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Ms. Lucy Ndungu (fourth from left, in white), Regional Manager, UNV East and Southern Africa Regional Office, together with a section of the UNV team and UN Volunteers during the Kenya national Volunteer of the Year Awards 2021

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Over twenty volunteers feted at the Kenya volunteer of the year awards

In honour of this year's International Volunteers Day (IVD), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Kenyan government and the Volunteer Involving Organizations Society in Kenya celebrated and recognized more than 20 volunteers for their exemplary performance and dedication in building strong communities across the country through volunteerism.

Nairobi, 8th December 2021 – For its 50th anniversary, the UNV programme celebrated volunteers across the world through national volunteer Awards. Kenya was one of the countries selected to host the Awards under the national Volunteer of the Year Awards (VOYA).

“UNV turns 50 this year, and to celebrate this, we recognize volunteers across the world through national volunteer Awards. 1 in 7 people volunteer every year, most of them informally, and societies

“ that support and encourage different forms of volunteering are generally wealthier and happier,” -- Ms. Lucy Ndungu, Regional Manager for UNV East and Southern Africa Regional Office during the Awards

Under the theme: *“Volunteer now for our common future,”* this year’s IVD celebrations were also special because the UNV programme deployed more than 10,000 volunteers across the world for the first time in its 50-year history.

“We are lucky to have the UNV programme. UN agencies and programmes benefit a lot from thousands of UN Volunteers’ expertise and inspiration from a wide range of skills and expertise,” -- Walid Badawi, the Resident Representative at UNDP Kenya during the Awards

"In fact, 80 per cent of these volunteers are from the global south, where development is most needed. In Kenya, we have more than 400 UN Volunteers supporting a wide range of programmes that directly benefit the people of Kenya," says Walid during the Awards.

Volunteers from the government, civil society, the community and different networks were selected from the following four thematic categories:

- Community engagement: Volunteers who were able to reach under-served communities at the community level and meaningfully engaged and created opportunities for the community members.
- Empowerment and gender inclusion: Volunteers who helped mainstream gender issues and contributed to the empowerment of marginalized groups (including people with disabilities etc.) to show how volunteering can help to reduce inequality gaps.
- Climate action: Volunteers who helped tackle climate change issues

and particularly helped local communities adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- COVID-19 response: Volunteers who supported the COVID-19 response efforts by the Kenya Government.

Additionally, UN Volunteers from the following categories were recognized: UN Community Volunteers, UN Refugee Volunteers, UN Youth Volunteer and UN Specialist Volunteers.

“I am extremely humbled and honoured to have received this award. I have been serving with UNDP Kenya for the last two years and it has been a great experience giving back to this beautiful country, Kenya,” -- Christabel Chanda, UN Volunteer with UNDP Kenya; one of the Awardees who was recognized as the UN Specialist Volunteer of the Year.

Through the Awards, it is expected that the culture of volunteering will increasingly become integrated into government and institutional policies and practices in the country towards achieving [the Sustainable Development Goals](#) and building better communities.

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UNV Kenya Office

- Twitter: [@UNVKenya](#)
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Key participants during the Award included:

H.E. Kivutha Kibwana, Makueni County Governor, Mr. Nelson Marwa, Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizen Affairs and Special Programmes, Mr. Walid Badawi, UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Lucy Ndungu, UNV Regional Manager, Ms. Jean Lokenga, UNICEF Kenya County Deputy Director, Ms. Damaris Mungai, Gender and Youth Coordination Officer (representing UNEP Africa Regional Director), Ms. Sophie Onyango from Safaricom Foundation and Dr. John Ireri from the University of Nairobi.

East and Southern Africa

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities](#) [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)