



UN Community Volunteer Denis Simah collecting taxes from Bagassi residents in southern Burkina Faso.

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UN Community Volunteers foster the economic development of their communities with UNDP

In Burkina Faso, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recruited 20 UN Community Volunteers in 2019. Why? To improve the performance of local governments in reducing poverty through support to citizen participation, decentralization and local development. Denis Gnoumou Simah is one of them. He assists the Bagassi commune located in one of the poorest regions of the country.

To address the commune's difficulties in mobilizing resources, Denis recommended a new strategy to the local council: to engage non-resident nationals to recover taxes and strengthen economic development.

"The commune of Bagassi had the lowest mobilization resources rate in the region in 2019. As local economic development depends on the capacity of communities to improve their revenues, I, therefore, suggested that we focus our efforts on non-resident nationals, to improve recovery of taxes (e.g. property tax, micro-business contributions and residence tax).

With the support and full participation of local actors, Denis explains that he first contacted the local agents of the treasury and taxes to identify the types of taxes to be collected and potential taxpayers outside the commune. Then, he held individual meetings to raise awareness among the population, showing the value of their contribution to local development. Once the communities joined the initiative, he carried out a mission to collect the various taxes.

“ The success of Denis' initiative is immediately perceptible and measurable through the doubling of the commune's revenues despite the Covid-19 pandemic: from 12.36 per cent in 2018 to 27.86 per cent in 2020.

Denis' support to the commune of Bagassi was not limited to tax recovery. He collected more than US \$3,600 from a mining company for a sanitation project benefiting the Bagassi women's association. He also trained 30 young people and women from the Vocational Training Center in entrepreneurship and developed five business plans for applicant cooperative societies. Denis' actions inspired the City Council of Bagassi, which wants to fund a position at the end of his UN Volunteer assignment, in order to build on his achievements.

“ The commune has benefited from the services of our UN Community Volunteer Denis in several areas, including resource mobilization. He has been a great support to civil registration, allowing us to considerably reduce the delay in delivering

“certificates from 14 to 3 days. In addition, he is the manager of our website, which helps us to share our results with the whole world. So naturally, our wish is that he continues to work with us. --Mr Nougara Somwaoga, Secretary General of the Bagassi Commune

The fact that I was assigned within my commune allowed me to have easy contact with the taxpayers, then a participatory approach with the different actors to get these results. I hope that the Bagassi commune will capitalize on these achievements and engage the diaspora to mobilize even more.



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