UN VOLUNTEERS

12 April 2017	Youth for the SDGs

Youth community representatives participating at a workshop on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in San Juan del Lurigancho, Lima, Peru. (UNV Peru, 2016)

Youth for the SDGs enables youth participation in sustainability in Latin America

Through "Youth for the SDGs" UNV is training and empowering young people in five countries in Latin America, enabling them to participate and engage in discussions and exchange experiences about the SDGs in their communities.

Volunteerism enables youth engagement, leadership and participation

Within Latin America and the Caribbean, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 account for 20 per cent of the population. This is the largest percentage of youth in this region, ever. The statistics are dire: 35 million of these young people never attended school, 39 per cent live in poverty and 25 per cent are unemployed.

In Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Guatemala, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme started in 2016 an initiative known as Youth for the Sustainable Development Goals (Youth for the SDGs). The group is locally known as *Jóvenes por los ODS*.

Positioning youth as agents of change, Youth for the SDGs trains representatives of youth volunteer organizations and empowers them to participate in discussions and events surrounding the SDGs within their communities.

In line with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, these workshops offer "valuable opportunities for youth engagement, leadership and participation… while also allowing young people to acquire skills, build their capacities and increase their employability," says Marcela Artica, UNV Regional Project Coordinator.

Empowering youth leaders and enabling youth networking

Through UNV collaboration with youth volunteer organizations, the project created an SDG toolkit for each of the five countries. These toolkits are equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to create and run national Youth for SDG workshops. These workshops focus on localizing SDGs, training youth, and allowing young people to provide unique contributions to local development.

In the beginning, the project only deployed five UN Youth Volunteers (one for each country) and one UN Volunteer specialist. The workshops quickly cascaded as attendees created their own replica workshops in other communities. For each person who attended the original workshop, at least 30 additional people were trained in subsequent workshops.

In the first Regional Meeting of Youth Volunteer Networks in Latin America in August 2016, 155 youth participants from Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, Peru, and Guatemala came together to exchange their experiences and discuss sustainable development.

The initiative doesn't just offer young people a voice, it creates and empowers youth leaders. Over time, those empowered by the original workshops will run even more, and increasing numbers of young people will be enabled to participate and find that they have a voice in their community.

Impact: triggering a cascade effect

Through the Youth for the SDGs programme, UNV promoted the role of local communities in delivering on the SDGs through volunteerism. It has managed to bring communities together and enabled participation. As Youth for the SDGs gained traction, more and more replica workshops are occurring.

As of November 2016, 2,975 young people had been reached through the Youth for the SDGs initiative. This included 38 workshops and 75 replica workshops. Each day, the number of those involved with Youth for the SDGs continues to rise. In January 2017, in Lima, Peru, four additional workshops were convened with more than 150 participants.

For Marcela Artica, UNV Regional Project Coordinator, the Youth for the SDGs is a powerful

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tool. She shares, "Volunteerism offers valuable opportunities for youth engagement, leadership and participation to contribute to the development of peaceful and inclusive societies."

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Latin America and the Caribbean

• Youth • Ecuador • Peru • Colombia • Bolivia • México • Guatemala • SDGs

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities