account of serving during the recently concluded and successful elections in Timor-Leste.

In addition, it gives me great pleasure to announce a pioneer initiative of UNV Support Team that was mooted immediately after IVD 2006 and put together in January 2007. Under my auspices, we put together a team of about eleven UNV volunteers who voluntarily agreed to complement the efforts of the UNV Country Office Team to achieve the development objectives of UNV Programme in Uganda and above all, the UNV volunteers themselves. This outfit has got tremendous mileage by motivating and looking into the plight of all UNV volunteers through continuous engagement, collection and dissemination of relevant information which would lead to popularising and galvanising the concept of volunteerism in the country. The UNV Support Team has several items lined up for the future, including joint activities of a contributory nature with other volunteer bodies, organization of IVD 2007 celebrations and more.

We have several exciting events scheduled for subsequent months; notable among them are two of the five UNV Results Workshops being held worldwide, where the first one will be held here in Uganda and the other in Kenya in the course of the month of October 2007. The UNV Results Workshops will gather, amongst others, selected UNV volunteers and representatives from governments, civil societies, UN Agencies and the UNV Programme from 3 different countries to give an account of UNV's distinctive contributions under specific themes generally dubbed *Volunteerism for Development*, in readiness to report back to the UNDP Executive Board in June 2008. In addition, Uganda has also been chosen to host the UNV Special Operations Annual Field Management Training workshop over the same period and shall assemble 4 UNV Country Office Teams, 13 UN Peace Keeping Operations Programme Managers and Support Officers globally as well as UNV Headquarters' staff members.

Be sure to catch a detailed account of these and more major events in the next edition of *The Volunteer*! Enjoy your reading!

Mwangi Mathenge, Patrick
UNV Programme Officer,
Editor-in-Chief

Word from Mr. Theopane Nikyema, Resident Representative



I am glad to write a foreword to this last issue of the UNV Newsletter in Uganda for 2007. Since the beginning of the

year, a lot has been accomplished by the UNV programme. Join me in recognizing the achievements and contributions of our Volunteers. With a large number deployed with UN Agencies and other institutions, the Volunteers and the UNV Uganda Programme are clearly making a big impact in diverse sectors in the country's development programmes.

I am pleased to see that the Programme is growing and its Volunteers' achievements are visible,

everywhere you go in Uganda. I am aware that many Volunteers are placed with UN Agencies and plans are underway to integrate volunteerism even more into UNDP and other UN agency programs.

This year, our country office was chosen to host one of the 5 international UNV Results Workshops and a Field training workshop. This was a good opportunity for our Programme to host an event of the international programme. I am confident that the success of these events, not only demonstrated the capabilities of our national Programme, but also achievements and learning from them will continue to reverberate in the Programme's work, showcasing what the UNV Programme is doing on the ground.

My best wishes to the UNV Programme and my assurances of continued support both in my capacity as the UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator. As Resident Coordinator I will continue working with colleagues from the UN Agencies to see that we exploit all the potential that the UNV programme offers. Given the current focus on the recovery in Northern Uganda and peace building in Karamoja in the North East, there are increasing opportunities for fusing such activities with volunteer programmes!

Good reading!

Theopane Nikyema
UNDP Resident Representative
& UN Resident Coordinator

Inaugural World Indigenous People Day Celebrations in Karamoja

UNV Christin Akot, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR Karamoja



Dressed the part: CSO Representative Priscilla Aberail and UNV Christine Akot (centre) participate in the music parade at Karamoja

OHCHR Karamoja initiated and organized the first ever commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People in Karamoja, North eastern Uganda.

As part of preparations to mark the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, OHCHR organised a radio talk show on 10th August 2007 with the theme, *Indigenous Peoples and the MDGs* to raise awareness on human rights issues in general and on indigenous people

and the MDGs in particular. Present at the radio talk show were the Team Leader OHCHR Karamoja, Priscilla Ciesay, UNV Christine Akot, CSO Representative Priscilla Aberail and from African Indigenous People's Network, Margaret Lomonyang. One of the members sensitized listeners about the work of the African Indigenous Peoples Network meeting held in Nairobi in April 2007 to relate and share knowledge on indigenous people, discuss progress, challenges and way forward and review articles in the proposed UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples. The CSO representative challenged district officials to meet their MDG obligations with an emphasis on girl child education, poverty eradication and improving health services for the communities, issues deemed pertinent to the local community.

OHCHR Karamoja with support from local government and development partners commemorated the day on

Saturday 18th August 2007 by holding a cultural event to mark Karamoja's first participation in festivities commemorating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The cultural activities were preceded by a music parade and brought together youth, cultural groups and local artists celebrating Karamoja's cultural diversity in the form of music, drama, songs and dance and calling for the promotion of human rights and participation of the indigenous peoples in the development of the region.



Karimojong men performing their cultural dance during the World Indigenous People Day celebrations organised by OHCHR

Sexual and Gender-based Violence Project Launched in Lira

UNV Kai Peter Matturi, Programme Officer, Office of the Prime Minister

Northern Uganda is beginning to emerge from a protracted civil war marked by high levels of internal displacement. As the humanitarian challenges brought about by this war diminish, early recovery strategies must urgently be put in place to ensure the region's successful transition to peaceful and sustained development.

In the crisis affected regions of the north, women and girls are, due to the dynamics of violent conflict, internal displacement, cultural practices and extreme poverty, extremely vulnerable to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). Due to the same dynamics, men and boys exhibit multiple types of anti-social behaviour and have become socialized to see violence as an acceptable expression of the frustration accompanying long-term displacement.

SGBV is perpetrated in the intimacy of the household, within local communities, by the parties of the conflict (both insurgents and UPDF), and it has a corresponding effect on increasing the prevalence rate of HIV/Aids in the region, which is higher than in the rest of the country.

As the peace process advances, there is a clear need to reduce SGBV as a means to enhance the human security of the population and create conditions conducive to sustainable reconciliation, peace and development.

The immediate goal of the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) project is to create a strong basis for interventions to address SGBV, and by this means, to contribute to the creation of a protective environment that supports the realization of the rights of

girls, boys and women in war-affected or post-conflict districts to protection from sexual violence, sexual exploitation, and other gender-based forms of violence.

Mr. Jose Manzano, Programme Specialist with UNDP Crisis Prevention and Recovery Unit, led a team to Lira to undertake a one-day workshop on planning and recovery priorities for the Lango sub-region.

The workshop took place on August 9 2007 at Lira Hotel. The main aim of the workshop was to identify district priorities and formulation of a workplan that would bridge the District Development Plan with the current needs on the ground.

The workshop was jointly organized by UNVs Sarah Stella Suffer, Emiliana Babweberya and Kai Peter Matturi. Dignitaries present included the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Mr. Athman Kakiva, the Minister of State for Gender and Culture Hon. Isanga Nakadama, Ms. Vanessa Farr of UNDP Geneva and the Chief Administrator Officer of Lira, Mr. Abdul Isodo.

Mr. Patrick Abal, Head UNDP sub-office Lira opened the workshop. In his address, Mr. Abal touched on the significance of the workshop, which sought to integrate the plans of various districts so as to allow for better planning and coordination efforts as the Lango sub-region endeavored to rebuild after years of conflict.

The unpredicted challenges faced by IDPs as they returned either to their home villages or new sites were thereafter highlighted by Mr. Manzano, with the project providing an opportunity to realign current

interventions to emerging priorities, including community rebuilding and ensuring that the needs of returnees were addressed in a holistic manner.

Mr. Daniel Opio of UNDP Lira thereafter made reference to the Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) conducted by the UNDP team in Lira in 2006, citing some of the lessons learnt from the survey such as the need for a common rationale for conducting the assessments to ease the comparability of data, while allowing for flexibility in case of unanticipated changes.

Mr. Kai Matturi, UNV and Programme Officer with UNDP Lira discussed the prevailing situation in Lango sub-region. He referred to several Lango area studies which had revealed low attendance rates for education, accessibility impediments for health, high poverty levels, inadequate shelter, virtually non-existence water facilities and sanitation, poor governance and lack of infrastructure, all of which problems needed to be addressed.

Mr. Michael Kalilu, head of the UNDP sub-office in Kitgum in his capacity as chief facilitator hailed the workshop as a key planning tool both for the Government of Uganda and UN Agencies. Mr. Kalilu guided the participants through the process of successfully undertaking the planned tasks.

Concluding the workshop, Mr. Abdul Isodo the Chief Administrative officer of Lira thanked everyone for attending the successful workshop and especially UNDP, expressing the conviction that the day's activities would lead to a more prosperous Lango sub-region.

Welcoming the Next Generation of Cisco Curricula

UNV Josephine Nakato, IT Specialist, UNV-Cisco Programme



Set for the new curriculum: Students of Mt. Masaba High School with Director Mr. Aramanzan Madanda (back, middle) at the launch of the school's Cisco Academy

In commemoration of its 10-years-of-existence celebrations, Cisco Networking Academy in mid-2007 launched the next generation of several of its curricula, including IT Essentials, CCNA and CCNP. These products were the result of networking Academy's increased focus on providing the skills students need to pursue IT careers in a competitive global marketplace.

To facilitate Uganda's roll-out of the latest developments, the new Associate Technical Manager Africa (ATM), Mr. Gabriel Fuster, visited Uganda and held a one-day training event for the instructors from all academies on the 23rd of August 2007. The event, held at the Faculty of Computing and IT Makerere University (CIT) Regional Academy attracted 47 participants from 14 academies, Cisco Systems and the UNV/Cisco Programme. During this highly interactive event, Mr. Fuster discussed curriculum adoption and migration, equipment, certification and training needs.

The academies present were Maryhill High School, Mt. Masaba High School,

Mengo Secondary School, Kampala International University (KIU), Faculty of Computing and IT Makerere University (CIT), Uganda Institute of Information and Communications Technology (UICT), Uganda Christian University, Department of Women and Gender Studies Makerere University (DWGS), Islamic University in Uganda, Gulu University, Kyambogo University, Uganda Martyrs Secondary School Namugongo, Multitech Business school and Gayaza High School.

Mr. Fuster started off by discussing the revamped Cisco curricula; CCNA Exploration and CCNA Discovery, IT Essentials and CCNP. CCNA Discovery is primarily for students who are looking for career-oriented, IT-skills instruction or a quick path to job entry career exploration. CCNA Exploration is primarily designed for Academy students with advanced problem solving techniques and analytical skills, typically associated with degree programs in engineering or science.

He also highlighted the equipment changes that the new curricula entailed as well as instructor training requirements. Significant revisions have been made to the Certifications program that develops and certifies skills required in entry-level IT jobs. Mr. Fuster explained the revisions in the certification procedure for all three curricula, before taking the gathering through the latest version of Packet Tracer, a network simulation tool. Mr. Fuster however emphasized that

neither simulation tools nor the facilities like Netlab could supplant the need for students to have practicals with real physical equipment. A firm favorite was the demonstration the ATM gave of the Virtual laptop and Virtual desktop tools. Academy kits were also given out to academies that had not as yet received theirs.

The ATM also visited UICT, CIT and KIU academies during his 3-day stay. By the beginning of November 2007, most Ugandan academies expect to have rolled out the new curricula.



Meeting at CIT: (L-R) ITE Coordinator Mr. Fred Kakooza, CCNA Coordinator Ms. Deborah Naatujuna, Regional Coordinator Mr. Johnson Mwebaze, Associate Technical Manager Africa Mr. Gabriel Fuster, UNV Josephine Nakato and CIT Deputy Dean Dr. Ddembe Williams

The ATM's visit followed the Cisco East Africa Roadshow held in Nairobi, Kenya in March 2007 at which more than 5 Ugandan academies were in attendance. Uganda took home honours then, with CIT, KIU and DWGS winning 3 out of the 6 certificates awarded for exemplary performance to academies from the East Africa Academy area comprising of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Somalia.

PICTORIAL

UNVs take part in WFP's *Walk the World* Event



In Moroto: WFP's Sam Odeke, OHCHR's Priscilla Ciesay and Beatrice Angiroi plus UNV Christine Akot await the start of the WFP walk



The Kampala walk underway, UNV Teresita Cedeno (waving) and Moses Tumusiime raise the UNV banner aloft as they make the trek



Adjumani: (From right) For UNVs Jacquelyne Okello, Carolyne Akello, Samuel Kirungi and Simon Obuoja, part of the walk was over water! Here they await the Laopi ferry

Mt. Masaba High School Cisco Academy Launch



Merrymaking galore: Mr. Masaba, Resident Director of Mt. Masaba High School joined the dancing as the school in Mbale officially launched its Cisco academy

Induction of new UNVs serving with OHCHR



Ms. Maarit Kohonen, OHCHR Head Of Office issues instructions for an outdoor group exercise during the induction of the new UNVs at OHCHR Uganda's offices



The new UNVs pay keen attention as Programme Office Mr. Mwangi Mathenge (not in picture) expounds upon the modalities of the UNV Programme

Volunteering at the Timor-Leste Elections

Former UNV Sarah Nakirigya, Electoral District Advisor, UNMIT Timor-Leste



Former international UNV Sarah Nakirigya (right), Electoral District Supervisor, oversees training of election staff in Timor-Leste



Critical stage: Sarah Nakirigya supervises the allocation of election materials



Crunch time: In action, dispatching voting materials on election day

Turning the Spotlight on the Children in Northern Uganda

UNV Josephine Aparo, Human Rights Officer, UHRC Gulu

"When two elephants fight, the grass suffers", goes the saying. This is what I have experienced and witnessed generally during the different violent conflicts in the post-independence period, where many innocent civilians have been killed and displaced in Uganda.

However, unlike other conflicts in the history of Uganda, the children and women have disproportionately suffered human rights violations in the 20-year protracted war in Northern Uganda. The conflict which has been described by many as the "Crisis of child protection" is unusual in that as the war dragged on the primary target became the children. This to the extent that about 80% of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) were children forcefully recruited by LRA Commanders through abduction. As many analysts have observed, this is a war "against the civilians fought by the children". The children have suffered all kinds of abuses at the hands of the rebels while in captivity.

The following statements testify to the "crises of child protection" :

"There is simply no excuse, no acceptable argument for arming children" (ArchBishop Desmond Tutu)

"The humanitarian crisis in Northern Uganda is unique in many respects. Where else in the world do you find 90% of the population displaced, as is the case in the district of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader? Where else are children singled out as the primary target of a conflict, abducted and forced through brutal means to become fighters and sex slaves to the Lord's Resistance Army? Where else do you see thousands of abducted children accounting for 80% of rebel fighters? Where else do children migrate in large numbers to urban centers every single night in order to avoid abduction?" (Mr. Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs briefing the UN Security Council)

Bidding Farewell to Outgoing UNV Volunteers

Since the last issue of The Volunteer, several UNVs have joined the UNV Programme in Uganda, and others have left. Among those who have left are Obert Chihamo and Gertrui Lanneau (more commonly called Truike) of the now concluded UNV Support for the Promotion of Human Rights project. Captured below are a few of the farewell messages from their colleagues:

Dear Truike, When you arrived in Uganda about two years ago to join the UNV Human Rights project I thought you would not last for a week! You will recall the persistent challenges that sometimes dampened our motivation, commitment and the will to carry on. All these required a rare sense of judgment and patience. As a truly committed professional you soldiered on together with other colleagues. Today, when you look back to October 2005, you do so with a sense of fulfillment, contentment and nostalgia. And I join you. I was privileged to have worked with you albeit for a short time but we continued to interact and exchange views about the project and other issues on career growth and progression. I hope your sweat and effort in the formulation of the successor project will be rewarded. Today you leave an indelible mark on the development terrain of Uganda through your contributions in the good governance sector. Nobody can take this away from you or deny it! Because of your good interpersonal skills you managed in a short period of time to establish around yourself a family of both social and professional friends. On my own behalf and the UNV Programme in general, I wish to whole heartedly express my deep appreciation for your contribution and raising the profile of volunteerism through your dedication to duty and as the Rotarians say, for your 'service above self'. As you look forward to your next assignment in Senegal, I wish you all the best and hope that you will take some of the experience you acquired in Uganda with you. I hope you will remain a good advocate of volunteerism for development and human rights as well. It's sad to say Bon Voyage Truike but the reality is that it is time to say goodbye. *Tapiwa Kamuruko, UNV Programme Bonn*

Truike, now you're really finally saying goodbye to us. We'll truly miss you, the vibrance, spontaneity, that bright sporty smile on the face... I'll always remember how during IVD 2006 you so beautifully tossed the volleyball up in the air on the sandy beach shore that it was hardly caught by the opponents. Up to this date, you still showed that volunteerism spirit that ignites us during the UNV Support Team meetings. Keep that up, and may you shine more wherever you are. Good luck on your next adventure, and may GOD be with you always..... *Teresita Cedeno, UNV*

Dear Truike, it seems just like yesterday that you came to Uganda. You were a great influence and very committed to the project for which we are truly grateful. We trust the people of Senegal will gain from our loss. All the best and Bon Voyage! *Enid Nambuya, UNDP Uganda*

A Heartwrenching Encounter in an IDP Camp in Uganda

From Page 1

She had also confirmed this with neighbours at the camp who discouraged her friends from going back to the village until peace was ensured in northern Uganda.

The little girl cited dreading camp life mentioning that people did not behave well to children, especially young girls. Probed to expound further on this, she got a tad jittery, leaving me with the suspicion that she must have undergone some kind of harassment as my question seemed to scour a wound that was far from healing. Upon realising this, I tried to lighten the conversation and put her at ease and she, gazing into the distance, revealed that camp life was not the best as there was no opportunity to go to school. The few schools in existence were too congested, with poor sanitation and very few teachers. Furthermore, the mothers would allocate household chores to the girls that they were expected to complete before and after school.

Asked to state some of the girls' responsibilities, little Atim mentioned that she was expected to remain vigilant together with other girls in the neighbourhood in case there was to be food distribution or any other humanitarian assistance rendered at the camp. The young boys and girls would then run and alert their mothers cultivating land about 8km from the camp.

In addition they had to keep monitoring closely the brewing of locally made alcohol called "kwette" to ensure it cooked well and to put out the fire at the right time, plus fetch enough water for the family. There is hardly any opportunity to go to school as the parents lack sensitization on the relevance of education, and even for the more enlightened, the



Much needed basics: UNV Perez Abeka (right) and a district official assess the latrine facilities at a school in a return area

displacement situation dictated the path which life was taking, relegating education to a low priority level.

With the on going resettlement process in the Lango and Acholi sub regions, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel for the displaced persons in the north. The humanitarian community in collaboration with the district authorities and other stake holders are united in seeking lasting solutions for the IDPs as they return home in safety and dignity. Although the process of return has registered positive results in some areas, a lot more is necessary for the process to be accomplished successfully.

Some of the challenges that hinder the IDPs from returning home border around insecurity; safety concerns due to suspicion of unexploded ordinances or mines, lack of adequate basic services at the areas of return which forced parents to leave their children on their own in the camps to access some basic facilities while they went back to the return areas to build and cultivate their land or trauma as a result of killings that saw them witness the remains of their family members and friends decompose or devoured by vultures and wild animals.

With all the uncertainty about return, the Juba peace process being pivotal for this, there is need for campaigns jointly involving service providers and various high security institutions for the purpose of confidence building in IDPs to aid them to make informed decisions on freedom of movement and voluntary return. It is necessary to express to the donor community and other well wishers the need to support return so that Atim, and other children like her, can go to school and access other basic facilities.



Contributing to the household chores: Boys and girls return from harvesting vegetables for the family meal

Tale of a UNV Volunteer serving in Timor - L este

Former UNV Godfrey Ssengonzi, Electoral District Advisor, UNMIT Timor-Leste

Every great journey begins with a small step. For me, the phone call from UNV Bonn inquiring about my availability to be an Electoral District Advisor in Timor-Leste turned out to be the first step of a truly incredible journey!

The initial wave of excitement and joy with which I accepted the offer was later succeeded by concerns about handling my activities at home in Uganda, job, studies and more.

However, I decided to take a dead year from studies and with short notes trained my staff to take up my responsibilities during the period I would contribute to the struggle for 'Democracy' in Timor-Leste.

These issues resolved, I undertook a search for information on this island. Now and then I'd be flooded by anxieties about having to work with speakers of only Portuguese and Bahasa, two languages in which I couldn't even say hello! But this did not faze me much because I love to learn and this would be a prime opportunity to learn as I worked.

Arriving at Comoro Airport – Dili – Timor-Leste, my first surprise was the sight of the so many children who flooded the airport, very actively grabbing the luggage of all arriving passengers and asking for one dollar. It dawned on me then that we now had a lot to do in this country and my expectations and aspirations immediately started coming into play.

Meeting other UNVs, we immediately started sharing experiences about missions and the kind of work we had come to do in Timor-Leste. The initial briefing was short as we had limited time to roll into action according to the calendar of electoral activities.

Six days later, I was deployed to the District and was given a vehicle to have my first long drive in Timor-Leste, in a convoy with my Team leader. I was particularly careful in my driving, following all safety rules after observing the nature of roads in East Timor which are so curved and narrow that any slight steering blunder that could seemingly lead one to drive off the road.

The duty station was not the most pleasant place to live due to a lack of proper facilities but still we kept our focus on the reasons for our being there. And when in the field the beauty of the superb mountain scenery and sight of the lovely flowers helped to but increase my sense of satisfaction in being a part of the democratic cause in Timor-Leste.

The Electoral Team at the duty station was a good one. Work was made even more interesting by the differences in opinion and analysis which were a result of the different backgrounds from which we came. We worked around these, with our resolve and drive towards a common goal — the free, fair and transparent elections for the Timorese people. The task of dealing with the people was indeed challenging, but we made things work through the promotion of good teamwork spirit and communication. This was a positive challenge to me because it developed my people-interaction skills and work-conflict resolution abilities.

Our local counterparts were easy to interact with, but the major hurdle was to build their capacity inspite of language barriers. We sometimes had to deliver basic information using a few simple words in English and the local languages, in conjunction with a lot of sign language, body movements and

facial expressions!

More than from my former mission in Liberia (UNMIL), I acknowledge to have learnt a lot from the Timorese people especially the new languages like Tetum and Bahasa, which chance I had never had with UNMIL since there English was spoken by all. The people of Timor-Leste were splendid teachers and the affability and smiles with which they taught me these languages were added motivation in my learning. Furthermore, the different culture really enriched my understanding of the global village and its people.

It is with gratification that I look upon the great success we attained, overcoming hurdles such as spending sleepless nights while on duty during the deployment and retrieval of electoral materials, the counting and tabulation processes and overall monitoring of electoral activities. I'm proud to have played a role in democratic governance for my brothers and sisters in Timor-Leste, and believe that within the next ten years they will probably be able to handle their elections perfectly without technical support from the international community.

Finally, reflecting on the sentiments of the Timorese people, I believe they have experienced that the "Democratic Governance" has also extended to their territory. The proper well managed and standardised electoral processes also brought home to them that power to decide their government now lies in their hands as Timorese citizens.

Who wouldn't love to be an International Volunteer and taste the sweetness of a successful struggle for the sake of humanity?

UNFPA Promoting Reproductive Health for Displaced Persons

UNV Rachel Goldstein, Emergency Reproductive Health Officer, UNFPA Gulu

When a person is asked to imagine the devastating effects of humanitarian crises such as the mass displacement and violence that has ravaged northern Uganda for the past two decades, usually concerns about emergency food, water, and shelter spring to the mind first.

UNFPA however recognises the unique needs of women during times of crisis that have traditionally been overlooked by the international relief community. Needs such as safe delivery services for pregnant women in the midst of conflict. During conflict, many factors such as increased militarization and breakdown of community support networks may also contribute to increased gender-based violence like domestic violence and rape, whose victims may need immediate access to post exposure prophylaxis PEP to prevent transmission of HIV. These are just some of the aspects of reproductive health that UNFPA works to address as part of its emergency programme in Northern Uganda.

As the international relief community has come to recognize the importance of reproductive health even at the earliest stages of an emergency, a Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) of interventions for reproductive health has been defined by the Inter agency Working group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations (IAWG), composed of representatives from the various UN agencies and their NGO and government partners. The MISP is a

guideline for humanitarian actors which defines a minimum specific set of activities which should be conducted even during the acute stage of an emergency. These activities include distribution of condoms for prevention of HIV transmission, providing clean delivery kits to ensure clean and safe deliveries, establishment of a referral



Patiko Pearl Peer educators pose with the parish Chief (right, standing). In front (right) is UNV Ms. Rachel Goldstein who is serving as Head of UNFPA's Gulu Sub-Office

system for treatment of obstetric complications, and prevention and management of the consequences of sexual violence.

As the situation in northern Uganda moves from one of emergency to one of transition and recovery, UNFPA continues to work with local governments, UN and NGO partners to improve access to reproductive health services. The emphasis is now on integrating comprehensive reproductive health into primary health care services. UNFPA thus works to strengthen local health systems to provide antenatal, family planning, maternity, and STI treatment services at health facilities through training of health workers and supply of condoms and equipment. To strengthen services at the community level, UNFPA is using the peer education and Village Health Team (VHT) approach, which approach

is aiming to cultivate a spirit of volunteerism in youth and community leaders throughout the affected districts.

In northern Uganda, UNFPA works with various partners including the Ministry of Health, local district governments, CARE International, Pathfinder International, and Marie Stopes to implement a variety of programmes which address reproductive health issues of displaced persons in transition from camps to return sites. This year, particular emphasis has been placed on promotion of family planning, strengthening referral systems for survivors of gender based violence and expanding adolescent friendly services.

As a sign of the evolving situation in northern Uganda and renewed attention to reproductive health issues, Gulu District was chosen to host this year's national celebration of World Population Day. The day's theme was 'Involving men as partners in maternal health'. Supported by UNFPA, this celebration emphasized the role that men as community leaders, husbands, fathers, and partners have to play in women's health.

To mark the day, HIV testing and family planning information was provided in several IDP camps and at Kaunda Ground in Gulu Town. The remarkable participation of the community and local and national leaders illustrated how reproductive health is increasingly recognized as an key issue for development in northern Uganda and in Uganda as a whole.

*Humour**Airline rage*

As a passenger takes his seat on an airplane, he is surprised to find a parrot strapped in next to him. After taking off, the flight attendant comes around to serve the passengers on the plane.

The man asks the flight attendant for a coffee and the parrot squawks: "And get ME a coke...NOW!"

The flight attendant, flustered by the parrot's attitude, brings back a coke for the parrot. However, she forgets the coffee for the guy. As the guy points this out, the parrot drains his glass and screams:

"Get me another coke or I'll really create a scene!"

Quite upset, the attendant comes back shaking, with another coke, but still no coffee.

Irritated at her forgetfulness, the man decides to try the parrot's approach. "I've asked you twice for a coffee. Go and get it right now, or I'll create a scene that will make HIS look like a Victorian tea party!"

The next moment, both the guy and the parrot are grabbed and thrown out of the emergency exit by two burly security guards.

Hurling towards earth, the parrot turns to him and says: "You're pretty cheeky for a guy who can't fly!"

*Poet's Corner**Agoro*

UNV Lazech Santo Okema, Human Rights Officer, UHRC Gulu

On the bright morning of 20th December 2006
It was like the final bell of summons had rung
The team hastily packed their belongings
Ready for the monitoring visit to Agoro

I could not imagine how I would get to Agoro
A danger zone highly infested by LRA rebels
At the Uganda/ Sudan border; A chill ran
Through my spine and no sooner had I recovered than

The team leader, head of the region
The Uganda human rights commission
Had cleared his voice and announced
We should be at Agoro by 2:00 pm;

The driver hopped into the car
Told everybody to fasten their seatbelts
Switched vehicle communication gadgets on
And immediately we set off on the journey

The rising clouds of dust and the torrential sound
Of the engine told of the speed of the car
Ploughing through pot holes and dodging the deep ones
The skillful driver wallowed through the seasonal roads

A fair while later I noticed the team was weary
One fell asleep and slumbered his way through
The ancestral worlds we covered, across the many hills
To Agoro, last IDPs camp at Uganda/Sudan border

We did not meet the set time limit, arrived at 3:00 pm
They who had fallen asleep awoke to a new world
Agoro Camp, well shielded by hills with the only access
That which we had come through as we entered

The smell of local brewed beer hit you like a slap
Almost every where we went there were
Signs of redundancy and of hopelessness
Many men we talked to were under the influence

The IDPs looked physically like a pack of bones
Complained of a lack of food, water and defilement
Defilement by the security that should care for them
A protection, but unpredictable protection

Health centers were mandatory in every camp
But did they have the required standards to save?
The wailing of the bereaved families could tell
Of health centers without drugs or qualified personnel

The schools here and there had no teachers' residences
Many children flocked the school and found no teachers
Far they commuted, from Kitgum town
Thirty-two miles away, a distance difficult to conquer

Spring wells, fountains of natural water had run to the hills
Leaving but mere depressions in the valleys
The tears of rain could not resurrect the dead wells that
Had watered the seedlings of life from time immemorial

Misery was noticeable in all corners of the camp;
The reluctance of men to go to farm, preferring to drink
Women struggling under scorching sun to make ends
meet
The scene of horror and dismay was their lot

Agoro a true land of desolation
Hammered by the long, severe war
Does not dream of peace
The peace which should, must come.

Visit to UWEC to Monitor MDG Facility Project

UNV Joe Burua, Advocacy Specialist, Ministry of Internal Affairs (National Focal Point)

It was a warm Monday afternoon when I found an invitation in my email to accompany a team from UNDP to Uganda Wild life Education Center (UWEC) to inspect the progress of the UNV-UWEC re-greening project that was started in 2006. I quickly slung a camera over my shoulder and headed to UNDP head office. The team comprising UNV Africa Section Senior Programme Specialist, Mr. Tapiwa Kamuruko, UNV Programme Officer Mr. Mwangi Mathenge, Mr. Andreas Lenhert, Mr. Moses Tumusiime, Environment Specialist Mr. Justin Ecaat and myself set off on Entebbe road.

On arrival at UWEC we were all happy to alight at the sight of Vicky, a former UNV now with UWEC who ushered us into the office of the Executive Director (ED) UWEC, Dr. Andrew Seguya. After introductions, the team discussed the progress of the project. Lunch followed thereafter, our eyes feasting upon the beauty of the calm Lake Victoria and a family of Uganda Cranes patrolling the vicinity.

Resuming business, our discussions took us into a classroom with very many tiny chairs. No, we weren't back in nursery, but were informed that the chairs were meant for primary school children who visit the center and use

the room to enrich their knowledge of wildlife. The ED explained the activities UWEC had undertaken as part of the UNV UWEC Programme since 2006. I was awed at the achievements and the ongoing activities related to the UNV-UWEC program! Before we could head back we were told that we were going on tour, to see the sights and sounds of UWEC. First stop was the Animal clinic where we witnessed vets operating on a tranquilized Uganda Crane with a broken wing which we were told would be flying in less than



(L-R) Mr. Andreas Lenhert, Mr. Mwangi Mathenge UNV Programme Officer, Mr. Justin Ecaat and Mr. Tapiwa Kamuruko tour UWEC's nursery

two weeks. We were then led to a very large room with a solo occupant, a big brown glittering 11-foot python. I was glad to watch from a distance, remembering the famous movie with the jumping Anaconda!

We left the Animal Clinic and went to the nursery where we were introduced to "only" 1200 species of plants, whose names I can't pronounce up to now, let alone write! After the nursery we visited a primary school and saw the trees planted by the women's group and the youth of the village. The icing on the cake however was the site of the IVD celebrations of 2006. The trees planted then were growing firm and strong. It was very fulfilling to find that a project started over a year ago was still going on strong as ever.

The attitude of the youth who amazingly work voluntarily to preserve their environment was the most humbling experience for me. So I made up my mind to plant trees in my village. I have bought 50 tree seeds and donated them to my LC 1 chairman to plant

alongside my dusty road for two reasons; first to fulfill the need for more trees and secondly, for protection from all the dust that always drifts direct into my house!

Editor-in-Chief: Mwangi Mathenge, Patrick

Layout, Design: Josephine Nakato, Peace Mutuwa

Editorial Team: Joe Burua, Perez Abeka, Teresita Cedeno, Teresa Sesay, Moses Tumusiime, Obert Chingamo, Simon Omoding, Edith Kaddu, Geertrui Lanneau, Josephine Nakato, Peace Mutuwa



United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme
15B Clement Hill Road
P.O.Box 7184, Kampala
email: cot@unvuganda.org
<http://www.unvuganda.org>

Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the UNV Programme or its Partners