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UN Volunteer Hussaina Ahmadu, serving with UNHCR, preparing non food items for internally-displaced people from Maiduguri, Nigeria, as part of an event for International Volunteer Day 2021.

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## IVD 2021 in West and Central Africa: a time for acknowledgement, appreciation and more volunteering

The call to volunteer now for our common future was translated into action in several West and Central Africa countries. Celebrating International Volunteer Day (IVD) under this slogan, UNV field units collaborated with local and international volunteer organizations, government and UN entities. Together, the partners convened events to raise awareness on civic engagement and rally people to join clean-up campaigns, painting activities and more. We look back at some of the IVD celebrations that brought together thousands of people in the region.

International Volunteer Day 2021 called for the recognition of volunteers and volunteerism as powerful and cross-cutting ways of achieving the SDGs

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and building an inclusive world. A number of UN partner representatives, influencers and national authorities shared via social media their [messages of acknowledgement and appreciation for the support of volunteers](#).

“ Through volunteering, people of all genders, abilities and backgrounds have an opportunity to be part of shaping their future. I thank all volunteers for their commitment to peace and development in their communities and worldwide. --Giovanie Biha, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel

**Nigeria and Congo** were among the 15 UNV field units selected worldwide to host Volunteer Country Awards in commemoration of UNV's 50th anniversary. UN and other volunteers were invited to showcase their work in different categories, including innovation, community engagement, gender and COVID-19, as well as UN agency-based and Government-selected national volunteer.

The Nigeria Field Unit organized its Volunteer Awards in partnership with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), Lagos State Government and Voluntary Services Overseas.

Out of 830 volunteer applications, a jury selected 15 finalists. Winners received their prizes on 30 November, during an official ceremony with UN representatives, national authorities, and other volunteer-involving organizations.

“ I had been working with government and private sector entities, but I realized that I needed to do more. I needed to do something that would have a national and international impact," says Dr Oluwatosin Jegede, National Programme Associate

“ with UN Office on Drugs, award winner in the COVID-19 category

He trained officers of the Nigerian Correctional Service on how to prevent, detect and respond to COVID-19 in custodial settings. Since the training in September 2020, there have been no reported cases among the over 70,000 inmates.

In Congo, UNV held the Volunteer Country Awards in December, with the support of the World Health Organization and in collaboration with volunteer-involving organizations. The event welcomed more than 140 participants, both online and physically. Nine volunteers received awards for their outstanding achievements and commitment to building strong communities.

Krys Bahoumina Nkounko, a national Volunteer Clinical Psychologist with the Corps des Jeunes Volontaires du Congo, received an award in the category of Government-selected national volunteer for her contribution towards inclusion. She serves at Case Dominique, which ensures the psychological accompaniment of children with special needs, including those who have autism or Down syndrome, or who are mentally/intellectually deficient, traumatized or have a disability.

Krys set up counseling and parental guidance sessions to help parents better accompany their children as they process their emotional distress.

“ Volunteering is giving without expecting anything in return. It is also about sharing knowledge with others for the good of the community and the nation. --Krys Bahoumina Nkounko, national Volunteer Clinical Psychologist with the Corps des Jeunes Volontaires du Congo

Further events and activities took place in 16 countries across the region to recognize and support the spirit of volunteerism to help create a better

future. The below video features some of them.

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West and Central Africa

• IVD2021 • International Volunteer Day

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 2: Zero hunger](#) [SDG 3: Good health and well-being](#) [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)