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Catherine Ngave (on the whiteboard), UNV program assistant-statistics, Makueni County, Kenya, leading the education department team in report writing after a survey on restructuring and revitalizing the youth polytechnics in the county. (Photo courtesy of Catherine Ngave)

Strengthening devolution in Kenya

Makueni County, Kenya: Catherine Ngave, a national UN Volunteer in Kenya: I started volunteering at a young age in our community. We would volunteer to clean the market places and also fetch water for the elderly women in the village. I never knew it would lead to national volunteerism.

I began my assignment as national UN Volunteer in November 2015. I am a UNV Programme Assistant-Statistician in Makueni County. At the onset of devolution in Kenya, the government encountered a lot of problems and that made many Kenyans regret devolution. Rather than sit back and complain, I decided to do something about it. I volunteered.

I am stationed at the Department of Finance and Socio-Economic Planning where I collect the latest data to facilitate the planning and resource allocation in the county. I compile this data from the field and various county government departments.

I help various departments carry out baseline surveys before embarking on projects; interpret the data to various stakeholders; and assist the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the county to support the Participatory Rural Appraisal. Additionally, I also help the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit report on the state of development projects across the county.

It's rewarding to be part of a team that fulfills the essence of devolution, bringing government to local people. To see the marginalized and the poor learn about self-sustainability is not only motivating but provides ultimate satisfaction.

My role in the county has enabled me to address so many community challenges and opportunities. I am currently involved in bringing together women from all the wards in the county for a volunteer event during International Women's Day to ensure women are effectively involved in gathering development data that informs the county resource allocation.

Working alongside the department of volunteerism in the county, we intend to establish a stronger women empowerment network that will also provide a tool for voter education as we approach next year's general elections.

My overall experience has been quite profound. I have been able to grow both professionally and personally through volunteerism. My message to everyone, and especially to women who want to see a change in the community is that the world is changing.

Are we? Will we take the initiative and volunteer to make our communities better, safer and more productive?

 **Sub-Saharan Africa**

• Kenya • self-sustainability

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 4: Quality education](#), [SDG 5: Gender equality](#)