

05 June 2018



During the celebration of Earth Day in Bangui on April 22, Irena Kazenaite (left), UN Volunteer Recruitment and Selection Specialist and Sahon Flan (right), UN Volunteer Environment Officer, remove plastic bags at Rapid High School of Bangui, Central African Republic.

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UN Volunteers drive change and support action for the protection of our environment

Volunteerism has historically been a key driver of the global environmental movement. Volunteers were and continue to be the force behind efforts to drive change and support action for the protection of our environment. They are an essential part of the solution to nature conservation, eradicating plastic waste and mitigating the effects of climate change.

For almost five decades, advocates in civil society and the United Nations have been raising awareness and advocating for the protection of our environment on [World Environment Day](#). The theme for 2018 is [beating plastic pollution](#), and the host country for is India, where UN Environment this year is helping to highlight the environmental challenges the country faces, and support the efforts to address them.

“ *In today's world, protecting our environment is not*

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“ *about choosing one issue above another. The deeply interconnected systems that make up the natural world defy such a narrow-minded approach. Beating plastic pollution will preserve precious ecosystems, mitigate climate change, protect biodiversity, and indeed human health. --Erik Solheim, Executive Director, UN Environment*

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has been a strong advocate for the conservation of nature and natural resources. In close collaboration with UN partners, UNV deploys UN Volunteers around the world to respond to the challenges caused by climate change and to promote a sustainable and diverse ecosystem.

About half of the SDGs are directly environmental in focus or address the sustainability of natural resources: poverty, health, food and agriculture, water and sanitation, human settlements, energy, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, oceans, and terrestrial ecosystems (UNEP).

In 2017, 82 UN Volunteers with UN Environment, and many more with UNDP and other partners, took action in assignments related to the environment.

In Africa, environmental protection is essential to achieving the SDGs. Ecosystems are under pressure in the Sahel region, which is manifested by environmental degradation such as shrinking of lake Chad, crop failures as a result of shifting rain patterns and extreme weather socks affecting already vulnerable populations. In the Central African Republic and Senegal, [UN Volunteers enhance environmental management and reduce plastic waste](#).

In Zimbabwe, UNV is partnering with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate on 'Supporting Enhanced Climate Action for Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Development Pathway'. There, [UN Volunteers contribute to climate resilience in rural communities](#), many of whom suffer from unprecedented impacts of climate change and climate variability.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, volunteerism contributes to the [conservation of biodiversity, access to genetic resources and the equitable distribution of its benefits](#). Ten national UN Volunteers with this UNDP/Global Environment Facility project support awareness-raising

campaigns, and the development of bio-cultural protocols with the mobilization of local and community volunteers.

In Europe, UN Volunteers with UNEP are [inspiring, informing and enabling people to preserve the unique nature of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).

What about you?

World Environment Day is the "people's day" for doing something to take care of the Earth. That "something" can be focused locally, nationally or globally; it can be a solo action or involve a crowd. Everyone is free to choose.

Protecting the environment is also a personal responsibility each one of us should uphold. Through voluntary action, all of us can contribute, and small actions can have a cumulative impact.

On this #WorldEnvironmentDay, volunteer to reduce your carbon footprint, minimize waste, clean up your environment and dedicate your time and knowledge to raise awareness. Let us #BeatPlasticPollution. If you can't reuse it, refuse it.

Global

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities](#)
[SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)