



Children celebrating after successful repair of a borehole by UN Community Volunteers in Bara Community - Yobe State, Nigeria. @UNV 2018

UNV and UNDP launch ‘Volunteer Action Counts’ to support communities affected by humanitarian crises in Nigeria

This new UN Volunteer modality subscribes to the principle that no-one should be left behind. UN Community Volunteers respond to the needs of UN agencies to have immediate interlocutors at the local level to do community mobilization, data collection, information sharing, coordination of activities, etc. It empowers communities and positions them squarely at the centre of UN projects.

It builds on their local knowledge, access to networks and unique skills in adapting to challenging contexts. As such it contributes to the implementation of the ‘New Way of Working’ agenda that is being pursued by the UN system in humanitarian and recovery contexts.

In North-East Nigeria, UNV, UNDP and ECHO are strengthening their efforts to reach out to

displaced communities affected by the conflict and to respond to issues that warrant their attention, such as community cohesion and access to economic opportunities and to better living conditions.

Over 130,000 people have been displaced since late 2017, of which 21,207 in May 2018 alone, according to a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) released in June of this year.

“These movements present major humanitarian challenges as resources are often already overstretched in the locations in which these civilians arrive,” the report emphasizes.

In an effort to support post-conflict recovery and development with UNDP, UNV initiated and launched “Volunteer Action Counts”, a campaign that integrates volunteers into the objectives and activities of UNDP and ECHO in the implementation of village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) in communities most affected by the humanitarian tragedy in North-East Nigeria.

“ Volunteer Action Counts’ is set to play a pivotal role in the humanitarian crisis response and to have a decisive impact on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda. The campaign pushes to put communities in the driving seat to participate in their own development, says Afke Bootsman, Regional Director of the UNV Office for West and Central Africa.



Launching the campaign, UNV mobilized a number of UN Community Volunteers to serve as Community Village Supervisors on the UNDP and ECHO project, to work in 10 communities across the crisis-affected region of North-East Nigeria, with a focus on Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States.

The added value of UN Community Volunteers is that they reside within their communities, they speak the local languages and understand the culture and norms of their communities. They are directly involved in humanitarian, peace building and post conflict recovery activities, as well as sustainable development and poverty eradication work.

“ I am highly impressed by the manner in which the community came together to contribute towards this campaign. After going through such a disaster, this Community Volunteerism effort will foster social

“ cohesion aiming towards lasting resilience, says Edward Kallon, United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of UNDP in Nigeria.

Under the ‘Volunteer Action Counts’ campaign, the pilot communities of Ngwom, Bara, Sangere, Uba and Bumsa were mobilized to participate in advocacy and awareness-raising around health and agriculture, tree planting and clean-up activities, borehole renovation, drainage construction, and rehabilitation of health centres, among others.

The Ngwom community, for example, was victim of the insurgent’s activities. The town was burnt and livelihoods destroyed, thereby forcing people to seek protection and residence within Maiduguri as Internally Displaced Persons. The community was recently rebuilt thanks to the support from UNDP and other partners.

UNV mobilized UN Community Volunteers to facilitate the planting of 450 trees, donated by Ngwom VSLA members, the African Climate Change Research Centre in Maiduguri and the Jewel Environmental Initiative NGO based in Gombe, since the locality has no trees at the moment.



Since early March 2018, Ahmad Abdullahi is a UN Community Volunteer serving as Community Supervisor with UNDP for the implementation of village savings and loan associations (VSLA) in Ngwom. He says:

“ Involving men in women empowerment programmes like VSLAs is crucial as it does not only generate a space for women to expand their activities beyond the household, but it also leads to the emancipation of both groups. VSLA has a positive impact on women, families and the environment.

This pilot has taught UNV and UNDP many lessons, such as ensuring that committed and motivated women and men are recruited as UN Community Volunteers to promote development and peace-building initiatives. Other lessons are the positive and quick impact of the campaign on the living conditions of the communities affected by the humanitarian crisis, enhancing cohesion, solidarity, trust and confidence amongst community members.

Based on the positive pilot in North-East Nigeria, UNV will scale up this modality in other countries throughout the Sahel region.

 **África Subsahariana**

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