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UN Volunteer Francesca Pinna (middle) during her assignment in Haiti, (UNV, 2014)

De Italia a Haití

My name is Francesca Pinna, I am a United Nations Volunteer in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office in Haiti. I never thought that I would get engaged in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). It happened by chance after the earthquake that hit the Italian city of Aquila in 2009.

Port-au-Prince, Haiti: My name is Francesca Pinna, I am a United Nations Volunteer in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office in Haiti.

I never thought that I would get engaged in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). It happened by chance after the earthquake that hit the Italian city of Aquila in 2009. I understood what an unexpected natural disaster could really provoke and how much destruction could have been avoided through an adequate knowledge of disaster risks and appropriate preparedness.

That occasion was also the first time that I saw the importance and the power of volunteers.

People came to help the people that had been affected by the earthquake. The volunteers were the biggest machine that acted immediately and that cared for the neediest. I loved the energy and wanted to be a part of it.

After a period in Senegal as a UN Youth Volunteer, where I was assigned to the Regional Emergency Programme division to represent the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the regional DRR task Force, I was offered a UN Volunteer assignment in the UNDP Haiti DRR Unit. The environment I found was very different to the one that I had left in Senegal. It was much more complicated and intricate.

In Haiti, I have been mainly involved in communications and resource mobilization. In particular, I've had the opportunity and great pleasure to support the National Committee of Public Education and Awareness Raising (CTESP). This committee, which groups the main DRR stakeholders in support to the Haitian Direction of Civil Protection, aims to improve public knowledge around the main disaster risks and the best practices to implement throughout all phases of a disaster.

While supporting this committee, I actively participated in the organization of several events, in particular the activities of "observation urbaine" - in which children are accompanied by volunteers to identify disaster risks in their cities and suggest solutions - and the "vendredis de la protection civile" – through which volunteers go to selected schools and teach the best practices to put in place before, during and after a disaster.

The volunteers that I had the chance to work with are an example of caring for each other, of dedication to improve their society, and a symbol of how excellence in a field of work can be achieved regardless of their professional status. Never like in Haiti have I understood the power of being a volunteer and the inspiration that it can be towards others, and not only through implemented actions, but just through example. The power of being someone that engages in problems that don't necessarily affect them directly is an element of success in development that should not be over looked in the new post-2015 era.

Volunteers, through their determination, understanding and a sense of empathy, are a valuable resource to guarantee direct contact with beneficiaries. Through the opportunities that have been given to me by the United Nations Volunteer programme, I feel that my technical capacities have been overall enriched, but what grew the most is my motivation to be active in this field of work.

I will always have a volunteer spirit in whatever job I will do.



América Latina y el Caribe

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