



# KNOWLEDGE AND INNOVATION

*UNV emphasizes knowledge and innovation in its work to build the financial, human resource and organizational infrastructure that makes it possible to quickly deploy volunteers for peace and development work in every corner of the world. Improvements in knowledge-based expertise and innovative technologies further advance UNV's comparative advantage in the development arena, as the only UN entity with a broad and embedded network of volunteer experts on call.*

In an effort to support the work of UN Volunteers on the ground, a 2015 *Capacity Development Learning Facility* meeting was held in Gao, **Mali**, and attracted about 20 national and international volunteers from the surrounding regions. The workshop covered topics such as gender, justice and social cohesion, among many others. For the first time, volunteer-involving organizations proactively attended the workshop.

Since its launch in the year 2000, the UN Online Volunteering service has continued to grow – with now over 480,000 registered users from some 180 countries – and avails volunteer opportunities and development impact via the internet. The fact file features some of the **success stories of UN Online Volunteers contributing from the comfort of their homes.**

## REPORTING ON TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE IN SECOND STATE OF THE WORLD'S VOLUNTEERISM REPORT

In 2015, UNV produced its second-ever SWVR and delivered a unique focus on *Transforming Governance*, which is the first global review of the role of volunteerism in improving the way citizens are governed and engaged. The report provides evidence from around the world on how formal and informal volunteers engage with governance actors to strengthen participation, accountability and responsiveness in peace and development efforts.

Through the SWVR, UNV promoted a global conversation about the role of volunteerism in governance as a critical factor for successful implementation of the SDGs. The report contributed to the positioning of UNV as a leader on volunteerism for peace and development and provided UNV and its field units a tool for advocacy and partnerships.

Drawing on evidence from countries as diverse as **Brazil, Kenya, Lebanon and Bangladesh**, the UN report shows how ordinary people are volunteering their time, energies and skills to improve the way they are governed and engaged at local, national and global levels.

Better governance across the board is a prerequisite for the success of the SDGs, which were agreed upon at United Nations Headquarters in September 2015. Building on the SWVR publications, UNV enhanced and deepened engagement with academia, research institutions and civil society, civic society, volunteer experts and researchers. UNV coordinated events in Washington and Nairobi that brought together around 80 stakeholders from various sectors to explore how to measure volunteerism within the context of the SDGs. The events fed into the workshop on *Strategic Directions for Global Research on Volunteering for Sustainable Development 2015-2030*, which brought together around 70 stakeholders from governments, academia, civil society and volunteer-involving organizations in Bonn. These events provide a clear direction for UNV to pursue the knowledge agenda in the coming years.

## NATIONAL UN VOLUNTEERS SELECTED AS UNDP YOUTH LEADS IN SRI LANKA

The UNDP *Youth LEADs Programme* was initiated in 2015 with the selection of four national UN Youth Volunteers charged with finding innovative solutions to existing and emerging development challenges. Countries such as **Sri Lanka** have been advocating the value of volunteerism in taking a stronger lead towards sustainable development. The programme provides an opportunity for youth to familiarize themselves with UNDP's work, infuse new thinking into the organization and contribute to sustainable development. A pilot of this initiative took place under the overall guidance and supervision of the

UNDP Sri Lanka Country Director. In the trial, four Youth LEADs, recruited under the UN Youth Volunteer Modality, will support the UNDP Sri Lanka Country Programme for a duration of 12 months in its youth-related policy, programming, advocacy, innovation and outreach work.

Youth Leads have since worked on HackADev, Sri Lanka's first social innovation hackathon. "HackADev was unique because it brought together hundreds of young people to ideate and create techno-social solutions that addressed some of our most complex human development challenges," says national UN Youth Volunteer UNDP Youth LEAD Isuru Somasinghe. The winning HackADev team is currently working with UNDP and the Parliament of Sri Lanka to develop an app that links the public with parliamentarians.

The twelve-month Youth LEADs pilot will culminate with a summit on Foresight and Innovation for Sustainable Human Development. "Looking back, we would have never imagined to engage with the plethora of private sector, professional and civil society organizations we have to date, and we couldn't be happier to see all our work coming together at the Summit," reflects Sulaiman Rameez, a UN Youth Volunteer UNDP Youth LEAD.

UNDP and UNV in Sri Lanka have subsequently shared the success and knowledge from the Youth LEADs Programme with other UNDP country offices, leading to the piloting of similar initiatives in other countries. As the successful pilot winds down, UNDP Sri Lanka is now kick-starting the second phase of the Programme.

**// Being a Youth LEAD has been a valuable opportunity to be part of UNDPs effort to combine youth, innovation and sustainable development.**

*Archana Heenpella, national UN Youth Volunteer UNDP Youth LEAD in Sri Lanka*



Shenrui Li

## UN VOLUNTEER INSPIRATION

### USING SPACE TECHNOLOGY FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

How might space technologies play an important role in the implementation of the SDGs? Think of their potential to guide and inform policies for all stages of disaster management. Shenrui Li, a national UN Volunteer Programme Officer based at the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response in China, worked on the application of satellite-based navigation systems in disaster risk reduction throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Shenrui was able to cull satellite images that documented wide-scale destruction by natural or human forces. The space technologies were also instrumental in detailing cities that were off the electrical grid due to any range of factors from severe storms to armed attacks. Before joining UNV, Shenrui interned in monitoring and evaluation at UNDP China, where he also helped remotely coordinate Nepal earthquake relief efforts.

Shenrui was responsible for coordinating with the National Disaster Risk Centre of China and the China Satellite Navigation Office to integrate the country's home-grown BeiDou satellite navigation satellite system into disaster management systems throughout the Asia-Pacific region. He was also responsible for the evaluation of the Global Navigation Satellites System (GNSS) in the context of disaster risk reduction. During this assignment, he analyzed the terminal requirements of BeiDou and its availability for the Asia-Pacific region, and he developed a universal application guideline to integrate GNSS into disaster management mechanisms globally, which will largely contribute to strengthening disaster risk reduction capacities in China and among its neighbours.

*"This UNV position is meaningful work. Serving as a UN Volunteer gave me a great opportunity to learn from experts and engage with real-world issues. I would definitely like to encourage more talented youths with relevant background to join the UNV team and to consider participating in constructing the capacity of space technology that brings the benefits of space to humanity". National UN Volunteer Programme Officer Shenrui Li*

*National UN Volunteer UNDP Youth LEAD Joanne Kotelawala (centre) participates in a Capacity Development and Learning Facility Training for UN Volunteers in Sri Lanka. (UNV, 2015)*

