Volunteers bring hope and help

At the frontline of United Nations support are volunteers. Over the years, many of us have responded to different crises as UN Volunteers. Crises settings take us to all corners of the world. As a UN Volunteer in the late 90s, I witnessed the birth of a new country: Timor-Leste. Here, I helped restore basic services in the region of Ermera, so children could go back to school and lead normal lives. In Cambodia, after the loss of many lives due to civil war, I volunteered to promote and protect human rights.

With experience as a UN Volunteer and now, as UNDP Resident Representative, I can confidently say UN Volunteers share three essential and common traits in order to rise to the occasion:

1. UN Volunteers are purpose-driven. They participate by helping communities in times of need. They go to places 'no one' thinks of going to. They roll up their sleeves 'no matter' the task and work together to achieve their goals.

2. UN Volunteers are passionate individuals. Against all odds, they keep a positive outlook. In many instances, they bring hope when everything else seems to be going downhill.
3. UN Volunteers are professionals. They bring great skill sets and expertise to a variety of fields.

We all know the devastating toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on all sectors of society. This shared crisis continues to challenge us all as individuals, communities, cities and countries in 2021. It has, however, also been an opportunity for institutions such as the United Nations to step up to the challenge and support those in need. Wherever they may be. Wherever they may go. Wherever they need protection. After all, this is our chance to build forward better, as we can no longer afford finance to be an afterthought in the discourse of the environmental conventions.

"When the pandemic hit, UNDP Jordan took an 'all hands on deck approach' and worked with UN Volunteers to quickly mobilize the right experts and support getting back on our feet."

From the onset of the crisis, we stood side-by-side with national institutions and first responders of the health emergency crisis, as well as those suffering from what became a socio-economic crisis, ravaging micro-businesses and informal workers, of which many were women-led.

The Arab Region has been hard hit by the pandemic. This has worsened pre-existing cracks in communities and societies already facing multiple crises and conflicts.

"I am proud of the inspiring stories I hear about UN Volunteers serving in places such as Gaza, where volunteers fight the hardships of unemployment, as well as those working in the aftermath of the Beirut blast."

Thank you, volunteers, for always bringing hope and help to those who need it the most!

• COVID-19 • Coronavirus • Timor-Leste • Beirut blast
Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being SDG 10: Reduced inequalities SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals