

Programmes

Story

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## **From Asia to Africa, UN Volunteers advance agricultural innovation**

The Asia Youth Volunteer Exchange Programme aimed to provide a mechanism for the exchange of knowledge, skills and capacity-building among countries of the global South, particularly African and Asian countries, in the fields of sustainable agriculture and private sector development. From 2006-2016, 33 UN Volunteers from Zambia, the United Republic of Tanzania and seven Asian countries (Nepal, Afghanistan, Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) exchanged know-how on sustainable farming.



Anna Msonsa, TCCIA Planning Officer, presents during the ICT planning session of the TCCIA Online Business Directory Orientation Workshop.

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(UNV, 2015)

East and Southern Africa are vulnerable to climate change, food insecurity and water scarcity. These issues have been exacerbated further by rapid population growth, urbanization and overgrazing. Over 36 million people face hunger across East and Southern Africa largely due to drought and high temperatures.

Zambia is a drought-prone country that is experiencing the effects of environmental issues on food security. Sustainable agricultural practices are a priority for attaining sustainable development. Promoting effective agricultural practices and strengthening national capacities are key to achieving SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition) and SDG 1 and SDG 12 (sustainable production patterns).

The United Republic of Tanzania, in contrast, seeks to enhance its economic growth, employment levels and poverty reduction with a focus on promoting small- and medium-sized enterprises and on fully harvesting its tourism potential. Strengthening the capabilities of SMEs and of the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Confederation of Tanzania are critical to attaining SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and SDG 1.

In Zambia, the programme aimed at promoting innovative agricultural practices at the community level and building capacity for the use, adoption and sustainability of these practices through community volunteerism. In the long term, the use of more sustainable, efficient and resilient agricultural practices aims to contribute to an increased food security in the country, agricultural productivity and income of communal farmers.

Working with Zambian volunteers, the UN Volunteers from Asia introduced smallholder fertilizer production by using vermiculture, new methods of rice harvesting, biogas technology, crop diversification, water harvesting for irrigation and livestock, container vegetable production using recyclable material and crop/animal integration practices.

In total, 400 farmers adopted conservation agriculture practices, modern agriculture techniques and sustainable practices and 300 farmers gained knowledge in how to produce organic fertilizer with vermiculture and are now using the technique to improve on their farm yields. They also trained other interested farming communities: 100 farmers were trained in grafting, air layering/marcotting and budding techniques.

By the end of the project, trained farmers were able to produce their own seeds, established nurseries and sold seedlings to other farmers in the area. District agricultural officers were supported in the development of manuals and guides on rice production and asexual plant propagation techniques, which were distributed to the farmers and will help to conserve the knowledge for the future.



In Tanzania, UN Volunteer Philip Mwesigwa shares business advice with a Sunflower Oil Mill operator. (UNV, 2016)

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the programme aimed at enhancing and supporting the growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises. The UN Volunteers from Asia disseminated knowledge and trained business people and the chamber of commerce in areas such as business proposal writing, management for productivity and marketing, including e-commerce, and networking.

Revitalizing the Hotel Association of Tanzania to enhance the country's tourism industry was another critical cornerstone of interventions in the United Republic of Tanzania.

Through the programme component in the United Republic of Tanzania, Asian and national UN Volunteers provided specialized support to the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (TCCIA), which has a membership of over 16,000 people across various business sectors.

Business people in 21 regions of the country, including the island of Zanzibar, developed their capacities in marketing for small- and medium-sized enterprises, such as how to conduct market research and improve the use of information technologies.

The programme has further contributed to strengthening the capacity of business associations, such as chambers of commerce and management development institutes, to meet members' demands for advisory services. For instance, an SME helpline was established and enabled the Chamber to respond to various queries and provide better services to its members.

A TCCIA Online Business Directory (E-Directory) and Networking Portal was established to support SMEs increase their visibility, with more than 300 businesses listed in the first edition.

Furthermore, a Tanzania Exporters Directory and Exporters Database was created, which lists more than 400 Tanzanian exporters and increased their access to international markets. In total, five information and communication technology (ICT) innovations were introduced with the technical support of the volunteers, including a non-tariff barriers SMS and online reporting system and electronic issuance of certificate of origin. Altogether, the new services and platforms enhanced dynamic business development support for Tanzania's business community.

Key to the success and sustainability of the Asia Youth Volunteer Exchange Programme in Tanzania and Zambia (AYVEP) was the involvement of both international UN Volunteers from Asia and national volunteers from Zambia and the United Republic of Tanzania. The volunteers worked together to transfer skills and disseminate knowledge and best practices from Asia to Africa. The Asian volunteers brought innovative and proven, successful practices while volunteers from Africa contributed their understanding of local context, cultural perspectives and immediate connection with the local communities. This led to a cross-fertilization of ideas and also benefited the Asian volunteers, their home countries and local communities. Volunteer action fostered the element of South-South cooperation through substantive, hands-on and transboundary contributions.

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**Sustainable Development Goal:** [SDG 1: No poverty](#), [SDG 2: Zero hunger](#), [SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production](#), [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)

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