UN Volunteer Medical Officer Dr. Surendra Basnet (UK/Nepal), back row, left, with members of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) medical team based in Tripoli: back row, middle, Medical Officer Dr. Evans Kofi Nkegbe (Ghana), right, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Khalid Eddahiri (Morocco); front row, from left, Nurse Nievesita Mendoza (Philippines), Medical Officer Dr. Samah Abodaiya (Libya), Head Nurse Makiko Kiriyama (Japan). (UNSMIL 2013)

Delivering vital medical services between curfews in Libya

Dr. Surendra Basnet, was a UN Volunteer Medical Officer with the Level 1 Clinic in Tripoli, Libya. He reports that his UN Volunteer assignment expanded both his professional and personal experience—giving a chance to tackle daunting responsibilities while discovering an appreciation for the country and its people.

I am a medical doctor by profession. Above all instances in my life, being a UN Volunteer in a UN peacekeeping mission has had the greatest influence on uplifting my career. When I first chose to be a UN Volunteer with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), it was a simple matter of my concern for people in such a deprived environment. But after joining the mission, I realise that I also had a lot to gain from the experience. Serving with UNSMIL has strengthened my career by giving the opportunity to work among wide range of people in varied roles.

A volunteer is not always junior staff in an organization. On the contrary, a volunteer's role in an organization might be crucial. For example, I regularly have been assigned responsible roles that have given a new meaning to my professional career. Shortly after I joined the mission, my volunteering experience had already taught me to be more mature and to keep an open mind by giving me the opportunity to voice my ideas and take definitive actions.

> **❝ Volunteering is a way to learn new skills and explore career opportunities. More importantly it is a way to give something back to communities of the best of our personal and professional background.**

I was responsible for consultation and treatment of acute medical conditions for walk-in patients, scheduled medical examinations and facilitating mission staff's access to local medical facilities including the follow-up. I often stayed on call after work or during days off to provide needed emergency medical care. Moreover, I educated members of the public to establish a general understanding of wellbeing in the simplest terms. This gave me the greatest satisfaction of a job well done.

Though it was a long way to travel, I was heartily delighted I came. As I journeyed through the countryside, in nature, feeling the wind, witnessing the greenery amongst the animals and most of all the local people, I rejoiced. On the other hand, security was often a challenge while working in field missions. In Libya, it was especially unpredictable. Similarly, the city had a curfew from sunset until sunrise which was a barrier to having a normal social life. Anyone thinking about becoming a volunteer should remember that volunteerism is a choice one must make freely. It should be in the person's field of interest and driven by self-motivation. It is not always the easiest of circumstances but it is incredibly rewarding.

Dr. Surendra Basnet (UK/Nepal) received his medical degree in Russia and a Master's of Public Health in the Philippines. Originally from Nepal, he completed technical officer's military cadet training there, where he spent five years with the Nepalese military, eventually becoming a Captain Medical Officer. Surendra received training in trauma and critical para rescue (organized by the US Defense Ministry), war surgery (organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross), and HIV/Clinical Management (from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria). Before joining UNV, he served in United Nations missions in West Africa, and received prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse training organized by the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone.

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