UNV-IBSA project sharpening the skills of youth volunteers for increased employability

The Global South-South Development Expo 2018 took place in New York from 28-30 November 2018 with a focus on Showcasing Institutions Supporting South-South and Triangular Cooperation, in preparation for the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40 Conference).

On 29 November, the Thematic Solution Forum 4 focused on promoting opportunities for young people and women through South-South cooperation and highlighted a partnership between UNV and the Kingdom of Cambodia, funded by the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA) Fund.

Cambodia provides an example of creating an institutional environment through the National Youth Policy and Youth National
Action Plan. Critical areas include agriculture, water, sanitation and environmental degradation. Over 3,800 young people, half of whom are women, have been trained in skills and are now confident players in economic change.

Moreover, a dedicated youth career guidance online platform has been developed to address the challenge of youth employment. Policymakers and young people from Cambodia are now planning to visit India to share their experience and learn about good practices in other contexts.

Prior to the thematic solution forum, H.E. Serei Chumneas, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Kingdom of Cambodia, spoke about the development results of the IBSA project at the 15-year Anniversary Celebration and Report Launch of the IBSA Fund.

As Cambodia has the largest generation of youth in its history with young people aged 10-24 comprising over two-thirds of Cambodians. Each year, roughly 300,000 Cambodians enter the workforce presenting the country with a 'youth bulge' that requires substantial investment in enhancing youth employability and provision of additional decent job opportunities. The UNV-IBSA project has sharpened both technical and competency skills, especially the awareness and confidence among youth on teamwork, problem-solving and contributing to community development as responsible citizens. -- H.E. Serei Chumneas, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Kingdom of Cambodia
UNV provides a platform for collaboration between developing countries, fostering exchanges of experiences and expertise to be applied to their own needs. UNV and volunteerism contribute to South-South and Triangular Cooperation globally. UN Volunteers from the global South serve onsite (83 per cent) and online (70 per cent).

The UNV project in Cambodia is funded by the IBSA Fund and it is an integral part of the UN Joint Programme on Youth Employment in Cambodia.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and strongly supported by the Resident Coordinator’s Office and the United Nations Development Programme, UNV supported knowledge exchange activities on youth empowerment. It also fostered participation among young people from Cambodia and other countries, such as India and China.

“Through volunteerism, the UNV-IBSA project provided additional opportunities for Cambodian youth to build skills, exchange expertise and improve employment opportunities. Importantly, it is contributing to closing the gender gap by building the skills of women and girls with less access to formal education. --Alexandra Solovieva, Chief, External Relations and Communications Section, UNV

In the framework of the project, the exchanges covered a broad spectrum of topics, including good practices for community development in areas of health, water and sanitation, where the role of youth volunteering was highlighted.

In the era of digital economy, the project further expanded space for inspiring innovations among youth, such as building a career guidance platform for Cambodian youth. Through collaboration with a youth-led social enterprise, the platform aims to engage about 100,000 young people. Based on the platform, an online youth volunteer management database will be built, improving efficiency of youth volunteering mobilization in
Cambodia. For this part, technical innovations from other countries, with successful track record of application, will be replicated to Cambodia.

The project team also received volunteers from countries of the global South and North, such as Brazil, China, India, South Korea and Cambodia itself. In total, the team received 16 onsite volunteers, 11 of whom are national volunteers from Cambodia, six of them women. One volunteer from China contributed with his ICT and communication expertise to building the online career guidance platform and the database on youth volunteering mobilization and management.

Among some initiatives, the project has launched mini-community development projects that were initiated and led by the young people with focus on building gender equality, and 122 young girls benefited of these projects.

Although the individual projects may be small by budget size, they have however provided huge opportunities for the youth to understand the power of change they could bring to community development. It is encouraging to note that the mini-projects have become the vehicle to highlight the untapped potentials of women and girls, and how they can contribute to community development as equals, especially in areas of health, water and sanitation.

Organized by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) in collaboration with United Nations agencies and other partners, the GSSD Expoo strategically engages all development actors, including the private sector, civil society, academic and philanthropic organizations, to scale up concrete Southern-grown initiatives to help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

• South South Cooperation • youth employability • IBSA

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals