



UNDP Tandem Teams promote a democratic media culture and reduce misinformation

In Bolivia, the UN Development Programme and UN Volunteers (UNV) programme are partnering to promote a democratic media culture and spaces for dialogue between civil society, the media and the state. Using a Tandem Teams approach, the partners are drawing on the local experience and expertise of national UN Volunteers to strengthen democracy and reduce misinformation.

According to the [2018 Latinobarómetro report](#), more than half of Latin Americans (56 per cent) do not trust the media, and the democratic support is only 48 per cent. In addition, information contamination (or info-pollution) and bad information are tools that cause political polarization and misinformation and undermine democracy.

In Bolivia, the annulment of the 2019 electoral results, the sanitary emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact, led to a triple crisis, where the media played a key role in the construction of governance.

Leni Matienzo, a national UN Volunteer serving as a specialist in dialogue facilitation for the UN Development Programme (UNDP), says that the media industry in Bolivia faces a challenging situation.

“ The media are a fundamental pillar of society. They form opinion, set the agenda and determine

“ what it is about and how it is decided, however, they do not have the tools or the necessary support to exercise the democratic role. We must identify the weaknesses that do not allow them to fulfill that role. --Leni Matienzo, national UN Volunteer Dialogue Facilitator with UNDP in Bolivia

"During the last elections, when we monitored more than 250 hours, it was evident that the information from the media was not neutral," continues Nagera Vicente, Communications Officer for UNDP Bolivia. "Only 49 per cent of the news were neutral. Of the remaining 51 per cent, we had 28 per cent positive news, and 23 per cent negative information that was oriented to the construction of misinformation narratives."

"It is important to discuss the role of the media in strengthening democracy, as well as institutions, and conflict prevention," says Albertina Piterbarg, an international consultant for Media for Democracy at UNDP Bolivia.

“ How can volunteering reduce misinformation and strengthen democracy? By serving as a bridge between local actors and promoting spaces for dialogue and exchange that overcome social divisions.

Media for Democracy is an initiative created by the UNDP Bolivia and UN Volunteers that involves people in finding solutions and strengthens local capacities. Under the Tandem modality, a working group was created where five national UN Volunteers (María Rene Ibáñez, Leni Matienzo, Fabiola Rollano, Roger Yance Peláez and Denis Michel) with knowledge and experience in this matter, worked under the remote leadership of Albertina Piterbarg, consultant to the UNDP roster of international experts.

Using Tandem teams is an innovative way of working that recognizes the unique value of bringing together local experience and knowledge with global experience, promoting cross-border exchange and consolidating a network of experts that transcends borders, time zones, languages and cultures.

“ The team's goal: to promote and consolidate a democratic media culture through the creation of spaces for dialogue between civil society, the media and the state.

With collective efforts, networks were established to map, analyze, and diagnose the situation of professional journalism in Bolivia, managing to monitor 191 traditional media (press, radio and television).

"The first step was to contact all those in charge of the media, from managers and owners, as well as journalists," says María Rene Ibáñez, a UN Volunteer serving as a dialogue facilitator for the departments of Beni and Pando with UNDP Bolivia.

"This allowed us to have a fully updated database of contacts and media working in the country. In the second part, we divided the media among all the UN Volunteers, manually monitored the media outlets and analyzed the news during the electoral process, to see if they do or do not collaborate in furthering democracy."

"It was hard work, but with the contribution of the UN Volunteers, very important products were produced, enabling the analysis of the media situation in the country. We obtained databases, interviews, media monitoring and a desk review with which quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed," continues Albertina Piterberg.

“ I feel like I have achieved my mission as a journalist. In this assignment as a UN Volunteer, I am fulfilling the dream of being able to contribute to my profession and recover the role of all journalists in our country. --Fabiola Rollano, a UN Volunteer Dialogue Facilitator with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Bolivia

With 340 UN Volunteers serving UNDP in the region, let's count on volunteering to attract the best local talent and strengthen Latin American democracies.

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