The hours spent in cyberspace can make a difference to our future

I was selected as a UN Online Volunteer for a project in which we developed content on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and spread it on social networks. I was already volunteering at an electronic newspaper and I asked for the authorization to use my weekly column to give the campaign more visibility. Every week I shared a general overview about the designated SDG, addressing the main point of the goal, the objectives, the global and regional context and, lastly, the Brazilian reality.

The impact of my contribution is like the work of an ant, but it makes a difference to our future. The SDGs are interconnected and that is why, one week, my analysis can raise the awareness of a biology student that studies the marine ecosystem, and in the next, while
speaking about the access to justice and peace, catch the attention of a lawyer. Little by little, people perceive that the SDGs aren’t abstract but actually affect their daily lives. With that purpose in mind, I tried to create light, easy-to-read content, without excessive academic language.

During the 17 weeks I had plenty of motivation, especially thanks to the reactions I received from different people, both friends and strangers. For example, I published the video “No point going halfway”, which made many people think about the fact that we have a commitment with future generations and with ourselves. Furthermore, some of the posts were praised by academics, like those which addressed SDGs number one and two, No Poverty and Zero Hunger, and an analysis I made on how the Brazilian South-South cooperation with other countries can contribute to the SDGs.

We are living in an era where everything revolves around social networks. This is why there is nothing more natural than exploring this area to raise awareness, mobilize and strengthen the commitments made by our representatives, on an international level as well as locally. It is very important that the UN system uses social media to come closer to the people, and in this way make them aware of the decisions that affect everyone. Likewise, people need to realize that they are instruments of change, both online as well as on the streets.

After participating in this project as a UN Online Volunteer, I feel more inspired to contribute to similar causes. So much that I applied to volunteer online at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016, and in June 2016 I was elected Online Ambassador for the socialprotection.org platform. Join the movement on onlinevolunteering.org!

Bio: João Antônio dos Santos Lima (Brazil) has a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations from the Paraíba State University (UEPB) and a Master’s degree in Political Science from the University of Pernambuco (UFPE). He is about to start a Master’s programme in Development Evaluation and Management at the University of Antwerp. He works as a Research Assistant at the Applied Economics Research Institute (Ipea) and is a volunteer writer for the electronic newspaper of the Centre of Strategies, Intelligence and International Relations (CEIRI). He is also an Online Ambassador for the socialprotection.org platform managed by UNDP IPC-IG.