The voice of youth from Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe

This is a story of three UN Volunteers, Arminda Ceita, Hugo Robert Carnell and Joel Benguela D’Almeida based in Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe. All three believe that investing in youth skills is vital for any sort of sustainable development on the ground. Here are reflections from their service with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Arminda Ceita is a UN Volunteer Adolescent Engagement Officer with UNICEF in Guinea-Bissau. In her volunteer assignment, she pays close attention to the voice of youth and a safe space for their equal participation.

One of Arminda’s areas of service is the well-being of adolescent girls. She also spreads
awareness of climate change and gender equality.

Before joining UNICEF in Guinea-Bissau, Arminda served with UNICEF in São Tomé and Principe. She was part of the U-Report platform, which has over 12,000 registered young people. She shares, "Through U-Report, young people can access relevant information. This initiative ensures that their voices are heard, and their rights are protected."

Hugo Robert Carnell, UN Volunteer and Youth and Climate Officer for Generation Unlimited with UNICEF, supports sustainability in São Tomé and Principe. He serves alongside youth climate committees.

Hugo leads beach clean-ups and tree-planting events to improve environmental resilience.

"The results have been amazing. The beach looks incredible. I'm so impressed with the passion, energy, and organizational skills of the young people I'm working with. I'm already looking for ways to extend this intervention to other regions of São Tomé and Principe." Hugo Robert Carnell, UN Volunteer Youth and Climate Officer with UNICEF.

Hugo recruits candidates for U-Report positions specifically to improve data collection and to address young people's needs across São Tomé and Principe.

For Hugo, the enthusiasm of young people is incredibly motivating.

Another UN Volunteer, Joel Benguela D'Almeida serves as Gender and Youth Representative for Climate Action with UNDP in São Tomé.

Joel has established seven regional and district committees. These involve almost 50 young people who focus on climate action, raising awareness, and equipping community members with knowledge on adapting to and building climate resilience.
Joel Benguela D’Almeida (right) UN Volunteer Gender and Youth Representative for Climate Action with UNDP in São Tomé. @ UNV, 2024.

“I support implementing practical climate solutions such as reforestation, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy projects,” says Joel. "These initiatives demonstrate that young people can be a powerful force for climate resilience."

Joel uses digital platforms and media to spread climate awareness. He has the support of young climate activists to advocate for climate action and raise visibility for UNDP’s efforts.

“As a UN Volunteer, I see genuine smiles and positive changes because of our efforts. This inspires me to keep going and help more young people make a difference.” Joel Benguela D’Almeida, UN Volunteer Gender and Youth Representative with UNDP, São Tomé.
The zest of young people in Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe underscores the fact that sustainable solutions demand the active participation of all.

With the chance to hone their skills and access equal opportunities, young people are truly limitless, with nothing but the sky above them.