

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

### Delivering UNICEF's relief assistance on a bicycle

"Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to ride my bicycle to help out with the distribution of UNICEF's emergency kits to internally displaced persons in Sampwe camp," declares Papa Kabamba. "When I see the results of my efforts, it gives my life a real sense of purpose and achievement."

Thirty-year-old Patricia Kalanga cannot stop crying. She feels so lonely, so isolated in Sampwe camp, far from her husband, her children, her mother and her friends, with nothing than the clothes on her back.

She sits among strangers, waiting. Finally, there is some good news. She will be part of the group receiving assistance from UNICEF. They will get plastic sheeting, blankets, cooking utensils, and jerrycans, announces Papa Kabamba.

Like most of the displaced Patricia's joy is mixed with frustration and sadness. She is aware of the constraints and challenges of getting help in a region torn apart by ongoing conflict – especially along the 120-kilometre route between Mitwabab and Sampwe, a road dotted with destroyed vehicles, where only the toughest can venture along. Papa Kabamba knows all too well that a bicycle is by far the safest way to get around and, even so, it's a struggle.

UNICEF has chosen the local non-governmental organization Action Contre la Pauvreté (ACP) as a powerful partner to provide assistance to the displaced along the road between Mitwabab and Sampwe. With their help much has been accomplished within a short period of time. The volunteers that ACP has recruited have been selected not only for their physical strength but also for their moral integrity. This is why Papa Kabamba decided to work with the ACP team to transport relief items and distribute family kits to the displaced in the area. It's work which he carries out with real enthusiasm.

"When I see the displaced forced to live in appalling conditions, it triggers a sense of responsibility. I know I have to do everything I can. Especially when it rains, that's the worst. The rain pours right through these flimsy huts that they have, made of banana leaves and whatever branches they can find. Cold air cuts right through; the children are freezing; it's so miserable. That really gets to me," says Papa Kabamba. "So when I see the huge effort our team puts into getting these 2,500 kits out to the displaced, I feel that at least I have done my duty. That makes me really happy. We have to go up and down 120 km of bumpy muddy roads between Mitwabab and Sampwe, before we reach Sampwe camp."

Without UNICEF's help, there would be no plastic sheeting, no toilets, no utensils, and no blankets. Papa Kabamba knows that he works with a good and reliable partner, Action Contre la Pauvreté, which he can trust when he travels to risky

zones, and that the items he helps distribute go to the women and children most in need.

“UNICEF showcases our work and that is very gratifying. We can actually see the outcome and the impact of our efforts. Going out on visits with journalists, speaking to ordinary people and being among them with good humour and friendliness makes it all worthwhile,” he says.

For now Patricia Kalanga is waiting for news about her family, but Papa Kabamba can feel satisfied, he has made her waiting a little more bearable.