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Mr. Olivier Adam, UNV Executive Coordinator, shaking hands with Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, after signing a new Memorandum of Understanding in Paris. Photo: UNESCO/Christelle Alix

UNV and UNESCO reaffirm partnership through Memorandum of Understanding

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reaffirmed their commitment to their long-standing partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in Paris today. Through this key step, both organizations aim to strengthen existing collaboration and expand UN Volunteer deployment.

“UN Volunteers are highly-specialized professionals who work at grassroots level to empower communities to pursue learning and education to overcome development challenges, including extreme poverty,” says UNV Executive Coordinator Olivier Adam. “Leaving no one behind is at the heart of what makes UN Volunteers special, and we are looking forward to engaging more with UNESCO.”

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, emphasized: “We believe together in the power

of youth as agents of change to take forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement. We believe in the power of dialogue to foster new forms of global citizenship. We believe in the importance of volunteering to strengthen the foundations of peace and sustainable development.” She added, “Volunteering is more than working for a good cause. [...] It is about forging bonds of trust to reinforce a sense of shared destiny.”

UNV has been partnering with UNESCO since 1971. In 1984, the two organizations signed a formal agreement on Principles and Modalities of Cooperation. Some 69 UN Volunteers, 71 per cent of them women, have served with UNESCO in 30 countries over the past ten years.

In 2016, 13 UN Volunteers served with UNESCO in 10 countries. By the very nature of volunteerism’s inclusiveness, UN Volunteers advance progress towards UNESCO’s strategic objectives.

One such volunteer is UN Youth Volunteer [Irene Bronzini](#). Originally from Italy, Irene was assigned with UNESCO’s Social Sciences Department in Mali in 2015, and is fully funded by Belgium. Irene is enthusiastic about serving with UNESCO to promote peace through citizen education. She shares, “working at the heart of UNESCO has enriched my knowledge of peace and culture. It has allowed me to think more profoundly about ways to prevent conflicts.”

Irene interacts closely with young Malians to help them develop skills as peacemakers and promoters of tolerance, intercultural dialogue and non-violence and brings a strong personal and professional dedication. “This commitment, which is a state of mind nourished by the idea that volunteering brings us closer to people, brings work back to the human level in order to achieve long-lasting change.”

Volunteerism offers a means of engaging at the grassroots with communities in advancing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

[Solomon Bekele](#), UN Volunteer Pastoralist Literacy and Education Specialist in Juba, is an integral part of UNESCO’s response to education challenges in South Sudan. Solomon serves as Field Manager with the Enhanced Knowledge and Education for Resilience Pastoralist Livelihoods project, implemented by UNESCO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and government.

Solomon focuses on supporting UNESCO’s education component of the project, implementing literacy and numeracy programmes at cattle camps within the Lakes State pastoralist communities. He manages community and county facilitators who facilitate learning in cattle camp communities. The results speak for themselves: 1,064 children, adolescents and adults from pastoral communities in five counties are attending literacy, numeracy and life skills training programmes through this project.

"As a volunteer, I have gained experience and understanding of the diverse ways of life of communities in the pastoral communities. I am glad I am helping build their capacity and resilience."

[Simon Kuany](#) (South Sudan) is a UN Volunteer with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), in New Delhi, India. During his assignment, Simon's focus has been on empowering the young generation and training their independent thinking skills by asking them to solve real, tough global issues.

"As a South Sudanese and a former refugee, I have gone through violence, and have experienced first-hand conflict, war and other development issues like poverty and bad education," he shares. "As a UN Volunteer, I bring the on ground perspective that is always lacking in policy design and policy making to UNESCO's work, and especially to MGIEP's work related to transforming education for humanity. I went through bad education and now I want to transform it, I grew up in conflict and now I want to contribute towards peace."

Besides the necessary commitment, UN Volunteers have also demonstrated the appropriate qualifications, skills and profiles required to contribute to the building of peace, eradicating of poverty and promoting of sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

The United Nations Volunteers ([UNV](#)) programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. We work with partners to integrate qualified, highly motivated and well supported UN Volunteers into development programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism.

UNV is active in around 130 countries every year. With field presences in over 80 countries, UNV is represented worldwide. UNV is administered by the United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) was created in 1945 to promote solidarity and dialogue among nations in education, the sciences, culture and communication based upon respect for commonly shared values. Exchanges and cooperation among the Organization's 195 Member States in these areas is intended to promote peace and contribute to sustainable development.

Global

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 4: Quality education](#)