



UN Volunteer Henriette Bjoerge (Norway), centre, with participants in the Women on Wheels project in Sargodha, where rural girls are taught how to ride motorcycles. (UN Women, 2016)

## Play ball against gender-based violence

As a UN Volunteer Communications and Advocacy Officer for UN Women in Pakistan, I give a voice to extraordinary women. I add value by developing advocacy events and campaigns that promote gender equality and challenge notions of women's roles in Pakistan.

Living in Pakistan since September 2015 has truly been an eye-opener. In a developing country where most of the population are youth, I have seen first-hand how we in the UN can actively influence young people to realize the benefits of women's empowerment and give equal opportunities to women and girls. As a UN Volunteer, I encourage people to take action.

Serving at UN Women has also allowed me to pursue one of my passions, which is [promoting sports for women and girls](#). I believe that the value of sports for women in developing countries is highly underestimated. Sports create confidence, life skills, team spirit and leadership skills, and as a result nurture an environment where women can speak up for themselves.

In Pakistan, it is a major challenge for girls and women to find safe public

spaces where they can exercise free from harassment and interruption. UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme aims to ensure that they are free from sexual harassment and violence when venturing outside their homes.

In spring 2016, I facilitated partnerships with other UN agencies, local NGOs and private sector partners, and together we organized a cricket day and football tournaments for girls and young women in Islamabad and Karachi. We, at UN Women, teamed up with The Diya Women's Football Club, for example, to organize a football match for 35 schoolgirls from less-privileged areas in Karachi. This event was in support of the UNiTE campaign to end violence against women and girls.

“ My previous experiences working with women less privileged than I am—women with many more hurdles to overcome—is what inspired me to join the UN in its efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, number 5 in particular: gender equality.

My assignment as a UN Volunteer allows me to make a difference in the lives of Pakistani women, while at the same time improving my professional skills and career focus. I particularly enjoy challenging my creativity to develop new and innovative ideas for UN Women to raise the agency's visibility in Pakistan and to be bold in the way we communicate. Interacting with donors and potential partners and telling them of all the good work that takes place at UN Women, is a priority for me.

Before joining UN Women in Pakistan, I volunteered as a ski instructor for youth in Afghanistan. I saw with my own eyes how a whole community can change when girls are given opportunities, and the magic that can happen when young people come together and volunteer for a better society.

My focus has now shifted towards working in innovation and donor relations at UN Women, and the opportunities are limitless. I look forward to continuing my contribution as a UN Volunteer within this new field of work. I recommend this experience - volunteering for development - to anyone who would like to make a difference in the lives of others!

*Henriette Bjoerge's UN Volunteer assignment with UN Women in Pakistan is fully funded by Norway.*

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 5: Gender equality](#)