



Cecilia Corneo

1970 – 2010

Cecilia Corneo, a national of Italy, was a Programme Officer for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since September 2008.

Known as “Cilla” by her close friends, she was born in Arona, Italy, studied Modern Languages at the Università degli Studi in Pavia, and graduated with a Master’s degree in foreign languages in 1997.

Fluent in English, French, German and Italian, Cecilia started her working life in 1995 as a translator. She also understood Spanish and Creole.

Cecilia joined the UN in March 2001 as a UN Volunteer working for the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in Pristina. Initially a Youth Liaison Officer, she became the Sports Programme Officer for Minority and Inter-Ethnic Development, creating programmes that used sporting events, tournaments and summer camps as a means of promoting peace.

It was in Kosovo that she met and married Patrick Hein, with whom she went to Haiti when he was offered a position with MINUSTAH.

Upon arriving in Haiti, Cecilia worked as freelancer for the Italian web site Peace Reporter where she became a popular contributor on Haiti. An article written in June 2005 depicted the harsh reality of life for the Haitian people; in hindsight it has a particular significance, titled, “Vivere e morire a Haiti” (To live and to die in Haiti).

In July 2005 Cecilia began an assignment in Haiti for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), where she managed a million-dollar budget and was instrumental in organizing over 60 projects, ranging from soil conservation and flood mitigation to youth events, all aimed at reducing conflict and promoting peace.

In 2007, Cecilia took a job with the Cooperative Housing Foundation-International (CHF) in Port-au-Prince, where she was their troubleshooter providing technical advice on the management of community infrastructure projects. Colleagues at CHF say they benefited tremendously from her managerial expertise.

She eventually joined MINUSTAH in 2008 as Team Leader of the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) Project, and went on to develop over 40 projects benefiting Haiti’s most destitute. The projects she designed are still being implemented there, helping to alleviate the suffering caused by the earthquake that took her life.

“She was a born programme manager who set a work ethic and a standard that all her colleagues will aspire to achieve,” said a colleague who served with her in Haiti. “She will be greatly missed, but her memory and guidance will be with us always.”

“She brought with her years of experience in the Balkans and in Haiti in project development and implementation,” said another colleague, adding, “Cecilia was a true colleague: we worked side by side every day. I trusted her judgment and motivation behind her work and she always acted with integrity and professionalism.”

“Her goodness, joy, sense of humour, and courage have been such an example. Cilla brought light to my days and a smile to my face and always knew when a comforting gesture was most needed,” said the colleague.

A colleague from Kosovo remembered that “Cilla loved singing. She was intense, cheerful, loved life and people. She was a very loyal friend.”

Cecilia is survived by her husband Patrick, a UN staff member who was working at Hotel Christopher at the time of the earthquake. He survived with leg injuries.