UN Volunteers create safe urban spaces for youth to discuss their challenges

UN Volunteers take action to create safe urban space for youth, address gender-based violence and respond to COVID-19 related challenges. Meet Olga Tsaplina, International UN Youth Volunteer with UN-Habitat in Kenya. Her assignment is fully funded by Russian Federation.

Olga Tsaplina has joined UN-Habitat in Kenya as a Junior Officer for sustainable urbanization in August 2020. She has a background in political science and international relations and studied in Russia and Germany.

UN-Habitat Human Rights and Social Inclusion Unit is responsible for the inclusion of the vulnerable urban population groups into programming and various other activities of the agency. Olga has been supporting the unit on several workstreams like developing the project documents, concept notes, reports and sometimes weekly event publications.

Her team organizes various events related to gender-based violence and urban safety in an urban context. For instance, Olga supported the 16 Days

07 February 2022
of Activism campaign and 40 Days Safer Cities challenge to promote an exchange of best practices in urban safety for everyone.

“There is just something vital and meaningful about working with the community on the ground, being able to co-create the solutions with the local population in the context of a developing country. UNV programme is a unique opportunity to put theory into practice supporting one of the agencies of the UN family. --Olga Tsaplina, International UN Youth Volunteer

As an UN-Habitat HRSI Youth Team member, she has been working on implementing the principles of youth-led development in urban contexts of developing countries. The new trends put urban youth from the Global South in the spotlight of the future. While a bigger proportion of the world’s population lives in cities and towns, the urban population in the developing world becomes more youthful.

Stakeholders take prompt actions to build up youth livelihoods, enlarge their education and self-realization opportunities, protect their rights and engage young women and men in decision-making processes on all levels of governance and programming activities.

The concept of One-Stop Youth Centre as a partnership between local governments, youth groups, and UN-Habitat serves to provide youth with safe spaces in urban settings where they can meet and access information and resources critical to youth-led, including peacebuilding, research and policy development.

Olga supported UN-Habitat’s One-Stop Youth Centre in Mathare, Nairobi. The center led a COVID-19 community emergency response and Olga was involved in developing research tools and subsequent surveying the community on the effects of the pandemic on livelihood and security situations. As part of the response, a group of artists addressed the community’s safety measures through street art. The Mathare Environmental One-Stop center received the Special Award from the DigitalArt4Climate
Overall, UN-Habitat Youth Team has hosted 6 UN Volunteers, all young women from China, the Republic of Korea, France and Russia.

"UN-Habitat has a long-standing experience working with UN Volunteers, who proved to be instrumental in implementing the initiatives and supporting the agency with ongoing operations."--Douglas Ragan, Children and Youth Specialist, Human Rights and Social Inclusion Unit, UN-Habitat

UN Youth Volunteers are young specialists between 18 and 29 years old. They work with UN agencies on the frontlines of political, development and humanitarian operations in 130 countries worldwide.

East and Southern Africa

• Russian Federation • China • Republic of Korea • France • Full Funding Programme

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals