

Partners

Story

06 March 2019

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UNV committed to increasing participation of women volunteers in development

For the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in West and Central Africa, promoting women's empowerment is a priority in 2019. Of the 1,959 UN Volunteers currently working with 32 UN agencies in the region, only 590 (36 per cent) are women. The UNV Regional Office in Dakar covers 24 African countries and has set itself the goal of increasing the number of women who serve as UN Volunteers in areas such as project management, public health, legal work, engineering, peace building, protection and resettlement, but even more so in technical profiles like fleet management and supply chains.



Grace Otieno, UN Volunteer Air Operations Planning Officer at the MOVCON Aviation section of MONUSCO in Goma, DRC, doing a pre-flight check.

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Grace Otieno, a UN Volunteer who serves as an Air Operations Planning Officer at the MOVCON aviation section of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO).

Posted in Goma, Grace is working in a largely male-dominated sector. Her everyday tasks include planning for daily flights, coordinating ramp activities for smooth and timely flights and briefing the crew on their daily route requirements as per UN procedures.

UNV wants to give more women like Grace the opportunity to serve as UN Volunteers in areas where women traditionally are not yet at par in numbers. The increase of women's participation in profiles like engineers, legal advisers and medical officers, for example, can play a key role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

My assignment as an Air Operations Planning Officer allows me contribute to gender equality in the world, proving that more women can perform in the workplace the same way as men do. --Grace Otieno, UN Volunteer with MONUSCO, DRC

Grace's assertion reinforces a timely call for action, as the celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March approaches. This year, the celebration of International Women's Day will be dedicated to the theme 'Think Equal, build Smart, Innovate for Change'.

Taking this opportunity, the UNV field units across the region, such as in Niger, Guinea, Cameroon and Senegal, have co-organized information and training sessions for women and girls to actively engage as volunteers with the United Nations through UNV.

In partnership with UN agencies and local authorities, UNV in Niger has been engaged in an information and awareness campaign to put more women forward as candidates in the UNV database.

This two-day campaign, starting 8 March, is intended to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the areas of social protection systems, access to public services and beyond, by strengthening the quality of women candidates and increasing their competitiveness and their chances of becoming UN Volunteers.

Hassane Ide Hawidabou, the UN Volunteer Programme Analyst in Niger explains, "Through interactive sessions with online practical examples and roleplays, beneficiaries have the opportunity to learn more about UNV and about volunteering opportunities in West and Central Africa. Our goal is to familiarize 200 women with the procedures to register in the UNV database and apply for UN Volunteer assignments."

In Dakar, Senegal, within the framework of the International Women's Day, the Regional UN Gender Thematic Group is organizing a market place on 6 March at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), where the 16 member UN agencies will showcase their work on gender equality, women's empowerment and their participation in political, economic, social and cultural life in the region.

Through the Regional Gender Thematic Group platform, UNV is showcasing the extraordinary results obtained across UN agencies in the region by female UN Volunteers. Volunteerism is a way to include more young women in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. --Afke Bootsman, UNV Regional Manager for West and Central Africa

Partnering with agencies engaged in promoting women's roles and rights, UNV Cameroon has been facilitating information and training sessions for women on how to register with UNV as candidates for UN Volunteer opportunities in Cameroon and abroad. A photo exhibition featuring volunteers and UN staff in their work environment also answers the question: "What do you do for more gender equality?"

On March 7, a panel titled 'A Girl's Talk', with participation from UN representatives, women, girls, beneficiaries and UN Volunteers, will deliberate the role and impact of women in peacebuilding and their contribution to development and humanitarian initiatives.

Through these initiatives, UNV Cameroon aims to inspire 100 new female candidates to sign up in the UNV talent pool. These days of activities will be followed by an information/training session of a group of 50 women in April in Ngaoundéré, the capital of the Adamawa Region in Northern Cameroon.

In partnership with UNDP and OHCHR, UNV Guinea plans to organize information days on how to research and find employment and volunteering opportunities within the United Nations. The objective is to contribute to gender equality by empowering another 100 female candidates to consider these opportunities.

The campaign is being conducted from 5 to 7 March at the United Nations Common House, OHCHR and the Ministry of Health, with the participation of women's and girls' organizations, including the Women Journalists Association.

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 5: Gender equality](#), [SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth](#), [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#), [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)

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