The Minister of Youth and Sports of Gabon, Blaise Louembe (right), and the Chief of Partnerships and Communications Division of UNV, Kazumi Ikeda-Larhed, signed an agreement for the implementation of a project that will support the establishment of a Youth Volunteer Corps in the country. (UNV, 2016)

National volunteer scheme for the youth of Gabon

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On the occasion of the 5th Summit of Pan-African UN Youth Leaders in Libreville, the Minister of Youth and Sports of Gabon, Blaise Louembe, and the Chief of Partnerships and Communications Division of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, Kazumi Ikeda-Larhed, signed an agreement for the implementation of a project that will support the establishment of a Youth Volunteer Corps in the country. The agreement was signed in the presence of the President of Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba.
The Youth Volunteer Corps of Gabon has been established as part of the National Youth Policy, which promotes volunteerism in the country. "I would like to pay tribute to the young people who become volunteers because through their commitment they have the power to lead social transformation and citizen participation," said Kazumi Ikeda-Larhed, Chief of Partnerships and Communications Division of UNV.

The youth of Gabon represent 65 percent of the population and the enrolment rates in primary education reach 90 percent. However, the dropout rates are too high as many pupils in the country enter the job market at a young age.

The Youth Volunteer Corps of Gabon will deploy part-time and full-time volunteers, who will be able to serve for a period of six to 12 months in missions of general interest that are related to public service, decentralized structures and civil society.

The establishment of the Youth Volunteer Corps in the country is an important scheme, as it will create a favourable environment for citizen engagement and it will promote the employability of youth by giving them first-hand experience and by facilitating their involvement in the Gabonese society, as part of the efforts to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNV has already a strong experience in the sub-region, as it has supported countries to set up national volunteer schemes. These schemes range from having a central structure that mobilizes and deploys volunteers, as in the cases of Burkina Faso and Togo, to supporting the establishment and coordination of national volunteer associations, as in the cases of Senegal or Cabo Verde.