On International Volunteer Day, celebrating volunteering as a real wealth of Latin American nations

In a region where inequality is one of the most critical barriers for moving forward 2030 Agenda implementation, celebrations of International Volunteer Day (IVD) brought hope to find in volunteering a potential means to promote inclusion and justice. Olivier Adam, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, celebrated IVD in Peru, joining a national event that brought together volunteers from across the country.

For the first time, the Peruvian government organized a national event to convene volunteer leaders from all 24 regions of the country to jointly reflect, learn, collaborate and celebrate volunteer efforts in involving individuals, especially those left behind, in addressing development challenges.
There is an urgent need for transformation based on equality, inclusion, human rights and sustainability. Investing in volunteering can be an effective and sustainable solution to reduce inequalities since volunteering opens spaces and opportunities to promote empathy, collaboration and mutual respect - fundamental values to strengthen citizenship. -- Olivier Adam, UNV Executive Coordinator

In July 2021, Peru will commemorate the Bicentennial Anniversary of its independence. IVD celebrations this year served as a milestone to position volunteering as a powerful means to raise awareness and engage citizens with a message of unity, integrity and equal opportunities for all. UNV is an ally to move this forward and make it visible worldwide.

On Peru’s Bicentennial Anniversary, we will count half a million volunteers trained in each of the 24 regions of the country, ready to make the difference in their communities through volunteering. --Gloria Montenegro Figueroa, Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations in Peru
Olivier Adam and Lita Paparoni, Manager of the UNV Regional Office in Latin America and the Caribbean, also visited Ecuador for IVD. Celebrations there brought together UN Volunteers mobilized during 2019 nationwide – the highest number in the past 10 years – and the representatives of the UN agencies where they serve. Olivier Adam lauded the commitment of organizations to continue recruiting indigenous community professionals as UN Volunteers.

“Mobilizing indigenous UN Volunteers promotes not only the inclusion of such a rich ethnic diversity into the UN workplace but also guarantees that sustainable development strategies consider ancestral knowledge and solutions to leave no one behind.” --Olivier Adam
The incorporation of the gender approach in climate change adaptation is essential to leave no one behind. Tania Bonilla (right) is a UN Volunteer Gender Specialist at UNDP in Ecuador for the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan and joined the #Equalizer challenge. (©UNV, 2019)

Celebrations in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, and Haiti also celebrated the volunteer actions of individuals, groups, communities and organizations to tackle systematic inequalities through taking collective voluntary action and fostering solidarity and empathy among society. At the end of the celebrations, the song *Volunteers from Latin America* was launched to widely share that volunteers are the engine of the world's social transformation.
Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals