

# REFUGEE TO REFUGEE: UN VOLUNTEERS TEACH REFUGEES IN LEBANON

The crisis in **Syria** has impacted hundreds of thousands of Syrian nationals who have been uprooted and displaced by the conflict. It has also affected Palestinian refugees who once sought long-term refuge in Syria, but are forced to again uproot themselves with many now seeking refuge in **Lebanon**.

The ongoing conflict in Syria has forced many Palestinian refugees from that country, including men, women and children, to flee to Lebanon in search of safety. Hence the country faces the challenge of providing basic social services to refugees from Palestine who have been long-term residents, as well as to the growing numbers of Syrian refugees and newly displaced Palestinians seeking refuge from yet another conflict.

In response to the UNRWA *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*, UNV provided basic education services through the recruitment and deployment of 103 national UN Volunteer Teachers for the children of Palestinian refugees from Syria living in refugee camps in Lebanon. These national UN Volunteers are themselves Palestinian refugees legally residing in Lebanon. The volunteers were rostered and recruited following the massive exodus of refugees from Syria. This initiative is implemented in partnership with the European Commission and the United Kingdom.

The schools are located in the areas of Tyre and Saida, Bekaa, and the North, as well as in different areas throughout Beirut. Around 53 per cent of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in the 12 recognized Palestinian refugee camps. Some of the schools are located inside

*UN Volunteer Teacher Loyal Ammar, talking to her students during recess. Loyal is an English teacher for Grade One and Two students at Ramallah School in the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp. (Nadim Bou Habib, 2016)*



refugee camps such as the Burj al Barajne Camp in Beirut. Each class has around 28 to 35 students. The national UN Volunteer teachers teach English, Arabic, Science, Math and Social Studies.

Due to the UNV response, UNRWA was able to absorb and accommodate Palestinian refugee children enrolling at UNRWA schools in Lebanon. Adjustments were made to the existing academic system to provide quality education to the children of both Palestinian refugees from Syria and those in Lebanon. As the 103 additional UN Volunteer teachers were able to staff otherwise vacant UNRWA teaching positions, a total of 5,318 children were registered in UNRWA school for the 2015-16 scholastic year.

When the situation allows it, UNV aims to expand its partnership with UNRWA Lebanon and to replicate this initiative in schools supporting Palestinian refugees in other camps. This is the first time that UNV has contracted Palestinian refugees with the status of national UN Volunteers in Lebanon.

UN Volunteer Teachers received induction trainings, mentoring from education specialists and some of them enrolled in a diploma course for teachers to improve their technical qualifications and prepare them to better manage formal academic study. Both Palestinian refugee children from Syria and from Lebanon experienced a smooth academic transition.

// This project is a window open for young professionals [...] This is a very strong tool for the people to be able to build for their lives, especially in this context where their possibilities were limited.

*M. Ahmad Mouh, Chief, Field Education Programme, UNRWA Lebanon*

// You feel like you want to give the children more, you want to make them laugh. Even to see the smiles on their faces. Being a UN Volunteer, you start to act not only as a teacher but as a mother, as a friend even. You want to give them so much.

*Rachel Saadi, national UN Volunteer Teacher in Lebanon*

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## UN VOLUNTEER INSPIRATION

### PROMOTING GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEACEBUILDING IN KYRGYZSTAN

Following the inter-ethnic conflicts in **Kyrgyzstan** in 2010, the United Nations began implementing a number of projects funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. Nasra Islan (Kenya) was assigned as a UN Volunteer Specialist in Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding in the country. Her role is to provide technical support on participatory and inclusive gender-responsive peacebuilding programming and management to help UN entities and partners ensure gender-responsive peacebuilding interventions.

Nasra is responsible for ensuring that women's priorities and needs are included in peacebuilding initiatives. To this end, she analyzes and monitors the implementation of peacebuilding projects for gender responsiveness. Her expert advice to the UN and the Government of Kyrgyzstan on national law and institutional reforms also helps to ensure that peacebuilding policies and programmes safeguard women's rights.

*"As a child, I was brought up in a culture where giving was considered the right thing to do in life. It is through volunteerism that I have grown personally in ways I cannot describe. This experience has allowed me to see things from a new and different perspective. Volunteerism provides me with new opportunities and experience to grow, learn about a new culture and meet new people, while being part of a bigger family where everyone works for the same cause: to better the world we live in".* UN Volunteer Specialist in Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding Nasra Islan (Kenya)

Nasra Islan



# FRONTLINE RESPONDERS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

On 25 April 2015, a massive earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck **Nepal**, killing more than 8,800 people and injuring over 23,000. Thousands of houses were destroyed and entire villages were flattened. It was estimated that around 2.8 million people required humanitarian assistance and more than 860,000 faced poverty, limited accessibility and homelessness. In the aftermath of the earthquake, volunteers were rapidly mobilized from other parts of the country to provide vital emergency aid on-site. National UN Volunteers were on the frontlines of emergency response efforts, alongside some 300 agencies supporting government-led efforts.

UNV established a Nepal Earthquake Taskforce to coordinate the most effective and essential support on the ground. Its first priority was to secure the well-being of UN Volunteers in Nepal. Soon after, UNV mobilized an initial group of 84 UN Youth Volunteers and specialized UN Volunteers in three Village Development Committees – Irkhu, Kunchowk and Karthalli – of the Sindhupalchowk

district of Nepal. These volunteers served under the UNDP *Debris Management and Demolition* project. Their responsibilities included assessing the structural integrity of every village building and overseeing the safe collapse of buildings that could no longer stand erect. This initiative was a successful collaboration between UNDP, the Government of Nepal and UNV. Prior to their deployment, UN Volunteers received a week-long induction training session led by disaster management experts hired by UNDP. Nine national UN Volunteer Civil Engineers deployed in the pilot phase went on to serve as team leaders.

The team of national UN Volunteers consisted of 37 UN Youth Volunteers and 47 specialists, of whom 13 were women. These UN Volunteers were divided into several teams that were led by national UN Volunteer Civil Engineers who were placed in the pilot phase. As of 18 May 2015, 234 displacement sites had been identified across 134 Village Development Committees in 11 districts. Around 762,000 people received emergency shelter and non-food necessities.

// It feels like having a second family here in the crisis zone when we are far from our own families at home. I am happy to contribute to the well-being of my people in that way, even though it implies being apart from my family. Despite the hardships, this is a very enriching experience and I would like to thank UNDP for providing me an opportunity to join this mission.

*Manash Gadtaula, national UN Volunteer Civil Engineer in Nepal*



Rishma Pokharel, national UN Volunteer Civil Engineer with UNDP, speaks to a visually impaired man before assessing the damage to his house from the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal. (Lesley Wright/UNDP, 2015)

In just three weeks, national UN Volunteer Civil Engineers demolished over 240 of 900 houses deemed unsafe to live in. A single engineer supervised two to three houses per day. These engineers led a brigade comprised of local community volunteers, and also trained 200 community workers on measuring the width and length of buildings during damage assessment. The community workers took the attendance of workers in UNDP's Cash for Work scheme, reported on progress and supervised the work to ensure continuity after the departure of the UN Volunteer Civil Engineers. A total of 4,321 locals were employed through the Cash for Work programme within the debris management project and supervised by UN Volunteers.

Within weeks of the earthquake, UNV Deputy Executive Coordinator Rosemary Kalapurakal and UNDP Nepal Country Director Renaud Meyer, visited Irkhu where 22 national UN Volunteer Civil Engineers were serving. The national UN Volunteers sacrificed time with their families to reside in tents or campsites with government officials and frontline responders.

"UNV and UNDP are partnering jointly in this debris management project because this is one of the first things that needs to be done before the other teams can come in for shelter, water and sanitation, health and so forth. It is noteworthy that of the 80 plus UN Volunteer Civil Engineers, more than 30 are youth and 13 are women. In fact, one of the three teams is led by a woman. Also remarkable is that these demolition and debris clearance volunteers are able to accomplish so much, living in such difficult conditions," shared UNV Deputy Executive Coordinator Rosemary Kalapurakal.

Given UNV's effective rapid response, the agency was invited by Nepal's newly established National Reconstruction Authority to contribute to recovery and reconstruction efforts, in partnership with other UN entities and the government. By the end of 2015, 188 UN Volunteers – 160 of whom were national UN Volunteers and 100 UN Volunteer Civil Engineers – were serving the Nepal recovery efforts.



Mona Ouda and Diana Abu Ramadan

## UN VOLUNTEER INSPIRATION

### NATIONAL UN VOLUNTEERS HELPING TO REBUILD GAZA

National UN Volunteer Engineers Mona Ouda and Diana Abu Ramadan from Gaza, **State of Palestine**, are two of four female engineers who are part of UNDP's **Rubble Removal Programme** in the Gaza Strip. The project removes debris from homes and other structures destroyed in the ongoing conflict with Israel. UNDP has been working to clear rubble so that local residents can access basic services and avoid injury from buildings on the verge of collapse. Once crushed, the rubble will be recycled and used to build roads.

As women, Mona and Diana are a minority in the traditionally male-dominated field of engineering. Yet both women, along with their male colleagues, supervised and led the process of removing rubble in more than 1,500 locations along the Gaza Strip including Shujayia, Gaza City, Middle Area, Rafah and Khan Younis. By being a part of this effort, Mona and Diana's specialized professional contribution through volunteerism has made a noted difference, not just in their contributions towards ensuring community safety but in the mainstreaming of women in engineering. Thanks to their volunteerism, Gazans are able to return to their homes with safety and dignity.

*"As a woman, it is challenging not only due to the nature of the work, but also due to the emotional burden, as we remove the homes of other women. I felt I was not only an engineer, but also a woman supporting other women and I am proud of it. In a place like Gaza, with such high poverty and unemployment, volunteering for me and my colleagues is really something special. I enjoy it, as I serve my people."* Mona Ouda, national UN Volunteer Engineer from Gaza

*"I challenged societal norms and my family when I studied engineering and later by working in this field. My experience as a UN Volunteer has been amazing. I am working to help others improve their livelihoods. I am also contributing to protect the environment as the recycled rubble will be reused for roads."* Diana Abu Ramadan, national UN Volunteer Engineer from Gaza

# PROVIDING ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE IN BURKINA FASO

Following the October 2014 protests against the ruling regime in **Burkina Faso**, a transitional government took charge with the mandate to organize free and transparent elections by the end of 2015. UNDP developed the *Projet d'Appui aux Elections (PAE or Electoral Support Project)* to provide technical support to all main parties involved in the organization of elections. The main partner was the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI or National Independent Electoral Commission), but the PAE's actions also engaged other actors such as government officials, political parties, civil society organizations, women's groups and the media.

Considering the need for electoral expertise at the provincial, communal and district layers of the CENI, the

PAE was well supported by UN Volunteers in the field who provided technical, administrative, logistical support and advice.

In collaboration with UNV, UNDP-PAE recruited 14 international UN Volunteers and 48 national UN Volunteers and ensured their rapid deployment. The international UN Volunteers, deployed in regional capitals, ensured the coordination of the national UN Volunteers who were deployed in the provinces. Due to their deployment in the provinces, national UN Volunteers helped to promote the creation of a community of election practitioners.

The Electoral Support Project also recruited an international UN Volunteer to serve as a Communication



*UN Volunteers with the UNDP Electoral Support Project, assist Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI or National Independent Electoral Commission) commissioners in supervising an open-air voting station under a baobab tree in the south-central region of Kombissiri, Burkina Faso. (UNV, 2015)*

and Reporting Officer in Ouagadougou. During their deployment in the field, UN Volunteers visited all provincial and local representations of CENI – Commission Electorale Provinciale Indépendante (CEPI) and Commission Electorale Communale Indépendante (CECI) respectively – in their duty area. They created a strong network of contacts with several stakeholders, such as election administration officials, political parties' representatives, administrative authorities, security personnel, civil society organizations and human rights associations, national and international election observers, and religious leaders.

UN Volunteers proved to be an effective presence in all regions of Burkina Faso, including remote locations with difficult access. With their support, the CENI and all its administrative levels managed to organize free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections. Voter turn-out reached 59.9% for both elections.

Before, during and after election day, UN Volunteers provided wide-ranging support to all administrative levels of the CENI. They facilitated information sharing between the CENI and its provincial and communal layers. They collaborated in the creation and elaboration of polling staff training materials and provided support during the selection, recruitment and training of polling staff. UN Volunteers cooperated in the production of voter information materials and assisted the international and national election observers. Furthermore, volunteers supported the Communal Results Tabulation Centers (Centre Communal de Compilation des Résultats).

UN Volunteers gave advice to the CEPI and CECI members on selection, recruitment, training and payment of polling staff and electoral personnel; the tracking of polling stations; and the packaging of electoral material. Some 26 of the 48 national UN Volunteers led the trainer tutorials and trained polling staff, while international UN Volunteers coordinated training activities. Thanks to their specialized backgrounds, UN Volunteers helped to define the role of local commissioners throughout all phases of the electoral cycle.

Throughout the process, UN Volunteers were involved in monitoring and analyzing the political and electoral environment. They produced weekly reports, statistical tables, information reports and other electoral documents. When possible, they shared them with CENI members and local stakeholders. Furthermore, UN Volunteers laid the groundwork for future elections by collaborating with CECI to create a national polling staff database. By the end of the voting period, satisfaction among the range of stakeholders was unanimous and highlighted in local media outlets.



Carlot Duplessy

## UN VOLUNTEER INSPIRATION

### TRANSITIONING PEACEKEEPERS IN AND OUT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Carlot Duplessy (Haiti) joined the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (MONUSCO) as a UN Volunteer Movement Control Assistant. To date, there are over 18,000 uniformed personnel deployed to MONUSCO. Peacekeeper contingents are deployed for a period that varies from six to eight months before being replaced with a new contingent. The deployment and repatriation of contingents take place in Entebbe, Bujumbura or Kigali, where MONUSCO has movement control liaison offices.

Carlot's role as UN Volunteer Movement Control Assistant involves coordinating flights for the rotation of military contingents or troops being deployed and repatriated from Rwanda. Troops transiting through Kigali are sent by India, Guatemala, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Uruguay, South Africa, Senegal and Malawi. He also coordinates ground and convoy movement as well as MONUSCO high priority flights through liaisons with the Rwandese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

When contingents arrive in Kigali, Carlot assists them with administrative procedures at the border. In light of the high volumes during contingents' rotation, Carlot has to carefully manage the deployment of some men and the repatriation of others, all on the same airplane with a maximum capacity of 272 seats per flight. Prior to his UN Volunteer assignment, Carlot worked for nine years at MINUSTAH.

*"I am the only UN Volunteer deployed to Kigali in Rwanda. I believe that one of my responsibilities is to encourage members of the community to provide technical support and enhance capacity through volunteerism. Through a community service called Umuganda which can be translated as 'coming together in common purpose to achieve an outcome', I try to organize meetings with students to talk about community development. I really would like to leave Rwanda knowing that I made some positive impacts on the community I live with".* UN Volunteer Movement Control Assistant Carlot Duplessy (Haiti)

# INSPIRING A GENERATION OF VOLUNTEERS IN BURUNDI

The draft law on national volunteering in **Burundi** was formally launched by the Burundi Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports, and UNDP in July 2015. The legal framework formalizes volunteering in Burundi by embedding volunteering in local institutions and guaranteeing equal access to volunteer opportunities for youth and minority communities. The process of drafting the law was conducted with the involvement of all stakeholders such as UNDP, UNV, the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture and Independent Provincial Committees.

The *National Youth Volunteering Programme* (NYVP) in Burundi, under the auspices of the government, is supported by UNDP and UNV jointly to improve the access of young Burundians to volunteer opportunities for social cohesion, employment, peacebuilding and development purposes. The programme was launched in three pilot provinces: Ngozi, Gitega and Bujumbura Rural. Eight national UN Volunteers, nine international UN Volunteers, 250 young volunteers and 497 youth from local communities participated in the programme.

*Community members share experiences during a volunteer outreach service session held in Burundi. (UNV, 2015)*



Since November 2014, the NYVP has mobilized a total of 254 young volunteers (40 per cent of whom were female) over two rounds of volunteer recruitment. In the first round, 104 young volunteers were placed in 72 organizations in several areas around Gitega, Ngozi and Bujumbura. These young volunteers carried out actions that led to remarkable changes in their community. Their impact ranged from ensuring that 350 victims of human rights violations and prisoners received legal assistance from three volunteers, to supporting antenatal care training for 1800 people.

The value of the NYVP infrastructure was evident by the multiplier effect that just a few volunteers could produce. For example, three youth volunteers provided psychosocial assistance to 44 groups of women. A single youth volunteer coordinated the planting of 169,800 shrubs throughout 55 hectares of Gashikanwa and 43 hectares in Ruhororo. Two volunteers trained 900 farm families on modern conservation methods while five volunteers helped set up 73 groups of village savings and credit associations for 1825 members (of whom 61 per cent were women and 20 were disabled). Their reach and impact is staggering.

Thanks to the efforts of this first round of volunteers, the lives of over 25,000 local Burundians were improved in tangible and sustainable ways. Such was the success of this first round of NYVP placements, that a second round of 150 young volunteers was mobilized.

// These different youth projects, especially those regarding volunteerism, are very important to our youth these days. We strongly believe in youth volunteerism as it is the foundation for young people in different fields. Volunteerism helps in developing youth and honing their talents, leading to strengthening their relations on different levels.

*Samy Al-Majaly, President of the Higher Council for Youth in Jordan*



Jina Park



## UN VOLUNTEER INSPIRATION

### CREATING A GARBAGE LAB IN UZBEKISTAN

Jina Park (Republic of Korea) was assigned as a fully-funded UN Youth Volunteer Community Outreach Specialist for the UNDP *Social Innovation and Volunteerism* project in **Uzbekistan**. She managed a project team of nine national UN Volunteers and a group of dedicated local youth volunteers. With the support of her team, Jina launched a three-day workshop called Garbage Lab, which gathered together approximately 40 young people, including youth with disabilities. The lab aimed to raise environmental awareness of recyclable materials and how they can be reused to make furniture. The Garbage Lab won a scale-up fund competition organized by UNDP Eastern Europe and Central Asia to facilitate the Lab's implementation nationwide, and garnered much local media coverage.

Apart from her UN Youth Volunteer duties, Jina taught Korean and gathered volunteers to help revitalize a playground, which locals later named after her. They painted wall murals, installed a see-saw, made tigers and minions from tires, and constructed a bench for parents. The skills Jina gained from her assignment have helped her in her current job as a rural development manager.

*"My greatest satisfaction as a volunteer was when one girl who participated in the labs started to volunteer in her own community. Being inspired to extend help, she became a volunteer teacher at the national library of Tashkent and continued do-it-yourself labs with her friends. For the rest of my life, I will always be grateful for the time I served as a UN Volunteer".* UN Youth Volunteer Community Outreach Specialist Jina Park (Republic of Korea)



# SUPPORTING THE LAUNCH OF PERU'S VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT

UNV has been partnering in **Peru** to develop volunteerism and support the country in establishing legislation and structures for volunteers. Some of the relevant milestones along this journey included the creation of a volunteer programme to support the recovery of affected people from the 2008 earthquake of Ica, the 2009 implementation of a public sanitation programme to support affected families in Santa Barbara, the 2011-2013 incorporation of volunteerism as a function of the Department of Public Charity of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, and the 2011 creation and facilitation of the Soy Voluntari@ National Network for cross-sector collaboration.

In 2015, the Peruvian government upped the ante and created a specific department for volunteerism, independent from the Department of Public Charity with specific functions and a budget for strengthening volunteerism nationwide to focus on development, welfare and social inclusion.

On July 22, the new Department of Volunteerism under the command of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, together with the new Regulation of the General Law of Volunteerism, was officially launched in a ceremony at the Presidential Palace in the presence of the Peruvian President.

The new volunteerism regulation establishes a National Volunteering Commission to formalize regional volunteerism, register volunteer-involving organizations nationwide, and help volunteers qualify for housing and obtain scholarships, as well as health insurance, among other incentives. UNV has accompanied the process by presenting and promoting the Volunteerism Department and the new Regulation in seven regions of Peru where the Soy Voluntari@ National Network is present. This is a network of public, private, national and international

*Volunteers celebrate the launch of the new Department of Volunteerism under the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations in Peru. (UNV, 2015)*



*Dashti Shuker and Noor Mosa discuss the role of volunteering in their community, during the UN Youth Volunteer Assignment Preparation Training (APT) taking place in Erbil, Iraq. The majority of the participants in this training were UN Youth Volunteers recruited under the project UN Volunteers Capacity Development and Support to the Kurdistan Regional Government through Volunteering led by UNDP. The APT is a standard face-to-face training provided by UNV to all its UN Youth Volunteers, enabling them to acquire soft skills essential in the work of the UN and to better integrate into their volunteer assignments. (UNV, 2015)*



organizations grouped together with the aim of implementing and promoting volunteerism through policies and programmes in Peru. As a facilitator of Soy Voluntari@, UNV has assisted the new department in promoting and mobilizing volunteerism to address the effects of the oceanic and climatic phenomenon El Niño in four regions of Peru.

To further enhance volunteer infrastructure in Peru, UNV launched an important research project documenting the Soy Voluntari@ methodology of cross-sector collaboration as an innovative way to create inclusive spaces and promote synergies among Latin America's public, international, private and civil society sectors.

In addition, the network received the People's Voice Award in September 2015 for outstanding work and a "Longstanding contribution to MDG implementation through volunteer action", presented by the UN Millennium Campaign, in collaboration with UNV and other strategic partners.

Finally, during 2015, UNV expanded the Soy Voluntari@ network in Lambayeque and Cusco to incorporate more than 50 entities from the diverse sectors that are organized in commissions. These two new networks received training and motivation from UNV to incorporate the 2030 Agenda in their development programmes and clearly present the SDGs to their communities. As a result, UNV trained 233 representatives and instructors who are replicating the trainings to engage volunteers about the purpose of the SDGs.



Lilian Byansi

## UN VOLUNTEER INSPIRATION

### UN VOLUNTEER HELPS SAVE UN IN MALAWI OVER US \$3 MILLION

Lilian Byansi (Uganda) served as the UN Volunteer Joint Procurement Coordinator in **Malawi**. Largely through her efforts, the United Nations in Malawi was able to save US \$1,168,838 by late 2015, with expected savings of US \$3,689,164 by the end of the Business Operations Strategy period in 2016.

Lilian was responsible for supporting the UN Delivering as One in Malawi in its efforts to simplify and align operational activities for development, a process of reforms that were launched in 2007 and that are being undertaken across the UN system. UN agencies in Malawi were committed to increasing their efficiency and effectiveness by harmonizing their business practices and operations. The purpose of Lilian's assignment was to introduce innovations to support UN agencies in Malawi in joint procurement and contribute to the Business Operations Strategy.

As a result of Lilian's efforts alongside her colleagues, Malawi was recognized as a pioneer country via the United Nations Global Market, due to improved access to and distribution of procurement information, including uploads of long-term agreements and standard operating procedures. For every initiative, a monitoring mechanism was developed to maintain the agreed service levels, with improvement plans in some cases to ensure uninterrupted service standards. From Malawi, Lilian went on to distinguish herself through a detail assignment in Tanzania where she assisted UNDP with procurement and logistical matters related to the country's general election.

*"This assignment was certainly a challenge for me, and it was also exciting. It is rewarding to see the results of my work being shared with the UN in Malawi and globally, and to know that I have made a significant contribution to development."* UN Volunteer Joint Procurement Coordinator Lilian Byansi (Uganda)

# VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS FOR POSITIVE IMPACT FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

Thanks to targeted outreach, the percentage of UN Online Volunteers supporting UN partners rose from 33 per cent in 2014 to 42 per cent in 2015. Nearly 40 per cent of UN Online Volunteers are professionally employed or otherwise engaged in the private sector. They leverage their expertise and skills for peace and development on a voluntary basis, and on their own time.

## VOLUNTEERING ONLINE FOR ICT INNOVATION

In 2015, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) engaged a team of seven UN Online Volunteers to research new trends and global best practices in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in preparation for the ITU Telecom World 2015 Event in Budapest, Hungary. Online volunteers mapped over 700 relevant initiatives undertaken by governments, universities and the private sector to promote ICT innovation hubs, clusters and parks in 115 countries.

// This was true teamwork and full of new ideas that enhanced our way of doing things. The volunteers did extensive research that was invaluable for the ITU.

*ITU-UNV Collaboration Coordinator Jose Maria Diaz Batanero*

## UN ONLINE VOLUNTEERS RAISE AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN THROUGH THE ARTS

The traditional belief in sorcery is used to justify violence against women in **Papua New Guinea**. Inhumane treatment of innocent women accused of sorcery is common in rural parts of the island as sorcery is thought to account for unexplained deaths or misfortunes in a family or village. For more than 12 years, Seeds Performing Arts Theatre Group has been using theatre to raise awareness on issues affecting the local rural population, including violence against women. The performances constitute an effective way to inspire and implement social change, as the play's content is based on local needs and culture. Opening up digital media to increase outreach, Seeds teamed up with a group of UN Online Volunteers to develop a screenplay for a video about the specific gender-based violence associated with witch hunting.

Collaborating with UN Online Volunteers from **France, Ireland, Israel, the United Kingdom and South Africa**, Seeds was able to produce a rich screenplay underlining the link between sorcery-related violence and gender discrimination as part of their **Women NOT Witches** campaign. UN Online Volunteers provided advice on how to communicate the message in a relevant and entertaining way in order to target both women and men and reach communities, including village chiefs and religious leaders who play a crucial role in trials on witchcraft in informal village courts.

Other members of the online volunteer team carried out research, wrote articles and web content, edited promotional materials for outreach, and drafted reports for donor agencies. UN Online Volunteer Robyn Santa Maria (Australia) helped cement a new partnership between Seeds Theatre Group and Oxfam in the country.



In addition, the Seeds project director was invited to a panel on gender-based violence for the Human Rights Film Festival that toured the country. The volunteering experience made Robyn reassess her work in the private sector: “I am so much more aware that my ability to help is not limited by geography”, she states. “I can use my skills from anywhere in the world to affect change, even if it’s in only a small way”.

Seeds has recently received positive feedback on two grant proposals drafted by UN Online Volunteers from the UN Trust Fund and the National Endowment for Democracy, and extended one of its contracts with the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission/Australian Agency for International Development to raise awareness on good governance. Currently, UN Online Volunteers are working to create more human rights-focused web content for Seeds and further enhance the organization’s website while developing Seeds’ own capacity to update and manage it.

## THE USE OF BIG DATA FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

In 2014, UNDP launched an *Innovation Facility* to offer collaborators around the world technical and financial support to devise novel approaches to increasingly

complex development challenges. The facility supported an initiative of UNDP offices in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Arab States, in partnership with UN Global Pulse and UNV, through which countries have the opportunity to explore how new sources of data can measure key development indicators and mobilize volunteer citizen expertise in the field of data.

UN Online Volunteers offer crucial support wherever they are based for gathering data which can then inform policies and services, as they did in collaboration with UN Global Pulse in classifying tweets, developing taxonomies and disaggregating data. For example, Tunisia, through the Tunisian National Statistics Institute, is working with real-time online data (e.g. news, blogs, online forums, social media) to see how such data can complement traditional statistics to monitor citizens’ perceptions and attitudes towards government. This initiative is expected to help the government improve its monitoring of the progress of SDG 16 towards a peaceful inclusive society, access to justice, as well as accountable and inclusive institutions.



David Bzhania

## UN VOLUNTEER INSPIRATION

### SETTING UP A VIRTUAL HELPDESK IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

David Bzhania (Russia) serves as a UN Volunteer Network Technician for MONUSCO. He is responsible for planning and implementing new technologies for the mission.

David implemented an innovative service desk called INeed in Goma which efficiently resolves various ICT-related issues that UN staff, UN Volunteers and uniformed personnel might encounter during their daily work. Following the same procedure used by the UN in New York, David helped to set up the INeed application for individuals to sound a technology help desk call that will generate a ticketed service request for a technician to solve and close. For this, David attended a training session in Entebbe and he became the focal point for the Goma implementation. He was subsequently put in-charge of the Goma service desk and greatly improved the working conditions of his colleagues.

*“It is rewarding to know that I am helping the Congolese community. I previously worked for the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia but I really wanted to look at our world from a different perspective. When I was younger, I would have never imagined working as a UN Volunteer for one of the biggest UN peacekeeping missions in the world and serving the community I am living with”.* UN Volunteer Network Technician David Bzhania (Russia).