



UN Volunteers support environmental initiatives across the East and Southern Africa region.
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Nine UN Volunteers. Five countries. #ForNature.

Every year, hundreds of UN Volunteers provide critical support to United Nations entities in conserving the environment. For this year's World Environment Day, we share an overview of the experiences of nine UN Volunteers from five countries in East and Southern Africa, working tirelessly to help save nature from extinction. Starting this World Environment Day, we will be sharing the stories of these UN Volunteers and the initiatives that they are engaged in, reminding all of us that it is time for humanity to work with nature and not against it, for our future.

Kenya

Lawrence Nzuve, Un Volunteer Communications and Outreach Officer, UN Environment (UNEP)

As a Communication and Outreach Officer, Lawrence supports the communications activities on water diplomacy of the EU-funded project *Support to the Effective Cooperation and Coordination of Cross-border Initiatives in Southwest Ethiopia-Northwest Kenya, Marsabit-Borana & Dawa, and Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia (SECCC)*. Lawrence also supports the Africa Office Regional Communication and Information Officer on communication

around UNEP's 7 priority areas: Climate Change, Disasters and Conflicts, Ecosystems Management, Environmental Governance, Harmful Substances and Hazardous Waste, Resource Efficiency and Environment Under Review.

According to UNEP's Regional Director and Representative of the Africa Office, Dr Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, volunteer professionals like Lawrence are essential to UNEP's work. "UNEP Africa Office, as one of the offices working with a large pool of volunteers, takes pride in the work our volunteers professionals do to contribute to the UN system activities in support of Agenda 2030," she says.

“ Volunteerism is essential to ensure that global sustainable development efforts are owned by all people, implemented by all people and for all people. On World Environment Day 2020, I salute all volunteers working behind the scenes to support the office in exceptionally difficult circumstances to help all of us meet our collective mandate. --Dr Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Regional Director and Representative of the Africa Office, UNEP

Sofia Mendez and Peter Kibe, UN Volunteer Project Coordination Assistants, UNEP

According to UNEP, about two to three billion tonnes of fine soil particles leave Africa every year in dust storms, draining the continent of its fertility and biological productivity. Sofia Mendez is from Costa Rica and serving as UN Volunteer Project Coordination Assistant in UNEP's Science Division. She is working for UNEP's Sand and Dust Storms Programme that aims to tackle challenges that affect the health and livelihoods of millions of people across the world.

Peter Kibe is a national UN Volunteer specialist, serving in UNEP as a Project Coordination Assistant within the World Environment Situation Room (WESR) in Nairobi, Kenya. This unit seeks to address the data gaps that exist in the world especially around environmental issues by consolidating data acquired from various stakeholders in the environment sector and UN Member States, thus offering a one-stop shop for environmental data to enable well-informed decisions. Peter supports the planning and monitoring of WESR project tasks delivery for technical development and content management. According to Peter, nature's wellbeing is a fundamental concept in the existence and well-being of humanity and should be highly regarded.

Verozian Mang'eli, UN Volunteer Freshwater Specialist, UNEP

Verozian is a national UN Volunteer with the Freshwater Ecosystems Unit in UNEP.

Volunteerism is the path that she has chosen to share her professional skills and contribute to the achievement of global sustainable development. With a training in water science and engineering and vast experience in the field of water and environmental management, she contributes to the development, implementation and monitoring of projects to restore and protect freshwater ecosystems. Verozian was also one of the volunteers awarded during the inaugural Regional Volunteer Awards organized by UNV and several partners to commemorate International Volunteer Day on 5 December 2019.

Jescah Muyia, Swahili translator, UNEP

Jescah Muyia is supporting UNEP as a UN Volunteer Kiswahili Translator and Social Media Assistant, ensuring UNEP is able to reach the Swahili-speaking community that mainly live in the east, central and southern Africa region. In support of the World Environment Day, she translated the entire dedicated website into Kiswahili. She is currently also promoting relevant content on social media accounts including [Facebook](#), Twitter (@UNEP_Kiswahili) and [Instagram](#).

Ethiopia

Misgana Elias Kallore, UN Volunteer National Project Coordinator, Switch Africa Green, UNEP

Ethiopia is one of the countries most affected by climate change, which is often felt in the form of flooding, drought and food insecurity due to higher temperatures, reduced rainfall, and changes in precipitation. Misgana, a national UN Volunteer Project Coordinator with UNEP in Ethiopia is helping reverse these trends. She is actively supporting the country through Switch Africa Green, a regional programme implemented in seven African countries. According to Misgana, change often starts with a change in mindsets and with climate change, it's no different. With knowledge of the issues, comes responsible and accountable action.

The work of UN Volunteers is widely recognized by UNEP colleagues and senior management, including Deputy Executive Director, Dr Joyce Msuya.

“ UN Volunteers bring to UNEP dynamic energy, diversity, youth and skills in support of the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. I am grateful for their commitment and drive to make this planet a better place for all. --Dr Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP

Uganda

Sheku Tamba Davowa, UN Volunteer Programme Management Specialist, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Sheku is a Sierra Leonean working in Mbale, Eastern Uganda, with UNDP as a UN Volunteer Programme Management Specialist. He is an environment and development practitioner with a background in agriculture. Sheku coordinates the project *Integrated Landscape Management for Improved Livelihoods and Ecosystem Resilience in Mount Elgon*. This aims to empower communities to manage their production landscapes in an integrated manner for improved livelihoods and ecosystem resilience. "This requires communities and farmers to be involved in their farming and other economic activities to enhance their livelihoods but in an environmentally friendly manner," he says.

Zimbabwe

Shingirai Mthabeni, UN Volunteer, UNDP

Zimbabwe is one of the countries most impacted by biodiversity loss and climate change. Through a UNDP project, Shingirai, a UN Volunteer with UNDP Zimbabwe is helping local communities in Gokwe region earn livelihoods from dried vegetables.

Comoros

Houda Abdoulbastoi, UN Volunteer Technical Advisor of the Local Civil Protection Unit, UNDP

Deep in Foubouni, a town located on the north of the island of Grande Comore in Comoros, Houda Abdoulbastoi joined the local community in the village of Sidjou in support of a reforestation initiative. She is part of the UNDP project team working to strengthen Comoros's resilience to climate change and disasters. One of the activities she is leading involves reforestation programmes on nearly 700 ha in the degraded areas of the hills that are exposed to landslides, throughout the national territory.

In these exceptional times, nature is sending us a message:

- To care for ourselves, we must care for nature.
- It's time to wake up. To take notice. To raise our voices.
- It's time to build back better for people and planet.

We hope that through the stories and actions of these UN Volunteers, we shall all be inspired to rise up to the urgent call of nature and take action for the one planet we all call

home.



East and Southern Africa

• World Environment Day • UNDP

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 3: Good health and well-being](#) [SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation](#) [SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities](#) [SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production](#) [SDG 13: Climate change](#) [SDG 14: Life below water](#) [SDG 15: Life on land](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)