



# THE VOLUNTEER



The official newsletter of the UNV Programme in Uganda

Vol. 2, February 2006

## UNV HOLDS SECOND COUNTRY WORKSHOP

The UNVs were at it again – excitement for the second country workshop! After having a wonderful interactive three-day workshop at Jinja in August of last year, the UNVs could not wait to be together again as a ‘UNV family’.

Within a span of 5 months, the UNV COT held a second country workshop last 12 January 2006 at Fairway Hotel in Kampala. Although it was only a one-day workshop, it was memorable and left a smile on everyone.



Some of the UNVs during the Second UNV Uganda Country Workshop.

There were still 64 UNVs comprised of 24 internationals and 40 nationals. Some UNVs upon completion of their assignments had left while new ones have joined the ever-growing family. Representatives from host organizations like WFP, UNDP, Amnesty Commission, Uganda Human Rights Commission, MLG, IGG, and MGLSD and also attended the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to value the UNV’s contribution to national and local development in Uganda. Specifically, the workshop was intended to gather data on results achieved by UN Volunteers based on the emerging UNV Results Framework for use in reporting to the Executive Board of the UNDP and to review and provide feedback on the UNV Results Framework to enable UNV to proceed with its further development.

In his opening remarks, the DRR (P), Mr. Auke Lootsma, highlighted the

important fact that partner/host organizations are involved and that this would only strengthen the output or results of the workshop which will serve as input towards the UNV Biennial Report. He also emphasized

that while the UNV Programme and the UNVs have achieved a lot and that such contribution is greatly valued, it is high time that these  
**Turn to Page 3**

### INSIDE

1. FROM THE RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE
2. WORD FROM THE PROGRAMME OFFICER
3. ROLL-OUT OF THE UNV UGANDA WEBSITE
4. THE MIND-SET CLICHE
5. IVD CELEBRATION AT UWEC
6. HUMAN RIGHTS WORK IS NOT A WALK OVER
7. AMNESTY FOR PEACE RESTORATION IN KASESE
8. UNV-UWEC SIGNS LETTER OF AGREEMENT ON MDG
9. VULNERABLE GROUPS GET A RAY OF HOPE
10. VOLUNTEERING, A CHALLENGING BUT REWARDING EXPERIENCE

## PROMOTING VOLUNTEERISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL THROUGH MUSIC

The Peace Concert held at Pece Stadium in Gulu, Northern Uganda to commemorate the International Volunteers Day (IVD) was a highly successful and memorable event. The IVD which is celebrated worldwide on 5<sup>th</sup> December each year was this time celebrated in Gulu, Northern Uganda on 10<sup>th</sup> December to coincide with the International Human Rights Day and allow the UNV Programme to widen the messages it was bringing to the local people.

Usually, when one talks of a Peace Concert in Gulu, the first thing that runs in one’s mind are people marching on the streets with banners, a band playing music, and volunteers marching behind them

then later helping the vulnerable groups. This time UNVs had the peace concert in a rather interesting and captivating way which was through music and drama performed by six of the best Acholi local artist groups.

The event not only brought the UNVs, stakeholders, partners, well-wishers and the local people together through music but it also raised funds for the purchase of microscopes that were eventually distributed to health centers

in Gulu IDP camps and allowed for recognition of the contribution of local musicians towards the promotion of peace in Northern Uganda.



One of the local artist groups performing during the Peace Concert.

**Turn to Page 4**

## FROM THE RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE

My appreciation once again goes to the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme and the UNVs for coming out with this second volume of *The Volunteer*.

The UNVs, through their voluntary services and professional skills, have continued to greatly contribute towards development in Uganda and made a difference in the lives of the people at local level. Among their activities within this short period were the International Volunteers Day (IVD) celebrations held both at UWEC and in Gulu and the second country workshop held recently, all of which I attended and fully appreciated the outcome of. I must say that the UNV Programme and the UNVs deserve all the credit that is due to them.



*Mr. Cornelis Klein, the UNDP Res Rep, a.i. (in blue shirt) joins local dancers in the Larakaraka dance during the IVD celebrations in Gulu, Northern Uganda.*

Appreciating fully well the sacrifices of the UNVs, the UNDP Country Office Management, in partnership with the UNV management in Bonn, Germany are doing its best to improve the welfare of the UNVs. Aside from the adjustment in the UNV's Voluntary Living Allowance (VLA); fixing of the payment of VLAs on a monthly basis; and extension of the full UN DSA rate to NUNVs, we have also worked with the UN DSS and the Security Management Team (SMT) to provide clearer security directives for UNVs operating in Phase 3 areas. It is the least we can do for the huge contribution that the UNVs are making towards the cause of peace and development in Uganda.

I also take pride of the fact that soon the UNV Programme will be implementing a project with the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC) on youth and community volunteerism towards environmental sustainability. We are confident that this project will contribute towards the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals (MDG) in Uganda.

The quarterly production of *The Volunteer* will continue to inform us of the progress of the UNV Programme. I therefore urge UNVs to continue serving the nation with dedication and to tell us through this newsletter of their experiences as we witness the programme rise to greater heights.

**Cornelis Klein**  
UNDP Resident Representative, a.i.

## WORD FROM THE PROGRAMME OFFICER

Once again we welcome you all to the second volume of *The Volunteer*. Like we promised, the issue is produced quarterly and will continue to update the UNVs, programme partners and stakeholders on developments in the UNV Programme and of UNVs in Uganda.

Over the last 3 months, some UNVs have left the organization either upon completion of their contracts or advocacy for other challenges. However, we also welcome an equal number of new members and though the total number of UNVs currently serving in Uganda remains at 64, at least 25 new posts are in the stage of recruitment and will be finalized soon to bring the expected total number of UNVs to 89.

The previous quarter had been very hectic (as usual) with numerous activities undertaken by the UNV Programme. There is the celebration of the International Volunteers Day which involved the holding of a youth development camp attended by at least 90 volunteers, the expansion of the beach area of UWEC, and the successful holding of the Peace Concert in Gulu, Northern Uganda to raise funds for the provision of microscopes to health centers in IDP camps.

Most important to note is the conduct of the 2nd UNV Country Workshop which introduced the UNVs to the UNV Results Framework and the inputting of the UNVs' clear, tangible results to the UNV Biennial Report. The framework paved the way for capturing of the

UNVs' contribution to national and local development.

Of course, the New Year Party that followed the 2nd UNV Country Workshop is something that we would all remember especially those who lasted until late. I thank the UNDP Resident Representative, a.i. who continues to be a fervent supporter of the UNV Programme and who is ever present in all UNV functions and activities, including the party.

Like I mentioned in the previous newsletter, improving the standards of the UNV Programme and of UNVs in Uganda has been the primary focus of the UNV Country Office Team (COT). To this end, we have officially rolled-

**Turn to Page 3**

# UNV HOLDS SECOND COUNTRY WORKSHOP

## From Page 1

contributions need to be quantified and documented. He thanked the UNVs and the UNV Programme for its continued contribution towards the development of Uganda and for organising a second workshop that would help analyse these gains and pave the way forward on how the UNV Programme can serve the country better.

The CCF Coordinator, Dr. Katebalirwe Amooti Wa Irumba, opened the country workshop. Dr. Amooti thanked all UNVs for their effort, appreciated their work last year and asked them to keep the spirit of volunteerism burning. On behalf of the government, he thanked UNV for their continued support to government and involvement in its programme. He assured the UNVs that government would continue to work hand in hand with them towards the development of Uganda. He also thanked the UNVs for organising the workshop which he believed would contribute towards the organisation's improvement.

In the course of the workshop, participants were introduced to UNV Results Framework which allowed for the generation of results, lessons learnt and areas that need improvement in a focused and systematic manner. As the Results Framework is relatively new, the participants also provided helpful suggestions that will go towards its enhancement.

The country workshop was officially closed by Mr. Cornelis Klein, UNDP Resident Representative, a.i. who took the occasion to express his appreciation of the UNVs' efforts and said that the contribution that they are making is incredible. He also thanked Mr. Bong Manzano, UNV Programme Officer, for his active leadership and added that the volunteers are an inspiration to the people and make a difference in the communities.

The day-long country workshop culminated in a New Year Party at Clement Hill Hotel where the UNVs continued to interact, share experiences and danced the night away.

## WORD FROM THE PROGRAMME OFFICER

### From Page 2

out the UNV Uganda website last December 2005. The website which address is [www.unvuganda.org](http://www.unvuganda.org), has all the information one needs to know about developments under the UNV Programme and of all the useful tools and forms that UNVs need in the course of their work. It even has a remote-access email system for all UNVs in Uganda to allow them to receive and send messages to the UNV COT more efficiently.

As I wind-up my assignment this month, I look back and take stock of what we have accomplished. We achieved a lot and the UNV

Programme is at its best position ever. To this, credit (and my heartfelt thanks) goes to the UNDP Country Office Management, specifically the ResRep and the Deputy ResReps (Programmes and Operations); the team in UNV headquarters, especially the Chief of the Africa Section, the Programme Specialist, and support team; and the UNV host organizations, implementing partners, and stakeholders which have been very supportive of the UNV Programme and the UNV COT.

Credit also goes to all the UNVs serving in Uganda who have made my assignment both very challenging but rewarding.

## ROLL OUT OF UNV UGANDA WEBSITE

Here is another feather on the cap for UNVs in Uganda - a website for the UNV Programme and UNVs in Uganda!

The website with the address [www.unvuganda.org](http://www.unvuganda.org) was officially rolled-out last December 2005 and is designed to ease the work of UNVs by making information on developments in the UNV Programme - its activities, partners, projects, latest advisories, newsletters, rules and regulations - and administrative forms accessible through the click of a finger. The website also contains information for non-UNV visitors to the site through the UNV posts under recruitment that are posted, and the Country Information Sheet, reports and publications that are downloadable.

This innovation, which was the result of discussions during the first UNV Country Workshop wherein various ideas on the website format and content were put forward, has the UNV Logo displayed prominently and with the Ugandan flag flowing in a wave on the side in a blue and brown color scheme.

The website also boasts of an email system that can be accessed remotely and which provides the UNVs with extra features such as personal diaries and calendars.

My heartfelt gratitude to our ever reliable *Mama*, Zeridah Sempira, for being a fantastic colleague and for the generous dispensation of motherly advices.

My sincere gratitude to everyone for making my stay in the Pearl of Africa a wonderful and unforgettable experience. It is not only truly "gifted by nature", but also blessed by among the best and friendliest people in the world.

**Jose Neil A.C Manzano**  
Programme Officer

## THE MIND-SET CLICHÉ/FORMULA

It is the mind that makes good or ill, happy or wretch, rich or poor. Your mindset encompasses three cardinal things; how you think, feel and choose. Your condition of life explains your actions, your actions explain your choices, your choices explain your values, your values explain your feelings and finally your feelings in turn explain your thoughts. We must have a certain mindset in order for us to be able to benefit from the bounty of opportunities that life does present. There are four cardinal forces that make up one's mindset:

### Perception

A person's mind once struck by a new idea, can never regain its original dimension!

### Beliefs

Your attitude determines your altitude. If you believe you can not you probably will not!

### Aspirations or Visions

We lift ourselves by our thoughts and climb upon our vision by ourselves. UNVs, aspirations are things we want to achieve or accomplish in life. We can not climb higher than the height of our thoughts! You may not agree with me on this because at times it's possible for one to be lifted to a place or position higher than his or her own aspirations, but

believe me when the force that lifted him or her to that height is withdrawn, he or she will fall back to the position of his or her aspirations! It's therefore imperative that we teach a person how to make a hook and fish as opposed to giving him or her fish.

### Values

Things don't change; we change. I want to believe that it is common knowledge that we move to the direction of our dominant values. Values here may be taken to mean things that we cherish and those that take first priority in any decisions that we make. I believe if you do not know where you are going, then you certainly can not get lost! Honestly, let us know where we are going such that when we get lost we can refocus and re-correct ourselves. In other words, have goals and objectives in life.

Fellow UNVs, yesterday is not ours to recover but today is ours to win or lose depending on our mindset. It's entirely up to us to either choose to *make things happen* or sit back and *watch things happen* or keep wondering *how things happen* in life! Nurture your mind with great thoughts. Decide now because many times we achieve low targets because there are hardly any goals to achieve anyway!

## PROMOTING VOLUNTEERISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL THROUGH MUSIC

### From Page 1

The concert day was about feeling relaxed as one watched the performances, joined musicians in singing and dancing, and interacted with the local people. The UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Cornelis Klein, was on hand to attend the concert and did all of the above but more towards greeting and talking to the local people, especially the children. The Head of the Gulu Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR), Mr. Chris Mburu, was also in attendance and seen equally happy.

What made the concert unique and meaningful was that local artists used various items, to include spoons and saucepans, as musical instruments. Regardless of the instruments used, they rendered a fantastic performance and their songs which carried messages of peace and reconciliation, AIDS, human rights, land mines and the effect of war on society were all

very meaningful and highly appreciated by the crowd in attendance. The crowd that was already set in cheers often sang along with the artists and requested for their favorite songs which were often granted. Some songs especially about the effects of the war were so touching that people shed tears.

The show ended with the *Larakaraka* traditional dance which the UNDP Resident Representative. a.i. joined,



Part of the huge crowd in Pece Stadium that watched the Peace Concert.

prompting the whole crowd to scream in delight. Mr. Klein closed the event by giving a speech where he thanked

the musicians for a very good performance and the UNVs for organizing a wonderful peace concert for the people.

Organization of the Peace Concert was done mainly by Gulu-based UNVs with the support of the UNV Programme Officer. Towards making the final preparations and on the concert day itself, the organizers were joined by UNVs from Kitgum, Soroti and Kampala who could not hide the excitement of meeting and working together once again after the first UNV Country workshop that was held in August in Jinja. Also on hand to offer assistance to the UNVs and make the celebration a huge success were volunteers from the JOCV and local communities. The concert was co-sponsored by UNHCHR, Gulu Kids League, Radio Mega, Choice FM and NUPI.

**By Janet Ojera**  
**NUNV Specialist/Team Leader,**  
**UNV Human Rights Project, Gulu**

## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS DAY AT UWEC

5<sup>th</sup> December 2005 was the day for the big celebration. A day when people took time to recognize volunteers and value their efforts in uplifting the quality of life in Uganda. A day that volunteers from different organizations and places came together as one and be proud of themselves.

The IVD was celebrated at the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC) and involved at least 90 volunteers from UNV, Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), Raleigh - Uganda and Red Cross Society. Though it was a day for celebrations, true to form, the volunteers went ahead to do their voluntary work by clearing the Lake Victoria beach front of UWEC. Clearing and beautifying the beachfront was intended to provide services and facilities to visitors of UWEC and is a critical cog in UWEC's plan for self-sustainability.

Work started at around 10 in the morning as volunteers immediately applied themselves vigorously to the task by cutting through the bush, discarding cut grass, and cleaning the cleared area of debris. Safety remained a primary concern with the volunteers provided with gloves and gum boots. A first-aid team was also on hand to provide the necessary assistance should there be a need.

After a hearty lunch, volunteers continued work until late afternoon where a short program with the UNDP Resident Representative, a.i., Senior Presidential Advisor, and UWEC Executive Director as guests was conducted to commemorate the day.



*The UNV PO, Mr. Bong Manzano, leads the volunteers in clearing the beachfront at UWEC.*

During the program, Mr. Ronald Tana, the Executive Director of Raleigh Uganda, the biggest national youth volunteer organization in Uganda, thanked the UNV Programme for supporting the Youth Development Camp and bringing together over 70 youth volunteers from all over the country for 7 days to be trained as youth leaders and models in their respective communities.

This expression of appreciation was echoed by the UWEC Executive Director, Dr. Andrew Seguya, who likewise thanked the UNV Programme for always being prompt in providing support when requested. He cited the deployment of 3 UNVs to UWEC which resulted to the successful revamping of their website and improvement of their Information Technology (IT) infrastructure. He looks forward to a continued and improved partnership with the UNV Programme.



*JOCVs who joined other volunteers in celebrating IVD proudly show off their UNV t-shirts and caps.*

Mr. John Nagenda, the Senior Presidential Advisor for Youth, addressed the volunteers and thanked them for the great work that they were doing. He said it was great to see young people going out of their way to help which was not the case in their times and hence encouraged them to continue doing so.

According to the UNDP Resident Representative, a.i., Mr. Cornelis Klein, volunteers have to be thanked for their effort which bring pride to everyone. He called it civilization and urged everyone to join volunteerism as it is not only for the youth. In his closing speech, he was grateful for the annual celebration of the IVD which is a day for volunteers to be recognized and to focus on how strong or important volunteers and volunteerism could be.

Just before the closing, Mr. Andrew Seguya gave presents to Mr. Cornelis Klein and Mr. John Nagenda as tokens of appreciation for their contribution towards UWEC and said that UWEC was glad to continue having them as partners.

The celebration ended with the volunteers touring the different animal and bird exhibits with the help of a guide. However, the IVD celebrations were to continue on 10<sup>th</sup> December in Gulu as a Peace Concert.

## AMNESTY FOR PEACE RESTORATION IN KASESE DISTRICT

The rebel captivity in Kasese district that started in 1996 turned people's joyful lives into a nightmare. Women were being raped, forced into marriage, used as cooks, made to carry boxes of bullets, steal food from people's gardens and among others worked as spies in the neighboring villages.

The young girls were married off at an early age which resulted in many child mothers, school dropouts, street children and thus the root cause of poverty in the local communities. Today these are the girls appealing to government and any volunteers willing to take them back to school or at least engage them in any sort of training like tailoring, savings and credit scheme so as to have a better future.

Life was not any better for the men who were engaged in actual combat against government forces after serious training. Some were abducted while others willingly joined the rebellion with the belief that they would overcome the government within a short period and be given high ranks and posts in the new regime.

The young boys too were forced to join the rebellion as child soldiers and if one tried to escape, the rebel commanders would order one of the child soldiers to shoot and kill him/her amidst the rest as an example of what would happen to whoever attempted to escape. So the fear of being killed kept most of the boys with the rebels.

Also, if one got tired on the way or fell sick, he would be killed in order to destroy evidence in case the government forces got him/her to disclose the rebel movements. Such an uncompromising situation indeed necessitated quick action so as to help put people's lives back to normal.

As a means of restoring peace in the country, the government of Uganda established the Amnesty Commission (AC) specifically to implement the Amnesty Act 2000. Under the act, rebel combatants are granted amnesty and pardoned for their activities. They are also provided assistance to allow them to be reintegrated into the mainstream of society.

In partnership with UAC, UNVs have continuously promoted the culture of peace and reconciliation in addition to diffusing Amnesty message to people at the grass root level.

Results have been good with the AC Kasese DRT so far, receiving over 15,000 'reporters' or former combatants in the last three years who denounced rebellion. However, much as most of these reporters being registered in the villages are appreciating the government of Uganda for granting them Amnesty, delays in the distribution of packages promised by the UAC since 2000 has frustrated some of them. This has led to threats of a return to rebellion, but the UNVs and AC staff keep counseling and discouraging them from doing so.

The major problem faced at home by the reporters are insults from other people in the community who have labeled them as bad and thus keep pointing fingers at them as murderers. These reporters are being harshly treated and isolated from other community members for fear of being harmful to even their family members. The community has also labeled the government as one that rewards murderers who deserve to face the guillotine.

On the other hand, most rebels are scared to come for Amnesty fearing that the government is using Amnesty Act as a cover to arrest them and so some of the ex-rebels are resettling themselves. There is therefore need to sensitize the local community and also the rebels about Amnesty.

The support of UNVs as neutral partners cannot be underestimated in this rather challenging achievement by the UAC. Several peace volunteer organizations are also on the ground for the same reasons. It is our hope as partners in development that peaceful measures and dialogue and the rights of all persons including reporters be maintained for sustainable peace and development. Having many reporters resettled so far shows great success towards normal life restoration in Kasese again.

**By Kaliisa Sylvia  
NUNV Field Worker  
UAC Kasese DRT**

## VULNERABLE GROUPS GET A RAY OF HOPE

Since 1997, the Government of Uganda has been guided by the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) to implement a range of programmes aimed at improving people's livelihoods and reducing mass poverty to 10% by 2017. However, the main challenge is the achievement of consistent progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the national aspirations in the Vision 2025. In particular, excluding of vulnerable groups socially and failure of basic services to reach the whole population threaten to undermine the poverty reduction efforts initiated by government. As one

of the ways to meet this challenge, the Social Development Sector (SDS) has been established so as to integrate social dimensions in policy formulation and implementation, and in all aspects of development.

The SDS which is spearheaded by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) promotes equity, equality, social protection, labour productivity and creation of employment. In the context of the PEAP, the SDS

**Turn to Page 7**

## UNV-UWEC SIGN LETTER OF AGREEMENT ON THE MDG

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme signed an agreement with the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC), a Trust/non-profit organization with the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry that aims at promoting and creating an understanding of biodiversity conservation in Uganda. This took place on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006 during the 2nd UNV Country Workshop at Fairway Hotel, Kampala.

The Letter of Agreement guiding implementation of the 147,531,000 Ugandan Shilling project was signed by the UNDP Resident Representative, a.i., Mr. Cornelis Klein, on behalf of UNV and the UWEC Executive Director, Dr. Andrew Seguya. The project entitled, "Youth and Community Volunteerism Towards Achievement of Environmental Sustainability", is funded under the UNV Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Grant Facility and is aimed at demonstrating and encouraging the

contribution of volunteerism towards the achievement of the MDGs in Uganda.



*UNDP ResRep, a.i., Mr. Cornelis Klein (right) and UWEC Executive Director, Dr. Andrew Seguya (left) showing the signed Letter of Agreement.*

The Agreement calls for project objectives to be achieved through a combination of strategies on youth development, advocacy, and strengthening of linkages with partner organizations at national and local levels through the implementation of

community volunteer activities that are focused on the MDG and environmental management and protection.

The Chairperson of UWEC, Ms. Kelly Mactavish-Mungar, gave the message of appreciation and commitment on behalf of UWEC, highlighting the value of volunteerism, particularly in the work of UWEC. She encouraged everyone to continue volunteering to preserve the environment and also to discover Uganda which is "gifted by nature".

The UNDP Resident Representative, a.i., Mr. Cornelis Klein, in his speech appreciated the UNVs' efforts and said that the contribution that they were making is incredible. He also said that the signing of the agreement is the culmination of the efforts of UNV, UNDP, and UWEC and that he is happy that this project is being undertaken with UWEC which is a proven and credible partner.

## VULNERABLE GROUPS GET A RAY OF HOPE

### From Page 6

implements programmes to enhance participation of vulnerable groups in the development process. It also works with other sectors to design interventions that follow-up social implications and vulnerabilities arising from factors such as gender, disability, age, and unemployment.

In relation to the SDS, MGLSD aims at creating a favourable environment for social protection and social transformation of communities, with a vision of a better standard of living, equity and social cohesion. It also works with other sectors to design interventions that follow up social implications and vulnerabilities arising from factors such as gender, disability, age, and unemployment and hence seeks to address the concerns of the vulnerable groups.

As soon as the SDS was adopted, the MGLSD embarked on the process of developing the Social Development Sector Strategic Investment Plan (SDIP) in response to the need for effective coordination of SDS operations and improved service delivery. Various development partners, including UNDP, provided technical and financial support to the MGLSD during the formulation of the SDIP. The UNDP second Country Cooperation Framework funded SDIP consultative meetings and workshops through the Equity Promotion

Component implemented by the MGLSD. It eventually gained Cabinet approval on 20 October 2004. The SDIP articulates interventions and strategies that will enhance participation of the poor and vulnerable groups in government programmes, increase their productivity and empower them to improve their livelihoods. It also involves supporting People in Difficult Circumstances (PIDCs).

Effective promotion of equity requires in-depth understanding of the programme areas identified in the SDIP and significant improvements in current technical, operational and management capacity of MGLSD as well as the SDS institutions at all level. To achieve this, the MGLSD has, with the support of UNDP, developed a capacity strengthening plan, which spells out strategies for enhancing the human resource and logistical capacity of relevant institutions for promoting the formulation and implementation of equity responsive policies, programmes and interventions. The plan will be implemented in a phased manner over a period of three years. With such strategies, we see the vulnerable groups heading for a better life.

**By Emiliana Babwebeiya  
IUNV Gender Specialist,  
MGLSD**

## VOLUNTEERING, A CHALLENGING BUT RATHER REWARDING EXPERIENCE

5<sup>th</sup> March 2003 will remain a special day in my life. On that day, not only did I face the panel of six tough and mean looking professors to defend my thesis in Master of Arts in Human Rights but also faced an equally tough panel of eight officials who interviewed me for the post of a National UN Volunteer and, opportunely, I rose above the occasion!

At that time everything seemed good and favorable until I got to know that there were tougher decisions to make and real challenges to face. The decision to leave my family behind and take my one year three-month old baby upcountry was not only hard but also painful yet I had no choice.

On May 2003, I reported to my duty station, Kabarole District Local Government at the Great Mucwa Complex together with my colleagues, Charles and Mabel. Unfortunately, the authorities were not expecting us despite several correspondence made between the project office and the district officials.

We had to use our own "creativity" for nearly two months before we got office accommodation. Every morning and evening, Charles, Mabel and I designed strategies on how to approach various district officials with regards to the big challenge before us.

When we did get an office, it was amusing! It only had one table, three small chairs and nothing else. However, we were quite contented and determined to work believing that

things would get better. At least, we had built rapport with our focal person at KDLG, Mr. Malik Mahaba, who was determined to make our lives better.

We soon realized that getting assimilated within the local government structure was challenging. At the district level, one is dealing with high level politicians and governors or even Presidents of their particular districts who are always suspicious of strangers amidst them. Therefore, penetrating their circles was like passing through the eye of a needle. Our efforts to seek audience with them and introduce ourselves yielded little results. Even when they knew who we are, they remained suspicious and would not fully engage us in their activities.

Transport was another problem. Having no computer and other necessary office equipment, we often had to go to UHRC to access them. The distance between Mucwa complex and UHRC office at Mugurusi road is about 2 kms. thus requiring the use of *Macaras* (boda bodas). Unfortunately, I have a phobia of *Macaras* and my colleagues found it hard to let me walk alone and so we had to ask for lifts.

After one year of trying to hurdle these challenges, our efforts were rewarded. We managed to win the hearts of the politicians and the UNVs are entirely engaged in the district's activities. By that time I was also transferred to the project office where the new office is spacious and furnished.

I am proud to say that at the moment, the UNVs in Kabarole have made a tremendous contribution in the district like training of the Local Council Courts in the administration of justice, initiating and establishing District Human Rights Desk, formation of Voluntary Action Groups, sensitizing community members about human rights, attending council meetings, facilitating the amendment of the Local Government Act exercise and other daily activities of the District Administration Unit.

The UNVs whose contribution has been greatly acknowledged by the district officials and the community at large have become consultants and can now also boast of a lot of achievements among them the training of over 1,000 Local Council Court members; the establishment of District Human Rights Desk; and formation of several voluntary action groups at community level. Indeed, volunteerism is a challenging but rather rewarding experience.

Although Charles left the project to pursue other challenges, Mabel is at UHRC and I remain at the project office. We are still together in spirit and happy that we achieved what we targeted. To all the UNVs in Kabarole and particularly those at Local Government, thank you for maintaining what we strived for.

**By Alison Byamukama**  
**NUNV Project Assistant**  
**UNV Human Rights Project**

### Advisors:

Cornelis Klein and Auke Lootsma

### Editor-in-Chief:

Jose Neil A. C. Manzano

### Lay out, Design, Editing:

Mary Kateme



United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme

15 B Clement Hill Road

P.O Box 7184, Kampala

email: [cot@unvuganda.org](mailto:cot@unvuganda.org)

[www.unvuganda.org](http://www.unvuganda.org)