



Participants in the National SDGs Youth Consultation workshop in the Republic of Moldova, April 2019.

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Fostering youth ownership of the 2030 Agenda in Moldova

Polina Listopad (Russian Federation) serves as a UN Volunteer with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Moldova. She works closely with UNICEF's Deputy Representative to advance the UN Delivering as One agenda, with a focus on women and children's rights, youth initiatives and volunteering. Her assignment, which is fully-funded by the Russian Federation, entails facilitating the implementation of relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by encouraging and promoting volunteerism and multi-stakeholder partnerships, while increasing the involvement of Moldovan youth in the national implementation of the SDGs.

Having volunteered for various causes over the past 10 years, from working in animal shelters to supporting playgrounds for disabled children, Polina quotes Mahatma Gandhi to explain her motivation:

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. These words of Gandhi describe my attitude towards volunteering. --Polina Listopad, UN Volunteer with UNICEF, Moldova

Beyond that, personal connections came as an added value. "I've always used the opportunity to volunteer as a way to integrate with another cultures and build more meaningful relationships with people," Polina says.

Alongside her volunteering experience, Polina is utilizing her education and professional background in her current assignment. She holds a Master's degree in Management, with emphasis on cross-cultural communication, and has worked for non-profit organizations for over five years.

Currently, together with her colleagues at UNICEF's Adolescents and Youth Programme in Moldova, Polina works to increase the percentage of young people who feel their views are taken seriously.

Their target is to get the youth participation rate to 50 per cent at district level and 40 per cent at national level by the year 2022, compared to the baseline participation rates of 38 and 30 per cent, respectively, in 2013.

To strengthen the engagement of young people in SDG implementation, Polina and her colleagues work directly with more than 400 young Moldovans to familiarize them with the SDGs and discuss their aspirations for the future.

In March 2019, a consultation with 800 young Moldovans revealed that awareness levels of the SDGs were low, with two-thirds indicating they had not even heard of the SDGs.

To address this issue, Polina supported the organization of several SDG-related online and offline consultations at regional and national levels, where discussions highlighted how youth could participate and engage in SDG implementation and monitoring. The results were shared with UNICEF programme specialists and relevant decision-makers at both national and local levels.

"Many young people had very practical ideas about how they can contribute to a sustainable world," explains Polina. "For example, a group of young people at the national SDG consultation decided to reduce the use of plastic in their school. They decided this could be achieved by talking to the school management, advocating SDGs, discussing the issue and reaching an agreement on how their school could cut its overall plastic consumption," she adds.

Transmitting the voices of youth to where it matters is something Polina takes pride in. "Being a UN Volunteer is an amazing chance to offer my time and knowledge where it is

needed most,” she concludes.



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