Giving Chadian youth the opportunity to volunteer

N’Djamena, Chad: We are Alladoum Assidjim and Laura Rutishauser, a national UN volunteer aged 33 and an international UN volunteer from Switzerland aged 29, working together to provide Chadian youth with local volunteering opportunities. In order to do so, we are supporting the set up of Chad’s National Volunteering Programme (CNVP), with our partners the UNV programme, UNDP, the French Embassy and France Volontaires, at the request of the Chadian Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

Chad is one of the least developed countries in the world, ranking 184th out of 187 on the Human Development Index. In order to foster the country’s sustainable development, its youth is an invaluable asset. Around 30 percent of the population are under 35, whereas youth unemployment is particularly high. The CNVP thus aims on one hand at enabling youth to gain Professional experience, and on the other hand, we also want to reinforce the civic responsibility of young people.

We have been working together on this new Programme for 6 months now, and it has not
always been easy. The biggest challenge remains understanding each other well. More than once, the message one of us sent to the other was understood in a completely different way. We are thus continuously negotiating to gain a common understanding of the problems we face and possible solutions. Nevertheless, we also learn from each other every day.

Alladoum has great knowledge of the Chadian context, is connected to all the important stakeholders we need to move the Programme forward, and is experienced in mobilizing youth and project management: "As a volunteer I am in direct contact with the population, which makes me want to improve their lives".

Laura brings in an outside perspective, helping the Programme to be structured more efficiently, communicate effectively and adopt new tools and techniques. "Being on the spot and working with my colleague Alladoum everyday gives me a better understanding of the reality and challenges Chadian youth is facing, and allows me to find responses to these challenges together".

So far, we have been able to mobilize 13 volunteers, supporting the Committee for Volunteer Development of Chad (CDVT), the NGO in charge of the National Volunteering Programme in the recruitment, training and follow-up of these volunteers. Over 400 young people have applied to become a volunteer so far, which confirmed a growing interest in our Programme. The 13 volunteers we recruited are reaching out to local communities in N'Djamena everyday: 10 of them are raising awareness in N'Djamena's districts on water, sanitation and health, as well as on other basic services the local councils provide.

They visit households to discuss simple measures one can take to improve daily hygiene and sanitary conditions, while also informing people on how to obtain a birth certificate at their local council. The volunteers are also enquiring into the population's satisfaction with the local council's level of service provision, feeding this information back to local political leaders.

The other 3 volunteers are teaching citizenship education to teenagers at community centres: they try to engage these young people outside school hours in developing responsible citizenship, talking about subjects such as how to keep themselves and their families healthy, how to protect the environment or to construct one's life plan using picture boxes, sketches, games and songs.

Plenty remains on our plate to make the National Volunteering Programme operational: We want to have legislation on volunteering, a sustainable funding mechanism and above all find more volunteering opportunities to offer to Chadian youth. Luckily, we can count on each other's volunteer spirit and motivation and on our partners' support to realize these goals. Let's all volunteer! (Tous volontaires!)
Sub-Saharan Africa

• Chad • Human Development Index • basic services

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities