



Abdelrahman Salayma, national UN Volunteer with OCHA in the State of Palestine, assessing a demolition site in Hebron.

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## Celebrating UN Volunteer humanitarians in the Arab States

On World Humanitarian Day 2019, UNV celebrates the contribution of UN Volunteers and others to humanitarian work worldwide, in partnership with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We pay a special tribute to the millions of #WomenHumanitarians – both the women caught up in crises who are often the first to respond, and women humanitarians around the world who rally to help people in need.

Across the Arab States, humanitarians have been making real change in peoples' lives, whether on the frontlines in conflict-ridden contexts or within their own communities.

Over the past five years, 57 UN Volunteers have served with OCHA in the Arab States region, providing support across a wide range of professional areas: from monitoring and evaluation to humanitarian affairs, geographic information systems and field support. Two-thirds of these volunteers have been female volunteers, emphasizing the leading role of women in

humanitarian response within a region furthest behind in terms of gender equality.

UN Volunteers have supported OCHA in tackling the most challenging humanitarian issues across the Arab States, with State of Palestine (20), Sudan (10) and Iraq (7) ranked as top three countries in terms of numbers of UN Volunteers mobilized. These served to ensure clear communication within conflict zones, map aid work and analyse funding costs for humanitarian action, amongst other functions.

Alaa Abu Ramadan is a woman humanitarian and UN Volunteer who has been serving with OCHA since May 2017, working to represent those living in Gaza accurately to the outside world. Having grown up in Gaza, Alaa has a strong sense of community and relates closely to many of the civilians. Her role comes with a great degree of responsibility; she is effectively a voice for thousands of marginalized people, her words providing their only opportunity to temporarily transcend the confines of everyday life.

“ The true reward for humanitarian workers is helping people and alleviating their sufferings. Nothing matters more than being able to make a change in their lives. --Alaa Abu Ramadan, national UN Volunteer with OCHA in the Gaza Strip, State of Palestine

Banan Al-Fares is another UN Volunteer serving with OCHA in the State of Palestine in her home town Nablus as a Field Support Assistant.

'We rise by lifting others' is Banan's favourite motto. She says her work allows her to put this into practice on a daily basis, through listening to vulnerable populations, reporting their needs and seeking potential assistances with OCHA partners. "When you participate in giving your own time and effort to lift others and enhance their chances in life, you find satisfaction at the same time," she explains.

"I am always seeking opportunities to help others and communities to prevent suffering," says Minhee Noh (Republic of Korea), an international UN Volunteer who finished her 30-month assignment with OCHA last February.

Minhee, who served as a UN Volunteer Coordination Support Officer in East Jerusalem, aided the generation of the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan for the State of Palestine. By providing humanitarian funding analysis, explaining which projects/sectors needed to be funded, donors were able to make informed decisions.

Men UN Volunteers have been also working hand-in-hand with women humanitarians in the Arab States. Just like Alaa and Banan, Abdelrahman Salayma serves as a UN Volunteer Field Support Assistant with OCHA, working to connect communities in need in Hebron with support networks. His role involves liaising with OCHA to determine the correct distribution of resources to those living in restricted-movement areas. For Abdelrahman, World Humanitarian Day is not only a celebration of the great humanitarian work carried out across the globe, but a reminder that humanitarian support is still much needed.

Working to connect outside influences with restricted communities elsewhere, Oladipo Akinpelumi (Nigeria) serves as a GIS Officer with OCHA in Erbil, Iraq. Oladipo provides up-to-date maps of the humanitarian organizations working within Iraq, enabling informed and efficient distribution of aid. Thanks to Oladipo's work, the likelihood of aid reaching its target beneficiaries has increased by 20 per cent.

“ World Humanitarian Day to me is more than just paying tribute to aid workers, but to give aid, security and peace to those in need. --Oladipo Akinpelumi

On World Humanitarian Day, UNV celebrates the great achievements of UN Volunteers serving with OCHA, commending aid and humanitarian workers across the Arab States and the world at large.



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