Josephine Monger is a national UN Volunteer Field Monitor with UNDP in Liberia. She provides peer education to youth in her community on rape and sexual exploitation. (UNV, 2017)

07 March 2017  Josephine Monger

The fight is not over in the struggle for gender equality

The issue of women’s rights is a global issue. The status of women’s rights around the world is an important indicator of global well-being. Despite many successes in empowering women, numerous issues still persist in all areas of life. For example, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence is increasing in a variety of forms in Liberia. While there may be a decrease in some instances of physical domestic violence, both physical and emotional abuse continue to occur.
I provide peer education to youth in my community – especially to girls – on rape and sexual exploitation. In most cases, the victims of these acts of violence have received threats from their perpetrators, and they are afraid to report instances of sexual violence and abuse. In my peer education sessions, I help people understand that rape and sexual exploitation need to be reported, and inform them that there are laws in place to protect victims, who can also receive treatment and counselling if needed or requested.

"The work I perform in my community has raised awareness amongst many women and girls, who have developed their self-esteem and now have the confidence to stand up for themselves. My work has also resulted in several young women taking the initiative to volunteer their services in their communities.

Women are important agents for creating stability in the lives of their families and for promoting reconciliation and peace, even in very difficult or traumatic situations. However, women's peace building potential has had no significant impact on policies and decisions related to conflict because they have been absent from decision-making processes. As a volunteer, I have raised awareness about policies and laws that include women in the decision-making process.

The International Day of Women should be used to raise awareness and find solutions to the many problems – stalking and harassment, sexual and gender-based violence, and human trafficking, among others – which are still affecting women. We should also use this day as an opportunity to encourage more women to give back to their communities by volunteering in whatever way they can.

As we celebrate International Women’s Day, I would like to remember our great grandmothers who were discriminated against, but still had the courage to fight for their freedom. As we celebrate all that women have accomplished in the struggle for gender equality, let us remember that the fight is not over.

There are still many problems affecting women – our sisters in villages that still do not have access to education; the maternal mortality rate is still on the increase; sexual and gender-based violence and our culture of child marriages are still affecting women. Let us come together with one voice and speak up about these issues. Together we will find solutions.

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Sub-Saharan Africa

• Liberia • gender • national UN Volunteer

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 5: Gender equality