



Nono Noelle Molipo Bilepo, a UN Volunteer Movement Control Officer with the UN Support Office for Somalia, managing logistics during her assignment.

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UN Volunteers help deliver peace in Somalia during COVID-19

For several years, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has supported the United Nations missions in Somalia in delivering peace and development.

Currently, 40 UN Volunteers are deployed with the UN Support Office for Somalia (UNSOS) and 12 UN Volunteers with the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). They serve from different locations in Somalia and Kenya. This is a significant increase over the years from 18 UN Volunteers in 2015.

“ With an average age of 42 years and a gender ratio of 30 per cent women, UNSOS is making significant progress towards achieving gender parity among UN Volunteers.

Most UN Volunteers serve in communications, movement control, aviation, transport, logistics, environment, and medical and electoral support.

For example, UN Volunteers are actively providing medical support to mission personnel across the country. They coordinate training programmes for medical staff of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), assist medical operations and management and participate in the mass casualty incidence response, evacuations, and preparing of standard operating procedures.

Dr Jainarayan Singh, UN Volunteer Medical Doctor with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Somalia, is one of them.

In his role as Health Manager ad interim and medical doctor, Dr Singh is responsible for overseeing medical care and health support for the 1,050 UN staff (and 4,000 dependents) in-country, ensuring that humanitarian workers and other staff are fit and able to continue delivering essential services.

“ Our main challenge is to provide a high standard of emergency and routine healthcare. The longstanding instability means healthcare services are poor, and many services are unavailable or inaccessible. We need to be prepared for any kind of medical emergency. --Dr Jainarayan Singh, UN Volunteer Medical Doctor

Several UN Volunteers have also been supporting the Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG). Last year, they helped in providing technical and operational support to the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) in organizing voter registration.

This year, they helped deliver parliamentary elections, particularly assisting the operationalization of the new NIEC sub national field structures.

UN Volunteers also play a critical role in the joint mission air operations in Somalia, supporting daily flight scheduling and safety and security among other important flight operational procedures. They also support cross-border movement coordination and control, ensuring critical logistical support is provided to AMISOM, UNSOM and the Somali National Army.

Nono Noelle Molipo Bilepo is one of the UN Volunteer Movement Control Officers with UNSOS. Her day-to-day work involves accurate, timely and efficient coordination of travel processes and procedures for both personnel and cargo.

UNV facilitates administration of the UN Volunteers, supporting travel, medical

arrangements and other human resource procedures necessary for successful fulfillment of their assignments.

“ To support the UN Volunteers during their assignments, UNV offers regular trainings, communications support and retreats to reflect on their assignments. --Dinna Urio, UNV Programme Support Officer

With the outbreak of COVID-19, UNV developed administrative guidelines containing operational measures for management of UN Volunteers including travel, medical and telecommuting guidelines.

The travel logistics support includes enrolment in the International SOS assistance programme that provides expanded protection to deal with medical needs that might arise for UN Volunteers. UNV also extended the medical coverage for UN Volunteers by CIGNA International to include medical emergencies that may arise due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

When COVID-19 spread into Somalia, the missions authorized flexible working arrangements for UN staff and UN Volunteers to work outside of the duty station, in response to COVID-19-related disruptions. The mission supported non-essential volunteers to travel back to and work from their home countries until the COVID-19 situation eases, with the exception of critical duties that must be performed from within Somalia. UN Volunteers working remotely are still receiving all the necessary support to carry out their duties.

Despite the challenging work environment, UN Volunteers continue supporting peace and development in Somalia with the belief that a better future is possible for the country, which has been heavily impacted by insecurity for several years now. As Dr Jainarayan Singh puts it:

“ I chose to become a UN Volunteer in Somalia to learn about the hardship faced not only by the local community but also by the humanitarian community, the aid workers. This is my chance to help improve people’s health and wellbeing and support everybody. --Dr Jainarayan Singh



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