



# INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE

*The drive behind innovation and knowledge in UNV is to enhance organizational investments, functions and human resources that support the integration of volunteerism into peace and development initiatives. By recognizing UNV's comparative advantage in the global development arena, we fulfil our mandate through constantly improving knowledge-based expertise and leveraging innovative advisory solutions.*

In 2014, the global dialogues around the post-2015 sustainable development agenda brought together stakeholders to discuss innovative and participatory means of implementation for the new agenda, bringing together a multitude of partners, including volunteer groups. The fact file for this chapter features UNV's role in **positioning volunteerism in the post-2015 development agenda** on page 34.

## **BOOSTING UN VOLUNTEER CAPACITY THROUGH TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

UNV's Capacity Development and Learning Facility enables UNV Field Units to plan and host national and regional capacity development and learning events for their UN Volunteers. In 2014, some 430 UN Volunteers participated in learning activities developing skills in communication and advocacy, participatory approaches to development, stress and conflict management and knowledge sharing. The trainings also enhanced understanding of the codes of conduct and ethics that are integral to all UN Volunteer assignments.

UN Volunteers were polled for feedback following each training, yielding over 200 responses. Approximately 88 per cent of respondents considered the training immediately applicable to their assignment; 91 per cent would recommend the training to other volunteers. Over 80 per cent found the training materials helpful in promoting volunteerism at their duty station. Overall, networking and teamwork were highlighted as positive training outcomes.

In January and March 2014, around 100 fully funded international UN Youth Volunteers attended their pre-assignment training at UNV headquarters in Bonn, Germany. They were subsequently deployed to UN entities in 51 countries. Similarly, all UN Youth Volunteers deployed worldwide are to undergo a substantive

assignment preparation training, aimed at ensuring that they are more motivated and better equipped to carry out their assignments and promote volunteerism for peace and development. With the launch of the new UN Youth Volunteer modality in March 2014, UNV developed a specific learning component, including additional training, strengthening peer support networks and establishing mechanisms for mentoring.

In further support of capacity development, Action Aid Denmark and UNV signed a Memorandum of Understanding to engage in new areas of collaboration, including capacity building and training of UN Volunteers, as well as local UNV partners and collaborators, such as civil society organizations and youth, and developing joint learning content.

## **VALUING THE IMPACT OF ONLINE VOLUNTEERING**

A 2014 evaluation of the UNV Online Volunteering service assessed the service's impact on organizations, beneficiaries and UNV, as well as on the UN Online Volunteers themselves. The evaluation found that the service has played a unique role in expanding and mainstreaming online volunteerism globally, and is highly appreciated by organizations and volunteers.

Organizations have benefitted enormously from the support of UN Online Volunteers, especially in the area of providing access to basic services for local communities. For civil society organizations with limited resources in particular, the impact of online volunteer engagement is significant: 41% involve UN Online Volunteers for technical expertise that is not available internally. In many instances, organizations without access to online volunteers would have difficulties achieving their own peace and development outcomes.

Another finding that came out strongly was that online volunteering reaches specific target groups – persons with disabilities, women and volunteers from developing countries – that often have restricted access to volunteer opportunities.

For UN Online Volunteers, personal satisfaction and development are fundamental results reflecting the mutually reinforcing aspects of volunteering. Some 84 per cent of online volunteers found that their online volunteering experience had contributed to their personal development and learning.

UNV's ability to foster South-South cooperation in its approach to volunteerism – 60 per cent of online volunteers are from developing countries – was identified as its unique added value, helping to bridge and expand volunteerism beyond a more traditional North-South relationship. UN Online Volunteers bring local or regional knowledge relevant to the organizations, as well as their own rich perspectives.

## PROMOTING ECO-TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON

The village of Tayap in central Cameroon struggled with deforestation from commercial logging and slash-and-burn agriculture. The 254 villagers realized that they needed to act to prevent and reverse the loss of habitats, biodiversity and agricultural land. In 2010, the cooperative *Agriculteurs Professionnels du Cameroun* (AGRIPO) was born. AGRIPO piloted an innovative rural development programme using agro-ecology, eco-tourism and gender-sensitive funding to develop alternative and sustainable sources of income. Since 2013, AGRIPO has partnered with UN Online Volunteers to develop the community's capacities and to improve and scale up its programmes.

In 2014, 45 UN Online Volunteers from Africa, America, Asia and Europe contributed a total of 45 months of work towards AGRIPO's projects. They contributed to the

cooperative's success by producing information materials on Tayap and local economic development initiatives, as well as its 2014 annual report. Volunteers also designed architectural plans for two eco-lodges (now under construction) and developed lessons to educate 60 primary school children on sustainable development.

UN Online Volunteers elaborated four new projects in water harvesting, solar energy, robust businesses and ICT for development that will be launched in 2015. Through successful funding proposals, these volunteers helped mobilize US \$30,000 for AGRIPO's activities in 2015.

AGRIPO's achievements in 2014 included establishing a nursery of 11,877 seedlings (including local species of fruit trees, wild mangoes and cocoa) on a 2-hectare plot and securing 60 hectares for sustainable crop rotation. It also established a micro-credit scheme for 25 women, funded by the UNDP/Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme. The cooperative received the Climate Challenge Innovation in Agriculture and Forestry Award of Agence Française de Développement and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development in 2015.

// **We are grateful for the collaboration with all our volunteers, who bring diverse and abundant skills that have enabled and continue to enable us to move forward in areas as complex as climate change resilience, efficient and sustainable energy, and sound business practices.**

*Adeline Flore Ngo-Samnack, General Director, Cooperative Agriculteurs Professionnels du Cameroun*

*Deputy Executive Coordinator Rosemary Kalapurakal briefing UN Youth Volunteers during their pre-deployment training in Bonn, Germany, in March 2014. (UNV, 2014)*

