



Kenneth Ndung'u served as UN Volunteer with the project in Taita Taveta County, seen here with members of the community. "The successful execution of the County Citizens Satisfaction Baseline Survey ranks amongst my biggest accomplishments," he says.

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## Decentralized decision making improves public services in communities across Kenya

With 40 national UN Volunteers placed in 37 counties and two national institutions, the Integrated Support to the Devolution Process in Kenya (2014-2018) improves public services by including local communities in decision making processes across the country.

### **Good governance is essential to public service delivery**

By decentralizing decision making and assuring local participation, the Devolution Project, managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, UN Women, and Kenyan national and county government offices, promotes collaboration between local communities and national public service providers.

Through civic education and public participation, the project improves the ability of local communities and local authorities to formulate policies, draft legislation, and participate in county planning processes. Through their

extensive field presence, UN Volunteers assure women's participation throughout the project as well as county-to-county experience sharing. These inclusive approaches help communities receive the public services they need more efficiently, and obliges service providers to monitor and improve their service delivery in areas of agriculture, health, environment, transport, trade, education, public works, and safety.

"A key and innovative youth development support that UNDP has provided to devolution is the technical assistance to both national and county governments through the United Nations Volunteers in areas including public financial management, monitoring and evaluation, statistics, human resource management and geographic information systems." Siddharth Chatterjee, *UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Kenya*

### **UN Volunteers as key drivers of transformation and change**

The Devolution Project in Kenya is supporting vulnerable communities and providing them with resources and improved governance structures. Through its participative approach, the project improves the planning and management of county services, their allocation of funds, and the accessibility to community services.

"Volunteering is about empowering people and communities to fulfil their potential and contributing to social change." *Patrick Ngatia Njiiri, Programme Assistant, Monitoring and Evaluation, Kenya.*

For Dimitri Lermytte, Programme Officer, UNV Kenya, the work is not finished. "Kenya has chosen the path of devolved governance, an ongoing process that will make legislation more tangible to local communities. The needs are high and remain, the call for continuing support is there. UNV Kenya –and the expertise and vitality of our UN Volunteers– remain at service."

### **Turning challenges into opportunities for success**

Implementing the Devolution Project across communities in Kenya is both a development challenge and an opportunity. Communities lack basic resources in terms of access to safe water, housing, medical provisions and a systematic monitoring and evaluation system.

In reflecting on his volunteer experience in Busia County, Nicholas Mutua Kiema, UN Volunteer Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Assistant, discussed how he turned the challenges into an opportunity for success. When Nicholas started, the county had a poor reporting system for projects

and activities. Together with the County Director for Public Administration they came up with a plan to train all county administrators and directors on the importance of monitoring and evaluation. Nicholas said, “Through my efforts, the county has now begun producing regular field monitoring reports and departments have designated an officer in charge of monitoring and evaluation.”

The project has demonstrated that a significant impact can be made with the right strategy and focus. Nicholas and many UN Volunteers within the project see themselves as change agents. “As a national UN Volunteer with UNDP, I am glad to initiate monitoring and evaluation as an accountability and transparency mechanism to contribute to the development of Busia County and the devolution process in Kenya,” Nicholas concludes.

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[Mid Term Evaluation of the Integrated Support Program to the devolution Process](#) (2016)

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