



UN Volunteers serving with UNFPA in Latin America and the Caribbean.
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Zeroing in on avoidable maternal deaths, family planning and gender-based violence

“UN Volunteers are highly committed people who know that in order to achieve zero avoidable maternal deaths and zero unmet needs for family planning, they must work to leave no one behind, even in difficult conditions.” The words of Eugenia Sekler, Programme Officer for the Sexual and Reproductive Health component of UNFPA Venezuela, underline the important contribution of UN Volunteers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Daniel Valbuena, Mirtha Morales, and Rosa Pimentel are among more than 70 UN Volunteers who served with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2022.

According to estimates, more than one million adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth in Latin America and the Caribbean annually (UNFPA, 2018). Twelve million women, from 115 countries, lost access to family planning services in 2021 (UNFPA, 2021). One in two women experienced or knew of a case of Gender Based Violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 confinement. These statistics all have a person and story behind them.

Contributing their knowledge and experiences for equal access to sexual and reproductive rights, reducing inequalities in vulnerable people, and countering the risks of GBV are some

of the areas in which UN Volunteers make a difference.

“ I am a psychologist with 20 years of professional experience. Being a UN Volunteer is growth, learning, and service.” -- Mirtha Morales, UN Volunteer Expert, Gender Based Violence Coordinator, UNFPA Venezuela.

Mirtha contributes to five projects that center on women's empowerment: Awareness on GBV, training of community women, entrepreneurship promoting livelihoods for women, multi-sectoral response services for survivors of GBV, and supporting women with disabilities through the provision of opportunities and accessibility.

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A UN Volunteer Surgeon, Daniel Valbuena serves in the Sexual and Reproductive Health component of UNFPA Venezuela. He contributes to achieving the 'Three Zeros'. Zero unmet contraceptive needs, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero gender based violence. ([UNFPA, 2018](#))

“ We are present in three municipalities of Zulia. We train health personnel in 11 centers. We dispense contraceptive methods, carry out workshops in communities where women have difficulty getting around, and inform about the correct use of the condom, and how to prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). In addition, we empower the female population on issues of sexual and reproductive health and awareness of gender based violence.” -- Daniel Valbuena, UN Volunteer Surgeon in the Sexual and Reproductive Health component, UNFPA Venezuela.

Rosa Pimentel, UN Volunteer with disabilities and an activist, serves as Sexual and Reproductive Health Specialist for UNFPA in Peru. For Rosa, providing opportunities for persons with disabilities is a key priority. She says, "A UN Volunteer for UNFPA is an opportunity to work actively to mainstream the issue of disability."

“ My assignment as a UN Volunteer has focused on contributing to the technical assistance provided by UNFPA to the Ministry of Health in preparing the Technical Health Regulations. This covers the prevention and elimination of gender based violence in health facilities, which provide sexual and reproductive health services.”-- Rosa Pimentel, UN Volunteer with disabilities, Sexual and Reproductive Health Specialist, UNFPA Peru.

This article was written with the kind support of Online Volunteer, Juanita Cuervo and translated by Online volunteer, Rociel Perdomo.

 **Latin America and the Caribbean**

• International Day of Epidemic Preparedness • Persons with disabilities • Gender-based Violence • maternal health • Sexual and reproductive health • Venezuela • Peru

Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 3: Good health and well-being** **SDG 5: Gender equality** **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities** **SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**