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Marie-Noel (right) training 30 young peace weavers in Kye-Ossi council, in the southern region of Cameroon in February 2022.

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## Weaving links to strengthen cross-border peace and security in Central Africa

Since the 1990s, the border areas of Gabon, Cameroon and Chad have been facing growing insecurity and criminality in a context of insufficient public services, lack of economic opportunities and citizen. In support of government efforts to tackle these challenges, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been implementing the Young Weavers of Peace project since July 2020. This two-year cross-border project is carried out in collaboration with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UNV. It aims to set up a network of 1,800 Young Weavers of Peace. Their role is to support the consolidation of peace in cross-border regions, prevent instability linked to illicit trafficking and coach 160 young people engaged in social enterprise projects.

Marie-Noel Verwiyi (Cameroon, 38 years old) and Wessi Vaissoulaye (Chad, 35 years old)

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are both UN Volunteers serving at UNESCO and in charge of training the young peace weavers. Through workshops and trainings, they engage youth in peace and security efforts and economic empowerment. This is instrumental in preventing the recruitment of these young people by armed and terrorist groups.

“ This project has given me the opportunity to help my community in conflict prevention, youth sensitization and existing peace building. That's how I got involved as a volunteer peace weaver. Through the effects of this project, I am convinced that I can participate in the improvement of a peaceful environment in my village. --Mirande, young beneficiary of the Young Weavers of Peace project in Kye-Ossi

Marie-Noel decided to become a UN Volunteer because she believes that serving her community is a lifestyle. She wants to make a difference by responding to the needs around her, while working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contributing to the development of her country.

So far, Marie-Noel has organized five training sessions in the southern region of Cameroon, where she has trained 175 young women and men to participate in peacebuilding, the fight against crime, illicit trafficking, discrimination, tribalism and hate speech in their communities.

Through educational conferences and sensitization workshops, these young people have become agents of change contributing to the development of their communities through their involvement. These activities also allow them to contribute to the maintenance of a culture of peace, the preservation of natural heritage and cross-border cooperation.

Marie-Noel also instills in them the values of volunteerism and the motivation to become role models who can play a key role in the process of preserving peace in their communities. She encourages them to look for solutions in their communities to consolidate peace. These young beneficiaries who previously had nothing in common now build a common purpose by putting their efforts at the service of the community.



Wessi Vaissoulaye is one of three national UN Volunteers supporting the project in Chad. His main role is to mobilize and sensitize administrative officials, religious and traditional leaders, and youth leaders on the importance of education for a culture of peace, which is an integral part of UNESCO's mandate.

Wessi has trained a total of 445 peace weavers, including 315 men and 130 women in Pala, Fianga, Binder and Léré. He has participated in the mobilization of 25,200 people, including 13,509 women and 11,691 men in these same communities for awareness sessions on peacebuilding.

“ The project is a way to bring us closer to the community, especially the youth in this transitional period in Chad. --Youssef Souleymane Achim, Chief of the Mayo Binder Department in Mayo-Kebbi West Province

Wessi's commitment as a UN Volunteer started from a desire to be closer to the local population, often in very remote places and sometimes facing difficult conditions.

"Being the interface of the United Nations in small villages and building peace in the minds of men and women are factors of my motivation," says this development activist. Since he was recruited by UNV, Wessi has been "fulfilling his childhood dream," he says. This young Chadian seized this opportunity to realize his hope of becoming a leader in global

community service.

The cross-border project allows for the revitalization and greater resilience of youth organizations to environmental, social and economic crises, particularly in the target areas, and contributes directly to sustainable peacebuilding and development. Furthermore, the project aims to strengthen political ownership by the States on the importance of cross-border cooperation in early warning activities and in the fight against cross-border crime.

The Young Weavers of Peace project is funded by the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and implemented under the joint coordination of UNESCO (which is in the lead) and UNODC. The project has deployed 11 UN Volunteers, five of these in Cameroon, three in Chad and three in Gabon.

 **West and Central Africa**

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Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions**  
**SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**