



Online Volunteers honoured for 'outstanding' contributions to peace and development

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Every year, more than 10,000 online volunteers engage in the work of non-profit development organizations through UNV's Online Volunteering service. The award honours the contributions of these volunteers who work entirely over the Internet to contribute to peace and development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A jury of experts in volunteerism and development cooperation chose the winners based on their "outstanding" commitment and contributions, the results of their collaboration and their impact on the activities of the development organizations they supported. The jury included:

- Mr. Alejandro Díaz Garreta, Director, Volunteering and Youth Division, Fundación Telefónica, Spain
- Ms. Anne Callanan, Chief, Recruitment and Reassignment Branch, Human Resources Division, World Food Programme (WFP), Italy
- Mr. Geoff King, Director, Volunteer and Business Partnership Section, Community Partnerships and Latin America Branch, Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), Australia
- Ms. Madina Athie, President, ONG Citoyennes et Citoyens Debout, Mauritania
- Ms. Tiziana Oliva, Director for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, VSO, United Kingdom
- UNV representatives from country offices and headquarters

The winners of the Online Volunteering Award 2011 are:

Akanksha Shukla: Online volunteer Akanksha Shukla from India helped the Cameroonian NGO Goodness and Mercy Missions (GMM) improve its "Children education through women empowerment" project, which subsequently won the World Bank's Cameroon Development Marketplace Competition. The project, which aims to enable 100 women to

secure their family income through palm oil trading and send their children to school, was the third among 15 projects that were awarded for their replicable innovative approach and high potential for development impact.

Alex Kambou, Ali Siribié, Bernard K. Allouan: Three IT experts helped the NGO La ferme aux arbres de Dekese develop a software to capture and analyze population related data. The organization works to support the population of Dekese, a war-torn and isolated region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Adapted to the local context, the population management tool will enhance the local administration's capacity to plan and implement projects to advance socio-economic development in the region.

Alicia Dorr, Eleanor Wragg, Jessica Anne Wise, Kari Kitiuk Marta, Jankovic, Mary McKeown, Sarah Shirley, Tara Green: These eight online volunteers transcribed more than forty hours of audio interviews with development workers and volunteers, who over the past twenty years have dedicated themselves to helping the most vulnerable citizens in Eastern Europe. These interviews formed the basis of a book that was produced by the Eastern Europe Aid & Development Network, a knowledge-sharing initiative for Irish charities working in Eastern Europe coordinated by the Comber Foundation.

Álvaro Martín, Annalisa Foglia, Dina Mansour, Gayatri Navaratnam, Karolina Ginalska, Katerina Papadopoulou, Laura Sánchez, Paola Cavallari, Peter Weekley, Porzia Persio, Ülgen Türkmen, Yafín Acedo: These volunteers are part of a group of 70 online volunteers, who have contributed extensively, during several months, to the Peace Bag for EuroMed Youth toolkit, drafting, reviewing and translating the 191 page publication into 12 languages, as well as creating the layout and a web version. The Peace Bag, which offers practical tools to promote a culture of peace at the local and regional level across the Mediterranean, has been developed in a participatory process that involved 18 youth-led and youth-serving organizations from 14 countries in the region, coordinated by the Fundació Catalunya Voluntària.

Anup Tiwari, Bibiana Restrepo, Caroline Joseph, Halima Tahirkheli, June Aluoch, Kara Kristine Manso, Mona Saleh, Punam Chowdhury, Radha Taralekar, Reena Rae, Vy Nguyen, Yann Say-Liang-Fat: Sharing their diverse medical expertise, a team of twelve online volunteers developed tools and materials that help the Kitega Community Centre sensitize the local community on health issues and good practices. The organization's health education programme benefits the rural population of Kitega, located about 40km from the Ugandan capital.

Edmund Paul Kalekyezi: Online volunteer Edmund Paul Kalekyezi, a legal expert from Uganda, prepared legal recommendations on Namibian laws and policies related to volunteerism. The paper supported Namibian policy makers formulate a well-considered policy seeking to create an environment in which volunteerism can flourish and act as a driver of economic, social and political development in Namibia.

Maria Jakimovska: Online volunteer Maria Jakimovska, a business development specialist born and raised in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, supported the newly formed Cameroonian youth-led organization Leaders of Tomorrow International (LOTI) in launching its first programme: an IT centre that offers underprivileged students free Internet access and training to pursue academic studies online, in addition to scholarships that the organization negotiates with different universities.

Paola Brigneti: Online volunteer Paola Brigneti supported the Nigerian NGO Delta Women, donating countless hours of her time towards advocating for ending female sexual harassment in institutions of higher education in Delta State, Nigeria. Passionate about the organization and its cause, Paola developed advocacy strategies, activities and materials for the organization to raise awareness about sexual harassment and educate people on how to prevent it.

Yolanta Cwik: Sharing her long-standing editorial experience, Yolanta Cwik from Canada conceived a website and posters for the Deworm Ghana Campaign run by the Ghana-based NGO Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa (VPWA). 3,900 children were dewormed as a result of this campaign, which was the first in a series that the organization will replicate in other West African countries.

OCHA Team: After the Libya crisis broke, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) relied on the service of hundreds of online volunteers who created and maintained a virtual map that showed live information about events in the country. The Libya Crisis Map provided relief organizations with information on health needs, security threats or refugee movements to help them plan their humanitarian response.

Congratulating the winners, UNV Executive Coordinator Flavia Pansieri emphasized that "Volunteers are an incredibly valuable asset and ultimately, 2011 – the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers – has been about recognizing those who light up our world through their commitment to peace, human development and sustainability."

Today, UNV also launches the first State of the World's Volunteerism Report, which captures the value of volunteerism on a global scale and deepens the understanding of the impact that volunteerism can have on our lives and on our world.

The winners' stories, which are available on the UNV Online Volunteering service website www.onlinevolunteering.org, illustrate this impact on the organizations, the communities they serve, as well as the volunteers themselves.

"The ability to contribute to an organization from a distance while significantly impacting the lives of others as a result is a tremendous feeling that has influenced my life in many positive ways," said online volunteer Marta Jankovic.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development, and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing volunteers.

The International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development (International Volunteer Day) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution A/RES/40/212 on 17 December 1985. Since then, governments, the UN system and civil society organizations have successfully joined volunteers around the world to celebrate the Day on 5 December. Learn more at www.worldvolunteerweb.org

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