



In FACT: UN Volunteers and HIV/AIDS

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is deeply engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the use of people-centred approaches. It collaborates closely with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), volunteer involving organizations, networks of people living with HIV/AIDS and national AIDS programmes in affected countries.

Since 2003, the UNV programme has been involved in UNDP's flagship programme to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic - the Southern Africa Capacity Initiative (SACI). Its contribution includes the provision of UNV volunteers with expertise in medical, planning, policy and technical fields. In the nine programme countries – Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe – they work with government ministries, agencies and NGOs to develop leadership capacity, accelerate skills training, and help institutions to maintain the supply of basic services. UNV volunteers are also serving at the provincial district and community levels to back the planning and coordination of response mechanisms and to support the creation of local volunteer groups to help carry out HIV/AIDS education and assist those affected and infected.

To help people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS overcome the stigma associated with the disease UNV, in partnership with UNAIDS and UNDP, has scaled-up its activities in the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) initiative. Since 1997, in collaboration with UNAIDS and UNDP, UNV has enhanced GIPA related efforts through community-oriented pilot projects. These projects seek to demonstrate that people living with HIV/AIDS can continue to work and be productive members of society, provided adequate care and support is made available.

Through GIPA, UNV volunteers – many of them themselves living with HIV/AIDS – work with regional networks of people living with HIV/AIDS and local institutions to develop prevention, care and support activities. Activities include, promoting voluntary counselling and testing, conducting media awareness campaigns, providing home-based care, and establishing micro-grant facilities for income-generating activities. Participants share experiences, knowledge and skills to help empower their peers and influence development policies and programmes. Equally important is the opportunity UNV volunteers have to tackle stigmatization by actively bringing about positive changes to their own lives as well as the lives of others. Following piloting in Malawi and Zambia, the initiative has expanded to include Botswana, Burundi, Cambodia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Rwanda, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Examples of HIV/AIDS initiatives include:

In Viet Nam, UNV volunteers under a new GIPA initiative coordinated by the UN system in Viet Nam are supporting the Vietnam Women's Union in providing training and support to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS; helping them access treatment and other services; reducing stigma and discrimination; promoting understanding and support of GIPA, and providing opportunities for voluntary participation of people living with HIV/AIDS.

In Guyana, UNV volunteer physicians part of a new initiative sponsored by the American Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) have a dual task: first to provide immediate health care delivery and second to

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)



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boost the country's national capacity to equip its own doctors with skills to address HIV/AIDS. To build up this needed knowledge-base, the UNV volunteer physicians, who are mainly from the South, conduct training seminars with front-line health workers and hold information sessions on prevention and treatment services for families and those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. With the help of local volunteers, the physicians have conducted medical outreach clinics in rural communities, places previously excluded from HIV/AIDS programme outreach.

In the Caribbean, UNV volunteers are supporting the Caribbean Regional Network of Seropositives (CRN+) to increase public awareness of HIV/AIDS and mobilize financial, medical and human resources. They work with political representatives to develop and enforce policies against HIV/AIDS-related discrimination and provide education in schools, prisons, the court system (with lawyers and judges) and other workplaces.

UNV is the UN organization that supports the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers. To this end, UNV provides the opportunity each year for more than 7,000 women and men - 75 per cent coming from developing countries - to support peace, relief and development initiatives in some 140 countries. In addition, it engages thousands of other individuals in the work of the United Nations through www.onlinevolunteering.org, and manages the WorldVolunteerWeb.org, a portal that serves as a knowledge resource base on volunteerism worldwide.

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