Volunteering for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in West and Central Africa

With ongoing violent conflicts and tensions in many parts of the world, the United Nations Secretary General’s Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is scaling up its efforts to build and sustain peace, while developing partnerships with organizations such as the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to support peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-affected situations across the world.

From 2006 to 2017, the PBF allocated US $772 million to 41 recipient countries. The PBF works across pillars and supports integrated UN responses to fill critical gaps; respond quickly and with flexibility to political opportunities, and catalyze processes and resources in a risk-tolerant manner.

UNV is a strategic partner and efficient interlocutor of the PBF at the national/local levels through the mobilization of committed and skilled UN Volunteers in remote locations.
For example, UN Volunteers play a critical role in the implementation of the PBF’s Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) projects. Last year, a group of UN Volunteers received a training by the PBF in Nairobi on gender-sensitive peacebuilding to enable them to apply a gender lens when implementing the PBF projects.

### PBF and UNV in West and Central Africa

In partnership with the PBF, UN Volunteers are deployed to play important roles in the implementation of projects, especially in West and Central Africa, where the PBF focuses on promoting peacebuilding activities which directly contribute to post-conflict stabilization and strengthen the capacity of Governments, national/local institutions and transitional or other relevant authorities.

In 2017, this region had the largest number of projects approved by the PBF, including 12 countries out of the 24.

In West and Central Africa, the UNV programme mobilized UN Volunteers in eight countries in 2017. They successfully support GYPI projects, post-peacekeeping mission transition and cross-border projects in, for example, Chad, Liberia, Niger and Sierra Leone.

#### UN Volunteer Project Coordinator Samuel Londo during a work session with colleagues involved in the PBF project “Improving women’s participation in political processes as peace ambassadors”. (UNV, 2018)

### Promoting gender equality in peacebuilding processes in Sierra Leone

Samuel Londo from Cameroon is currently serving as a UN Volunteer Project Coordinator in Sierra Leone. He coordinates a project on “improving women’s participation in political processes as peace ambassadors”, funded by the PBF and jointly implemented by UN Women, UNESCO and UNDP.

He contributed to the first milestone of the project that has been concluded. This included the general elections in Sierra Leone in April 2018, where some gender-based violence occurred. Samuel said, “the situation would have been aggravated if the project had not trained some 700 uniformed women and men who were deployed all over the country to help reduce the spate of violence during elections period. Now the tension has dropped”.

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However, Samuel notes that stability is still fragile though efforts are being made by the new government and stakeholders.

"Therefore, this period offers crucial opportunities to shore up peacebuilding efforts and the regional consultations we are presently carrying out to craft the second National Action Plan of Sierra Leone on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 & 1820, as well as finalize the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy," Samuel shares. This experience has sharpened his interest in helping others and addressing new challenges.

“I have gained an in-depth understanding of peacebuilding and reached the conclusion that fighting actively against violence against women and encouraging them to be part of political life in decision-making positions can really bring social development. I am now truly convinced that volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, purposefully creating opportunities to promote gender equality. --Samuel Londo, UN Volunteer Project Coordinator in Sierra Leone

Building trust between security forces and civilians: Chad-Cameroon cross-border project

As part of the Chad-Cameroon cross-border project funded by the PBF, UN Volunteers helped to identify the root causes of conflict and define a community early warning and rapid response system for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization in the Far North region of Cameroon and Hadjer Lamis in Chad.

Appoline Uwimbabazi (Rwanda), an international UN Volunteer who coordinates the project, stresses that UN Volunteers can built trust between the security forces and the civilian population in the cross-border areas through recreational volunteer activities such as sport, community interest activities, and training.

To achieve peace and stability, international UN Volunteers, such as Appoline Uwimbabazi, have improved mechanisms for collaboration and partnership between implementing agencies and partners in the field, through good organization of joint and cross-border meetings. Their volunteering for peacebuilding has created a favorable climate between security force officers and civilians.

Millions of people are suffering from social and political tensions in the world, including a significant number of victims who are women and children. During the last years, the PBF showed more engagement in response to the increasing demand for sustaining peace in countries struggling to restore peace and social cohesion.

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