

# UNV PARTNERING WITH UNHCR

Since the early 1990s, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has been partnering with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Some 2,564 UN Volunteers, more than half of them women, have served with UNHCR in 95 countries over the past 6 years.

## 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 cost-effective 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 UNHCR's mandate. UN Volunteers contribute to the UNHCR goal of refugee protection and humanitarian assistance. UN Volunteers work within camps on refugee status determination, registration, repatriation, resettlement, protection and family reunification. UN Volunteers, by the very nature of volunteerism's inclusiveness, advance UNHCR's efforts to support and protect refugees and internally displaced people.



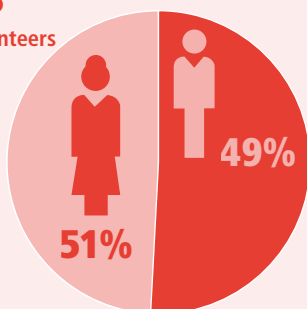
Edouard Palogo (Burkina Faso), UN Volunteer Refugee Registration Officer, with the family of Adama Ag Boubacar, his wife Fadimata Wallet Agah and children Kadija (2 years old), and Hamed (5 years old), in Sag Nioniogo refugee camp, Burkina Faso. (Eric St-Pierre, UNV 2014)

## What is the added value of UN Volunteers?

Close to 82 per cent of UN Volunteers come from the global 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.

### 2010-2015

2,564 UN Volunteers helped UNHCR carry out its mission in 95 countries



### Top 3 countries of assignment

2010-2015		
190	148	111
Egypt	Turkey	Kenya

### Top 3 countries of origin

2010-2015		
165	139	129
Egypt	Turkey	Cameroon

### Top 3 professional titles in 2010

Protection Assistant  
Field Officer  
Protection Officer

### Top 3 professional titles in 2015

Protection Assistant  
Protection Officer  
Refugee Status Determination Officer

*“UN Volunteers make an invaluable contribution to addressing the needs of refugees, and we are fortunate to have a large number in our operation. The experiences of volunteerism make an impact for a lifetime. That has certainly been the case in my own career, as I began as a volunteer.”*

*Elizabeth Tan, UNHCR Representative in Egypt*

UNV is committed to reaching out to youth and bringing their voices to the table in a rapidly changing world. The United Nations Secretary-General has made working with and for young people one of his top priorities in his Five Year Action Agenda, announced at the beginning of 2012. UNV is leading the way on youth volunteerism within the UN with the establishment of a UN Youth Volunteer Programme. Based on the UN Youth Volunteering Strategy launched in September 2013, this programme started in 2014 and helps build the capacities 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 UNHCR?**

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 12 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 10 years of experience to their assignments. The average age of international UN Volunteers is 38.

**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 UNHCR offices recruit UN Volunteers?**

To partner with UNV and recruit UN Volunteers who will help you implement your development, humanitarian, crisis response and peacebuilding 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 UNHCR.

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

# UNV-UNHCR success stories

## Empowering women and distributing food in refugee camps in Malawi and Cameroon

UN Volunteer Associate Community Services Officer Askal Tilahun (Ethiopia) serves with UNHCR Malawi on a multi-functional team assessing the general social conditions of refugees and their needs for social services at the Dzaleka refugee camp. Among other responsibilities, Askal has been helping women at the camp find markets where they can sell their crafts.

Working together, the women started the UMOJA Crafts group to earn extra money to support their families. Not only does Askal motivate these women in running their business and providing forums for product and training discussions, she also collects their products to showcase and sell at local UN functions. The craft group, which has grown to more than 50 women, has helped participants develop the skills needed to be financially independent.

"Volunteering at a refugee camp has helped me to grow on both a professional and personal level. We visit different zones

of the camp each week and every day there is a different challenge. The stories of women and children of persecution, survival and building a new life are always inspiring. It takes courage and resilience to build a new life in exile. It's always priceless to restore a smile on a child's face and be part of the positive changes in their life."

Désiré Olembe is a national UN Volunteer Programme Assistant with UNHCR in Cameroon, where he manages food distribution to Central African refugees in Gado, Garou-Boulai. For him, "Serving as a volunteer is a passion. As a UN Volunteer, I am helping people access humanitarian support. These people, who are extremely needy and hungry, smile when they see me and other volunteers coming, because they know we are coming with food and that gives them hope... hope that this food will give them enough strength to solve their other problems around health, habitation, asylum and so on."

## On the frontlines of the Syrian refugee crisis in Egypt

The Syrian refugee crisis has had a monumental impact on the Arab States including Egypt. Dealing with refugees who have experienced not only displacement but the emotional turmoil of a conflict requires fortitude and endurance. UN Volunteer Reception Coordinator, Yasmine El Demerdash is stationed in Cairo. "In November 2014, I served as UNHCR intern from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM every day. It was very tough to deal with people who had experienced so much misery and hardship."

In early 2015, Yasmine became a UN Volunteer and was more confident than ever that this is the path she wanted to pursue. "Since then my work entails interacting with refugees and asylum seekers from different nationalities on a daily basis." She explains, "I work particularly with interpreters as UNHCR Egypt depends on them in different units – at the reception area, while conducting interviews, or taking phone calls on the UNHCR Infoline."

She advocates the significance of UN Volunteers in this humanitarian crisis. For Yasmine, the work UNV does and the added value it brings to the ongoing refugee crisis is beyond measure. Volunteerism not only addresses the systematic void that a humanitarian crisis such as the Syrian conflict has had in the global context but furthermore brings novel ideas and innovative ways to tackle the challenge.

Yasmine says, "The best thing about dealing with so many cases is that you feel you did something useful, especially when the refugees appreciate what you do for them, even the smallest gesture." She continues, "I have been serving with UNHCR for almost a year and a half – I am happy and satisfied about the impact of my work. I feel more empowered to serve and assist refugees."



*Désiré Olembe, national UN Volunteer Programme Assistant with UNHCR based in Meiganga manages food distribution for Central African refugees in Gado, Garou-Boulai, Cameroon. (UNV, 2014)*

## Protecting internally displaced people in Afghanistan

More than three decades of war and insecurity in Afghanistan has resulted in millions of Afghans fleeing to neighbouring countries. Throughout these years of armed conflict about 40 per cent of the country's 28.4 million people have been displaced.

Even when people return home, the risk of displacement continues due to on-going insurgencies or difficulties accessing basic services and finding a way to make a living. UN Volunteers with UNHCR in Afghanistan help with emergency assistance and provision of basic services, both for those people who return to the country and their host communities.

UN Volunteers also identify specific assistance and protection requirements of returnees and internally displaced persons, in particular children and those with special needs. By conducting assessments of conflict-induced population movements, UN Volunteers are identifying the root causes of displacement, the immediate humanitarian needs, as well as long-term solutions. In addition, they formulate evidence-based interventions, manage project implementation and provide technical guidance to implementing partners, including capacity building activities. These types of interventions are

aimed at the entire community to safeguard sustainable reintegration, and to lessen the potential for secondary displacement. Within the communities, UN Volunteers also raise awareness about gender-based violence, hygiene and education.

One such UN Volunteer contributing to UNHCR's protection activities for returnees and displaced persons in Afghanistan, as well as building the capacity of implementing partners is Rehma Kauma (Uganda), who serves as a UNV Associate Protection Officer. Rehma has been engaged in distributing food, blankets and other emergency supplies to internally displaced people, as well as inspecting wool spinning machinery provided to local women as a means of securing their livelihoods. Her UN Volunteer assignment is a source of great inspiration and satisfaction.

"The situation in Afghanistan is nothing like I'd ever imagined. The people have virtually nothing, yet share what little they have. It might sound like a cliché, but I like to help people. As a UN Volunteer, I feel like I am putting others before me without material expectations. It is a good feeling. I get a lot of satisfaction from working closely with the communities and beneficiaries."

**UN Volunteers support the protection of millions of uprooted and stateless people, provide humanitarian assistance in emergency situations, support refugee status determination and registration, facilitate voluntary repatriation and resettlement, encourage inclusive participation, 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).*

