

Volunteers

Story

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## **UN Youth Volunteers from Sweden learn new skills while supporting peace and development all over the world**

The Government of Sweden has partnered with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) since 2007. Sweden strongly supports the deployment of Swedish UN Volunteers, as well as UNV's programmatic work to promote volunteerism worldwide. In fact, Sida doubled its funding in 2018 for up to 40 UNV assignments, with a strong focus on supporting refugees and migrants. Three Swedish UN Volunteers currently serving in Bolivia, Guatemala and Ukraine share their experiences below.



Alexandra Palmquist, UN Youth Volunteer in Environment and Climate Change, works in her office at UNDP in Bolivia. (UNV, 2018)

### **Alexandra Palmquist, UN Youth Volunteer in Environment and Climate Change with UNDP Bolivia**

Alexandra arrived in Bolivia six months ago and works on environmental management, monitoring activities, assessing outputs, and preparing reports.

Looking back, the most challenging part has been working with a political system so different from what I am used to. Understanding and managing the relations with the governmental counterparts is no small thing, but with the help of my colleagues I am finding my way. This increased need for adaptability and flexibility has strengthened me and forced me recognize my Eurocentric worldview, as well as how to put it aside to function in my new environment," she says.

One of the projects she supports promotes sustainable forest management, whereby UNDP is facilitating the processing of forest fruits (Asai, Majo and Cocoa), rubber and timber in communities in the Amazon so that they can be exported or added to the local school breakfast to reduce malnutrition amongst children.

### **Sara Larsson, UN Youth Volunteer in Monitoring and Evaluation with UNDP Ukraine**

Sara serves with the UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme in the conflict-affected regions of eastern Ukraine.

Sara supports the staff in planning, monitoring and evaluating projects to make them as efficient, effective and sustainable as possible. In her own words,

Reporting on results may sound boring but it's incredibly important to attract donors and improve future projects. As part of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team, I recently helped in researching and writing UNDP's Annual Report, where we analyzed our results and lessons learned in 2017. The M&E team at

UNDP also plays an important role in the coordinated planning across the UN system in Ukraine, and I have really enjoyed the opportunity to work in cooperation with other agencies.”

The UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme was set up after the armed conflict began in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and includes projects ranging from rebuilding infrastructure to mediation training. So far, more than 3 million people have benefitted from restored infrastructure, 3,000 jobs have been created, 48 men and women have been trained in mediation, and nine communities now have early warning systems to detect tensions.

### **Oskar Tinnerholm, UN Youth Volunteer in Conflict Resolution with UNDP Guatemala**

In his role as Conflict Resolution Officer, Oskar supports the development and use of conflict analysis tools for government counterparts. He also provides analytic reports of social conflict dynamics that can potentially be used by other UN agencies in the country.

Oskar is currently working on strengthening capacities for dialogue, mediation and constructive conflict management in Guatemala, an initiative jointly promoted by the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA), UNDP and the European Union. The project aims to enable key actors to conduct dialogues, mediation processes and consensus-building initiatives for the prevention and management of conflict, while giving indigenous authorities, youth and women a central role as peacebuilders.

Within the six months that have passed since the beginning of my assignment I have learned a lot, both professionally and personally. I have gained knowledge and experience by working in a field in which I was not an expert. Doing that in a foreign country helped me understand the daily issues that people are facing here. One example is the public sector, and more precisely its operational structure and its different ways of managing conflicts, which are all very diverse from a Swedish context,” Oskar explains.

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*In March 2017, UNV and Sida signed the first agreement to deploy 20 UN Youth Volunteers from Sweden in the areas of areas of monitoring and evaluation, climate change and peacebuilding. The volunteer experiences shared above give a flavor of their results of this partnership.*

*The new vacancies open for Swedish nationals are available [here](#). The application deadline is 18 February 2018.*

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**Sustainable Development Goal:** [SDG 13: Climate change](#), [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#), [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)

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