08 May 2020

Volunteering online during lockdown to fight COVID-19

In West and Central Africa, reported COVID-19 cases range from seven in Mauritania to 1,550 in Ghana. To fight the spread of COVID-19, governments and the United Nations system are developing an integrated response adapted to national situations. With more than half of the global population experiencing movement restrictions, Online Volunteers are an effective solution to support international and national organizations in addressing the pandemic. They come from Côte d’Ivoire, Italy, Bangladesh, Argentina and Kyrgyzstan… Online Volunteers worldwide allocate their time, competencies and energy to support civil society organizations, public institutions and UN agencies in the fight against COVID-19.

In West and Central Africa, Online Volunteers have supported organizations in Senegal, Nigeria and Cameroon as social media administrators, graphic designers, researchers,
financial proposal writers, project developers, and even as microbiologists.

Because addressing COVID-19 needs a large range of support, from technical assistance to public awareness, Online Volunteers have used confinement and quarantine as opportunities to support governments and communities, where help is most needed.

“Social distancing is a privilege. Having a home, access to soap and clean water, and food on the table at a time when people have to struggle both with hunger and the Coronavirus, reminds me of my privileges, as well as my responsibility to use them to benefit others.” - Ashlyn Sajeev (India), Online Volunteer in Graphic Design helping the Public Health Aid Awareness & Education Organization in Nigeria.

Through the Cameroon Association of Active Youth (CAMAAY), 10 skilled Online Volunteers supported 1,000 Cameroonians from Bamenda, department of Mezam, with online fundraising for an awareness-raising campaign on COVID-19, which resulted in the distribution of soap and cloth face masks.

These Online Volunteers - medical doctors, lawyers, students, engineers, computer scientists and financial analysts - provided support to the Bamenda community, which is impacted through the pandemic and its economic, social and political consequences. Operating remotely, Online Volunteers seize the opportunity to support field offices and organizations in spreading the word, and not the virus.

“Online Volunteers should be role models for those who want to fight COVID-19 without breaking the physical distancing policy. Whether it’s a fundraising campaign, proposal writing or social media management, Online Volunteers should channel all their creativity and dedication to address COVID-19.” – Edward Yo (Indonesia), Online Volunteer managing a project in support of the Cameroon Association of Active Youth

Worldwide, Online Volunteers advocate for better access to basic reliable healthcare facilities and promote sustainable hygiene and social behaviors that will last beyond the COVID-19 outbreak.

Thanks to UNV’s Online Volunteering service, neither lockdown nor physical distancing
prevent creativity, solidarity and collaboration. Instead, the system promotes effective personal and collective achievements. Within a limited timeframe, organizations and volunteers gain maximum benefit. 

Today, more than half a million Online Volunteers are available and willing to help organizations worldwide on their projects. They represent 111 fields of expertise from 17 professional families, and have collaborated with civil society organizations, public institutions and UN entities from 51 countries since the beginning of 2020.

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals