



Despite ongoing crisis in Syria, with millions of people displaced, residents of Damascus go on living as best they can. (UNV, 2017)

## Syrians rebuilding Syria—one volunteer at a time

**Toily Kurbanov, Deputy Executive Coordinator for Management Support:** Last month, I had the privilege to visit Damascus. I saw a city where mortar shells can be felt shaking window frames; yet also where Mothers rush their children to school in the morning and hawkers peddle their goods through the streets.

Syria, seven years into the crisis and counting. Over 13 million Syrians need humanitarian assistance, and of these six million are internally displaced and five million fled to other countries. Majority of people affected by the crisis are children and youth; some children have no memories of life before the conflict.

375 UN Volunteers are currently serving in countries neighbouring Syria, mostly as part of the response to the refugee crisis. These UN Volunteers are teachers, monitors of cross-border operations, enumerators; they serve in refugee camps and in public offices, they

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provide livelihood opportunities, protection, medical and other social services. Some of them are refugees themselves, some are youth, many are women.

While humanitarian assistance remains an absolute priority, the United Nations has a responsibility to support Syrians to develop their own resilience, engage with their communities, improve their living conditions and build their own futures. Such is the need in Syria, a country not short of talents, yet where opportunities are scarce for those who wish to contribute, including youth and women.

UNV, in 2017, will prioritize engaging national youth and experts as UN Volunteers in Syria. Serving with our UN partners, these UN Volunteers will help strengthen local capacities and skills and engage communities in the economic recovery and delivery of social services.

Engaging Syrians as UN Volunteers, inside Syria, in the development and humanitarian programmes is a practical step towards local talent sourcing. National UN Volunteers are best aware of the local context, hence well placed to respond to the dire needs on the ground. As nationals, volunteers strengthen social cohesion and bring solutions that have local ownership, while at the same time developing own skills of volunteers and employability.

Peace needs to prevail first. In the meantime, we at UNV, in the region and globally, are committed to support the nation's recovery. Syrians themselves are best placed to shape the future of this country; we at United Nations Volunteers want to give Syrians the opportunity to do so through volunteering.

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#)