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Stefania Defilippo (Italy), a UNV Intern serving in Mauritius, made a documentary to illustrate volunteers' contribution to local NGOs and to help vulnerable groups expand and improve their partnerships. Her internship was fully funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Dr. Magda Verdickt/ UNDP, 2010)

"Volonter Pou Moris"

Port Louis, Mauritius: Originally from Italy, since last February, I have been a "volonter pou Moris", which means "volunteer for Mauritius" in Mauritian Creole, serving in the UNDP Country Office in Port Louis as a UNV Intern in Inclusive Development and Gender. In my internship, which is fully funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I have been assigned to the Support

to Inclusive Development project which is aimed at assisting the Mauritius Government in its efforts to address the issues of poverty reduction, socio-economic development and empowerment of vulnerable groups, through partnerships with non-governmental organizations.

The first component of the project is the Support to the Implementation of the Mauritius National Volunteer Programme. It was designed to support the creation of a civil service system and coordinate the selection of volunteers among students and senior citizens who are to be recruited within different non-governmental organizations.

During my first months in Mauritius, I noticed that among local NGOs there was scarce knowledge about each other's projects. This impression was later confirmed by the Non-State Actors Unit, UNDP's main partner for the Support to the Implementation of the Mauritius National Volunteer Programme.

While describing the purpose of our project at UNDP to some friends, I had the feeling that they did not know much about NGOs and were often asking me about the reasons why students should volunteer or wondering about the added value brought by volunteer work to their lives as well as mine.

At that point, the main questions arising in my mind were: "If NGOs themselves do not know what their fellow organizations are doing, how well are other people actually informed about their work? If they are not informed, what will encourage them to volunteer for these organizations? What are the main reasons at the core of their volunteering?"

I was impressed by the documentaries shown during a film festival held in New York in 2009 on NGOs working with HIV positive sex workers in South Africa or within local communities in Sub-Saharan countries to raise awareness on genital mutilation on young girls.

Thanks to these documentaries and the Internet, I have this information close at hand no matter which continent I am on. While sharing this experience with the NSA Unit and other UNV colleagues, the idea just came to me: "Why don't we try to develop short documentaries on the impact volunteers recruited within our project have had on the NGOs they are working for?"

We then thought of a short documentary to be used for International Volunteer Day (IVD), worked on the script, formulated the questions to address both volunteers and NGO staff members and prepared the interviews.

The documentary has already been posted on some websites and will be uploaded in the near future on the Civil Society Network, the web portal developed by the NGO Branch under the United Nations-Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), where I used to work, as a tool to share and promote best practices set up by NGOs worldwide.

Making the documentary has presented a precious opportunity for me to gain grassroots experience of the community I work for and to identify myself with these volunteers. I was amazed by the wide array of motivation at the core of our volunteering experiences.

Despite our belonging to different cultures and coming from different backgrounds, the decision to volunteer is always led by our desire to play a constructive role in development, to be active and useful citizens for our communities and by our aspiration to offer support to others while at the same time being willing to learn. Volunteerism embodies for all of us a meaningful and fundamental enrichment both for our personal lives and professional experiences.



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