



UN

Volunteers

In FACT: UN Volunteers and Youth

In recognition of the particular role that youth play in shaping the development of their societies and the need to harness this potential, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme with its partners has launched pilot projects to explore ways in which, by building on and promoting a culture of volunteerism, youth can be mobilized and engaged in activities at the community, regional and national level.

In Burkina Faso, UN Volunteers have partnered with youth associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Government to further the social development of the country's marginalized youth. Involving the participation of 1,200 young people and their parents, the project works with uneducated and under-education youth, street children, orphans, disabled youth, unemployed teenagers, single mothers and young victims of abuse. UN Volunteers placed in counselling centres provide services to the youth participants and their parents in a number of areas, including literacy training, employability skills, money management and counselling. The UN Volunteers also focus on promoting volunteerism and creating information networks on the prevention of child exploitation and reduction of young women's susceptibility to sexual transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

In 1997, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNV teamed up with the South Africa Student Volunteer Organization (SASVO) to assist the organization in building its operational capacity to expand its activities throughout South Africa and in neighbouring countries. Through this initiative, SASVO developed strong networks and the capacity to mobilize volunteers. It engaged more than 8,000 student volunteers to participate in some 215 community-based projects through its various volunteer modalities such as the vacation work camps, the international volunteer exchange programme and the short- and long-term internship programme. Specific key achievements include building 204 classrooms, renovating 25 schools and establishing more than 15 vegetable gardens and 11 playgrounds. UNDP/UNV, SASVO and its implementing partners have recently signed a new three-year agreement to further strengthen SASVO's volunteer management capacity, increase the profile of the organization and assist in developing training materials in the relevant thematic areas of SASVO's interventions in agriculture, HIV/AIDS and social infrastructure. In Azerbaijan, UNV, the Ministry of Youth, the Baku Executive Power, the National Youth Council and UNDP are working together to provide increased opportunities for young people to contribute to their own and their communities' development. Following a massive awareness-raising campaign launched in NGO resource centres, universities and the city of Baku itself, more than 3000 young people and students volunteered their services. The selected volunteers support a range of activities including with disabled people, refugees, orphans, street children as well as in health care and environmental projects. Important networks have also been established among youth organizations, voluntary organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs). In line with government policy, the project has extended its networks to NGOs in the rural areas.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNV is working to support and complement efforts towards building peace and confidence, focussing in particular on fostering understanding and cooperation among youth from Croat, Serb and Bosnian communities. International and national volunteers, together with a network of 16 national facilitators, are engaged in training new facilitators; organizing workshops in conflict transformation; running multi-ethnic summer camps for young people; conducting targeted skills training for unemployed youth; and managing an inter-communal reconciliation fund. Pilot radio programmes and a web site - managed by youth to reach youth in other communities - have been developed and set up in cooperation with UNESCO and Youth Local Advisory Boards (LAB), comprising members from different ethnic backgrounds.

Through the UNV led United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS), a global web-based volunteer initiative focused on building human capacity, volunteers from any country can give their skills and time to extend the opportunities of the digital revolution to developing countries. A network of qualified university student volunteers are using the service to provide training in basic computer skills, helping create web sites and databases and repairing broken computers. With CISCO Systems' Networking Academy Program, a private-sector partner in the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Initiative, UNITeS UN Volunteers share their IT skills with students in developing countries who attend computer courses to foster high-tech skills and increase their chances of finding employment in the IT sector.

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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