

08 March 2021



UN Volunteer Emergency Nurse Maryam Al-Omaissi at the UN Clinic in Sana'a, Yemen
© UNV, 2019

Women UN Volunteers in Yemen on the path to a more equal future

In Yemen, women UN Volunteers are stepping up to the many challenges during the pandemic. They are on the frontlines of response despite many hurdles – including gender stereotypes, risks caused by years of conflict, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women. By volunteering these women are serving as glimmers of hope in hard times. These UN Volunteers lead the way to a more equal future for women and girls.

In Yemen, an estimated [24.1 million](#) out of the country's total population of 29 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. With 19.7 million people requiring health assistance, COVID-19 has only exacerbated the situation. As in many other parts of the world, women are [disproportionately affected](#) by the pandemic.

Entisar al Zubairy is a UN Volunteer in the city of Ibb, serving as a national Medical Doctor with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). She is one of twelve women UN Volunteer health professionals serving at UN clinics in different Yemeni cities.

Describing the current state of Yemen's health sector, Entisar explains that many health practitioners have left the country. "For example, displaced persons from Taiz and Hodeida have fled to Ibb to escape the fighting. The number of care-seekers is increasing at a time when less doctors are available," she adds.

By volunteering with her medical expertise within such a context, Entisar is contributing to making a difference. However, her journey to gaining such expertise was not easy, as many women continue to struggle with limited access to education and the workforce in Yemen, not to mention assuming leadership roles. Entisar, who lost both of her parents to health problems, is one of few women to find support to pursue her career ambitions. More often, women are expected to forego secondary school and remain at home.

Entisar's pursuit of a successful career has already started to inspire other women around her, namely within her family.

“ I was grief-stricken and in medical school, I felt alone. But my husband gave me hope. He told me not to give up and when we moved to Ibb, he urged me to apply for this volunteering opportunity with UNV. To my surprise, my sisters were inspired by our story and it changed their minds about school. When they see me, they know their dreams are possible.” -- Entisar al-Zubairy, UNV National Medical Doctor with UNDP Yemen.

UN Volunteer Samaher Bafarjoom is also serving as a national Medical Doctor with UNDP. She notes that COVID-19 has intensified already dire conditions. "COVID-19 complicated our efforts to provide preventative care. For example, many people are weary of new travel restrictions and lockdowns because these have been part of life in Yemen before the pandemic. People don't trust these measures are solely designed to mitigate the spread of the virus," she explains. Moreover, when travel is permitted, many care-seekers end up risking their safety to access health services. "The airport is closed and many of the roads are dangerous," adds Samaher.

Alongside volunteering with the UN, Samaher is determined to play a further role in improving conditions. She engages in community volunteer activities in her spare time, conducting awareness sessions in Mukalla and Aden. She also develops flyers and social media posts to counter misinformation and stereotypes.

Amal Amer is yet another woman UN Volunteer forging an equal future in Yemen. Amal serves as a Management Information Specialist (MIS) with UNDP Yemen, primarily in support of the Programme's economic development activities. She creates templates,

forms, graphics, and other tools that UNDP and its partners utilize for monitoring and knowledge sharing. Amal also provides technical support and training for national and international UNDP partners. She is currently developing a smartphone application that will allow partners to access information platforms through mobile devices.

When asked about highlights from her assignment, Amal points out the many successes of Yemeni women she has learned about through her work.

“It is heartwarming to support information flows from Yemenis who own businesses, including women selling honey and pastries, working as artisans, and installing solar energy panels. They are helping families struggling with frequent power outages and high utility costs, while promoting the recovery Yemen needs,” UN Volunteer Amal Amer says.

As doctors and information and technology experts, these women UN Volunteers lead a new generation that excels in work often dominated by men in Yemen. They also promote equality on the frontlines, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic response.

If you are inspired by the stories of these exemplary women, UNV encourages you to explore volunteer opportunities. Women age 22 and above, with a diploma and two or more years of professional experience, are especially encouraged to join our talent pool.

 **Arab States**

- **International Women's Day**

Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 3: Good health and well-being** **SDG 5: Gender equality**
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals