UNV Executive Coordinator Richard Dictus and UN-Habitat Executive Director Joan Clos sign a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation between the two organizations. (UN-Habitat, 2014)

UNV and UN-Habitat sign Memorandum of Understanding

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is keen on increasing the deployment of specialized UN Volunteers. UN-Habitat Executive Director Joan Clos said, "We have a new strategic approach to urbanization with three focus areas; urban legislation, urban planning and design, and urban economy and municipal finance. We recognize the specific contribution that UN Volunteers make to our projects and we are looking to engage volunteers with technical expertise in these areas specifically." Joan Clos was speaking at a meeting with UNV Executive Coordinator Richard Dictus, on the occasion of the Memorandum of Understanding signed recently between UNV and UN-Habitat.
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"UN Volunteers work at the grass roots level, reaching out to communities, youth and the marginalized," outlined UNV Executive Coordinator Richard Dictus. "We have seen UN Volunteers strengthening the resilience of highly-vulnerable communities through community-based adaptation projects. They are best-placed to support communities in sustainable recovery from disasters and conflicts, and they hit the ground running."

More than 170 UN Volunteers have served with UN-Habitat in 30 countries over the past seven years, supporting UN-Habitat in delivering on its mandate of coordinating human settlement activities.

UN Volunteers, by the very nature of volunteerism's inclusiveness, advance UN-Habitat's efforts to promote the participation of communities and civil society in urban planning, disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation. This includes a focus on advancing gender equity and helping youth gain access to the knowledge and skills they need for better employability.

National UN Volunteers are familiar with local development challenges and, through their approach, foster community participation and generate a sense of ownership. In Haiti, UN Volunteers worked with UN-Habitat following the devastating earthquake of 2010 and tropical cyclone Tomas in creating emergency plans and returning people to safe houses and neighbourhoods. The volunteers helped set up ten emergency community and shelter centres in the greater Port-au-Prince area, and strengthened the capacity of local communities to articulate their needs.

UNV and UN-Habitat share a commitment to reaching out to youth and bringing their voice to the table. Within the framework provided by this Memorandum of Understanding, UNV and UN-Habitat will be examining the potential for deploying UN Youth Volunteers in support of joint development activities.

*The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization*
that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing volunteers.

UNV engaged UN Volunteers on a total of 6,459 assignments in 2013. With an average age of 38 years and the requisite professional skills and qualifications of some 5 to 10 years relevant experience, UN Volunteers served in 129 countries in 2013 and came themselves from 152. The majority come from developing countries themselves. One fourth of UN Volunteers served in their own countries, with the others carrying out international assignments. The financial equivalent of programme activities exceeds US $235 million annually.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, is the United Nations agency for sustainable urban development. It is mandated to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. Its key priority areas are: urban planning and design; urban economy; and urban land, legislation and governance.

• Kenya • UN-Habitat • Memorandum of Understanding • MoU

Sustainable Development Goal: