Volunteers driven by solidarity and willingness to help others celebrate IVD in Peru

Volunteering means to do your bit, driven by solidarity and willingness to help others. The efforts that are being made to promote volunteerism, make its contributions to sustainable development visible and recognize the work of every volunteer in different sectors of Peru and worldwide are multiple. Thus, this year, on 5 December we celebrated the 20th edition of International Volunteer Day (IVD).

Fifty years ago, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme was born, with the purpose of contributing to peace and development in the world through volunteerism.

It does so by promoting and integrating volunteerism in the work of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as in government strategies, to contribute to development. Now, in the Decade of Action to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNV helps the world achieve the objective of 'leaving no one behind'.

"Through the UNV programme, many initiatives and strategies are being developed to promote volunteerism in Peru. Especially in
difficult times, UNV Peru has helped countries overcome crises through people’s solidarity and willingness to help others.

This was how we began our operations after the Ica earthquake in 2007, providing emergency response, humanitarian assistance and risk management support. Since then, UNV Peru has steadily grown, experiencing a multiplier effect, especially at the beginning of this second decade.

Between 2018 and 2019, UNV provided technical assistance to the Special Bicentennial Project of the XVIII Pan American and Parapan American Games 2019 in Lima. The result? More than 40,000 citizens were trained on the 2030 Agenda, sport and development.

Furthermore, in 2020, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the effects of the pandemic, the UNV team supported the Special Bicentennial Project, integrating different volunteerism schemes. We mobilized more than 7,000 volunteers to support over 100,000 elderly people and persons with severe disabilities.

These projects, alongside the work of more than 350 Peruvian UN Volunteers, have served as a strong precedent for UN agencies to integrate volunteerism and develop initiatives that help reduce climate change effects, promote inclusion, assist refugees and migrants and inspire others to volunteer for a common future.

In Peru, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP in Spanish) is spearheading efforts to bring the different organizations that promote volunteerism together and develop good practices.

Spaces like IVD allow us to celebrate and appreciate the efforts that different government entities, civil society organizations and citizens have been undertaking to support local, regional and global development, inspiring more people to become volunteers.

In the 20 years since we started celebrating IVD, this is the first time in Peru that the MIMP, the Special Bicentennial Project of the Ministry of Culture, France Volontaires, the National Network I’m a Volunteer and UNV Peru unite to celebrate the Week of Volunteerism. Indeed, one day is not enough to value our volunteers on the frontline of action, promoting the changes they want to see here and now.

In the words of our own UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, “the pandemic, conflicts, hunger, poverty and climate emergency remind us that our world is far from being perfect,
but also that solidarity is the only path to follow."

This solidarity transformed into collective actions is what we recognize and make visible on International Volunteer Day.

This article was written by Oscar Málaga Granda, UNV’s Country Coordinator in Peru.

• IVD2021

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals