UN Volunteers work for UN Women to promote gender equality in Africa

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has been partnering with UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, since 2010. A mixture of 300 international and national UN Volunteers have served with UN Women over the past six years. A third of them continue to work across the world in UN Women’s programmes for peace and development.

UN Volunteers are an important component of UN Women’s capacity on the ground and have been at the forefront of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR). Currently, UN Women has 34 UN Volunteers working within its programmes located in ten countries across the region. The largest group is in Kenya where 13 national and international UN Volunteers work to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation, as well as communications and public advocacy of gender equality within communities.
“For the UN Women Kenya Country Office, the UN Volunteers play a critical role in supporting the effective and efficient implementation of the country programme. They provide strategic capacity surge for our work especially at community level with our implementing partners across the country. Because of the technical assistance they provide, their interventions are really felt in places like Turkana County whereby they bring in vibrant energy and new innovations to systemic challenges and try to impact people’s lives. We find UN Volunteers committed, competent and compassionate in the way they carry out their work,” says Zebib Kavuma, UN Women Kenya Country Director.

Across the Eastern and Southern African region, UN Volunteers contribute to UN Women’s impacts, changing mindsets and working towards the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action, and peace and security.

We find UN Volunteers committed, competent and compassionate in the way they carry out their work.” Zebib Kavuma, UN Women Kenya Country Director.

Sami Frestadius (Finland), UN Volunteer Campaign Manager on Gender and Land Tenure Security with UN Women in Ethiopia, shares his views: “Working for gender equality is crucial, it is initially what brought us all up and determined our chances for success. It has been my pleasure to volunteer for something which will change the world. UNV has enabled me to influence things on the political level. I am now the custodian of Goal 5 of the SDGs, this is truly guiding human development on a global scale”.

Deepika Nath (India), UN Volunteer Communications and Media Specialist with UN Women in Tanzania echoes that sentiment: “Working with UN Women as a UN Volunteer is a great experience, tremendous opportunity, and gives an insider’s access to the best minds working on gender equality and the empowerment of women.”

Back in Kenya, UN Women mobilize UN Volunteers not only as professional personnel but also as event volunteers to support the organization during high level conferences where additional capacity is often required. This gives UN Women the logistical support needed to host such events. For the conference volunteers, it is a learning opportunity to understand the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment in accelerating sustainable development in their communities.

“It was a great pleasure working with UN Volunteers during last year’s Sharefair on Gender and Resilience. They demonstrated the true spirit of volunteerism and shown that they do believe in the mission and vision of UN Women,” notes Loise Maina, UN Women Programme Manager on Women’s Economic Empowerment in ESAR.

**UN Women** is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. For more information on UN Women’s work in Africa, please visit: [https://africa.unwomen.org/](https://africa.unwomen.org/)
The infographic featured in this article was created by UN Online Volunteer Javier Luis González.

- gender • International women's day • UN Women

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 5: Gender equality