Engaging youth as key actors of change in West and Central Africa

To respond to these challenges, UNV’s adoption and implementation of youth initiatives, including providing young people with the opportunity to contribute to peace and development through UN Youth Volunteer assignment, has been successful in many parts of the world, such as in West and Central Africa.

In this region, UNV continues its efforts to provide more young people with opportunities to advance peace and development and build their capacity through volunteering.

In 2017, 1,820 onsite UN Volunteers and 11,273 UN Online Volunteers serving around the world with UN entities and NGOs were under the age of 29.

In West and Central Africa, UNV plans to offer more volunteering and capacity-building opportunities to young people through new and stronger partnerships with UN agencies and partners in the coming years. The main
outcomes to be achieved are the recognition of youth as a driving force for peace and development, and advanced capacity-building to enable youth participation in building resilient communities.

In this regard, the UNV Regional Office for West and Central Africa has developed partnerships and capacity-building activities to better engage youth in community, national, regional and international projects and programmes.

For example, as part of the UN University Volunteers programme, in June 2018 the UNV Regional Office signed a partnership with the Institute of Management of Senegal (ISM). The goal is to provide registered students with professional opportunities with UN agencies, and enhance their skills and engagement in development issues as UN University Volunteers.

UNV Portfolio Specialist Sika Ahawo explains the UN Youth Volunteers / University Volunteers modality to ISM students in Dakar. (UNV, 2018)

Eva Aby Gaye, 20 years old, studying communications and project management at ISM, wishes to be one of the five students who will be selected for the pilot phase of this joint project, which is a first in Africa:

“This project between UNV and ISM enables youth to leverage their skills and energy into areas that offer them better career opportunities for the future. Through the University Volunteers programme, young people can contribute to the UN mandate while upgrading their skills and experience -- Eva Aby Gaye, student from ISM.

Rabiatou Diallo (26 years old) is a UN Youth Volunteer Communications and Reporting Assistant with UNDP in Guinea since March 2018. She was involved in micro-projects managed by UNDP to support Ebola survivors through income-generating activities and the construction of health centres. She contributed, through field visits, evaluation and awareness-raising efforts, to fighting the stigmatization of people cured from Ebola and
enhance their economic and social integration, especially the community of Koropara in Eastern Guinea.

“Through UNV, youth in Guinea are given the opportunity to be involved in issues that are high on the development agenda of the country. I strengthen my leadership skills and, through exposure to the functioning of the UN system in my country, I gain unique professional experience that will help me in the future -- Rabiatou Diallo

Ramatoulaye Dia is a UN Youth Volunteer serving as Executive Assistant at the UN Women Regional Office in Dakar, Senegal. She was one of 15 UN Youth Volunteers, of 9 different nationalities, who participated in the pre-assignment training during the regional capacity-building workshop organized by UNV in West and Central Africa. In her view, volunteering with UNV is a great opportunity to gain experience and contribute to development:

“There was a moment when I wondered about my future, about what I would do, and then I came across this great opportunity to serve as a UN Volunteer advocate for women. I am really grateful to UNV for this -- Ramatoulaye Dia

In addition, through its Online Volunteering service, UNV offers thousands of young people the opportunity to put their skills at the service of
development and peace. In 2017, almost 17,900 UN Online Volunteers, the majority of whom are under 29 years of age, supported over 2,200 organizations around the world.

Afrique subsaharienne

• youth • West and Central Africa • capacity building • UN Youth Volunteers

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 4: Quality education, SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10: Reduced inequalities