

# UNV PARTNERING WITH OHCHR

*Since the early 1990s, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has been partnering with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Some 247 UN Volunteers served with OHCHR in 34 countries during the period 2007-2016.*

## Why recruit UN Volunteers?

United Nations Volunteers are global citizens motivated to contribute to peace and sustainable development. Working with United Nations entities, governments, civil society and the private sector, UN Volunteers use their experience and talent to bring people to the forefront of development and give them a voice.

UN Volunteers are one of the talent-management solutions available to the UN system. UNV manages this rich talent pool of volunteers who can be deployed to work in synergy with the staff and personnel of United Nations entities to bolster the effective delivery of their programmes and mandates.

UN Volunteers are particularly suited to support OHCHR's mandate. UN Volunteers can contribute to the OHCHR goal of promoting and protecting human rights that are guaranteed under international law and stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UN Volunteers work within communities, making them well-placed to monitor and document human rights situations, support research analyses and improve inclusive participation and engagement. UN Volunteers,



Omar Azzabi (Switzerland), UN Youth Volunteer fully funded by Switzerland, preparing a visit to the civil jail of Kérouané, Guinea, with Human Rights Monitor Mohamed Cocorico Camara and prison staff. (UNV, 2015)

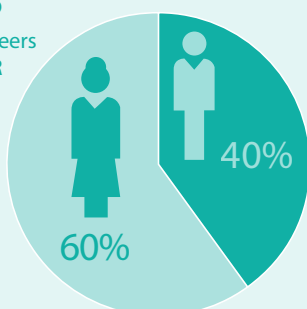
by the very nature of volunteerism's inclusiveness, advance OHCHR efforts to protect human rights.

## What is the added value of UN Volunteers?

Some 83 per cent of UN Volunteers come from the South. Thus, UN Volunteers tend to be familiar with local development challenges and societal norms. UN Volunteers apply culturally-sensitive approaches that foster participation and generate a sense of ownership. Through engaging community volunteers and strengthening local volunteering structures, UN Volunteers help make development more effective and sustainable.

### 2007-2016

247 UN Volunteers helped OHCHR carry out its mission in 34 countries



### Top 3 countries of assignment

2007-2016		
46	37	29
Guatemala	Nepal	Uganda

### Top 3 countries of origin

2007-2016		
21	19	18
Belgium	Switzerland	France

### Top 3 professional titles in 2007

UNV Human Rights Officer
UNV Interpretation/Translation Officer
UNV ICT Development Officer

### Top 3 professional titles in 2016

UNV Human Rights Officer
UNV Programme Officer
UNV Communications Officer

*“A team of 10 international UN Volunteers monitored the human rights situation, documenting and analysing information. The team played an important role in the Totonicapán case, contributing to the observance, monitoring and reporting of human rights violations, and technical assistance in support of national authorities, civil society and individuals.”*

*Andrés Sánchez, OHCHR Deputy Representative, Guatemala*

UNV is committed to reaching out to youth and bringing their voices to the table in a rapidly changing world. UNV is leading on youth volunteerism within the UN, and established a UN Youth Volunteer Programme in 2014. Based on the UN Youth Volunteering Strategy launched in September 2013, this programme helps develop the skills and enhance the employability of young people, while at the same time tapping into the energy, unique strengths and perspectives of youth.

### **What categories of UN Volunteers are available to OHCHR?**

There are different categories of UN Volunteers, each with its own characteristics, which offer flexible solutions to the needs of our United Nations partners. UN Volunteers serve on contracts lasting three to twelve months on a renewable basis for assignments of up to four years, depending on the category of volunteer.

**International UN Volunteers** are typically professionals with specialized knowledge. They come from all walks of life and over 100 professions, bringing five to ten years of experience to their assignments. The average age of international UN Volunteers is 36.

**National UN Volunteers** are nationals of the host country (or a refugee or stateless person with legal status in the country), normally recruited locally. These volunteers concentrate in areas such as local community outreach. Recent university graduates with specialized skills are also recruited as national UN Volunteers.

**UN Youth Volunteers** are between the ages of 18-29 and may be engaged for national and international assignments of up to two years. UN Youth Volunteer candidates will have demonstrated their commitment to global peace and sustainable development through academic, extra-curricular and volunteer activities they have undertaken and/or up to two years of formal work experience. UNV supports these young volunteers by providing additional learning and guidance so that they are well supported throughout their assignments in areas such as primary health, education, climate change adaptation and human rights.

UNV also offers an innovative **short-term UN Volunteer** modality through which volunteers can be contracted for assignments of less than three months. This option may be useful for rapid deployment in many areas, such as shoring up emergency responses, census activities, and in general for projects that require a quick scaling up or rapid adaptation to changing circumstances. The short-term modality often suits diaspora nationals, the corporate sector and retirees. It allows partners to have an agile, flexible and adaptable talent solution when specific skill sets are required for a defined period.

Another modality that can provide strategic support to partners is **Online Volunteering**, a rapidly growing service of UNV. Over 11,000 UN Online Volunteers conduct 15,000 assignments over the Internet annually to bolster peace and development activities of United Nations entities, governments and civil society organizations.

In all the above categories, the very nature of volunteering for the United Nations inspires and attracts exceptionally motivated specialists and youth – people dedicated to advancing global peace and sustainable human development. Irrespective of the modality through which they serve, UN Volunteers come from all geographic regions and socio-economic backgrounds.

### **How can OHCHR offices recruit UN Volunteers?**

To partner with UNV and recruit UN Volunteers who will help you implement your development initiatives, contact the UNV Programme Officer based in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office. The UNV Programme Officer can provide advice and guidance on how to recruit volunteers for assignments relevant to OHCHR.

For further information, refer to the partners section of our web site at [unv.org/partnerships/host-volunteer](http://unv.org/partnerships/host-volunteer).

# UNV-OHCHR success stories

## Monitoring places of detention and deprivation of liberty in Guinea

Omar Azzabi served as a UN Youth Volunteer fully funded by Switzerland with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the organization's regional office in Dakar, Senegal in 2015.

Since the end of military rule in 2010, Guinea has been working to reintroduce judicial and correctional institutions that meet its international commitments, case being the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment that it ratified on 10 October 1989. Although the country is on track, the Committee against Torture, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention in countries that have ratified it, made recommendations to follow in the concluding observations of the last review of Guinea in June 2014.

Within the context of this mandate, Omar was sent to undertake unannounced monitoring visits to places of detention and deprivation of liberty in the Upper Guinea region. Over the course of his three-week mission, Omar visited more than 12 gendarmeries, police stations and civilian prisons, covering over 1,600 kilometres.

While reminding the security and police forces of Guinea's obligations regarding the rights of prisoners, he met more than 70 suspects and detainees and questioned them on their health, hygiene, medical and nutrition conditions. The investigation also focused on their treatment by law enforcement officials from the time of their arrest to police custody and up to the execution of their sentences for those convicted.

"When I took up my role as a UN Youth Volunteer, I was not quite sure what to expect," Omar admits. "From the university benches, lectures and books to the real-life practice of human rights in the field – these words are what come to mind when I try to summarize those three weeks on mission to monitor human rights in Guinea."

The experience has left a marked impact on Omar and has influenced his career aspirations. "I am hopeful that there will be a prevention mechanism through a national system for the surveillance of all places of detention in Guinea. In the meantime, I wish to continue practicing human rights in the field. There is nothing quite as meaningful as volunteerism."

## Promoting the human rights of indigenous peoples in Bolivia

Human rights lawyer Fanny Declercq, a UN Youth Volunteer fully funded by the Government of Belgium, served with OHCHR in Bolivia from 2013 to 2014. As a UNV Human Rights Associate Officer, Fanny worked in La Paz within the Indigenous Peoples Unit. Culturally 42 per cent of Bolivians identify themselves as indigenous. Fanny's background in human rights helped her understand the serious challenges facing the Guarani peoples in the Chaco region.

The Guarani are Bolivia's third indigenous group, and the largest group in the eastern lowlands. In the Departments of Santa Cruz and Tarija, the communities are negatively impacted by fumes, noise and water pollution emanating from gas extraction activities. As a result crops and livestock are significantly affected, and so is their health and lifestyle.

In accordance with international law and Bolivian regulations, the national authorities have to consult indigenous peoples regarding any plan or project that might affect them. Free, prior and informed consultation broadly refers to the rights of indigenous peoples to participate in decisions affecting their lands and resources. Fanny was responsible for monitoring these processes of consultation and participation regarding plans to extract natural gas from Guarani lands. She was then able to investigate cases dealing with human rights violations. As part of her work, Fanny organized

courses on the rights of indigenous peoples that were addressed to indigenous representatives and public servants.

Fanny organized events, courses and conferences to raise awareness among indigenous people of their rights and the mechanisms available to address violations. Public servants and civil society stakeholders were involved in her outreach and promotion efforts to ensure relevant stakeholders were included. One of the courses that she organized was for public servants working on hydrocarbon matters in indigenous territories.

In addition to promotion of rights, Fanny monitored human rights violations and offered legal advice to individuals and indigenous organizations during regular missions to two indigenous territories. As well as the rewarding personal experience of meeting so many different people, Fanny reflects, "I understand much more about the impacts of private companies and extractives industries on the environment and human rights in South America, and the negative consequences of the development process".

Fanny shares, "I was in permanent contact with the Guarani peoples and their leaders. I believe that I have been able to deliver information to them and have contributed in strengthening the local organizations. In the same way as my work in the field has made a difference, this fulfilling experience changed my life."





UN Volunteer Human Rights Officer with OHCHR Alexia Ghyoot (Belgium, right) interviewing indigenous community members at the scene of the Totoncapán incident, Guatemala October 2012. (OHCHR, 2012)

## Enhancing fact-finding following human rights violations in Guatemala

Residing and working in crisis-affected communities, UN Volunteers complement the collective resources and manpower of United Nations humanitarian partners. In Guatemala, a country affected by violence, crime and social tension, UN Volunteers substantively support the mandate of OHCHR as Human Rights Officers. OHCHR observes and reports on the human rights situation and avails legal and technical advice to national authorities and civil society.

In October 2012, UN Volunteers provided technical support to OHCHR in the Totoncapán case, in which six indigenous people were shot dead and over 30 others wounded – allegedly by military personnel – during a peaceful protest in the region.

UNV Human Rights Officers documented the occurrences during OHCHR's fact finding mission, conducted interviews, recorded testimonies and assisted local authorities. They interviewed military and national police present at the scene. Their contributions proved indispensable for the OHCHR

report on the incident, which received high-level attention and facilitated accurate information on the case for the Attorney-General's Office.

"A team of 10 international UN Volunteers monitored the human rights situation, documenting and analysing information. The team played an important role in the Totoncapán case, contributing to the observance, monitoring and reporting of human rights violations, and technical assistance in support of national authorities, civil society and individuals" said Andrés Sánchez, OHCHR Deputy Resident Representative.

Within one week of the killings, nine military personnel, including a colonel, were detained and indicted on charges of extrajudicial execution. In addition, several special procedures and strategies were developed as a response to the OHCHR findings and recommendations.

"We achieved the recognition of justice, strengthening of crucial state institutions and promotion of human rights, highlighting the respect of rights inherent to every human being," says UNV Human Rights Officer Alexia Ghyoot (Belgium).

**UN Volunteers promote respect for human rights for all, enhance equality and counter discrimination, monitor and document human rights situations, support research analyses and build capacity, improve inclusive participation and engagement of communities, and so much more.**

## Is your office investing in UN Volunteers?

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. We work with partners to integrate qualified, highly motivated and well supported UN Volunteers into development programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism.

UNV is active in around 130 countries every year. With field presences in over 80 countries, UNV is represented worldwide. UNV is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

