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Becoming a volunteer to mainstream gender equality

For Ekin Su Yilmaz from Turkey, joining UN Women as a UN Youth Volunteer was her life-long dream. Supporting Sustainable Development Goal 5 is part of her day-to-day work, and Ekin shares her experience.

“As a young woman, I have always been motivated to create spaces for women to participate in decision making and take on leadership roles. I want to help eliminate barriers to gender equality in my country and region and accelerate achieving 50-50 by 2030 globally. --Ekin Su Yilmaz, UN Youth Volunteer with UN Women, Turkey
Ekin studied Political Science and Public Administration at Middle East Technical University, completed several internships and actively participated in numerous SDG-related projects. She started volunteering right after her graduation, as she wanted to be part of a meaningful effort and to learn from inspirational people before pursuing further studies.

This thoughtful approach helped Ekin get engaged with UN Women as a national UN Youth Volunteer. Through her assignment as a Programme Assistant, she is currently gaining significant experience and insights on drafting strategies, coordination with civil society organizations and assisting development programmes and projects.

"I have not only ended up strengthening my practical skills on delivering SDG 5 targeted activities, but my experience as a UN Volunteer has also given me the motivation to continue to work for an equal future where inequality will be unknown and unexperienced by the upcoming generations," Ekin shares.

**Collective force of individual wills**

For Ekin, volunteerism is essential to mainstream gender equality, as she believes that only the collective force of individual wills and efforts can bring lasting change.

> The more volunteers we have to openly promote gender equality, especially among young women and men who are willing to engage in dialogue with their parents and grandparents’ generations and encourage the youth, the more successful we will be in this. – Ekin Su Yilmaz, UN Youth Volunteer with UN Women, Turkey

UN Women in Turkey works closely with the Government and civil society to promote gender equality, empower women and unlock progress for everyone. The organization focuses mainly on initiatives in leadership and political participation, ending violence against women and girls, and peace, security and engendering humanitarian action.
As an integral part of the UN Women country team, Ekin contributes to the empowerment of women and girls in Turkey, including women with disabilities, refugee women and girls under temporary protection and their advocacy networks.

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Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals