UN Volunteer Celestine Ravelondranzana, Reproductive Health/HIV Emergency Specialist and focal point with UNFPA, in the Hôpital de la Liberté of N'Djamena, Chad. (UNV, 2009)

22 August 2017

**Service Line: UN Volunteers as a rapid response solution to global health emergencies**

For more than 45 years, UNV has strategically responded to severe crises and large-scale health emergencies, stressing issues of immediate concern on a local and global scale. With its rich talent pool of more than 25,000 specialist UN Volunteers and over 400,000 online candidates, UNV possesses an enormous capacity to quickly deploy personnel with profound expertise and knowledge, and channel their commitment into easing the distress of affected communities. UNV offers different volunteer modalities with varied skills, resources and expertise, which, combined, can create a powerful multi-faceted response to health emergencies.

**UNV IN ACTION: RESPONSE TO 2014 EBOLA CRISIS**
After Ebola’s unprecedented West-African outbreak in 2014-2016, UNV provided emergency/crisis deployments of 130 international UN Volunteers to support the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) operations in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The scope of the engagement included highest priority measures to address the crisis climax and reduce the administrative burden on local authorities. Working with UN Volunteer Field Crisis Management and Logistics Officers, national and international medical staff, stress counsellors, GIS Data Collection Specialists and Air Operations Assistants, UNV established a field unit in Accra, Ghana and created an efficient administrative infrastructure where skilled UN Volunteers were quickly assigned to establish mobile clinics and treat the infected, ensure essential services were provided, disseminate information in local languages and achieve a measure of stability. UN Online Volunteers with post-graduate degrees in health-related areas supported the hotline services, raised awareness on topical issues and fostered solidarity within vulnerable communities.

“The Mission has achieved its core objective of scaling up the response on the ground and establishing unity of purpose among responders in support of the nationally led efforts.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the transition of UN Ebola emergency response after the success of UNMEER
WHAT WE OFFER AND HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT

First, the requesting UN partner agency prepares one or more standardized Descriptions of Assignment (DOAs) for the specific profiles needed in the emergency operation, while UNV provides the UN entity with related DOAs that it may have in its repository. Once UNV has approved the requesting UN entity partner’s DOAs and received confirmation on the budget, it proceeds with publishing an open call to select candidates (read this example with UNICEF) and interviews the most promising applicants.

Subsequently, UNV submits the profiles of all suitable candidates to the attention of the UN partner. UNV also provides all training, orientation and logistical arrangements before the start of the assignment, facilitates knowledge sharing and trust between the volunteers. Upon conclusion of the assignment, the performance of the UN Volunteers is closely evaluated to put emphasis on multilateral partnership, lessons learnt and personal recognition, in a continuous effort to promote volunteerism and its enormous societal contribution in the face of adverse circumstances.
As a UN Volunteer Medical Doctor with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), my work involves providing clinical healthcare to all UN national and international staff members, as well as to the UN peacekeeping uniformed personnel.

Dr. Patrick Chukwudi Nzene (Nigeria) is a UNV Medical Doctor with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

HEALTH EMERGENCIES AND THE VALUE ADDED OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERING

Community or local volunteers help stop and prevent health emergencies by reaching out to people, including those marginalized or difficult to reach. Many of the SDGs call for long-term attitude and behaviour changes, and this is what volunteers facilitate by raising awareness or championing those changes at the local level. This includes debunking myths and misconceptions around critical health issues.

Community volunteers can also provide health education and services to families who may not otherwise have access to care. They pay door-to-door visits to collect data, raise awareness about health issues and increase the efficiency of the overall emergency response efforts.
Broad consultations with UN entities led to the establishment of UNV service lines. These embody a set of standardized volunteer services based on standard Descriptions of Assignments dedicated to facilitate developmental efforts across UN entities.

Download our brochure on the UNV Service Line: Volunteers as a Rapid Response Solution to Global Health Emergencies

→ Interested in other UNV Service Lines?