

NEWSLETTER

RSCE UPDATES



Starting 2021 with enthusiasm and committed service



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"...I avail of this opportunity to welcome you all back to the office under the new normal..."

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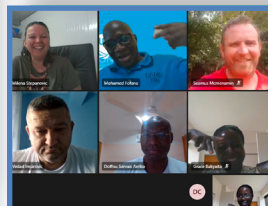
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"I avail of this opportunity to welcome you all back to the office under the new normal."

Message from the Director a.i RSCE



Dear Colleagues,

On 1 March 2021, I requested all staff members to return to the office on a rotational basis so that a 65% of staff members are physically present in RSCE during the workday. This required a thorough consideration of COVID-19 preventive measures, especially physical distancing. You may have already noticed that all offices have been rearranged for this purpose. I avail of this opportunity to welcome you all back to the office under the "new normal".

The RSCE is committed to providing a safe work environment for all and we have provided the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hygiene facilities in all areas on the campus.

During my interactions with many of you, I have noticed a general enthusiasm to return to the office. Even under the masks, I have noticed the smiling faces of those that are glad to be back interacting physically with their colleagues. Being away from each other for a full year has been very challenging for the RSCE family. So once again, I welcome you all back.

The good news is that the Government of Uganda has agreed to vaccinate interested UN staff members and their dependents in the country. However, this does not mean that we will become immune immediately. Thus, we must continue to respect the COVID-19 protocols in place to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all. It is everyone's responsibility to practice and enforce social distancing requirements, good hygiene, and the use of PPE. All staff are reminded to stay at home if they develop COVID-19 symptoms.

On 8 March 2021, we celebrated the International Women's Day with a very enlightening panel discussion on "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 World". We were honoured to count on the participation of Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, UN Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Eswatini; Ms. Chhaya Kapilashrami, Director of the Human Resources Services Division, Office of Support Operations, Department of Operational Support; Ms. Suzette Schultz, Chief of Service, Investigations Division of Office of Internal Oversight Services; and Ms. Linda Forsberg, Learning Enabler, Leadership Coach, Facilitator, Change Catalyst and Trusted Advisor. The panelists shared important insights on female leadership in times of crisis. I encourage all of you to join the voices calling for gender equality for a better future.

This is our second edition of the newsletter. I thank the contributors and the Communications Team for their effort. I would also like to encourage anyone with an interesting story to tell to contact the Communications Team at rsce-broadcast@un.org.

Stay well and stay safe.

**Paulin Djomo,
Director a.i RSCE**



The Journey of Working from Home to Office Return



Vicky Akech, Uniformed Personnel Service Line

As I sit down and reminisce the day on which the announcement was made for us to start working from home due to COVID-19, it is hard to believe we are just a few days shy of making a year. Anxiety levels skyrocketed: from being thrown into the technological challenges of working from home to not forgetting the multitude of distractions while finally adjusting to the reality of our new way of life for the next year or so to finally being thrust back to office life after getting comfortable at home. Describing this experience is a quagmire.

On the fateful day of the announcement for us having to work from home, many questions lingered through my mind coupled with fear due to the ever-increasing victims of the pandemic. Adjusting to wearing masks and social distancing was one thing, but I also had positive expectations about working from the comfort of my home. It almost felt like I could make my own rules.

The first week of our home office was one wherein most of us had to adjust to the technological aspect of working from home. We had to learn how to withstand distractions especially for those staying with their families. We needed to observe a healthy life-work balance, a true test of discipline and integrity.

A few months down the road and the battle of keeping off the fridge became evident as many started to gain weight... Thank God for the team that put together the step challenge which jumpstarted many of us into exercising. I found myself working beyond

traditional working hours and during weekends. Striking the balance between work and life was a real battlefield.

At some point, depression and boredom seemed to loom over me due to the social distancing and seclusion but thankfully RSCE's Got Talent contest and the numerous phone calls saved the day.

Fast-forward to the opening of the airport which increased the workload for many of us. Colleagues were involuntary going offline during meetings due to internet and connectivity issues. The GGST experience had many pulling out their high school books and calculators while others that volunteered to coach the rest became superstars, it was nothing short of a thrill.

Then came the moment of truth, the ultimate gamechanger, waking up to being listed among the first 40% of staff members who needed to return to the office. I quickly realized that I no longer had office clothes which I had to battle with the drama of having to adjust to the normal working hours and living with the new normal because of the pandemic.

The period of 'working from home' to returning to the office has been the experience of a lifetime. As I iron my clothes and get my things ready for work in the new year, I look forward to meeting my colleagues after a long time and *starting 2021 with enthusiasm and dedication to committed service*."

My Journey at RSCE



Joseph I. Atagubuzia, Vendors Service Line Manager

Congratulations RSCE! It has not been an easy ride. I saw you crawl from 2011 through the first phase of five years with a stunted growth but, doggedly, you went into the second phase of another five-year period with much vigour and determination and here you are with a much improved satisfactory service delivery to all clients. A lot of sacrifices, commitments, dedication and resilience of the workforce must have been at their peaks for you to have survived the awful first phase and yet survived another phase of five-year period on a higher pedestal means a lot once more, congratulations and félicitations!!

My RSCE journey started in April 2011 right from UNMIS (single S) in Khartoum, where I had barely spent four months as the Chief Payroll Officer when the news of a service centre started occupying the airwaves. I was invited to the management's meeting and the plan to support the Service Centre had already been concluded. Payroll and Vendor services were identified to kick start the Centre. The UNMIS Senior Management supported their decision on the ground that payroll services are very sensitive and that the Service Centre will use it as a litmus test to determine the efficiency in running such a centre. UNMIS had promised to play the lead-role for the Centre and I would be the one to lead the Team to Entebbe. This piece of news reverberated in my ears multiple times and I immediately knew the weight of responsibilities

I was assigned to carry, and I became apprehensive if I would be able to cope with the new roles.

...Today, RSCE is looked at like 'a bride that every groom wants, seeking her hands in marriage'. To the appreciation of many, RSCE has positively grown in leaps and bounds, most of our client missions if not all have built a lot of confidence in what we do and have in various fora, attested to the rapid transformation in our service delivery processes. This intuitively gives me a lot of joy and satisfaction to see that the office I played a pivotal role in establishing, has evolved from birth to crawling, walking and now running without looking back in pursuit of excellence. Candidly, I feel very much accomplished and this experience will ever remain indelible in my lifetime!!

[Click here to read Joseph's full article](#)



Civilian Pre-deployment Training Delivered via Microsoft Teams

By Milena Stepanovic, Chief, Civilian Predeployment Training (CPT)

"Welcome everyone to the virtual Civilian Pre-deployment Training"; the voice of a colleague started the MS Teams CPT training. "I hope you can all hear me. Can you please mute yourselves so that we can hear the presenter? Remember to raise a 'hand' button and unmute yourself if you would like to speak. We also have a 'chat' where you can write your comments or questions. Don't forget, all our training material is on the link shared in our MS Teams group. Thank you."



For the Civilian Pre-deployment Training (CPT) team, 2 to 5 February 2021 marked the delivery of the 7th virtual MS Teams training since October 2020. Before COVID-19 started - up until March 2020 - newly recruited UN international civilian staff from all over the world travelled to Entebbe to attend the mandatory civilian pre-deployment training.

The CPT team, a strong team of five, is a tenant office at ESB/RSCE and is part of the Integrated Training Service at UNHQ in New York. Since January 2017, Entebbe is the home of the CPT training and serves as the training hub to all newly recruited international civilian staff deploying to UN field operations.

No one could predict how COVID-19 would change the way we work and live. We kept hearing about the 'New Normal' and for the CPT team this meant redesigning the otherwise four full days of face-to-face practical and interactive sessions into four shorter days of informative, but still interactive sessions. How did we do it?

We focused on the most important information to be delivered in concise sessions. We modified presentations so that less time is used on lectures and more time is allowed for questions and interactions. CPT staff have been coming to the office and also working from home, despite issues with internet and electricity among many other challenges.

We continued to collaborate with ESB medical and security colleagues for them to deliver their relevant sessions. Even Conduct and Discipline colleagues from MONUSCO continued to join virtually from their office in Goma to inform us about the UN standards. Not a single virtual CPT session passed by without the ESB & RSCE Staff Counselors' advice on how to handle stress in missions. The Ombudsman office shared mediation tips with the staff. Of course, none of that would be possible without the help and support of the RSCE Onboarding office and mission HR focal points, who provided us with us the contacts of the newly recruited staff members.

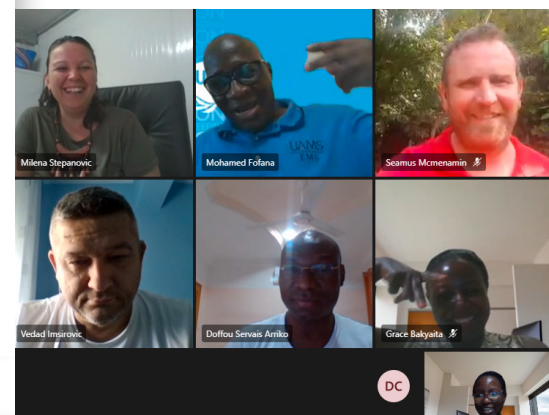
The CPT team is also grateful to senior managers - Mr. Paulin Djomo Metanhi, Director of Regional Service Centre (RSCE) and Mr. Ingemar Bjoernfot, Head of ESB Premises - for their precious time to deliver opening or closing remarks during our training sessions.

As CPT training sessions draw to an end we are always delighted to be hearing comments from the participants - "Thank you so much, it was extremely useful to attend my first facilitated online training". Another colleague said: "The training method was good, however, face-to-face training would be better".

The CPT team is looking forward to many more virtual training sessions in 2021. We cannot think of a better work motivation than continuing this new year with enthusiasm, committed service and resilience!

CPT Facts: Did You know?

- ◇ CPT training is mandatory for all international civilians joining the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Department of Operational Support (DOS) field operations.
- ◇ CPT training used to be a six and then a five day long training. CPT is currently delivered in four days.
- ◇ Over 5,200 civilian international staff members have undergone the training.
- ◇ The CPT team has delivered more than 300 training sessions in two locations: UNGSC, Brindisi and RSCE/ESB, Entebbe.



BUILDING A HARMONIOUS UN WORKPLACE ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME

Regional Ombudsman Office in Entebbe,

Starting 2021 with enthusiasm and committed service requires resilience, a great amount of it. The year 2020 was difficult for everyone; however, we, the people of the United Nations serving the world have demonstrated, more than ever, that we have what it takes. The whole of humanity suffered from the unprecedented crisis of the coronavirus pandemic. There was no distinction between young or old, rich or poor, man or woman: everyone was impacted.

The dynamics of the workplace also shifted considerably during the pandemic, presenting new challenges but also offering new opportunities. Maintaining business continuity meant going virtual, requiring us all to adapt to new ways of working. This all happened too fast. It was, in many ways, a large-scale social experiment, a first in the history of the UN. The Organization did not have enough capacity to support all personnel to continue to deliver efficiently by providing proper equipment, appropriate policies, sufficient internet access and bandwidth, robust cyber and data security measures, ergonomic workspace support, etc ([Rf. CEB task force on the future of the United Nations System workforce, Interim Report](#))

The new reality of working also ushered in new ways of relating to one another. While addressing and preventing any forms of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority remained in focus, even more intricate levels of tolerance and understanding became necessary. It's about understanding that the parent with homeschooled kids may not be connected on the work mail each and every time when expected; perceiving that family responsibilities come in various shapes and forms; realizing that remote working does not mean 24/7 availability; learning that stress impacts us all in various ways. For managers, it's about discerning a real need for flexibility, balancing that with the need to maintain productivity. In other words, it's about sustaining an environment where all can strive to balance work and life in harmony, with civility and respect towards one another.

During this unprecedented health crisis, the staff of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS) continued to serve all those in the UN workforce worldwide by offering professional, confidential conflict-resolution and mediation services, regardless of duty station or time zone. Working remotely, we provided a safe space to address concerns and helped explore options regarding various work-related issues.

Here in the Regional Ombudsman Office in Entebbe, we offered workshops, discussion cafés and learning activities to more than 1400 staff in the region. We started with the 'new normal' civility cafés held early in the lockdown and ended the year with dialogues against racism in which hundreds of managers and staff representatives in the region participated.

The realization of the incredible value of tolerance, civility and respect was in the forefront in 2020. In 2021, we will all bring our full commitment and enthusiasm to build on the momentum and bring about tangible changes in the system.

It's important to remember that conflict in and of itself is not necessarily negative: it often leads to innovative and creative solutions. The determining factor is how we handle conflict. Let us start 2021 with enthusiasm and commitment to handle our workplace conflicts promptly and professionally. Together, we can build a harmonious UN workplace, one conversation at a time.

Should you have any questions or wish to have a confidential discussion, we are just an email away:

Ms. Selome YIFRU (yifru@un.org), Regional Ombudsman
Mr. Balazs JUTASI (balazs.jutasi@un.org), Conflict Resolution Officer
Mr. Saner AHMEDOV (saner.ahmedov@un.org), Conflict Resolution Officer
Ms. Julu MALLA (mallaj@un.org), Administrative Focal Point

For more information on UNOMS, visit our [iSeek page](#)

In the Spotlight

Catherine Nabwile: the IT Wonder Woman



Have you always assumed that working in Information Technologies is strictly a man's affair? Thought it impossible for women to be successful in IT Officer or Information Management roles? Think again! Catherine Nabwile is dedicating her life and career to prove advocates of such conventional and old-fashioned views, wrong. Allow her to introduce you to the wonderful world of women in IT...

A (Wo)Man's World?

Throughout her career, Catherine had to make a name for herself as a starting IT Officer. She believes that the hurdles were even more aplenty for her since it happens to be that she was born a woman. She takes us on a trip down memory lane: from those early days of her career - when it used to be awfully hard to convince her male peers that she knows a thing or two about computers - to where she stands today, a seasoned and knowledgeable IT professional.

By Yannick Van Winkel, Communications Officer, RSCE

Keep Rollin'

Catherine is an Information Management Officer within the Quality Assurance and Business Intelligence Unit. She's still new as she only joined the RSCE late last year. She explains what her professional duties demand her to do: "Briefly said, I ensure that users are assigned to the right roles in Umoja so that they can be performed effectively. This specific function gives me the title of Security Liaison Officer, a vital role which guarantees smooth operation of the centre."

One might wonder what these roles exactly are. Catherine gladly clarifies: "Roles are functionalities within Umoja and drive how we all operate, it's a backend process. About sixty per cent of my time goes to operational tasks such as assigning roles to new staff members that arrive and decommissioning users that leave for another entity or leave the organisation overall. I have implemented data-driven dashboards to help with the monitoring and to automate this process as much as possible."

Catherine continues to explain what her other occupations are: "I divide the remaining forty per cent of my time to three other main areas: troubleshooting, governance and compliance, and training. Regarding the former, I look onto Umoja and track issues. These are tasks wherein users experience difficulties in performing them. I escalate these problems to get them resolved, again enhancing how we operate."

"Governance and compliance are all about reviewing staff members' roles and ensure that they are within the stipulated requirements. We look at what roles users have as per what their job duties require, we find out why certain users have implausible roles and whether or not there is a justification for them having acquired this or that role", Catherine explains.

She is also involved in a lot of training, in the sense of both conducting training to

others as well as keeping herself up with the latest industry developments: "I have just started leading induction training sessions for newly appointed UN staff members wherein I introduce them to the complex enterprise resource planning platform which Umoja is. During this training, we cover an overview of what Umoja offers to you as an individual and we answer questions such as 'how do I register leave?' and 'how do I perform a travel request?' I also try to keep abreast as much as I can on fields relevant to my area of expertise through online courses on Microsoft Solutions such as the Microsoft Power Platform."

Self-confidence, Reading, Mentors

When asked what it takes to be successful in her role, her answer is threefold: "First and foremost, the main thing is that you need to believe in yourself, otherwise you cannot achieve some of the things I have been able to do."

"My second approach is to read a lot. Like I mentioned already, I often deep dive into IT-related online courses. Some of these courses build my confidence, others do a great job at expanding my technical knowledge while different ones give me an idea of where the technology is going. Once you have the habit of lifelong learning, it provides you with the required tools that allow you to function correctly within the scope of your area."

Her third 'secret' to build on her path of success are mentors: "I am indeed lucky enough to currently have two people that I can call my mentors. My first and foremost mentor was my father who was also an electrical engineer and worked for the Kenya Power Company for over thirty years. Sadly, he passed on five years ago, having left a legacy of commissioning the first private power company in Kenya. My two current mentors are a chief engineer with MONUSCO and a fellow Kenyan lady who's a director in finance. I communicate often with the two of them to discuss aspects that can enable me to grow but I also ask them for advice or guidance. These people enable me to keep on track!"

"I studied engineering at university where I was one out of only five women in a class of sixty students. After having worked a while as an electrical engineer in Kenya, I started working with Field Technology Services (FTS) as a United Nations Volunteer in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). I was the only woman in my unit! In the entire section, there were only five women. I talked about believing in yourself during this interview before. With our group of five ladies, we used to meet up for lunch regularly. During these lunch dates, we encouraged each other and established greater self-esteem among one another. Thanks to those meet-ups, we managed to build up collective female confidence!" Catherine goes on: "I believe that women have the greatest advantage since everyone looks at us as the weaker of the two genders. Through what I achieved through my career, I want to inspire young girls. Convince them that they too can do it. If you work hard, take an initiative to learn and have perseverance, nothing stands in your way of making it."

Luckily, Catherine did see a lot of progress when it comes to female representation in technology over the years: "I cannot say that IT is a male-dominated field anymore as the gender division is leaning more towards fifty-fifty now. It sure used to be. When I started, it was quite the mission to make it as a woman in IT. Today, because of better access to education on science subjects for girls and the knowledge shared by female leaders and mentors, women have a much



more likely chance to make it within the sector as compared to fifteen years ago. It's also a snowball effect: the more women that notice successful women in IT that came before them, the more women that will be encouraged to take the leap into the thrilling world of technology themselves."

From Africa to the Middle East and Back Again

Before joining the RSCE, Catherine had the opportunity to work in several different locations. She has spent time working in Kenya, the DRC, Chad and the Central African Republic. Her two most recent appointments were with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) and the United Nations Special Coordinator Officer (UNSCO) in Israel.

However much she enjoyed her years in the Middle East, she is content to have returned to Entebbe.

Returned? Indeed, Catherine has worked at the RSCE before during its inception phase, be it just for a short time of one year. When asked why she had the desire

to call Entebbe home again, she replied: "When I first came here in 2010, I was moved by the vision which the centre had and still has today. I believe that the RSCE does essential work in Africa and feel like I can make a difference here. I have always wanted to make an impact in this region and with my current work, I believe I can. In addition, this was also a career move. I wanted to deviate from the technology area and concentrate more on the information management side of things. That's what I aspire to grow in, to be able to manipulate data. To work and come up with storytelling dashboards that enable managers to make cognisant decisions. I like the fact that my impact is now more direct in comparison to the impact I had in my previous role."

On Weekends

So, what is Catherine doing when she's not staring at a computer screen?

Catherine is a mother and dedicates most of her leisure time to her two kids who are with her in Entebbe: "Nicole is fifteen

years old and attends boarding school in the UK. Now with the pandemic, she attends classes virtually from Uganda. She's an aspiring professional musician and can play three instruments already! My other daughter is called Joanne, she's eight and loves cooking."

Luckily, Catherine can free up some quality time for herself too: "I enjoy reading and I read at least two books per month. I especially take pleasure in stories about people's lives. This includes biographies from people that inspire me, like the American stand-up comedian Steve Harvey."

Catherine is also a philanthropist. "Being a born-again Christian, I spend a lot of time in prayer and mentorship of young girls back home in Kenya. I mentor and educate two girls. They are now in high school and I have been their mentor since primary school."

If you know anyone you would like to nominate for an article in our Spotlight series, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us through rsce-broadcast@un.org

Sheroes Against the Pandemic: International Women's Day at the RSCE

By Yannick Van Winkel, Communications Officer, RSCE

On 8 March, the RSCE celebrated the annual International Women's Day. This year's recognition for the women of our world took place virtually because of obvious pandemic reasons. Through a panel discussion 'womanned' by four female leaders, all attendees of the event witnessed an exceedingly passionate and, at times, stirring exchange on the numerous struggles that girls and women still face in our lifetime.

The global theme for Women's Day 2021 is: 'Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World'. The panel that deliberated this year's theme consisted of Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, UN Resident Coordinator to the Kingdom of Eswatini, and Ms. Chhaya Kapilashrami, Director of the Human Resources Services Division, Office of Support Operations, United Nations Department of Operational Support. The other two panel members were Ms. Suzette Schultz, Chief of Service, Investigations Division, UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and Linda Forsberg, Learning Enabler, Leadership Coach, Facilitator, Change Catalyst and Trusted Advisor.

Irene Zulu-Chabala, a long-serving woman in the United Nations with about 30 years of service under her belt, moderated the event, which was open to all staff members at the UN Entebbe Support Base (ESB).

After the audience internalized the opening remarks by Director a.i. RSCE Paulin Djomo, several video recordings were shown. These videos served as testimonials from a diverse selection of the female ESB workforce. From RSCE

Deputy Director Ms. Nalini Contreras to the T&D Cleaning Company ladies or Mary from our on-site coffee shop, they all shone a light on how the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanied severe health, economic and mental backlashes influenced and affected their lives, mainly for the worst.

While the testimonials still moved some spectators to tears because of these often-poignant statements by our lady colleagues, the four panellists were eager to start the debate. Questions asked to the panel included 'Why is it important for women to be represented in senior leadership?' as well as 'What would you say to the women who are currently carrying the disproportionate burden during this pandemic?'. While all questions asked resulted in illuminating answers, one specific question derived striking replies: 'Do you feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has set women back in the achievement of an equal future?'

Ms. Ndongo-Seh - who effectively nicknamed the women of the world 'sheroes' instead of the word's male counterpart 'heroes' - recognized the setback women experienced and revealed some mind-boggling COVID-19 related statistics to strengthen her view.

"It is estimated that around one million teenage girls around the world will never again return to school because of early pregnancy during the pandemic. Eighty-seven out of every thousand girls in Eswatini are deprived of their future education because of this exact reason. Teenage pregnancies have been a real problem during our battle with the virus as people are locked inside their homes with little to nothing to do to pass the time. Another confronting statistic is that forty million women worldwide will fall into poverty due to reasons directly or indirectly linked to the virus. Furthermore, women form the largest group of workers within the health sector. That also bears an extra risk: women contract seventy percent of the infections among health workers." - Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, UN Resident Coordinator to the Kingdom of Eswatini

Luckily, it's not all a bad news show. Ms. Schulz also had positive observations: "I have the deepest respect for women who fulfil an amalgam of different roles in our society, be it breadwinners, teachers, caretakers, community leaders, mothers, nurses, doctors... Combining all these roles requires real resilience and bravery. It reveals yet again their character on how strong our women are."



Welcomes and Farewells

Welcome



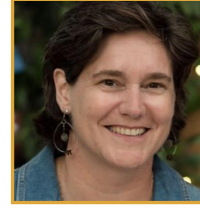
Salome Mukui,
Software Engineer
in the Quality
Assurance and
Business Intelligence
(QABI) Unit



Machane Daniel Issac,
Planning Officer (IUNV)
in the Strategic Planning
and Capacity Building Unit



Susana Reyes Arreaga
Associate Administrative Officer
in the Office of Director - RSCE



Deanna Lynn Manson,
Planning & Analysis,
*joined TMICC as part of
the integrated supply chain
management structure
working with MSC*



Yuriy Kryvoruchko,
Chief of Logistics,
*joined TMICC as part of
the integrated supply chain
management structure
working with MSC*

Farewell



Zewdu Mebrat Tegen,
to Chief of Kuwait Joint
Support Office (KJSO)



Charles Mwangi Gathinji,
to Project Management
Office Specialist, UNOPS,
Copenhagen



Marife Leal-Lalonde,
to Head of the HR Strategic
Support Unit, Human
Resources Section, MINURSO



Regional Service Centre Entebbe

RSCE is an efficient, effective and innovative client-oriented shared service centre, committed to **meeting stakeholders' expectations** by supporting UN peace operations in a changing and challenging global reality.

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This RSCE Newsletter is brought to you by the RSCE Communication Unit:

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Jullian Kahara Atukunda and Yannick Van Winkel.