



PREVENTING CONFLICT

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Conflict prevention and sustainable and equitable development are inseparable, mutually reinforcing interventions. Preventing conflict entails dealing with tensions and inequalities in the distribution of resources or access to basic services and rights that could create discord or spark violence. In the face of economic and social challenges, marginalized groups are at greater risk of falling into a vicious cycle of frustration and conflict.

UNV supports communities and disadvantaged groups in identifying and communicating their needs, and developing their capacities to improve their situations. They inspire and empower individuals and communities to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, and to embark on changing the social behaviour that results in violence.

UNV volunteers in Honduras are training youth leaders to organize voluntary leisure activities that keep them off the streets and out of violence. A similar approach was pursued by UNV volunteers in Burkina Faso, who enhanced the skills and employability of marginalized youth. In Croatia, UNV volunteers deliver services to marginalized communities and empower individuals to volunteer to support one other. In India, UNV works with development partners to assist conflict prevention efforts through a rights-based approach to development.

Latin America suffers the highest youth homicide rate in the world. It is an alarming trend that is particularly acute in Central America and one that has hindered the development of countries like Honduras for decades. The phenomenon of *maras*, or youth gangs, and gender-based violence are just two destructive influences to which Honduran youth are exposed. About 5 percent of males aged 15-24 are members of gangs.

This situation was the entry point for UNV which, together with UNFPA, UNDP, FAO, WHO/PAHO, UNICEF and local authorities, has pursued a programme since 2006 to support human security in the Honduran municipalities of Comayagua, Choluteca and Juticalpa.

The programme contributes to building a 'culture of peace' among youth at risk, and is directly benefitting 55,000 youth, half of them female. The involvement of girls and women raises awareness of the impact of gender-based violence and engages them in confronting it. UNV volunteers organized peace fairs and workshops where youth were trained in leadership, organization, violence prevention and self-esteem. They also supported the creation of youth volunteering groups to organize activities in their communities. These groups now involve increasing numbers of young volunteers, developing in them a sense of belonging to their communities that is improving their social inclusion and enhancing their understanding of the value of peaceful coexistence.

'Yopi' (right), as he likes to call himself, is a former gang member and one of the leaders of Arte and Accion in Honduras. His creativity and strong will helped him to give up a life of violence and crime in order to become a respected leader of the art group. Here he paints the arm of Adan Fuentes, a member of the wall-painting group Yopi now leads. (Andrew Smith, 2009)

Meet a volunteer

Renata Delgado-Schenk is a UNV volunteer Human Rights Officer from Germany working in Guatemala. She supports the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in strengthening the capacity of institutions to fulfil their human rights obligations when it comes to gender.

Renata (left) trains police officers on procedures that need to be followed in cases of gender-based violence against women. In cases of domestic violence, for example, police officers are sensitized to remain neutral and tactful, avoiding exacerbation of the individual's trauma through repeated interrogation.

"I am enabling women to access improved protection institutions when they have experienced such traumatic violence," Renata says. "I believe my work contributes to raising awareness about gender-based violence amongst police officers, making them more conscious of their obligations when it comes to crimes committed against women."



Andy Ventura, once a rebellious teenager from Comayagua, took part in different training activities over a period of ten months. He says the experience has changed him. "I have had the opportunity to become a volunteer myself and help friends get out of anti-social groups, and have given them leadership training. My hope is for Honduras to be a country where the culture of peace prevails, and I am helping to make that happen."

Chronic poverty, unemployment and social exclusion can increase a society's disposition towards conflict. Marginalized youth or youth frustrated by seemingly hopeless situations are at particular risk of engaging in violence, robbery, drugs or prostitution. In Burkina Faso, UNV implemented a project in partnership with the national Government, the Government of Luxembourg and local stakeholders. The project provides marginalized youth in the Hauts Bassins region with learning and employment opportunities in order to tackle their economic challenges and reduce the potential for social discord. From 2003 to 2008, it involved 27 civil society organizations and seven national agencies in training youth and providing them with access to micro-business development funds. Around 400 marginalized youth, including homeless youth and orphans, received professional training that enabled them to find a job or start up businesses that

become tangible sources of revenue.

Fatoumata Ouattara was able to set up a café through this project. "As an orphan, I had nothing and no means of raising money. Through this project, I gained business and marketing skills, and have now made enough money to be able to expand my café to sell fizzy drinks. Volunteers helped me deal with my circumstances, and I am now helping others with my story."

One distinctive aspect of the project was 'Jeunes pour Jeunes' ('Youth for Youth'), through which youth engaged in voluntary sharing of knowledge and experiences with peers and local communities. The youth produced the *Jeunesse en Devenir* (Youth in Development) bulletin, participated in 40 radio programmes and were featured in a documentary film about their training and micro-business development activities.

Through the transfer of knowledge facilitated by this project, UNV also contributed to the capacity development of partner civil society organizations. Nearly 90 percent of partner organizations now have sound financial accounting systems and have received training in micro-enterprise management and information and communication technologies. Some 1,300 of their staff, one-third of them women, were trained in data collection and the provision of psychosocial support.

Zoran Vasiljević (centre) is a national UNV volunteer from the Roma community in Croatia. As part of a UNDP partnership with local authorities, he leads children in after-school learning and socializing activities at the Capraske Poljana Community Centre at a Roma settlement. These activities are aimed at strengthening social cohesion and promoting the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups through volunteerism. (Hrvoje Žučko, 2009)



Ukuri guca muziko ntigusha

Truth tested by fire will never burn

As diverse as they are, countries that have experienced conflict in their history often share common development challenges, including traumatized communities, weakened social fabric and a lack of basic service infrastructure. A decade after the civil war ended in Croatia, its consequences still linger. In poor and isolated rural communities in the counties of Sisak-Moslavina, Zadar and Lika-Senj the population is largely comprised of Serb returnees and Croatian-Bosnian refugees, and also contains Roma minorities. They are marginalized, have limited access to social services and health care, and suffer high unemployment. Intolerance, apathy and distrust between the groups have hampered social cohesion and could, if left untended, become triggers for renewed conflict.

UNV and UNDP have been working to strengthen local development, social cohesion and the inclusion of vulnerable groups through volunteerism, including the unemployed, the sick and the disabled, the elderly, youth and children, women, and Roma. They have partnered with Government ministries, local authorities, the National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Zagreb Volunteer Centre and the local Roma centre.

Eight national UNV volunteers were drawn from within the target marginalized groups.

Having experienced the conflict and post-conflict situations themselves, they demonstrated a deep understanding for the challenges faced by remote, impoverished communities and minority groups. The UNV volunteers mobilized their communities to bridge differences and tackle challenges, facilitating communication between communities, service providers and local authorities. They also served as role models, delivering social services and building the capacity of community centres. Their contribution has increased access to social service delivery, reduced social exclusion and enhanced ownership and community-based volunteerism.

Zoran Vasiljević, a national UNV volunteer from the Roma community, assists pre-school and school-aged children in a Roma community centre by providing tutoring and after-school learning activities. "Volunteering has given me the power to change the situation in my community. I help children prepare for school and overcome language barriers. Their enthusiasm and energy is contagious, and I enjoy working with them so much I now want to become a teacher."

UNV volunteers in Kosovo help improve governance and the rule of law. Much of their work with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)



Andréa Ramde (right) serves with the National Volunteer Programme (PNVB) in Burkina Faso. She works with a female association in the village of La Toden, 130 kilometres north of Ouagadougou, helping women such as Marie Thérèse Kombelemsigri (left) gain access to micro-credit. (Kerstin Gossé/UNDP/UNV, 2009)

Iminwe iryoha inyuranye

Hands that share reveal their true beauty

revolves around empowering communities to resolve differences through dialogue, developing the capacity of democratic institutions, facilitating sustainable returns and safeguarding the rights of communities and their members.

Muhammad Bashir, a UNV volunteer Civil Affairs Officer from Pakistan, works in the town of Mitrovica in northern Kosovo. “UNV motivates people to take part in voluntary mediation activities and restores confidence among communities. After years of work, we are at the stage where local communities have been empowered to pursue their development needs and activities. And we are at their side, assisting them in building their own future.”

UNV volunteers have been working with children to foster a feeling of belonging that is free of ethnic tensions. They have empowered children and youth to discuss their rights and future aspirations, raised their awareness on conflict and security issues, and brought them together to have fun and bond through sports tournaments and camping excursions.

“I am 7,000 kilometres away from my home town, and come from a country that has also experienced conflict,” says Muhammad

Bashir, who has learned Serbo-Croatian for his work. “While there is often mistrust of the international community, people see that I am not here for personal gain, but to help them. They believe my efforts to facilitate the peaceful resolution of their problems are impartial and sincere, and contribute to a better future.”

In the pursuit of any large-scale efforts to improve people’s standard of living, local stakeholders must be engaged to win their commitment and ownership. Efforts to promote development in poverty-stricken regions in India brought mining, industrial and irrigation projects to the state of Orissa, which has a high population of tribal minorities. However, the quest to improve living conditions resulted in large-scale displacement that ousted the populace from their homes and traditional sources of livelihood. The result was growing protest, leading to tensions and violence. Demonstrations in towns such as Kashipur, Lanjigarh and Kalinganagar led to clashes between affected tribal community members and the authorities, resulting in several deaths.

UNV worked in partnership with UNDP, the Government of Orissa and the British Department for International Development

GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND EQUALITY

UNV works on mainstreaming gender issues into all aspects of prevention, conflict management, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. UNV has a total of 55 UNV volunteer Gender Specialists serving in 27 countries, up from just three in 2004. Of these, 12 were serving in peacekeeping and special political operations, including Sudan, Nepal, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Gender Specialists work with governments and civil society organizations on gender analysis and research, economic empowerment and gender-responsive budgeting, as well as on addressing the impact of armed conflict and gender-based violence. Francis Bogie Boogere is a Ugandan UNV volunteer Specialist on Gender-Based Violence working with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Burkina Faso. "In 2007, 33 percent of women surveyed reported to have experienced gender-based violence in the past twelve months; 77 percent of girls have been subjected to female genital mutilation [FGM]," he says. "How to address accepted practices is a challenge. Women often do not fully accept the intervention of a male, particularly with culturally-sensitive issues like FGM. Men, including traditional chiefs, tend to take the health of women and girls more seriously when the issue is raised by a male."

Addressing gender programming issues also involves ensuring that aid reaches women and addresses their needs and empowerment. In Ghana, UNV is working with the European Commission, UNIFEM, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to implement a programme for gender equality in aid delivery, with implementation being piloted in 12 countries worldwide. This programme targets and monitors progress towards gender equality goals, including adequate financing, accountability systems and gender-sensitive indicators and progress assessments

Nana Bemba Doreen Nti, a Ghanaian national UNV volunteer Gender Specialist working with UNIFEM, says: "This programme is successfully mobilizing the media and civil society to recognize the importance of gender-sensitive policies, strategies and resources to ensure the human development needs of women and girls are not ignored."

(DFID) to implement the Orissa Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy, a unique policy developed in close consultation with the people affected by displacement. This standardized, comprehensive plan, which also involved the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, guided the development of the 2007 National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy.

UNV volunteers empowered communities to demand an equitable, gender-sensitive approach to resettlement and rehabilitation. They raised awareness about rights and entitlements, provided counselling, and ensured grievances were heard. Documenting innovative approaches, lessons learned and best practices, they shared these with authorities to improve the resettlement process. Volunteers also encouraged displaced people to form voluntary village level committees, empowering them to develop their skills and engage in self help. One such community volunteer is Chakradhar

Patra, who was displaced from his ancestral land by an irrigation project. He now guides displaced families in shifting to a new location. "I am motivating displaced people in my area to use the compensation amount and resettlement assistance judiciously," he explains. "The resettlement and rehabilitation training programme provided a platform for me to interact as a volunteer with Government and project officials to negotiate a better deal for our fellow people in and outside the village." UNV volunteers continue to play a watchdog role, ensuring that there is accountability and transparency for the beneficiaries and maintaining sustainability for the project.