

REPORT ON THE INDUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF NEW UNV VOLUNTEERS  
SERVING WITH OHCHR & UNHCR  
(26 - 27 APRIL 2007)



Taking notes: Moses Tumusiime, Former UNV volunteer with UNV Human Rights Project

Taking pictures: Josephine Nakato, UNV volunteer serving with UNV-CISCO Programme

Compiling the report: Josephine Nakato

Editing the report: Mwangi Mathenge, UNV Programme Officer

21 May 2007

## Executive Summary

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme is the volunteer arm of the United Nations. It was created by the UN General Assembly in 1971 to serve as an operational partner in development cooperation at the request of UN member states. It reports to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and works through UNDP's Country Offices around the world.

Following successful recruitment and placement of new UNV volunteers, UNV Programme in Uganda organised an induction and orientation workshop in conjunction with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The fourteen UNV volunteers (13 with OHCHR and one from UNHCR) underwent the two-day event that saw them inducted and briefed on various aspects ranging from the UNV Programme through Host Agency activities to the eventual signing of UNV Initial Service Contracts and Pledges of Commitment to the UN System mandate.

Mr. Mwangi Mathenge, UNV Programme Officer and Ms. Susan Birungi the UNV Country Operations Assistant discussed the UNV Programme; role of the UNV Country Office; UNV Programme relationship with UNDP, OHCHR and UNHCR; United Nations System policies, and the Conditions of Service governing national UNV volunteers as well as the subsequent entitlements.



Participants prepare for a group activity at OHCHR offices on Day One of the induction sessions

Ms. Maarit Kohonen, Head of Office for OHCHR in Uganda conducted an enlightening session on OHCHR's mandate and what would be expected of the UNV volunteers at their duty stations. And together with Mr Patrick Amihere, OHCHR's District Team Leader at Pader who moderated the Question & Answers session, they provided a great opportunity for the participants to get a good understanding of the synergy between the OHCHR and the collaborating partners that which most of the UNV volunteers would be placed with.

On the second day, Dr. Rostyslav Marushko, UN-designated Physician who is also a UNV volunteer briefed his new colleagues on the Medical Issues ranging from overall medical situation in the country, through use of UN Clinic facilities to how the participants should handle medical situations at their respective duty stations.

Mr. Michael McNulty, Security Advisor with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) took the UNV volunteers through a security briefing that is mandatory for all UN Staff and affiliated personnel.

Former UNV volunteers, Mr. Moses Tumusiime and Ms. Sarah Stella Suffer also had the opportunity to share their volunteerism experiences.

## Day One

The morning session on Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007 was held at the OHCHR offices where UNV Programme Officer Mr. Mwangi Mathenge made opening remarks and further explained the purpose two-days Induction and Orientation Sessions. Further, self-introductions were done and to see the extent at which the UNV volunteers would benefit from the sessions, they were asked to share their expectations. Their responses varied from finding out more about the UNV Programme and human rights concepts, ascertaining the relationship between OHCHR, UNDP and UNV to the role of the host agencies that they would be placed with.



Ms. Maarit Kohonen, OHCHR's Head of Office (standing) describes her organisation's mandate in Uganda and role of UNVs. Seated left is UNV Programme Officer, Mwangi Mathenge.

Ms. Maarit Kohonen, OHCHR Head of Office then took to the floor and after extending a welcome to all present, gave an overview of OHCHR and its origins and thereafter described its mandate in Uganda. She also emphasised that the UNV volunteers were to be an integral part of their host agencies in order to pursue delivery of the set out activities.

Delving into the synergy between OHCHR, UHRC and the CMCCs, Ms. Kohonen informed the new recruits that they would be involved in undertaking joint visits plus advocacy and monitoring tasks amongst other duties. She urged them to take the initiative to network with support agencies, and establish a rapport with others involved in their field of work.

Ms. Kohonen then went on to talk about the various reports that the UNV volunteers would be expected to submit periodically and what they would be expected to contain, such as a list of joint activities carried out with partner organisations, planned activities and other relevant information. And with the help of illustrated examples, she also clearly explained the difference between human rights crimes and human rights violations.

Mr. Mathenge led the next session, starting off with a brief discussion about the essence of volunteering. He then showed a couple of video clips to augment the new UNV volunteers' understanding and appreciation of volunteerism, including one showcasing the volunteer experience of various UN Agency Heads where they described their experience as volunteers and how they not only enriched the lives of the targeted beneficiaries but also their own lives. Mr. Mathenge emphasised the quote from the former Secretary General of the United Nations System, Mr. Kofi Annan:

***“At the heart of volunteerism are the ideals of service and solidarity and the belief that together we can make the world better. In that sense, we can say that volunteerism is the ultimate expression of what the United Nations is all about”***

Thereafter, Mr Mathenge provided insight on the UNV Programme including its background and mission. He went on to say that UNV Programme in Uganda was started in 1983 and that it currently had a population of close to seventy (70) UNV volunteers all from 18 different countries including Uganda. He encouraged the participants to familiarise themselves with the contents carried in the copies of the national UNV Conditions of Service at their hands. He went on to advise them that they should adhere to the UN System's Code of Conduct that includes neutrality in country's political affairs and sharing unauthenticated information with the press. While coming to a close of his presentation, Mr. Mathenge tackled the issue of UNV Volunteer Periodic Progress Reports (VPPR) that the UNV volunteers would be expected to fill and submit on various stages – initial (after two months on duty), annual (after one year) and final (at the end-of-assignment). He also informed them that he would be visiting them at their respective duty stations in the coming months which would serve as a formal introduction to their Immediate Supervisors and briefing thereof.



The new UNV volunteers listen to Mr. Mathenge (not in picture) expound on the UN Volunteers Programme

Ms. Josephine Nakato, a serving UNV volunteer working with UNV-CISCO Programme was next on the floor to provide insight to the publicity and advocacy tools available. She gave a briefing on the presence of *The Volunteer*, UNV Uganda’s Newsletter that is published bi-annually as well as the existence of the official UNV Uganda Website <http://unvuganda.org> besides the global one <http://unvolunteers.org> that serve as media for publicity of the impact of volunteerism.

She emphasised that now that they had joined the UNV family, they had an important role to play in keeping the Websites updated by through their contributions in form of stories, articles and pictures on their assignments and interesting things happening in their lives. They were also requested to submit stories regularly for possible publication

in the UNV Newsletter that would be shared with fellow UNV colleagues worldwide including the public at large. Ms. Nakato also notified them that they could sign up and make use of the UNV Web-mail hosted in the UNV Uganda Website.

The new UNV volunteers had the opportunity to hear first-hand account of the volunteering experience from Mr. Moses Tumusiime who served as a UNV volunteer with the UNV Support to Promotion of Human Rights in Uganda project. He recounted joining the Programme in the year 2003, serving first in Kabarole district under UHRC, then at the District Local Government and later with Amnesty Commission in Kasese District. He stated that his work over the four (04) years had involved amongst others capacity building, human rights awareness promotion, mediation and reconciliation as well as community outreach programs.

The major challenges that Mr. Tumusiime came across while serving as a UNV volunteer cited were in creating a positive attitude change towards volunteerism within the communities they worked with and the expectation by some leaders of monetary favours from the UNV volunteers. These challenges notwithstanding, he was happy to disclose that the project had more than achieved the set targets and a successor programme was currently being developed to carry on with the good deeds.

Later on, the entire group was taken outdoors for an interesting and enlightening group activity dubbed ‘**human rights exercise**’ led by Ms. Kohonen that demonstrated in a unique way how challenging circumstances hamper advancement and access to opportunities in life when human rights were denied to some members of the society. The exercise also depicted the need for the more fortunate and enlightened to help those facing more challenging situations and allow or facilitating them to enjoy freely their human rights.



Ms. Kohonen gives instructions on how the ‘human rights exercise’ would be undertaken as OHCHR’s Mr. Patrick Amihere (left) looks on



In a graphic depiction of how life circumstances can dictate one’s advancement, UNVs stand at different stages of progress as determined by their assumed identities

Thereafter, the participants re-converged at the plenary for the second session of Questions & Answers where Mr. Patrick Amihere of OHCHR entertained the technical queries from the eager UNV volunteers that included career development opportunities, advancement in the UNV Programme, the boundaries in following up on human rights violation cases, security concerns in high-risk areas and submission of reports.

While concluding the Day One morning session, Mr Mathenge thanked the entire OHCHR team for according the UNV volunteers such a hospitality and for all they had done to facilitate the induction process.

In the afternoon, the UNV volunteers returned to UNDP Country Office for an afternoon session that involved further briefing on Operation and Administrative issues led by Ms. Susan Birungi, UNV Country Operations Assistant that included signing of UNV Initial Service Contracts and other documents as well as issuing of UN ID Cards.

## Day Two

And on Friday the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007, the UNV volunteers met at UNDP's Mary Chinery-Hesse room where they were briefed by Dr. Rostyslav Marushko on the medical facilities and situation in the country.

Mr. Michael McNulty of UNDSS conducted a security briefing session for the UNV volunteers, alerting them of the procedures and what was required of them with regards to safeguarding their security especially in UN Security Phases Two and Three.

Ms. Stella Suffer, another former UNV volunteer who served with UNHCR in Northern Uganda, relayed the new members of UNV family recruits with an account of her experiences while offering them with tips on how to make the most of their work as UNV volunteers.

And as the two-day event drew to a close, Ms. Rose Ssebatindira, Assistant Resident Representative and Head of Crisis Prevention Unit with UNDP represented the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Ms. Elizabeth Odour-Noah to close the sessions by re-congratulating them for having been chosen to join the UN System as UNV volunteers where they would exercise free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity, which are the foundations of volunteerism hence serving the cause of peace and development in the world. Finally, she reminded the participants on the need to observe and exercise the UN Core Values namely Professionalism, Integrity and Respect for Diversity.



Ms. Rose Ssebatindira (centre) of UNDP gives the final remarks at the Workshop