



In Kenya, UN Volunteer Annastacia Some (left) discusses plans to ensure a peaceful election with an administration police officer. (UNV, 2017)

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## UN Volunteers help build early warning and response systems for peace in Kenya

In 2017 and 2018, Kenya ranked 125 and 123 respectively out of 163 countries in the Global Peace Index. Violence presents a challenge, particularly in Kenya's border regions, where migration puts additional pressure on already marginalized communities, and in multi-ethnic communities during election periods. Threats of terrorism by groups such as Al Shabaab add to the tense situation.

For about four years now, 16 UN Volunteers have been helping build local capacities for lasting peace in 12 regional clusters across Kenya through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UN Volunteers are serving under UNDP's *Deepening Foundations for Peacebuilding and*

*Community Security* project and the joint programme for *Strengthening National Capacities for Conflict Prevention* of UNDP and the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

Together with other stakeholders, they have been pursuing effective strategies to prevent electoral violence since Kenya's elections in 2013. These UN Volunteers have been building on the foundation set by their predecessors, who supported Kenya's 2007 and 2013 electoral cycles through the *Neighbourhood Volunteer Scheme* and *Get Informed, Get Involved* projects of UNV and UNDP.

Mohamud Mohamed Abdullahi is a national UN Volunteer working as a Peace and Cohesion Coordinator in Kenya's North Eastern Region.

"The area borders Somalia and is currently the site of some of the worst armed violence in Kenya," he says. "On the one hand we have communal clashes because of deep and unresolved tensions between communities. On the other hand, we have the problem of Al Shabaab terrorist attacks, which have dramatically increased since 2011. The attacks have led to a crisis in governmental services since many non-Muslim civil servants refuse to return to work out of fear."

Mohamud works with local authorities, community leaders, local partners, peace committees and authorities to take measures against security threats. "I take the lead in facilitating community dialogues, for example," he shares. "We also lead mentorship programmes in schools to prevent radicalization."

“ The key to sustainable peace is building durable partnerships and the capacities of local organizations. That's how I managed to successfully restructure and enhance local peace committees across the region in order for them to resolve communal clashes through dialogue and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. --UN Volunteer Mohamud Mohamed Abdullahi, Peace and Cohesion Coordinator

In Kenya's Central Rift Valley Region, the UN Volunteer Peace and Cohesion Coordinator, Anastacia Some, collaborates with a wide range of partners on peacebuilding, conflict management and conflict transformation in the four counties of Uasingishu, Nandi, Baringo and Elgeiyo Marakwet to promote local solutions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

During Kenya's 2017 elections, she established coordination teams comprising 13 representatives of different agencies to monitor the elections. Anastacia worked with these partners to identify and address gaps and risks in conflict response through timely

sharing of information with relevant government agencies and capacity building of grassroots initiatives.

"Through my assignment, communities are slowly beginning to engage in dialogue meetings and elders are taking on a mediation role in order to prevent communal conflict over resources," Anastacia says.

“ I worked closely with the Pokot and Marakwet communities through sustained intra and intercommunity dialogue forums. The community warriors have since abandoned their guns and are cultivating land on both sides. The grazing land they once used to fight for has been converted to agricultural land. The number of deaths due to cattle theft has dropped drastically. Support from government has also greatly helped. -- UN Volunteer Anastacia Some, Peace and Cohesion Coordinator

Another national UN Volunteer, Halkano Boru, works in Isiolo, North Central Kenya, also as a Peace and Cohesion Coordinator. Before Kenya's 2017 national election, Isiolo had been identified as a 'conflict hot spot'. In response, UNDP and partners established a Joint Operations and Command Centre, where residents were able to report any violence at its earliest stages.

"This is how we were able to prevent nearly 30 incidents in the county," says George Natembeya, former County Commissioner for Isiolo. Halkano does not only work in the command centre, he also sensitizes communities on electoral gender-based violence in order to reduce the harassment of female candidates.

"Prejudice and violence against female candidates are rampant," says Halkano. "For example, someone broke into the house of a woman candidate for the County Assembly. They stole her belongings and destroyed her campaign materials. We reported the incident to the police and a suspect was arrested."

Halkano's work in violence prevention and gender sensitization bore fruits; while some incidents were reported, the election ran generally well and Isiolo country even made history by electing the first woman senator in Northern Kenya.

“ The Command Centre helped build trust and confidence during the election period through working with both the police and

“ communities. --Halkano Boru, UN Volunteer

The UNDP project *Deepening Foundations for Peacebuilding and Community Security* builds on achievements of previous programmes, which were also supported by UN Volunteers. The project is implemented through the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management of the Ministry of Interior and Coordination, under a national multi-stakeholder conflict prevention and response system. This platform integrates the use of SMS, incident reports and media reports to help strengthen peace and conflict prevention efforts in Kenya.

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) defines Positive Peace as the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies and optimal environments for human potential to flourish. Since Kenya's post-electoral violence in 2008, UN Volunteers in Kenya have demonstrated the strong linkage between volunteerism, early response systems and local capacities for enhancing peace and preventing conflict. Engaging volunteers in building lasting positive peace is essential for national development.



<https://www.ke.undp.org/content/kenya/en/home/operations/projects/peacebuilding/deepening-foundations-for-peacebuilding-and-community-security.html>



<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/joint-undp-dpa-programme-on-building-national-capacities-for-con.html>



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