



BUILDING TRUST

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Nations and communities emerging from conflict need to cement the human relationships and rebuild the infrastructure, institutions and systems that form the foundations of peace. Governance must often be re-established and basic services provided. In volatile situations, the threat of recurring and escalating conflict must be averted by tackling the underlying causes and facilitating the transition to normal security conditions.

Through volunteerism, UNV works with partners to rebuild local governance capacity, support demobilization, disarmament and reintegration efforts, and protect human rights. UNV engages individuals and communities in establishing secure and stable environments conducive to the peaceful resolution of conflict, enhancing ownership of conflict management and recovery processes.

UNV volunteers in Kenya are supporting affected communities in taking ownership of reconciliation and healing processes. In Liberia, they support the functioning of judicial systems to uphold the rule of law. In Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNV volunteers work to get people out of combat and back into their communities, with particular emphasis on disarming them of their weapons. And in Haiti, UNV volunteers contribute to building trust between communities and the police.

Community volunteers in Kenya have taken the lead in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the wake of the violence that erupted following the general elections in December 2007. “Within a matter of days, whole districts were off limits to international development actors,” reflects Elizabeth Lwanga, who was United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative at the time of the post-election crisis. “We could not get to the communities to mediate; we could not deliver food, supplies and medical care. The only ones who had access to these communities were volunteers from within them, so they were our ambassadors for peace.”

Working in close collaboration with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and the Government of Kenya, UNDP and UNV

launched an Emergency Volunteer Scheme in February 2008, designed to promote post-election community dialogue. Formalized as the Neighbourhood Volunteer Scheme (NVS), it is managed by UNV in collaboration with the National Secretariat for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management in the President’s Office. Twenty-one national UNV volunteers trained 900 prominent youth leaders, retired professionals, women and opinion leaders in conflict resolution and community security, as well as humanitarian response and early recovery.

The current United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Aeneas Chuma considers volunteerism an innate approach to real-time crisis management. “The Neighbourhood Volunteers reached a common realization that

Neighbourhood Volunteer Rose Anyango Ouma (right) works with people like David Situma (left), a carpenter in Kibera, Nairobi, to counsel and advise them on how to rebuild their businesses following the destruction caused by the post-election violence in early 2008. (Harald Franzen, 2009)

Meet a volunteer

Lahatra Rakotondradalo, a UNV volunteer Civil Engineer from Madagascar, was deployed by UNHCR in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help identify a new campsite for a wave of people arriving en masse in Minova, a town some 50 kilometres from Goma. UNHCR was working there to shelter some 4,000 internally displaced persons. Until then families had been forced to seek temporary shelter in schools, churches and the local hospital compound.

Lahatra Rakotondradalo's work is not just about engineering, however, and she is very conscious of the people she works with. "Our approach to the beneficiaries has to be rather delicate," she says. "Their change of status – from being refugees totally dependent on outside help to becoming 'repatriates' – is often difficult. Our task is to facilitate their reinstatement within their communities. So we engage former refugees in voluntary reconstruction work, from making bricks to helping build walls and sanitation facilities, and that helps a lot."



they were experiencing a serious threat to the very fabric of their society. The crisis created a sense of urgency that propelled them to come together to respond and take charge of promoting and guiding processes for recovery and reconciliation."

Serving as a Neighbourhood Volunteer has resulted in personal transformation for Duncan Opee. "I took sides during the fighting, and even my wife, who belongs to another tribe, ran away. Now I am calling for violence control and anger management, and am trying to make good the damage I contributed to."

Mariam Yahya, fondly referred to as 'Mama Mariam' by younger Neighbourhood Volunteers, adds: "Neighbourhood Volunteers are respected and known, so people now come to us with their problems. We listen and advise, mediate and negotiate. And we have been able, for example, to assist people to move back into their homes which were grabbed during the post-election violence."

Following years of conflict in Liberia, the United Nations is assisting the implementation of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and reinstating law and order. "UNMIL [The United Nations Mission in Liberia] aims to ensure that all persons and authorities observe, respect and act in accordance with national and international

legal standards administered consistently by independent judicial bodies," says Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Rule of Law. "UNV volunteers provide invaluable support to this process. They empower partners to do more to safeguard the rights and dignity of their people."

Geoffrey Omon is a lawyer from Uganda serving as a UNV volunteer Judicial Systems Monitor with the UNMIL Legal and Judicial Systems Support Division in Lofa County, where the last war broke out. As a specialist working on the rule of law, he monitors and reports on the administration of justice, builds the capacity of national partners, and engages in data collection on subjects such as gender-based violence. He also encourages and empowers community members to turn to formal justice institutions rather than settling matters out of court or resorting to 'mob justice'.

"More criminal cases are now being reported to the police for prosecution instead of to other parties," he says. "UNV volunteers promote voluntary engagement to address legal challenges, and currently some people are even volunteering to compensate the shortage of judicial personnel."

UNV is also supporting the National Youth Volunteer Service (NYVS) in Liberia, a

Aloysius Griffiths, a National Volunteer, rallies community support as he leads a parade of students in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, Liberia. The event is one of many organized in the country to raise public awareness on gender equality and women's empowerment issues. (Harald Franzen, 2009)



Ugutambuka niko kugenda

One small step after another leads to walking

project implemented by the Liberian Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNDP and UNV. Since implementation started in September 2007, the NYVS has recruited 67 university graduates, referred to as 'National Volunteers'. In a country with an 85 percent unemployment rate, the programme is providing much-needed work experience.

National Volunteers are currently teaching in elementary schools, enhancing the skills of local teachers and carrying out health awareness campaigns in clinics and communities. They also work on improving the situation of women, advocating for girls' education and an end to gender-based violence and discriminatory practices, and develop peacebuilding campaigns to reduce the divisions and polarization that exist after 15 years of civil conflict.

Sudan was engulfed in civil war for over two decades. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which calls for the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of former combatants and special groups, and the promotion of community security and arms control, was signed in 2005 to facilitate lasting peace. UNV is working with the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in monitoring and supporting the implementation of various political, military, humanitarian and developmental aspects of this agreement. UNMIS is also tasked to facilitate the

voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons; provides de-mining assistance; and contributes towards international efforts to protect and promote human rights in Sudan.

Eveline de Bruijn is a UNV volunteer from the Netherlands working with the Community Security and Arms Control programme. This UNDP programme is jointly implemented by the Government of Southern Sudan and UNMIS, and supports governmental bodies, state police, rule of law institutions and local authorities to build capacity to enhance security.

Working with community authorities, Eveline mobilizes youth, women and elders to deal with issues relating to community security and arms control awareness. She engages them in discussing their security concerns, identifying the root causes of problems, proposing projects for improved security and explains in what way the programme can support them.

For Eveline, the challenges are many. "There are 11 counties in the Jonglei State alone and I spend an average of four to five days in each county. I am constantly travelling through rough terrain and, at times, it takes 11 hours drive to cover 120 kilometres." But that is not her only concern. "The security situation is volatile and unpredictable. I have been ambushed by raiders, but fortunately my



Dutch UNV volunteer Eveline de Bruijn (right) converses with a Sudanese cattle herder near the town of Bor in Jonglei State. Since Jonglei mainly consists of pastoralist communities, cattle are highly valued and armed raids are an increasing problem. Key to resolving disputes is therefore dialogue with cattle keepers. (Tim McKulka/UNMIS, 2009)

Umutwe umwe ntiwigira inama

One head does not good council make

team colleagues and I were unharmed. When fighting breaks out, we have to discontinue our work, and be prepared to restart as soon as the security situation permits. Being a volunteer gives me the energy and inspiration to do so.”

In its recent history, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been engulfed by several conflicts. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is facilitating the implementation of the 1999 Lusaka Accord, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in their communities.

In Ituri, one of the conflict prone areas in the east, UNV and UNDP supported the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, in partnership with MONUC, FAO, UNICEF, OCHA and UNHCR. A team of fifteen national and six international UNV volunteers worked together with communities, local authorities, non-governmental and civil society organizations to re-orient the ex-combatants and sensitize communities to accept their return and reintegration.

The reintegration process was conducted at two levels. The transitional phase involved ex-combatants and communities in the

rehabilitation of the infrastructure. This close interaction gave 1,600 ex-combatants and 7,600 community members an opportunity to bond. In the sustaining phase, UNV provided 1,600 ex-combatants and 500 community members with professional training, a financial package and the support they needed to start a business.

“Through this project, 23,000 former combatants were successfully demobilized, 10,000 of them child soldiers,” says Alberto Barrera, a UNV volunteer Reinsertion Expert from Spain. “UNV volunteers bring new and creative approaches to project design. Based on its great success, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Ituri received the annual UNDP Administrator’s Award for Innovation and Commitment in 2007.”

The Head of the UNDP Office in Ituri, Jonas Mfouatie, having served himself as a UNV volunteer in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, considers volunteering the most enriching experience in his career. “UNV volunteers provide solid technical and professional expertise. They are entrusted with high levels of responsibility and are considered representatives of UNDP in the eyes of communities and local authorities,” he says. “Through their daily interaction with local authorities, civil society and communities,

ONLINE VOLUNTEERING SERVICE

The UNV Online Volunteering service connects volunteers with organizations to work online for sustainable human development, and taps their knowledge, skills and experience to help address challenges faced by developing countries. In 2008, the Online Volunteering service was relaunched and expanded to cover the French and Spanish languages as well as English. Grassroots organizations are increasingly using the service and the number of assignments increased by 45 percent. In 2008, 3,742 online volunteers (59 percent female) engaged in 5,259 assignments.

Shine a Light, a non-governmental organization network working with street children throughout Latin America, engaged a team of seven online volunteers to translate educational material and best practices from more than 200 grassroots organizations with which it collaborates. Translating from a variety of languages including Portuguese and Spanish to Aymara and Tzotzil, the online volunteers were essential to knowledge-sharing amongst the network and to tackling the crime, violence and deprivation to which street children are subjected.

“Shine a Light has made a huge impact on the lives of children in Latin America, both by increasing the capacity of grassroots non-governmental organizations and by reforming public policy, but we would never have been able to do it without the help of online volunteers,” says Kurt Shaw, Director of Shine a Light.

The Bureau for Reconstruction and Development (BRD) in Afghanistan works in the areas of human rights and capacity building of government, civil society and non-governmental organizations. Online volunteer Yin Mei Wong assisted the BRD in defining its strategy and designed action plans for implementation, guided the development of project proposals and facilitated networking with other development organizations. She developed and executed marketing and promotion strategies.

BRD Programme Director Khan Agha Dawoodzai believes that Yin Mei’s contributions have helped build the capacity of the organization to deliver its development projects. “Yin Mei and other online volunteers have helped us get linked to the world,” he says. For her part, Yin Mei remarks: “Online volunteering has added a new dimension to how I apply my skills and has deepened my interest in development work.”

UNV volunteers contribute to capacity building. Without the contributions of volunteers, the United Nations mandate of peacebuilding and sustainable development would not become a reality.”

Establishing enduring peace is a challenge in the slums of Martissant, Haiti, where around 300,000 people live in an area of less than 10 square kilometres. The population is very poor, and very young: 50 percent of the people are less than 24 years old. UNV is working together with the Civil Affairs Unit of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to reinforce security and sustain efforts toward the establishment of law and order in this violence-prone area.

UNV volunteers ensure that the situation is continuously monitored, empower community members to cooperate with police forces, and enable access to legal recourse in dealing

with violence. They also develop the capacity of local officials, including the Haiti National Police, through training, mentoring and monitoring.

J. Carter, Director of Civil Affairs at MINUSTAH, values the contribution made by UNV. “UNV volunteers engage on a daily basis with the average citizen and local official. They have been instrumental in assuring that the capacity of municipal and delegation staff have improved over the years.”

Caroline Demarque of Belgium is a UNV volunteer Civil Affairs Officer. “The work we are doing with MINUSTAH encourages the population to cooperate with the national police forces and to have recourse to legal means when it comes to fighting violence in the slum. This sense of ownership is very important in such a violence-prone area”.