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Ozge Ozkaya, a national UN Volunteer at Cukurova University, Turkey.
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UN Volunteer breaking gender barriers in data science

With the rise of digital technologies and their growing impact on societies, the sector has become one of the key employers for tech-savvy ambitious youth around the world. However, there are barriers of bringing more women aboard and only a quarter of professional data-related roles are held by women.

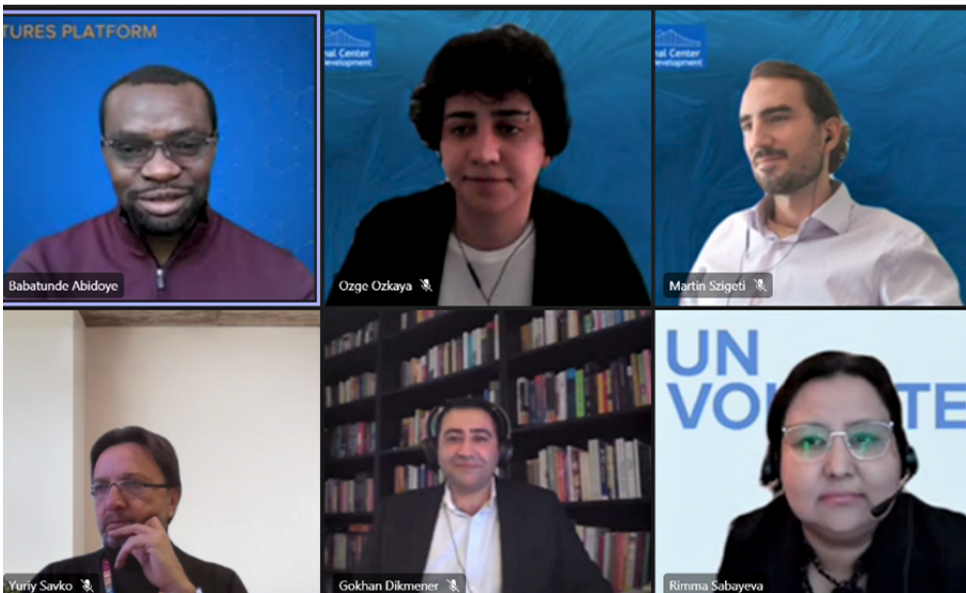
The underrepresentation of women in the digital technology industry is not a new topic. This often occurs due to an over-competitive and male-dominant system, lack of female role models and unclear career prospects for those interested.

One of the talented women data scientists who overcame all those challenges is Ozge Ozkaya, a national UN Volunteer in Turkey. Ozge serves as a Junior Data Science Officer at the SDG AI Lab in pursuit of digital transformation to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

[The SDG AI Lab](#) provides research and advisory support through cutting-edge digital

solutions in harnessing the potential of frontier technologies for sustainable development. On the other hand, the SDG AI Lab is committed to gender equality in Data Science. The Lab has been actively and strategically exploring ways to provide more opportunities and greater space for women to pursue data science careers. As a result of these efforts, more than half of the Lab's volunteer data scientists are women, and the Lab is proud of this achievement and will continue its work in providing more opportunities for women.

As part of the team, Ozge leads the Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning (ML) workstreams at the UN Development Programme (UNDP) IICPSD's global initiative.



Ozge manages several ongoing digital projects and leads the work of online volunteers. Among her growing project portfolio, Country Program Document (CPD) Analyzer project is widely praised. The project aims at creating a knowledge base and interactive knowledge graph to identify and visualize hidden patterns between thousands of UNDP country programme documents.

“ I really want to see more women in data science field. I believe that

“ women should listen to their inner voice and go for what they want without any hesitation. -- Ozge Ozkaya, national UN Volunteer in Turkey

Ozge’s passion and interest in computer engineering and NLP goes back to her childhood. Under the influence of her father, who was a computer technician, she spent her childhood playing computer games and exploring how computers work. Afterwards, she continued her studies in computer engineering at Cukurova University in Turkey and participated in the ERASMUS+ Mobility Programme at Politehnica University of Bucharest in Romania.

During the postgraduate period, Ozge specialized in NLP. She developed a machine learning model that can automatically evaluate exam answers in English with the Cukurova University research team as part of her master thesis. Although the model is only applicable to the English version for now, the team looks forward to expanding the module to Turkish in the future.



While paying much attention to studies, Ozge also put great effort into volunteering. She actively participated in voluntary activities to help people with disabilities and promote

gender equality. These experiences have not only strengthened her personal abilities but also helped her define her goals in life.

“ I would like to pursue my career within the UN system in the future and continue to use frontier technologies for the common good of people around the globe. I am determined to become a global-level expert on Natural Language Processing and a role model for younger generations. -- Ozge Ozkaya

In Ozge's opinion, the SDG AI Lab is one of the examples which can bring more women into data science through volunteerism. Indeed, her presence and perseverance have convincingly proved that women can and will hold up half the world in the AI and data science workforce.

Together with the SDG AI Lab team and its volunteers, Ozge will continue to develop digital solutions for SDGs and promote gender equality in the data science field.

 **Europe and the CIS**

- **International Women's Day**

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 5: Gender equality](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)