

20 June 2013



Diana Popa Senyuva is a UN Volunteer with UNHCR in Turkey. She works on refugee status determination and carries out research on the situation and the condition of the countries the refugees come from. (UNV, 2013)

Volunteering from the heart

Ankara, Turkey: I come from Moldova and I am now working as a UN Volunteer with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Turkey. I have been living in Turkey for a few years and have had the opportunity to observe the approach of the Turkish people towards volunteerism. In Turkey people help each other with their hearts and from their hearts on a continuous basis.

Young people are the main driving engine behind the ever-growing volunteer force in Turkey. For Turkish young people it is common to be part of some kind of association,

organization or student club on a volunteer basis, doing various activities such as exchanges, environmental action, charity work and peer education.

This trend grew particularly in the late 1990s, despite the fact that civil society organizations have sometimes been viewed with suspicion by some state authorities.

This has changed in the last decade, and many young people now choose to get involved and use their spare time to develop their skills, while also manifesting their civic participation by contributing to a cause.

Perhaps this is the reason why the core of the UNV community at UNHCR Turkey is made up of young people. Being a UN Volunteer with UNCHR allows us to gain the skills needed to realize our social and human development potential, but also to dedicate our time, energy and ideas to contribute to the achievement of UNHCR's global strategic objectives.

Being a UN Volunteer with UNHCR is an opportunity to make other people's lives better. Working on refugee status determination has been an interesting and worthwhile learning experience. Part of the task involves carrying out extensive research on the situation and the condition of the countries the refugees come from.

Especially in light of recent events in neighboring countries, and given the influx of refugees and the increased time necessary to process the rising number of applications for asylum, the contribution of UN Volunteers to UNHCR seems crucial and the impact invaluable.

I also believe that I have brought cultural diversity to an already diverse office, where true professionals and young graduates work hard side by side to protect refugees and find durable solutions for them.

 Europe and the CIS

• Turkey • UNHCR • youth

Sustainable Development Goal: