Amy Wickham (left) is an international UN Volunteer with the United Nations Children’s Fund in Zimbabwe. (UNV, 2015)

Giving and receiving: UN Volunteers talk about their work in Zimbabwe

Harare, Zimbabwe: When Amy Wickham, an international UN Volunteer, joined the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Zimbabwe, she didn’t know what to expect. Yet this experience changed her life. "The experience and exposure that I've got since I started as a volunteer has been phenomenal", she says. "The ownership that I've been given over the projects, as well as the time and responsibility that I've been given from professionals that I've worked with has been fantastic."

As a UNV Climate Change Officer, Amy tried to lead a green movement and raise awareness about environmental issues. She started an initiative called Green Fridays and encouraged the people she worked with to bring their recycled waste to the office every Friday. She also introduced renewable energy concepts and a footprint assessment. "Had I not experienced all of that, I wouldn't be in the position I am now," Amy says. Two national UN Volunteers serving within a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project in Zimbabwe saw their efforts pay off when the livelihoods of a local community they were supporting started improving. What these two national UN Volunteers were not expecting was that their contribution brought to them something in return that was even more valuable: a feeling of joy and a connection to other people.

Daisy Bizeki, national UN Volunteer and Project Coordinator for UNDP, says that
volunteerism has been "a joyful journey". Thanks to UNDP and the provision of a fishing rig, she helped a local community grow its income. "It brings joy to me, so I enjoy being a volunteer," she says.

Mthandazo Maphosa, national UN Volunteer and UNDP Programme Liaison Officer seems to agree: "The joy of being a volunteer is working with communities and seeing them transforming to another level, especially seeing their income streams growing," he says. [Watch Daisy and Mthandazo talk about their work]

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