How volunteers act first in Kenya

With 17 national UN Volunteers assigned to field duty stations, UNV Kenya is well embedded in the host agency, UNDP programs and projects on the ground. Under the umbrella of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), Mr. Nahashon Lotaruk, a national UN Volunteer in the arid Turkana-county, is working closely with local communities on income generating activities to help improve livelihoods.

The UNDP Peacebuilding programme has 12 volunteers deployed in different regions, some of them in frontier counties like Turkana or Wajir, supporting a peaceful elections process through mediation and peacebuilding activities. Many other UN Volunteers are working on environment and climate change, supporting program delivery on the reduction of the carbon footprint for the country and the set-up of a greenhouse data inventory on carbon emissions.

In the wider context of the UN Country Team, UN Volunteers with other UN partners such as UNHCR and UNICEF play a forefront role when it comes to offering support in times of natural disasters, economic instability, forced migration or humanitarian emergencies;
whether it is supporting the functioning of the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps or responding to the child protection concerns in Garissa county.

"Out of 180 UN Volunteers in Kenya, 75 % are nationals: young professionals, highly motivated and skilled, willing and ready to assist their own communities under often stringent conditions. Through their ongoing support, volunteers make the voices of the most vulnerable heard, helping people and communities be better prepared to face uncertainty in the future.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly recognizes volunteers as stakeholders to support the grassroots implementation of the 17 Development Goals. International days such as the IVD celebrations are explicit moments where civil society organizations, UN agencies, funds, programmes, peacekeeping missions and UN Member States can recognize and value the important role of volunteers as first responders to development and peace worldwide. This year, we chose to celebrate our inspiring volunteers, both here, and everywhere.

Siddharth Chatterjee is the UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Kenya.

Sub-Saharan Africa

- IVD 2017 • Kenya • #VolunteersActFirst • UNEP

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions