



Gopi Kharel (Bhutan), UN Volunteer Communications Specialist with FAO in The Gambia, recording a video of a beneficiary to capture success stories for advocacy and communications.

© UNV, 2021

A partnership to ensure food security for vulnerable communities

The representation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was established in the Republic of The Gambia in 1979. Since then, FAO has implemented over 120 projects, facilitating policy formulation and the development of programmes and projects aimed at improving production, productivity, food quality and national technical and institutional capacities. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, through the deployment of highly qualified volunteers like Esi Mawuena Christon-Quao (Ghana) and Gopi Chandra Kharel (Bhutan), is making a significant contribution to FAO's mandate in the country.

When Esi took up her position as UN Volunteer Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, she immediately identified implementation bottlenecks as the main problem with FAO projects in the country. Prior to her arrival, projects required, on average, up to two or three no-cost extensions to complete deliverables. This was beyond the project timeline, which could take up to two years.

Through Esi's monitoring and evaluation support, the agency was able to significantly close implementation gaps, by identifying bottlenecks and reporting them to project management for prompt action. Esi directly supported 21 projects covering forestry, fisheries, livestock, agriculture and natural resources, nutrition and livelihoods, within FAO's global mandate.

Esi is most proud of her contribution to a community poultry project. Between January and August 2022, FAO provided 30 communities in six districts with approximately 30,000 birds. During a monitoring visit, Esi observed that beneficiaries were working in silos, with no information sharing and limited opportunities to share knowledge and experiences or ask for help. She also found that some communities had creative ideas for managing their poultry stock, but had limited support. She therefore recommended the creation of a WhatsApp group platform for beneficiaries of FAO poultry support. This WhatsApp group now has 70 members, and beneficiaries have a self-help platform where they regularly share information.

“ I am proud of being part of the forefront players of agriculture development in the world. I have seen firsthand the changes that the support FAO provides makes to the lives of people and communities, and I am proud to say that I have played a role in the changes. --Esi Mawuena Christon-Quao, UN Volunteer Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at FAO

Career-wise, the young Ghanaian native's commitment as a UN Volunteer has "broadened her experience and helped her gain valuable skills in investment and development in the agricultural sector," she says. It also allows her to collaborate with other UN agencies such as the Office of the Resident Coordinator, UN Development Programme (UNDP), International Office of Migration (IOM), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), World Food Programme (WFP), International Trade Centre (ITC) and UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Gopi is a UN Volunteer Communications Specialist at the FAO office in Banjul. He has helped to improve the visibility of the achievements and successes of programmes and projects. For him, documentation and digital engagement with FAO's target audience is a matter of great importance in development work as donors and various implementing partners, the government and the population need to be kept informed of FAO's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger.

“ I was humbled to make a significant contribution to improving our message by leveraging different communication channels and methods to

share key messages and success stories with our audience. --Gopi
“ Chandra Kharel, UN Volunteer Communications
Specialist at FAO

As part of his work, Gopi has improved and created communication tools. FAO has an active Facebook page with more than 2,000 followers and a quarterly newsletter that regularly shares success stories. He has produced 10 newsletter publications and 13 project-specific fact sheets to increase the programme’s visibility and re-designed the website to support information dissemination. Finally, he has also improved media partnerships, allowing FAO to get three to four media covers per month. As a result of his work, partners, government and the population at large now have a renewed interest in understanding FAO’s mission and contributions.

Since January 2022, UNV has deployed 18 UN Volunteers with FAO to contribute to ending hunger (SDG 2) in West and Central Africa, through improving food access for vulnerable communities.



 West and Central Africa

• World Food Day • food security

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 2: Zero hunger](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)