

Football and smiles all around during the 20 June World Refugee Day celebrations in Lóvua refugee settlement.

On World Refugee Day, held every year on 20 June, humanitarian organisations commemorate the strength, courage, and perseverance of millions of refugees. It is a day to recognise the contributions of refugees in their communities and in Lunda Norte, where there are more than 22,000 refugees who fled violence in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), it was no different.

The highlight of the day was a football match between refugees and humanitarian workers. Prior to World Refugee Day, a football tournament was organised between the four schools in Lóvua and the victorious squad then competed against a team of humanitarian workers from organisations involved in the response, such as Jesuit Refugee Service, the International Organisation for Migration and Medicos Del Mundo, as well as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The highly anticipated match finished in a draw (2-2) due to a late equaliser from the refugee team which led to jubilant celebrations.



Figure 1: Congolese refugee showcases cultural mask ©UNHCR/Omotola Akindipe

The day also included speeches from the Governor of Lunda Norte, Mr Ernesto Muangala and Mr. Guy-Rufin Guernas, the UNHCR Head of Office in Lunda Norte. There was also a speech from John Lupemba, a young refugee who spoke on behalf of the refugees in the settlement.

Congolese talent was on display with a host of performances, as well as several presentations of arts and craft including cardboard homes and cars made by refugee children. A community group theatre performance contained humorous sketches and two dance performances from different groups that



highlighted various cultural aspects and traditional dances. Towards the end of the day, the in-house refugee rapper performed some of his tracks, which led to ecstatic dance scenes involving both partners and refugees.

Celebrations were not limited to 20 June. Indeed, on Saturday 16 June, humanitarian partners also celebrated the International Day of the African Child with a football match between two female teams.



Figure 2: Girls teams playing on the International Day of the African Child @UNHCR/Basilio Clemente