Volunteering is synonym of inclusion and commitment: the UNFPA Venezuela experience

Volunteering has proven to be an ideal mechanism to promote the inclusion of women in all areas of social and economic life. This, of course, contributes to the objective of leaving no one behind, a key message that the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has sought to promote within the framework of International Volunteer Day 2021.

According to the United Nations, women make up 57 per cent of volunteers globally. In the case of Venezuela, at least 60 per cent of the UN Volunteers serving in the country are women. This figure is even higher in the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in Venezuela, since the agency hosts 20 per cent of the total number of UN Volunteers serving in the country.

Our volunteers have a female face, since 76 per cent are women. Two-thirds of our human talent are UN Volunteers. --Mr Jorge González Caro, UNFPA National Representative, Venezuela

UNFPA in Venezuela utilizes volunteering to facilitate the empowerment and inclusion of women, especially the most vulnerable. This is does by enabling them to develop their capacities, obtain new skills and increase their possibilities for social participation when they are hindered in other spheres of work or family.

"We can say, without any doubt, that UNV has allowed us to take our actions to territories that we had never
reached before. All our personnel in the field and in complex border areas are UN Volunteers," highlights Mr González Caro.

The creation of so-called 'Safe Spaces' stands out among the initiatives that demonstrate how UNFPA Venezuela promotes inclusion through UN volunteering. These spaces are training platforms to empower women from amongst the most vulnerable communities by addressing issues of gender-based violence, sexual violence, body autonomy, women's human rights and sexual and reproductive health, among others.

"During 2020 and 2021, we launched six Safe Spaces in different communities of San Félix and Puerto Ordaz. We brought together more than 100 women and adolescents, who shared their experiences, everyday challenges and what they have had to face due to the pandemic," shares Jackeline Fernández, a UN Volunteer serving as Gender-based Violence Coordination Associate for UNFPA in Bolívar state, Venezuela.

Volunteers serve as the "eyes and ears" in the population, helping to generate knowledge from the communities, and bolstering the empowerment, solidarity and exercise of the rights of people, especially the historically most marginalized groups.

As of December 14, 2021, 160 UN Volunteers have been mobilized in Venezuela, distributed in 23 of the 24 states of the country and in most of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system. Based on these figures, Venezuela has the second highest UN Volunteer numbers in the Latin American and Caribbean region, after Colombia.

• International Human Solidarity Day • inclusion

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 10: Reduced inequalities SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals