



In FACT: UN Volunteers and Sustainable Development

Strengthening local institutions and fostering ownership and participation are integral components of strategies aimed at promoting an enabling environment for sustainable human development. Through facilitating voluntary action, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme helps to achieve the cornerstones of sustainable development - economic growth, environmental protection and social development – by supporting the activities of UN agencies, governments, volunteer involving networks and local organizations in these areas. With its partners, UN Volunteers work to achieve secure livelihoods by fighting poverty, stimulating income generation, building capacity to apply information technologies, preserving the environment and reinforcing disaster preparedness.

In eastern Mongolia, UN Volunteers help women in impoverished communities to earn money by setting up felt workshops. They provide advice on management and marketing of the felt products made from wool discarded by nomadic herders. The success of the felt workshops, established with loans from the Community Conservation Fund (CCF) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has inspired men and other women to apply for loans to start up their own small businesses, such as furniture workshops and community shower facilities. Expanding the reach of volunteer action, UN Volunteers help contribute to protecting the environment by building networks of local volunteer organizations to clean up rivers and patrol riverbanks to protect trees from being cut down for fuel.

In Lesotho, a team of eight UN Volunteers works with the Maseru City Council to help connect poor communities and expand job opportunities. UNV engineers consult with communities to map out roads linking settlements in a bid to improve access to transport as well as to improve the mobility of those seeking work. UN Volunteers also guide City Council personnel in participatory approaches for mobilizing community members to build and maintain their infrastructure. Supporting women in these settlements, the UN Volunteers have also helped form three handicraftproducing cooperatives.

In Niger, UN Volunteers work alongside Toubou, Arab and Fula fighters in order to help them reintegrate into society. They assist the ex-combatants in developing small ventures, such as raising livestock and producing iron implements, clothing and jewellery. At a broader level, the volunteers play an important role in bringing together local authorities and civil society; encouraging communities to engage in inter-communal activities; and conducting workshops for young people from different ethnic groups. As a result of these actions, the ex-combatants have started a number of initiatives, from forming development committees to discuss a range of topics such as water conservation to setting up volunteer rural radio programmes to connect to rural areas. The ex-combatants are also having an impact on education by making training cassettes on conflict resolution for teachers.

Through the UNDP Community Recovery Programme in Indonesia, UN Volunteers are helping those below the poverty line to sustain themselves and even make a profit. Working with CBOs, they assist rickshaw drivers, carpenters and street vendors in accessing microcredit funds and starting up their own businesses. After work hours, they hold meetings for community entrepreneurs to discuss legal and business issues, as well as personal matters, such as family planning and safe sex practices. In rural areas, UN Volunteers provide technical training in organic farming to help farmers reduce the use of chemical fertilizers.

Based in Bonn, Germany, UNV is the UN organization that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers. As a part of its activities, each year, UNV provides the opportunity for over 7000 skilled and experienced professionals, 70 percent coming from developing countries, to support peace, relief and development initiatives in some 150 countries. In addition, it engages thousands of other individuals in the work of the United Nations through www.onlinevolunteering.org, and manages the WorldVolunteerWeb, a global volunteering portal that serves as a knowledge resource base for campaigning, advocacy, information dissemination and networking.

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United Nations Volunteers

PO Box 260 111 53153 Bonn Germany Telephone +49.228.815-2000 Fax +49.228.815-2001

Email information@unvolunteers.org <http://www.unvolunteers.org>

UN Volunteers is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)