Increased recognition of volunteering marks IVD 2021 in the Arab States

International Volunteer Day (IVD) was celebrated this year in over 11 countries and territories in the Arab States, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. This year’s campaign was marked by an increased level of recognition and interest in leveraging volunteering by various stakeholders at national level, with activities varying between volunteer talks, social campaigns, capacity-building workshops, volunteer awards and launch of volunteering platforms.

IVD this year coincided with the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. Country volunteer awards were organized on the occasion in several countries, including in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.
Another highlight of IVD 2021 in the Arab States included the launch of the Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II Award for Voluntary Service by HRH Crown Prince Hussein of Jordan.

UNV co-curated the IVD programme within Expo 2020 Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where a dedicated event was held to discuss how volunteerism can play a central role in strengthening people-state relationships, promote better governance and help build more equal and inclusive societies.

As part of the day, volunteer heroes were celebrated alongside Expo’s 30,000 volunteers, in the presence of three UAE ministers: the Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, the Minister of Community Development and the Minister of State for International Cooperation.

In Egypt, the Minister of Social Solidarity, Dr Nivine El Kabbag, announced a National Volunteer Award for 2022 under the theme of Environment and Climate change, as the country hosts the 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP27).

Furthermore, UNV held a series of parallel capacity-building workshops on 11 December, in collaboration with 18 different partners, including government, civil society and volunteer involving organizations. The workshops aimed to equip participants with skills and knowledge focused on empowering volunteering for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Iraq, the soft launch of the National Youth Volunteering Platform (NYVP) was announced in Baghdad on 8 December by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Federal Iraq, the Ministry of Culture and Youth in Kurdistan Region of Iraq and UNICEF, in collaboration with UNV. The platform, funded by the Government of Germany, aims to serve as a new innovative tool that allows young people in Iraq to be matched to volunteer opportunities.

IVD was also celebrated by UNV in Erbil on 5 December, through a small gathering and musical performance attended by UN Volunteers and UN personnel working in the UN compound.

In Lebanon, IVD was celebrated through two social campaigns. The first aimed to both raise awareness about plastic waste and collect it for delivery to two recycling facilities (led by UNDP-YLP Alumni). Proceedings from sale of part of the recycled plastic will go to families in need through the Recycler Donation Project, while the remainder will be transformed into sustainable furniture and designs. The second campaign collected winter clothing for people most-in-need, in partnership with the Volunteering Unit at Al-Makassed.

In the State of Palestine, a capacity building campaign titled Nawwarat carried out trainings for around 300 university students over 25 days, in collaboration with the UNDP Accelerator Lab and several Palestinian universities and partners. The training sessions focused on how to design and launch voluntary initiatives in support of achievement of the SDG's.
In addition, several Palestinian Youth organizations chose 5 December to jointly launch their voluntary programmes for the year 2022, alongside the national volunteering initiative Volunteering for Palestine, bearing the theme ‘Volunteer Now for a Better Future’.

In Sudan, UNV celebrated IVD in Khartoum and Abyei. The first event took place in the compound of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Khartoum, with the participation of UNDP Resident Representative Yuri Afanasiev.

During the event, three local volunteer-involving organizations shared insights about their volunteering work in humanitarian and development fields, and three UN staff members shared reflections about their previous experiences as UN Volunteers.

The event also featured a testimony by a current national Volunteer who is also a football player on the women’s national team. In Abyei, the Mayor of Abyei & Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief joined UN staff and Police, military personnel and the Community Protection Committee in a clean-up activity of the town market.

In Tunisia, a series of events took place in different parts of the country in the lead up to 5 December, including a solidarity caravan to Ain Drahem in collaboration with Tunisian Scouts.

A camp on the Sustainable Development Goals was organized in collaboration with UNHCR and WHO Tunisia, and an open house networking event in collaboration with the municipality of Medenine, the Tunisian Scouts, Red Crescent Society and France Volontaires.

In addition, a ceremony was held at the UN House in Tunis to celebrate both IVD and the International Day for People with Disabilities on 3 December.

In Yemen, UNV held a hybrid event in celebration of IVD on 5 December, whereby UN Volunteers and representatives of UN partners shared experiences on volunteer contributions to a better common future. A number of UN Volunteers and UN staff members joined the event at UNDP office in Sana’a, while others joined virtually from different governorates.

Several webinars and virtual events also took place in Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE, whereby UNV joined UN and non-UN partners celebrating the day, and introduced the audience to opportunities of accelerating delivery of the 2030 Agenda by working with volunteers.
Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals