

Nurturing the next generation of health leaders





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Going Forward

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative is a significant investment in the health of African people, with a focus on empowering African women. The initiative aims to increase the presence of women in leadership positions within WHO and prepare women professionals for senior appointments. Their impact has been felt across various aspects of WHO's work, contributing to the organization's success. The initiative also emphasizes the importance of fostering connections among the champions, sharing experiences, and providing continuous support.

I salute all the women of our great organization who engage themselves in this initiative to be figures of excellence and models for a brighter generation of women and girls and contribute to enhancing the health sector in Africa. One of the greatest joys as I travel around the region is interacting with these dynamic, knowledgeable and impactful young women. Looking back on the initiative, I am proud that I started it. Each time I meet them in my office or elsewhere, I am impressed by their stories.

Our Health Champions, we celebrate you. Your work contributes a lot to the achievement of the sustainable development goals in Africa. I can assure you that in every sector, your contributions and successes are recognized at their fair value. I encourage you, to develop your careers, embrace your diversities and achieve more for the next generation of women for whom you are leading the way.



Dr Matshidiso Moeti

WHO Regional Director for Africa

WHO and UNV joined hands to start the new initiative to increase the number of young women in the health sector, to empower women while helping countries on the continent to improve people's health. These Volunteers have been the agents of change and champions of Africa's healthy future. Together, we started building the next generation of women health leaders; and we did this amid COVID, while WHO was leading the global pandemic response. Despite all challenges, the target is achieved, even surpassed.

Today, I thank them all. You excelled as professionals. You brought volunteer passion, and you made such a difference.

Kofi Annan once said, 'There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.'



Mr Toily Kurbanov

UNV Executive Coordinator



The WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti (front row, second to left) photographed with some of the Health Champions, at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

Introduction

WHO has been partnering with UNV since 1973 to provide primary health, basic social services and combat diseases through awareness and prevention. In 2016, Zara Hassan and Dolma Haraszti became the first UN Volunteers at the WHO Regional Office for Africa. This number increased steadily over three years to 60 UNV serving at WHO Africa in 2019.

On 8th March 2020, with the world celebrating the International Women's Day and marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration for women's rights, the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was launched.

This strategic initiative aimed at attracting and engaging 100 young women, from the African continent (aged 22-35 years), in public health initiatives in the 47 WHO country offices in the region, highlighting the cross-cutting nature of WHO's work by focusing on gender equality and equity, women's empowerment, and volunteerism as pillars.

In 2021, women represented 67 per cent of 174 UN Volunteers deployed to WHO in the African region and on the 28th of August 2022, the AWHC initiative onboarded the 100th health champion. Over the past 4 years, 400 UN Volunteers have served with WHO in the region. Today, 1 in every 3 UN Volunteers serving with WHO in the region is an Africa Woman Health Champion.

01

Statistical Overview



Statistical Overview

145



Volunteers



97%



Women



21%



National
UN Volunteers



79%



International
UN Volunteers



38



Countries of
Origin



15%



are from WHO
under-represented
nationalities



2



Persons with
Disabilities



34



Average Age of
Volunteers



Top 5 countries of origin

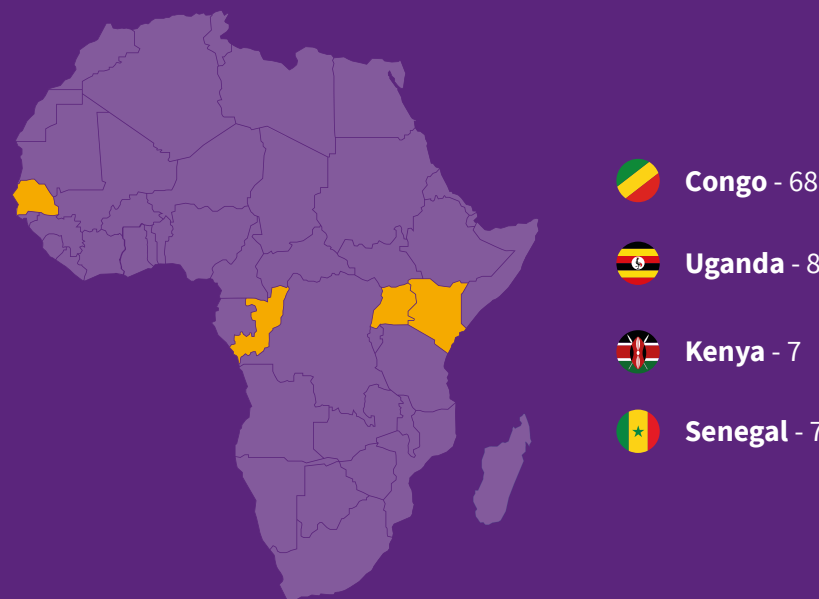


62.5%

The initiative has increased the percentage of women in the WHO Africa’s UNV workforce to 62.5 per cent in 2023.



Top 4 countries of assignment



4x

Serving volunteers with WHO Africa increased from only 60 in 2019 up to 217 in 2023.



In February 2024, UNV conducted an anonymous satisfaction survey among deployed Africa Women Health Champion volunteers and their supervisors. The response rate from the volunteers was 52 percent and that from their supervisors was 43 percent. The results gave valuable insight into the main outcomes and total added value of the Africa Women Health Champion initiative, which are explained below.

Volunteer Survey



87 per cent of the respondents would recommend the Africa Women Health Champions initiative to other young professionals.



2/3 of the volunteers were satisfied with their assignments.



3/4 of the volunteers expressed satisfaction with the recruitment and on-boarding process.

Supervisor Survey



All responding supervisors indicated their satisfaction with the implementation of AWHC initiative hailing the recruitment and on-boarding process as rapid and clear.



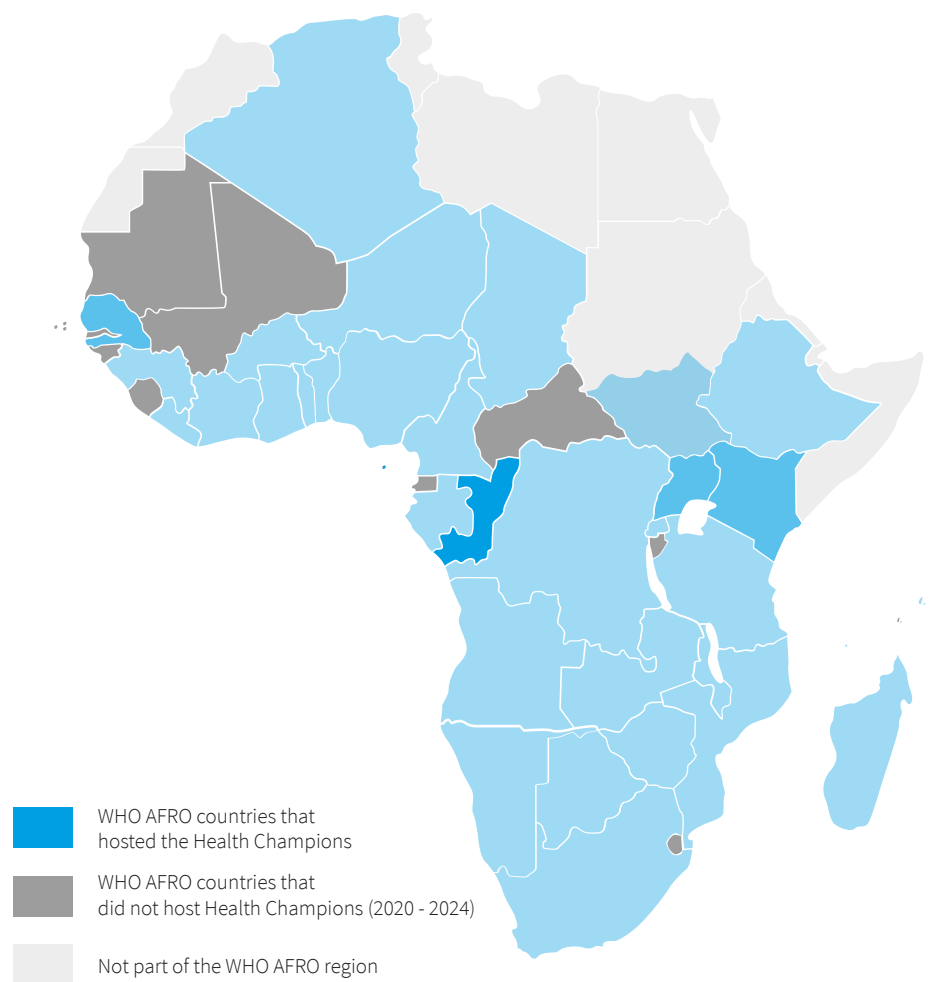
90 per cent of the supervisors would welcome future initiatives like AWHC.



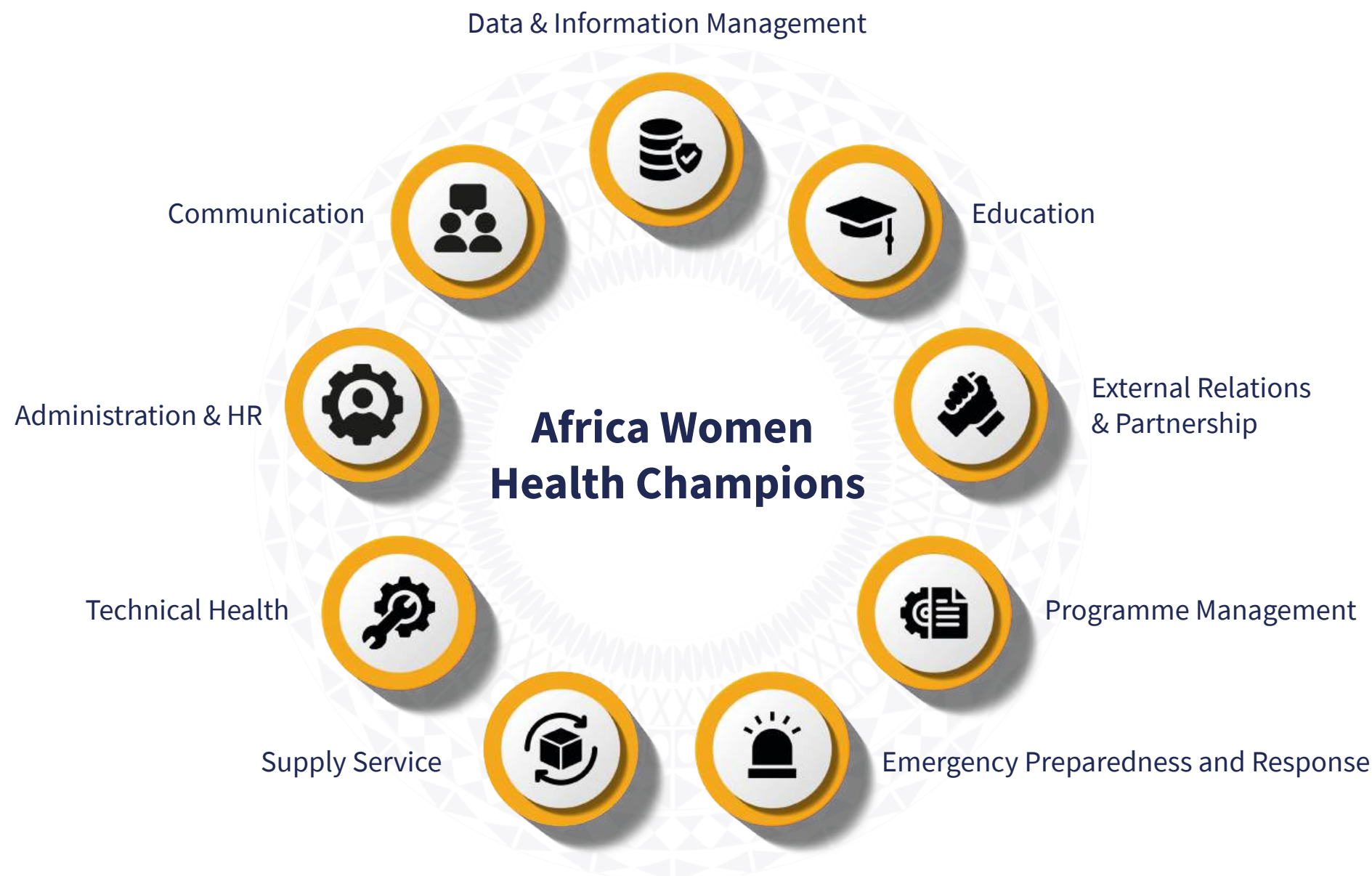
Supervisors also advocated for a more established career development programme to help the volunteers transition to staff positions within WHO.

Where the Champions serve (38 countries)

 Algeria	 Madagascar
 Angola	 Malawi
 Benin	 Mauritania
 Botswana	 Mauritius
 Burkina Faso	 Mozambique
 Cameroon	 Namibia
 Chad	 Niger
 Comoros	 Nigeria
 Congo, Republic of the	 Rwanda
 Congo, Democratic Republic of the	 Sao Tome and Principe
 Cote d'Ivoire	 Senegal
 Eswatini	 Seychelles
 Ethiopia	 South Africa
 Gabon	 South Sudan
 Ghana	 Tanzania, United Republic of
 Guinea	 Togo
 Kenya	 Uganda
 Lesotho	 Zambia
 Liberia	 Zimbabwe



Professional Areas





“The initiative has passed the expected results. Now the way forward is to invest more in that programme and create a pool of qualified young women and qualified candidates for succession planning in public health.”

Dr Egide Rwamatwara

Regional Human Resources and Talent Manager, WHO AFRO



“This initiative has had immense gains for this region. It has brought in a number of talented young women from the Africa Region. These young talented women have had a great impact in that effect.”

Ms Pamela Drameh-Avognon

Coordinator, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, WHO AFRO



“I think the biggest challenge we had was what I call the lack of breadth: the ability to spread ourselves to be able to support the 47 countries, each of them quite unique. So the volunteers have been very useful in that they are open to new ideas, and explore different ways of solving problems we have been grappling with. They have been able to give us that breadth we need and have presence in a bit more countries than we would have if they were not with us.”

Dr Humphrey Karamagi

WHO Representative for South Sudan



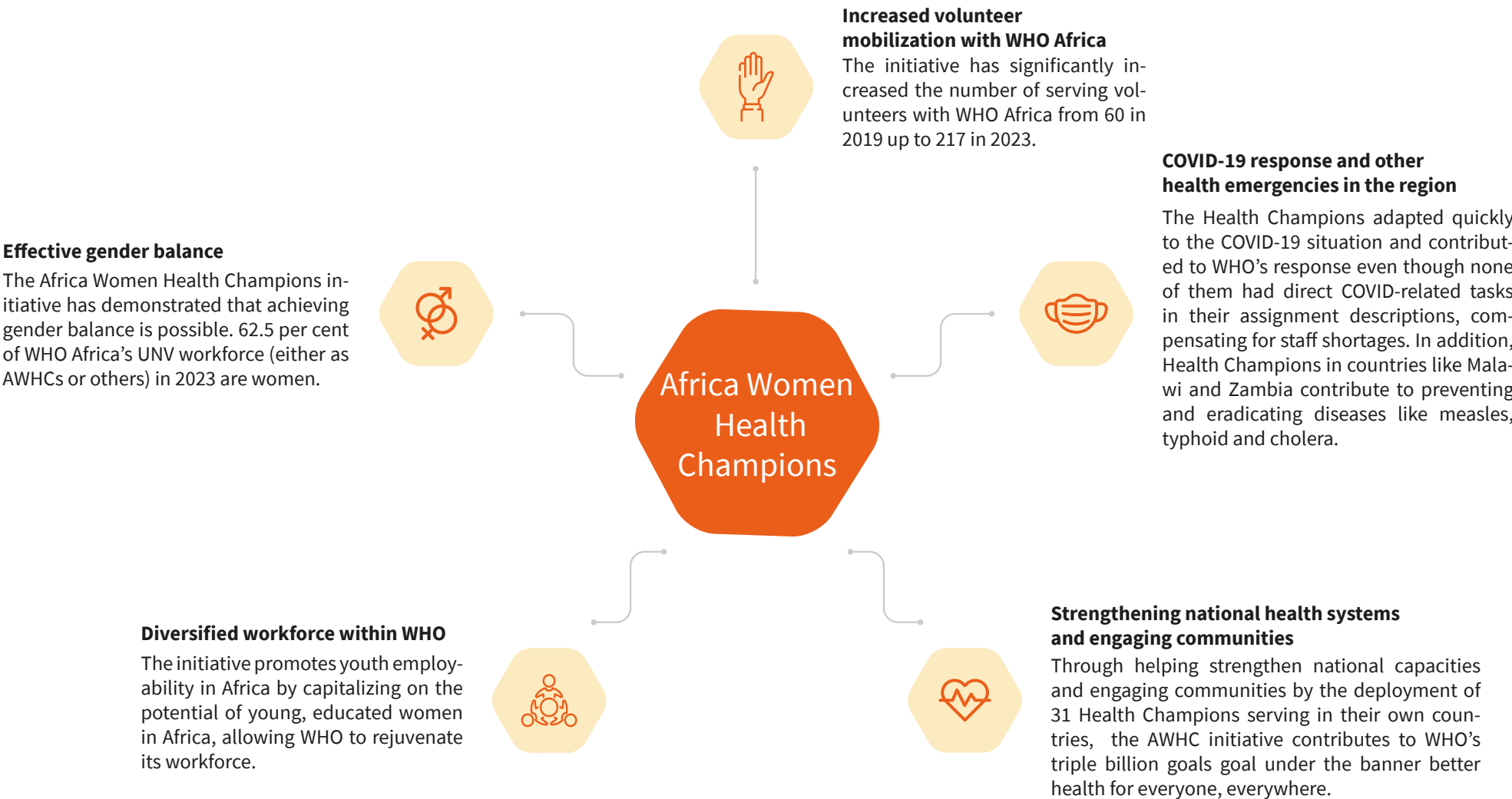
“Such a beautiful journey it has been! A commitment made 4 years ago, an achievement to recon with, a real investment in the African women. This legacy will certainly live on.”

Sika Ahawo Somda

Regional Portfolio Specialist, UNV Regional Office, Nairobi

Impact of the initiative

WHO AFRO and the country offices identified many profiles in the areas of communication, external relations and partnership, country emergency preparedness and response, strategic health information, service delivery systems, data and information management. The volunteers were needed to fill the gap in these areas in the organization’s workforce. The contributions of the AWHC initiative include:



Key events related to the initiative



2020

Ready, Set, Go!

On 8th March 2020, with the world celebrating the International Women's Day and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration for women's rights, the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was launched at the WHO Africa Regional Office in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.



2021

Frame it, Film it, Tell it!

Njobati Sylvie Vernyuy, an International UNV Multimedia Officer from Cameroon serving in WHO Congo produced a video dubbed 'She Serves', highlighting the Africa Women Health Champions initiative and its objectives to promote health and boost gender equality across 47 African countries. The video features fellow volunteers: Audrey Mutasa, Matilda Tingu, Prudentienne Musabyimana and Dr Phionah Atuhebwe, the Chair of the WHO Gender Parity Task Force in Africa.



3rd December 2021

Celebration of Excellence

The UNV Congo organized the Volunteer Country Awards 2021 to recognize the volunteers' work all around the country. The Gender Prize category was dedicated to the Health Champions volunteers. Among the contestants, two volunteers received the Gender prize:

- Lurole Elfried Mpeke-Ntollo - Technical Officer, Risk Communication and Community Engagement
- Prudentienne Musabyimana - Technical Officer, Violence & Injuries Prevention





September 2022

Where Creativity meets Reality

United Nations Volunteers launched three categories of contests for the volunteers to participate in: photo, video, and story. This was an opportunity to hear from the Health Champions themselves, their feeling about the initiative and to showcase the emanated impacts. The winning contestants were:

- Salawu Oluwatoyin - winner of best story
- Veronica Mukhuna - winner of best photo
- Marie-Therese Khadija Ki-zerbo - winner of best video



5th December 2022

A Day of Gratitude and Recognition

To commemorate the 2nd anniversary of the initiative and mark International Volunteer Day, an event took place at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. Marriane Enow Tabi and Chidinma Opoko spoke about their journey and experience as Africa Women Health Champions.



8th March 2023

The Next Leap Forward

WHO AFRO and UNV celebrated together International Women's Day and the 3rd anniversary of the AWHC initiative at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.



02

Bringing Better Health for Everyone Everywhere

The Health Champions are true change-makers, shattering barriers and igniting a powerful movement for gender equality. Their passionate efforts are a source of inspiration for young African women to step into leadership roles in healthcare, lighting the path toward sustainable development across Africa. Together, they are not just envisioning a better future—they are actively creating it!





Communication Warriors: Advocates for Health Awareness

At WHO, communication is not just a tool—it is the heartbeat of its mission to create a healthier, safer world for everyone, especially those who need it most. By weaving together media, social platforms, branding, and emergency alerts, WHO is stepping up its game, ensuring that vital information reaches people exactly when they need it most. From life-saving health advice to real-time crisis updates, WHO is all in—ensuring every message is clear, trustworthy, and ready to act on.

These volunteers are passionate about driving real change, using powerful health messages, heartfelt conversations, and compelling stories to inspire healthier lives, whether in their own country or as internationals. Their mission is to connect with individuals and communities, sparking behaviour shifts that can make a lasting impact. They believe that through their words and interactions, they can bring hope to those who need it most—especially those struggling with health challenges. By amplifying these vital messages, they aim to not only inform but uplift, offering encouragement and a sense of possibility for a healthier, brighter future. Because at the end of the day, it's not just about talking, it's about saving lives.



Ayaovi

Djifa Akomatsri

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Benin  **Nationality:** Togo 

I learned how to better understand target audience’s needs, pain points, and health risks and tailor my messaging in the adequate format, in a timely manner and through the appropriate channels.



“I spent four years as an Africa Woman Health Champion from 2020 to 2024. In life, there are moments that define us—moments that awaken the spirit within and ignite a fire that cannot be extinguished. For me, that moment was during the COVID-19 outbreak. I felt a calling to pitch in and more than ever to serve and provide relief from the destruction that COVID-19 has had on communities.

As a communication officer, my work consists of helping people to make informed decisions for their health using communications channels, documenting the WHO country office’s key achievements, and

promoting WHO’s visibility and success stories.

Winston Churchill once said “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” I learnt how to better understand target audience’s needs, pain points, and health risks and tailor my messaging in the adequate format, in a timely manner and through the appropriate channels.

Recognizing my efforts and my enthusiasm, the country office has recruited me as an international consultant to support communication activities at the end of my International UNV assignment in July 2024.”



Ms Ayaovi Akomatsri (right) photographed with a woman in a local market, a day before the introduction of the malaria vaccine for children (6 to 18 months) in the Allada-Toffo-Zè Health zone, Benin, 2024.



Ms Ayaovi Akomatsri, Master of ceremony for the regional peer learning meeting on the introduction of the malaria vaccine, organized by WHO AFRO and partners, in Cotonou, Benin, May 2024



Ms Ayaovi Akomatsri carrying an under-5 infant who just received her first drop of polio vaccine during the national polio immunisation campaign, in Oueme, Benin, 2024

Esperança

da Sílvia Mandlhate

Title: Communication and Risk Communication and Community Engagement Officer

Country of assignment: Mozambique 🇲🇵

Nationality: Mozambique 🇲🇵

I have reached places called unreachable such as Chilomo (a community in Zambezia province, where people would go to one of the neighbouring countries in order to access care) and we provided care...



“I have been interested in communication and community work almost all of my teenage and adult life. Working at WHO made me more aware of the necessities of my community and I am now pursuing a degree in Public Health Policy, with a goal to work and help design more inclusive health policies that will help my community.

Being in a conflict zone with weak literacy levels was very challenging. Many times I found myself balancing between risking my life or helping others understand risk and access care. I overcame this with my supervisor’s help and encouragement. She would often say ‘we are here to save lives’, and that fuelled me to continue saving lives.

On several occasions, I have reached places called unreachable such as Chilomo (a community in Zambezia province, where people would go to one of the neighbouring countries in order to access care) and we provided care, made the health authorities aware of their necessities and difficulties, and the work to change the scenario eventually followed.

This initiative changed my whole life, and I am really happy for that. By improving healthcare access across the continent, and sending passionate women like me to serve communities, without limitations of ethnicity, culture or location, by helping us develop our leadership skills, we were able to promote health for all the communities we serve.”



Ms Esperanca Mandlhante (right) during a focus group discussion with a conflict-affected community, during cholera and conjunctivitis cases investigation at the Eratí IDP camp in Nampula province, Mozambique, 6 March 2024



Ms Esperanca Mandlhante (right) with a displaced family at Malica IDP camp during the cholera outbreak response in Niassa province, Mozambique, 6 September 2023

Fatoumata Keita

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Guinea  **Nationality:** Guinea 

I led a communication and awareness campaign in the 7 regions of Guinea on COVID-19. The results were 100% achieved, which earned me the recognition of UNV ROWCA.



“Working at WHO has given me new confidence in myself and my skills. I had the opportunity to discover myself and unearth skills that were hidden within me. I was also impressed by how inclusive and respectful everyone was. I had benefitted from a UNV mentoring programme during my time at WHO, which gave me a clear direction for my career. This was made possible by the flexible working environment offered by WHO.

I led a communication and awareness campaign in

the 7 regions of Guinea on COVID-19. The challenges were enormous, given that some communities had their own interpretation of the disease, and on the other hand, I had to earn the trust of the WHO, which had entrusted me with this mission. The results were 100% achieved, which earned me the recognition of UNV ROWCA.

This is an exceptional opportunity for women.”

Fiovigan

Kayi Maloao Lawson-Agblulu

Title: Communication Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴 **Nationality:** Togo 🇲🇪

This initiative has deployed women closer to the communities, women who are more sensitive and protective, enhancing the trust of communities in the organization. I've acquired new skills in implementing communication strategies and in managerial coordination.

“My greatest pride is to contribute to the improvement of public health by showcasing the work of WHO in the field through impactful stories.

This initiative has deployed women closer to the communities, women who are more sensitive and protective, enhancing the trust of communities in the

organization.

It's an initiative that significantly enhances skills, and I encourage all women who have the opportunity to apply for it. I've acquired new skills in implementing communication strategies and in managerial coordination.”



Flora

Dominique Atta

Title: Chargé de la Communication

Country of assignment: Madagascar 🇲🇵

Nationality: Cote d'Ivoire 🇳🇮

I am in charge of raising awareness, promoting health, and promoting WHO's support to the government; letting the public know what WHO is doing in Madagascar.



“I came to Madagascar in 2017 as an intern during the plague outbreak. So, before leaving, I told myself that there is a lot to do over here to save lives, so why not come in? And then I saw the position of Communication Officer with UNV. So now, here I am. I am in charge of raising awareness, promoting health, and promoting WHO's support to the government; letting the public

know what WHO is doing in Madagascar. Seeing people accepting vaccination and accepting the fact that they need to improve their well-being and health is fulfilling for me.

I'm particularly proud of the work I did to save lives during the cyclones Emnati and Batsirai in 2022.”



Ms Flora Atta (right) and a colleague from WHO (left) sensitising parents who decline vaccination, in Sakaraha, Madagascar, 2022



Ms Flora Atta (middle) and a colleague (right), listening to a beneficiary of the mobile clinic, offered by WHO to support communities affected by the humanitarian crisis in Ambovombe, in the Great South Region of Madagascar, 2022

Francine

Manuela Tchouta

Title: Spécialiste en Communication

Country of assignment: Burkina Faso 🇸🇩 **Nationality:** Cameroon 🇨🇲

I contributed to the 74th Regional Committee. I brought new ideas to the table, I did quality work and I let my work speak for me. This initiative gives you the opportunity to make a contribution to the health sector and at the same time to develop yourself.



“The opportunity to occupy positions of responsibility as a young woman was invaluable to me. I contributed to the 74th Regional Committee, a historic moment in which the next Regional Director of the WHO in the African Region was elected.

Having people doubt my skills because they were not used to seeing young people in positions of responsibility was one of the challenges I faced. To overcome this challenge, I brought new ideas to the

table, I did quality work and I let my work speak for me.

This initiative gives you the opportunity to make a contribution to the health sector and at the same time to develop yourself. At the end of the assignment, people are not the same as they were at the start. You develop new skills, both professional and personal. It showed me that we could do better, that we could achieve great things by acting differently.”

Joelma Pereira

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Mozambique 🇲🇴

Nationality: Guinea-Bissau 🇬🇼

“One of my major achievements is minimizing the partnership review timeframe from three weeks to only one day.



“I oversee partnerships between WHO and different stakeholders in the health and humanitarian sector at WHO Regional Office for Africa. I take pride in being a health champion, documenting key initiatives related to environmental health, climate change, and the misinformation about COVID-19 vaccinations.

One of my major achievements is minimizing the partnership review timeframe from three weeks to only one day. As a result, the office recorded a three-time increase in the number of partnerships established in 2021 compared to previous years.”

Kafusha

Kapema

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Zambia 🇿🇲

Nationality: Zambia 🇿🇲

One of the achievements I'm most proud of was telling the story of local farmers who had transitioned from growing tobacco to other alternative crops that are not only of benefit to their health but also protect the environment/soil.



"I found immense fulfilment in documenting the stories of women and children about their experiences with interventions to improve health outcomes in their communities.

One of the achievements I'm most proud of during my time in the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was telling the story of local farmers who had transitioned from growing tobacco to other alternative crops that are not only of benefit to their health but also protect the environment/soil. It was wonderful to

see how much they had taken control of their health and that of their family members.

The initiative allowed me to develop leadership and project management skills by working on impactful health programmes while collaborating with diverse teams which broadened my perspective and sharpened my ability to navigate just about anything. A step forward is a step towards achieving your dream. Don't underestimate the power you have to contribute towards making the world a better place for all of us."



Ms Kafusha Kapema during a WHO HQ & AFRO mission to assess progress of alternative livelihoods to tobacco growing project in the Chipangali District, Eastern Province Zambia, 26 February 2024

Leticia Nangwale

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Liberia 🇱🇲 **Nationality:** Malawi 🇲🇼

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative is a gateway to unleashing the potential in you and making meaningful contributions to Africa's health.

“Being part of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative as a Communications Officer with WHO Liberia has been incredibly rewarding. One of the most enjoyable aspects of my role has been the opportunity to amplify the voices and stories of significant strides made by WHO in supporting African Member States, including Liberia, and the impact of these interventions. Seeing first-hand how these stories have inspired and mobilized communities, raised awareness of WHO as a brand, and driven positive change has been incredibly fulfilling.

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative is a gateway to unleashing the potential in you and making meaningful contributions to Africa's health. I have now secured a fixed term position in the organization all stemming from the vast exposure and experience attained from this initiative.”

Leticia's most proud moment was when they won the Director General Award in 2022 for Team work as a country office.



Marie-Thérèse Khadija Ki-zerbo

Title: Spécialiste en Communication/Média

Country of assignment: Guinea  **Nationality:** Burkina Faso 

Becoming a UN volunteer and joining the AWHC was quite an honour and pride. I won the 1st prize in the Africa Women Health Champions 2022 contest for my video. I learned from others, I shared and taught others. We laughed and cried sometimes together.



“Contributing to making the world a more sustainable place has always been a motivation for me. Becoming a UN volunteer and joining the Africa Women Health Champions was quite an honour and pride. Knowing that through my skills and competencies, I would bring some type of change which will positively impact communities at heart was my daily motto.

My biggest achievement during my service was to win the 1st prize in the Africa Women Health Champions 2022 contest for my video narrating the rewarding parts of my experience as a UN Volunteer, illustrated

with recordings of the serving volunteers in Guinea interacting with each other. This prize was awarded at the International Volunteer Day celebration at the AFRO office in Brazzaville.

I learned from others, I shared and taught others. We laughed and cried sometimes together, we became a family that no borders can destroy no matter the distance. Professionally, I grew and did get a better sense of where I would like to be in a couple of years.”

Marlène

Flore Dimegni Bermi

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Congo, Democratic Republic of the 🇨🇩

Nationality: Cameroon 🇨🇲

I write stories with impact. I take images that speak and tell the story of these people who inspire me and allow me to see a way of life that I had never seen before.



“I enjoyed the feeling of contributing something to the communities and my host organization. I give my time, my energy, my skills, and I learn from all these experts in emergencies and public health with diverse profiles, unique backgrounds, and inspiring journeys.

I write stories with impact. I take images that speak and tell the story of these people who inspire me and allow me to see a way of life that I had never seen before. I give human faces to what they do and share the results on social media and the WHO website. These stories that will be read bring hope to all those who are fighting, but also, show how the WHO and its partners work alongside governments to bring smiles to populations.

I believe in volunteering and the transformative power of young people and women within communities. This experience has been a true catalyst for the rest of my career. That’s why I hold this Africa Women Health Champions initiative particularly dear to my heart, and I am one of its ambassadors.

If you are a woman and a mother, know that you are in your rightful place and everything will be arranged to help you give your best and reach your full potential. You might even dream of a career at the United Nations and becoming the future Dr Moeti. (laugh). I think it will be a great pride!”



Ms Marlene Flore (right) photographed with Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa (second to right) and other WHO colleagues

Marriane Enow Tabi

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇬

Nationality: Cameroon 🇨🇲

I am very proud to have contributed to informing the public about COVID-19 facts through monthly regional bulletins in the wake of so much misinformation. The Africa Women Health Champions initiative has helped many young people like myself understand global health issues.

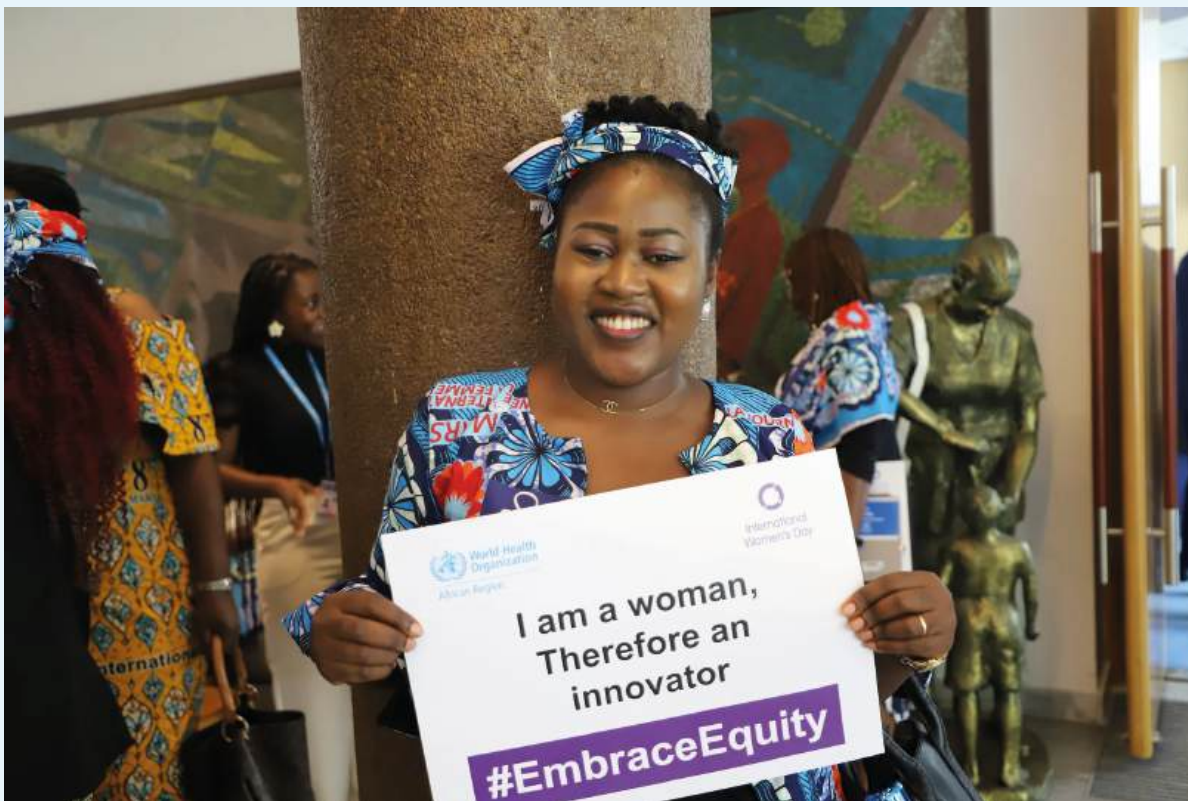


“There are so many enjoyable moments. Some stand out including me being part of the team working to halt the end of the greatest pandemic of our times, COVID-19. I am very proud to have contributed to informing the public about COVID-19 facts through monthly regional bulletins in the wake of so much misinformation.

I learnt new ways of engaging the public, innovative ways of communication. The Africa Women Health

Champions initiative has helped many young people like myself understand global health issues and how we can all contribute to ending diseases in Africa.”

Marriane led the development of monthly regional bulletins in April 2022 to address misinformation surrounding COVID-19 messaging. Marriane and team have produced 12 issues as of August 2024.



Ms Marriane Enow Tabi during the International Women's Day 2023 celebration, at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo



Ms Marriane Enow Tabi making a child smile, a beneficiary of the Lolo refugee camp, Cameroon



Ms Marriane Enow Tabi (right) sensitising refugee women in the Lolo camp on the importance of hygiene in preventing malnutrition, Cameroon

Melvis

Lu-uh Kimbi

Title: Chargé de la Communication

Country of assignment: Madagascar



Nationality: Cameroon



What I am most proud of is using communication to strategically position WHO Madagascar as the go-to agency for public health issues, and this was seen in the sharp increase in the number of social media followers and online engagement.



“In terms of professional development, working as a volunteer opens you up to upgrading your skills and competencies. It is something I am really happy about. It is also quite notable that the UNV invests a lot in skilling up UN Volunteers to enhance their impact during their assignments.

I loved being at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic serving and saving lives, and giving hope to many at a moment when the world was dreary, with millions of people losing hope. What I am most proud of is using communication to strategically position WHO Madagascar as the go-to agency for public health issues,

and this was seen in the sharp increase in the number of social media followers and online engagement.

The initiative helped to bridge human resources gaps by deploying young professionals with a burning passion to serve in these communities and contribute to promoting public health.

I am proud that I have been part of this great initiative. The fact that WHO opened this position for an international UN Volunteer is also a great recognition of the value that UN Volunteers have to offer.”



Ms Melvis Kimbi during a past field activity in Madagascar, 2019



Ms Melvis Kimbi speaking during training of journalists in Antananarivo, Madagascar ©WHO Madagascar/Rija Ramamirijery, 2020

Nyandoh

Paho Tadfor

Title: Communication Assistant

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇬

Nationality: Cameroon 🇨🇲



I am proud to have initiated and launched the UCN Newsletter. This wasn't just another publication; it became the heartbeat of our communications strategy within the WHO's Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases (UCN) Cluster.

“What I cherished most about being part of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was the incredible sense of community and the unstoppable energy that radiated from every woman involved. Picture this: a vibrant network of passionate, powerhouse women, all laser-focused on transforming Africa's health landscape. It was like being part of a sisterhood where every conversation sparked new ideas, and every challenge was met with fierce determination and a dash of fun.

We weren't just colleagues: we were a tribe, united by a common goal: to tackle the continent's most pressing health issues head-on. The vibe was electric, filled with laughter, late-night brainstorming sessions, and a mutual respect that made even the toughest

days feel like a victory lap. We supported each other through thick and thin, celebrating each milestone with the enthusiasm of a winning team.

The achievement I'm most proud of during my time with the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was initiating and launching The UCN Newsletter. This wasn't just another publication; it became the heartbeat of our communications strategy within the WHO's Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases (UCN) Cluster. What began as a blank canvas soon transformed into a vital platform for sharing our progress, celebrating milestones, and connecting with stakeholders across Africa and beyond. The first edition was a labour of love, and its success was immediate.”



Ms Nyandoh Tadfor sharing her professional journey and experience during the UNV Congo Townhall, at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, June 2024



At the first International Conference on PEN-Plus in Africa, in Tanzania, 25 April 2024

On the photo, from left to right: Ms Aïssa Bagagnan, Dr Mary Tongkhir Dewan, Dr Yuka Maniko, Mrs. Olivia Neneh Carine Endzandza, Ms Nyandoh Tadfor, Mr Josue Bienvenu Bamana Malonga (standing)

Olivia

Ogechi Okorundu

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Lesotho  **Nationality:** Nigeria 

I successfully organised and led a one-year campaign to promote physical activity in Lesotho. This campaign tagged the “Walk the Talk Challenge” was organised as part of activities to mark WHO@75.



“Before joining the UNV, I was actively involved in advocacy activities organised by the SDGs Story Group and SDGs Volunteer Group in Abuja, Nigeria.

As the focal point for the Country Office on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PRSEAH), I contribute to WHO’s mandate of preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment by promoting the campaign against sexual misconduct.

I successfully organised and led a one-year campaign to promote physical activity in Lesotho. This campaign tagged the “Walk the Talk Challenge” was organised

as part of activities to mark WHO@75. This activity significantly increased the visibility of the country office and strengthened partnerships within the UN, Civil Society Organizations, educational institutions, development partners, and even donors such as the European Union.

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative has made me understand the power of embracing cultural diversity. I have learned new cultures and new ways of approaching life. As a UN Volunteer, I have worked with volunteers from Germany, France, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana, Italy, Kenya and Lesotho.”



Ms Olivia Ogechi (right) collating data for the documentation of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign success in Lesotho, August 2024



Ms Olivia Ogechi (standing) facilitating a session on preventing and responding to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment for Lesotho emergency responders, May 2024



Ms Olivia Ogechi (centre) with members of the Lesotho Boy Scouts during the launch of the Walk the Talk challenge, October 2023

Priscilla Adjeidu

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Tanzania 🇹🇿

Nationality: Ghana 🇬🇭

With support from other programme colleagues, we developed beautiful impact videos, ensuring the visibility of WHO Tanzania.



“Being a UN Volunteer, especially with my host agency, which is WHO Tanzania, has been the most relevant period in my career. It has set a tone for my career, and given me great leadership skills. It has also made me build my competence in communication, just because of the level of trust that has been given me by my supervisor, our WHO Representative and other colleagues.

With support from other programme colleagues, we developed beautiful impact videos, ensuring the visibility of WHO Tanzania. We have had the Tanzania country office being featured in different news portals. I also produced a video on maternal mortality, and the WHO Headquarters saw it and thought that this is a very good way of telling a human impact story. I had

to present and share how that was done, and that could not have been possible without this platform.

Securing a permanent position as a P3 staff in WHO Tanzania country office, is remarkable for me. I just want to say thank you so much to Dr Moeti. She was so amazed at the work I’ve been able to do as a UN Volunteer and decided to take a photo with me and then posted it on her social media platform. I remember her being so utterly pleased with my transition from UNV to staff as it was her vision for the Africa Women Health Champions initiative.

Thank you so much, UNV. This has been a great journey.”



Ms Priscilla Mawena Adjeidu (left) photographed with Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa (right)



Ms Priscilla Mawena Adjeidu (centre) with kids from the Rukwa community during polio vaccination campaign, United Republic of Tanzania, September 2023



Ms Priscilla Adjeidu (holding the infant) during a visit to engage and share the impact stories of individuals who have recovered from cholera, in a remote village in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, 2023

Veronica Mukhuna

Title: Communications Officer

Country of assignment: Malawi



Nationality: Malawi



I witnessed a lot of teen pregnancies which forced a lot of girls out of school. My current UNV role aligns with my personal values as it involves providing information, advice, and guidance to decision-makers to prompt action that will protect the health of individuals.

“My motivation for joining UNV was for personal and professional growth. I grew up in a rural community in Southern Malawi. Growing up, I witnessed a lot of teen pregnancies which forced a lot of girls out of school. I was privileged to be selected to the University of Malawi to study for a BA in journalism. During my orientation week, I learnt about all the options that girls/women have about their sexual and reproductive health. It was my first time to learn about emergency pills, at 18! This inspired my passion for health communication. Since then, I have been intentional with my career choices to always work in the health communication field.



My current UNV role aligns with my personal values as it involves providing information, advice, and guidance to decision-makers to prompt action that will protect the health of individuals, communities, and nations.”

Veronica won the best photo during the Photo, Video and Story Contest organized by UNV in September 2022.

In the photo, she portrays an image of herself interviewing a cholera survivor who has recently received an oral cholera vaccine as part of the WHO-supported vaccination programme.



Ms Veronica Mukhuna documenting the aftermath of Cyclone Freddy at the Phalombe District Hospital, Malawi; the hospital was flooded, leading to damage to infrastructure and medical supplies, 2023



Ms Veronica Mukhuna in Malawi during a mission to document stories of dedicated polio campaign vaccinator Macron in the Machinga District, Malawi, April 2022

Veronica Mukhuna - Health champion fighting cholera in Malawi

Winner of the Best Photo contest 2022



Veronica's winning photo from the 2022 Best Photo contest

Ms Veronica Mukhuna (right) documenting the story of a man whose wife suffered from cholera, and how it affected his family, in the Chikwawa District, Malawi, 2023

Cholera has been endemic to Malawi since 1998. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that there have been 58,557 cases and 1,756 deaths since 7 May 2023. The outbreak began in March 2022, and has spread to all 29 districts of Malawi. Veronica Mukhuna has been on the frontlines of these efforts, and reports on the WHO response to the outbreak.

As the outbreak unfolded in the country in late 2022 and early 2023, rumours and misinformation started to spread. Misinformation fuelled mistrust in health workers, resulting in physical aggression towards doctors and nurses in cholera-affected areas. This undermined the response efforts.

“My day-to-day tasks include working alongside community health workers and volunteers to empower communities in addressing rumours and promoting the adoption of cholera prevention measures. By mid-March 2023, I had participated in 10 community engagement sessions, reaching over 50,000 people with accurate information about cholera.

Since the onset of the cholera outbreak, the United Nations has been working with the Malawian government and partners on the emergency response.

The government launched the “End Cholera/Tithetse Kolera” campaign, strategically aimed at intensifying response at the community level. As part of this campaign, I shared stories of cholera survivors to foster trust within communities, encouraging them to act upon WHO’s information, advice and guidance regarding the disease.

I often witness the devastating effects of the cholera outbreak on families and communities. It is heart-breaking seeing the level to which the emergence of cholera cases in non-cholera hotspots has put significant pressure on already struggling health systems in the country.

As a United Nations Volunteer, I take pride in the contributions I have made to the cholera outbreak response in Malawi. Since February 2023, the country has been experiencing a decline in both cholera cases and deaths. My work has contributed to increased mobilization of resources, which has improved response efforts across various areas. The Tukombo Health Centre achieved 100 days without recording a single cholera case as of 14th August 2023.”



Information Stewards: Guiding Health through Insight

At the core of WHO's mission is turning data into action—collecting, analysing, and sharing vital information that powers the future of public health. WHO's commitment to data is more than just numbers; it's about setting a gold standard. Their data principles ensure every piece of information is timely, accurate, and transparent, creating a solid foundation for tackling the world's most pressing health challenges. With clear audit trails, consistent reference points, and a drive to make data accessible wherever possible, WHO is dedicated to delivering insights that truly make a difference for global health.

These volunteers are part of the unsung heroes behind the scenes, shaping the future of global health with cutting-edge technology and innovative thinking. From managing strategic health information to spearheading knowledge management, they are revolutionizing how we understand and respond to health challenges. Their expertise in IT systems administration and support ensures that critical data flows smoothly, while their skills in data analysis and machine learning uncover new insights into disease patterns. With advanced disease modelling, they help predict and prevent outbreaks, playing a pivotal role in saving lives. These tech-savvy changemakers are not just crunching numbers—they are building the digital backbone of healthier, more resilient communities, harnessing the power of data to turn hope into action.



Auréole

Nganhyim Nguemezi

Title: Strategic Health Information Officer

Country of assignment: Togo 🇲🇵 **Nationality:** Cameroon 🇨🇲

Working alongside field teams in both districts and regional health areas has shown me the critical importance of high-quality data for the effective planning and implementation of health interventions.



“The Africa Women Health Champions initiative has enhanced our ability to respond swiftly to health emergencies and better plan interventions at both national and regional levels. As a Volunteer with WHO, I have had the opportunity to contribute directly to the improvement of health data collection systems in Togo.

My efforts have focused on strengthening health systems through various programmes, particularly those related to preparedness to emergencies, malaria, tuberculosis, HIV, and non-communicable diseases. Working alongside field teams in both districts and regional health areas has shown me the critical importance of high-quality data for the effective planning and implementation of health interventions.

One of my key achievements has been the update of the national data value for the African Integrated Health Observatory information, a crucial project that optimizes access to critical data for epidemiological surveillance.

This role has provided me with a platform to support constructive dialogues with decision-makers, including the Ministry of Health, and to contribute directly to the improvement of national health policies.

I am proud to be part of the WHO Africa Women Health Champions initiative and to contribute to Dr Moeti’s legacy as a health champion in Africa.”



Practice sharing session on the validation of malaria surveillance data at the community level during the experience-sharing visit between Togo and Benin, within the Benin-Burkina Faso-Niger-Togo initiative, in Porto-Novo, Benin, 10 September 2024

On the photo: Dr Auréole Nganhyim (right) with midwives and obstetricians at the Adjara health centre, Oueme department



Restitution session and advocacy with the WHO Representative of Benin during the experience-sharing visit between Togo and Benin, within the Benin-Burkina Faso-Niger-Togo initiative, in the WHO office, Cotonou, Benin, 13 September 2024

On the photo from left to right: Dr Stan Koudema, Malaria and Neglected tropical diseases Programme Officer, WHO Togo; Dr Casimir Mazengo, Multi-Country Assignment Teams (MCAT) HIV/AIDS-TB-STI-Hepatitis Programme Officer; Dr Laconi Kaaga, HIV/AIDS-TB-STI-Hepatitis Programme Officer, WHO Togo; Dr Kouamé Jean Konan, WHO Representative a.i. in Benin; Dr Auréole Nganhyim; Dr Dismas Baza, MCAT Malaria, Neglected tropical diseases and other Vector-borne diseases Programme Officer; Dr Télésphore Houansou, HIV/TB Advisor in charge of the fight against HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis, WHO Benin; Dr Souleymane Zan, Head of sexual and reproductive health and related rights Programme, WHO Benin

Felana

Henintsoa Rakotoarimanana

Title: Project Management Office Assistant

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴 **Nationality:** Madagascar 🇲🇩

Seeing the tangible impact of our work on healthcare access and outcomes across Africa was incredibly fulfilling and aligned with my passion for driving positive change through technology. I streamlined the reporting process by implementing a web-based tool that improved the efficiency of data collection and analysis.



“What I enjoyed most about being part of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was the opportunity to apply my data management and IT expertise to support initiatives that uplift women in health leadership. Seeing the tangible impact of our work on healthcare access and outcomes across Africa was incredibly fulfilling and aligned with my passion for driving positive change through technology.

Through targeted training and support, the initiative equipped women with the skills and resources needed

to lead health projects, advocate for better health practices, and manage health programmes effectively.

One of my proudest achievements during my time with the initiative was streamlining the reporting process by implementing a web-based tool that improved the efficiency of data collection and analysis. This innovation significantly enhanced our ability to monitor the initiative’s impact, ensuring that our efforts to empower women in health leadership were data-driven and targeted for maximum effectiveness.”



Ms Mubaraqa Ibitye Yusuf (left) and Ms Felana Henintsoa Rakotoarimanana (right) participating at a WHO “Walk the Talk” event, organized by the Healthier Populations (UHP) Cluster, at the WHO Africa Regional Office, in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, July 2024



Ms Felana Rakotoarimanana (left) with Mr Ali Ahmed Yahaya, Team lead of the Assistants to the Regional Director during the International Volunteer Day 2022 celebration at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

Jacqueline Raïssa Bebga

Title: Strategic Health Information Officer

Country of assignment: Mauritania 🇲🇷

Nationality: Cameroon 🇨🇲

“As the Strategic Information Officer, I played a key role in analyzing health data, identifying gaps in service delivery, and providing evidence-based recommendations to shape the campaign.

“One of the achievements I am most proud of during my time in the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was successfully leading a data-driven campaign that improved access to maternal and child healthcare in underserved regions. As the Strategic Information Officer, I played a key role in analyzing health data, identifying gaps in service delivery, and providing evidence-based recommendations to shape the campaign. This resulted in tangible improvements in healthcare access for women and children, including an increase in vaccination coverage and better antenatal care services. Seeing the direct impact of our efforts on vulnerable populations was incredibly rewarding and reaffirmed the importance of data in driving meaningful health outcomes.



As Michelangelo once said, “The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving it.” This quote perfectly captures the spirit of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative: aim high, because it is through ambitious goals that we can truly make progress and transform health systems for the most vulnerable.

Everyone is a health stakeholder, with a role to play in the national health information system. Together, let’s use data to identify difficulties, inform decision-making, and target resources to vulnerable populations.”



Ms Raissa Bebga (last row, middle) with children from the Thienel locality, during a poliomyelitis vaccination campaign in the Boghé district, Mauritania, 27 May 2024



Ms Raissa Bebga (right) with staff from the Ministry of Health and a regional health delegation of Trarza during a joint evaluation mission WHO - MoH, for the establishment of electronic registers and capacity building on data management (collection, analysis and utilization), at the Rosso Health center, Mauritania, 14 August 2024

Maryanna Akinyi Ochieng

Title: Data Analyst

Country of assignment: Zimbabwe 🇿🇼

Nationality: Kenya 🇰🇪



I enjoyed being at the forefront of promoting healthcare in Africa, specifically supporting East and Southern African countries in their immunization activities.

“Public health is constantly evolving with diseases being eliminated, others emerging, and outbreaks occurring. It truly takes a collective effort to ensure societal well-being, and this programme is an excellent platform for not only promoting good health and well-being but also challenging stereotypes, promoting gender parity, and ensuring no one is left behind. It’s both professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling to be part of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative.

I enjoyed being at the forefront of promoting healthcare in Africa, specifically supporting East and Southern

African countries in their immunization activities. I had the privilege of working with countries like Rwanda and Namibia in conducting comprehensive Essential Programme on Immunization (EPI) reviews.

It’s an honour to contribute to a programme that not only helps increase the life expectancy of the African child but also prevents disabilities and deaths caused by these diseases. Witnessing the progress of immunization programmes across Africa, particularly the expansion of target age cohorts beyond under 5 years old to include adolescents and adults, has been fulfilling.”



Ms Maryanna Ochieng (standing) and a WHO colleague data manager during the post-introduction evaluation of the Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV), presenting the analyzed findings from the field to teammates from the Ministry of Health Malawi, WHO (HQ, AFRO, East and Southern Africa), UNICEF Malawi, Africa CDC, JSI, PATH Malawi, and the Liverpool Wellcome Trust, in Lilongwe, Malawi, July 2024.

Mildred

Chirwa

Title: Operational Partnerships Officer; Information Products and M&E Technical Assistant

Country of assignment: Congo/ Senegal   **Nationality:** Cameroon 



I am a proud Africa Woman Health Champion, passionate about public health, community development, women and youth participation.”

“I was planning to stay behind after my studies to work in Milan, Italy in 2021. My plans changed in 2022 when I was invited to work at WHO AFRO as one of the Health Champions under the Africa Women Health Champions initiative by Dr Moeti.

With my background on humanitarian action and project management, working with HIR (Information Management) has assisted me to strengthen my data analytics and management skills. I have been able to map and document operational and strategic partners that worked with the COVID-19 team at AFRO, follow up collaborative activities, and produced training

materials for capacity building among WHO AFRO partners and stakeholders.

The major difficulty was the language barrier due to working in a francophone country. But with free French lessons offered for UN Volunteers, I am able to communicate in French now, and it gives me freedom to enjoy the country without worrying about communication challenges.

I am a proud Africa Woman Health Champion, passionate about public health, community development, women and youth participation.”



Ms Ketsia Saya (front, left), UNV Congo Country Coordinator, photographed with some of the Health Champions during the International Women's Day 2023 celebration at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

Yawa

Tècle Thérèse Doris Guinhouya

Title: Project Officer – Knowledge Management

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴

Nationality: Togo 🇲🇵



I loved the fact that the initiative brought together young women from different countries. For the first time in AFRO’s story, we organized a training for team lead assistants and for all the drivers in the region.

“Creating my profile on the UNV platform was one of the best decisions of my life. The AWHC is a unique opportunity to learn grow and shape your career. I loved the fact that the initiative brought together young women from different countries. I was inspired by my fellow colleagues, their paths and success stories. At the regional office, I’ve also met beautiful souls that have become almost like family. It’s a strong sisterhood.

As part of my assignment, what I am most proud of is the launch of the Team Performance Programme with

the Staff Development and Learning team. For the first time in AFRO’s story, we organized a training for team lead assistants and for all the drivers in the region. For the first time, we reached that ‘No one behind’ point and support the professional growth of those who seem invisible in the system.

The AWHC is a unique opportunity to learn grow and shape your career. Don’t hesitate to join if you got a chance. Take the opportunity today to step forward in your career and make a great impact!”



Team Performance Programme Workshop for the Regional Office Team Leads Assistants in Dar Es Salam, United Republic of Tanzania, September 2023

On the photo from left to right: Ms Tausi Rajabu Yusuf, WHO Representative Assistant in Tanzania; Ms Jenipher Nombo, Finance Officer, WHO Tanzania; Ms Doris Guinhouya



From left to right: Mrs Nene Bah, Staff Development and Learning Officer, WHO AFRO; Ms Doris Guinhouya; Ms Corinne M'poussa, Human Resources Assistant (Health Champion), at work at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo



Ms Doris Guinhouya during the International Women's Day 2023 celebration, at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo



Crisis Action Squad: Ready to Rise and React

At any moment, WHO teams are battling outbreaks and natural disasters across the globe. Nowhere is this more urgent than in the African Region, which faces the heaviest burden of public health emergencies, with over 100 major crises reported each year. WHO personnel are working hand-in-hand with nations to help them prepare for, respond to, and recover from these life-threatening events. The Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) cluster is at the heart of this mission, partnering with governments to boost their ability to prevent, detect, and tackle health emergencies.

These volunteers are at the frontlines, playing a vital role in protecting communities when it matters most. From empowering country teams with targeted training to developing innovative learning strategies, these volunteers ensure that everyone is ready to act in the face of crises. Whether it's combating gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies, strengthening surveillance systems, or leading emergency risk management efforts, their work is saving lives and reshaping the way we respond to health threats. They are not just preparing for emergencies—they are building resilience, creating safer futures, and standing as a global force for hope and recovery when disaster strikes.



Amarachi

Tikal Abianuru

Title: Training Officer, country support scale up Flagship Projects

Country of assignment: Kenya 🇰🇪 **Nationality:** Nigeria 🇳🇮

This effort has allowed me to contribute significantly to strengthening health systems and enhancing the capacity of health professionals across the continent.



“One of my proudest achievements during my time with the Africa Women Health Champions initiative has been the ongoing restructuring of the WHO Africa Regional Office’s Emergencies Preparedness and Response Digital Asynchronous and Synchronous learning strategies. This effort has allowed me to contribute significantly to strengthening health systems and enhancing the capacity of health professionals across the continent. I have facilitated and coordinated over 5,000 hours of interactive learning through 287 webinars and meetings, reaching more than 120,000 health professionals. Additionally,

I spearhead the provision of mobile-friendly, low-bandwidth downloadable resources to over 20,000 health workers in remote areas, ensuring offline access to vital learning materials. These initiatives have been critical in improving emergency preparedness and response across Africa.

The initiative has contributed to fostering a more prepared, informed, and collaborative health workforce, contributing to stronger health systems that are better equipped to serve vulnerable communities.”



Ms Amarachi Tikal Abianuru during the Rapid Response Teams Managers Training, in Musanze, Rwanda, July 2024



Ms Amarachi Tikal Abianuru during the Rapid Response Teams Managers Training, in Musanze, Rwanda, July 2024



Ms Amarachi Tikal Abianuru speaking during the Republic of South Sudan's second joint external evaluation workshop, in Juba, September 2024

Lurole

Elfried Mpeke-Ntollo

Title: Technical Officer - Risk Communication and Community Engagement

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴 **Nationality:** Congo 🇨🇴

As a beneficiary of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative, as a pan-Africanist, I appreciate the fact that I have the opportunity to contribute to improving the health of people in the Sub-Saharan African region.



“As a beneficiary of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative, as a pan-Africanist, I appreciate the fact that I have the opportunity to contribute to improving the health of people in the Sub-Saharan African region. The lack of experience in the organization’s procedures, strategies and intervention approaches was the first challenge I had to face, as it limited my productivity and efficiency.

To cope with this, I had to study the organization’s procedures and ways of operating, and draw resources from existing documents in my field, developed by the organization at both regional and headquarters

levels. I also had to be patient with myself in order to assimilate the notions I had learned.

Through this initiative, several communities to which I have contributed have become more active in improving their health and living conditions. For example, in Douala, Cameroon, as part of the implementation of the Urban Governance, Health and Well-being project, the Douala Urban Community has cleaned up more than 1,500 water points to promote access to drinking water for these communities, and is currently working to clean up markets to contribute to the healthy nutrition of its communities.”



Ms Lurole Elfried Mpeke-Ntollo (standing), speaking during a capacity-building workshop on participatory and multisectoral monitoring and evaluation in Libreville, Gabon, September 2022

Matilda

Tingu

Title: Technical Officer - Nutrition and Food Safety in Emergencies

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇩 **Nationality:** Cameroon 🇨🇲

“My assignment allowed me to provide support and guidance to 47 WHO Member States on nutrition and food safety to ensure the delivery of effective interventions; particularly in response to climate induced disasters such as floods and droughts.

“I first of all say a big thank you to Dr Moeti for this great initiative which gave a chance to me to serve in the prestigious lead agency in global health. I can never thank her enough. This initiative changed the statutes of many women and girls.

My assignment allowed me to provide support and guidance to 47 WHO Member States on nutrition and food safety to ensure the delivery of effective interventions; particularly in response to climate induced disasters such as floods and droughts. I also



assisted countries in developing policy documents particularly in implementing the code of marketing of breastmilk substitutes and guided 20 countries to pass legislation substantially aligned with the code. This is an achievement I am quite proud of.

I encourage every young girl who aspires to grow, to learn more about this initiative and engage in every opportunity it offers. It is a memorable and a never regrettable experience. GO girl GOOOOO!!!!!!”



Quarterly session with the Director of the Healthier Populations (UHP) cluster at the WHO Regional Office of Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

On the photo from left to right: Ms Christine Kibaara, Technical Officer - Nutrition and Food Safety in Emergencies (Health Champion); Ms Prudentienne Musabyimana, Technical Officer - Violence & Injuries Prevention (Health Champion); Ms Chidinma Opoko, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Risk Factors Officer (Health Champion); Ms Matilda Tingu; Dr Adelheid Onyango, Director UHP cluster; Ms Esther Genebu, Technical officer TNR; Ms Lurole Mpeke, Technical Officer - Risk Communication and Community Engagement (Health Champion); Mr Montasir, Technical officer Non-Communicable Diseases

Ndungla

Marita Nangkeng

Title: Training officer, country support scale up Flagship Projects

Country of assignment: Kenya 🇰🇪 **Nationality:** Cameroon 🇨🇲

I felt so accomplished seeing participants commit to being ambassadors who seek to challenge Gender-Based Violence wherever they're assigned. This often was a big moment for me.

"Though not included in my job description, WHO provided me the opportunity to bring in my previous experience as a Gender-Based Violence expert. I was able to train WHO SURGE teams in Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zanzibar. I was also a co-facilitator for a training of trainers for GBV trainers in Africa and had the opportunity to facilitate the Gender module during IMST trainings in Kenya and Ethiopia. I contributed to the WHO Gender-Based Violence in Emergency workforce in the African Region.

I felt so accomplished seeing participants commit to being ambassadors who seek to challenge Gender-



Based Violence wherever they're assigned. This often was a big moment for me.

I immensely thank my supervisors Dr Boukare Bonkougou and Dr Miriam Nanyunja who believed in me and provided me with the opportunity to contribute to the organization's programmes in this regard. I also liked the level of support the UNV field office accorded myself and other colleagues. Stanley and Anne-Rose are super amazing, empathetically, responsible and committed.

Many thanks to Dr Moeti for this initiative."



Ms Ndungla Marita Nangkeng (standing in the middle) during a master training on in-patient management of severe acute malnutrition, in Nairobi, Kenya, 7 March 2023

Salawu Oluwatoyin

Title: Country Preparedness & IHR (CPI) Officer

Country of assignment: Ethiopia 🇪🇹 **Nationality:** Nigeria 🇳🇮

I got a pool of networks and friends, a repertoire of knowledge from various online courses, an experience that gave me the confidence and catapulted me to a height I had never imagined and an empathy to always look for ways of giving back to where I came from.

“Instead of just a 2-year opportunity to have an international experience, I got a pool of networks and friends, a repertoire of knowledge from various online courses, an experience that gave me the confidence and catapulted me to a height I had never imagined and an empathy to always look for ways of giving back to where I came from.

Volunteering is a symbiotic relationship as UNV offers a lot for both personal and professional growth - coaching from senior colleagues, various free learning opportunities, freedom to stretch beyond your



capabilities, a guided mentorship from both your supervisor and an assigned mentor.”

Salawu won best story during the Photo, Video and Story Contest organized by UNV in September 2022. She describes her path, beginning with the opportunities search for career development, how she learned about the Africa Women Health Champions initiative, her positive COVID-19 result, her deployment journey, her experience as a UN Volunteer, and her post-UNV professional growth.





Storytime with Salawu

Winning story from the 2022 contest

As I read with heavy heart the reply from the hiring manager from South East Asia, INGO; “you are qualified but do not have an international experience to support it,” a lot of questions flushed through my heart. How do I go around this? How do I acquire the needed experience to plunge forward?

I spent the whole day searching through the web for options as I conducted integrated supportive supervision to support the operational excellence of detection of cases of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) in 5 Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities in Alimosho Local Government of Lagos State, Nigeria.

Opening my WhatsApp, the news that the WHO Director-General has declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) flooded my timeline. This was news with mixed feelings as a national consultant with World Health Organization (WHO) Nigeria, who is leading the AVADAR programme - the use of mobile phone technology to complete the last mile of Polio

eradication - in Lagos State.

While carrying out my role of supporting the Government at the sub regional level to improve their preparedness and test their capacities to response to COVID-19 outbreak using the existing AVADAR platform, I stumbled on the Africa Women Health Champions initiative. This was cold water to my thirsty soul.

I went through the different opportunities in the various countries of Africa, two positions struck me - Country Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulation officer (IHR) in Ethiopia and Eritrea - I immediately reviewed my resume for the application.

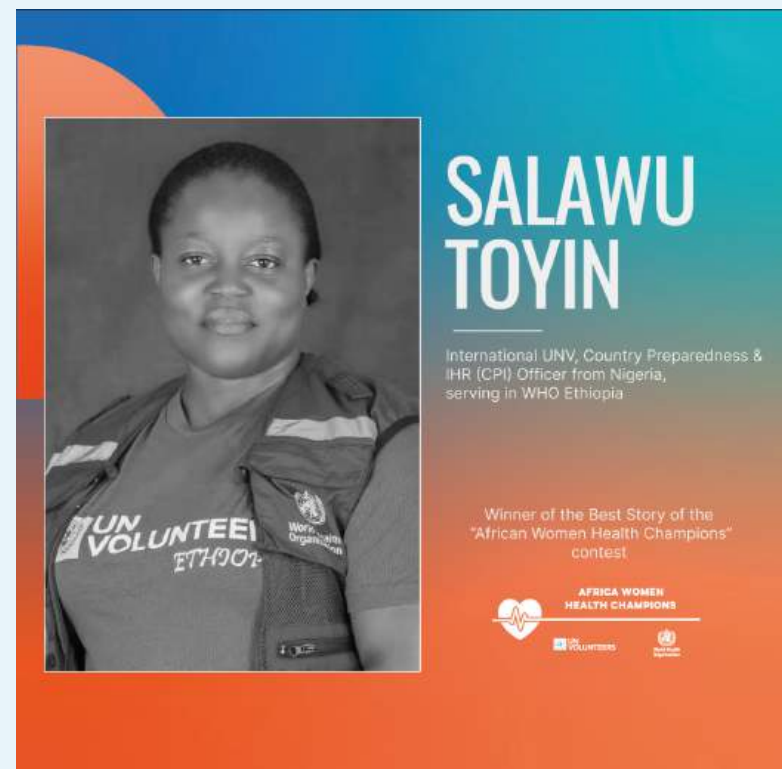
Some weeks after sending in my application for the two positions, I tested positive for COVID-19. Along the way to the isolation centre - a 16 hour journey by road from Lagos to Abuja due to the pandemic lockdown - I got the invitation for an interview.

Fast forward to 6 weeks after, I had my appointment letter as an International United Nations Volunteer (IUNV) with WHO Ethiopia and a flight ticket with the World Food Programme (WFP) - due to lack of commercial flight as a result of the pandemic lockdown.

First thing first, in a space of 12 weeks, the Africa Women Health Champions initiative became the vehicle for my journey to be a global health expert in a larger world, outside my comfort zone.

My work as an IHR officer started with a phone call from Dr Martins - the CPI IHR officer who I will be working with - during my two-week quarantine. He oriented me, provided some logistics and guided me on how to settle in a new environment - a country with no internet or mobile connection due to political instability and a temporary restriction on movement to decrease the incidence of COVID-19.

Being a veterinarian in the EPR team of WHO Ethiopia - a country that deals with pockets of reports of zoonotic diseases in the different regions - was a great



privilege. My expertise took me to Somalia - a region plagued with unknown camel deaths - and Tigray - the war zone with looming outbreaks. This was with a recommendation from the WHO representative “Toyin is a new colleague who is a veterinarian, involve her in all zoonosis and animal related issues.”

Also, spending 15 months with WHO Ethiopia as a Health Champion, built me to compete internationally and landed me in the Performance for Veterinary Service (PVS) team of the Capacity Building Department in the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) headquarters as a Public Private Partnership Project manager, the only Nigerian in the WOAH Headquarters, a team of over 100 professionals from different countries.

Violet Mathenge

Title: Surveillance & Emergency Risk Management

Country of assignment: Botswana 

Nationality: Kenya 

To me, volunteerism means giving up my time, knowledge, energy, and heart for the greater good. In giving my service, I have received a truly rewarding experience.

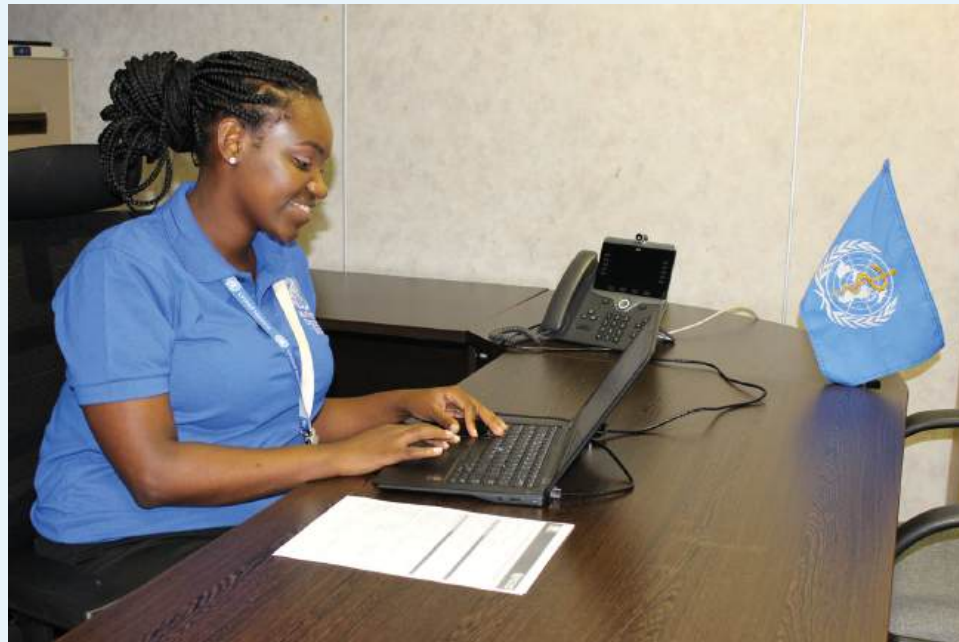


“I have been heavily involved in COVID-19 response efforts in the country. One of my greatest achievements has been strengthening data infrastructure and capacities for Botswana’s health sector. The information generated from the capacities I helped build has been useful in informing response activities, such as guiding targeted case management and vaccination, particularly in the context of COVID-19 response. Health surveillance forms a key aspect of any response, and data forms a big piece of the pie.

This experience has given me a lot of exposure and given me the opportunity to engage at international platforms and at levels that I really would not have thought of.

My greatest satisfaction comes from seeing the impact of my service and contribution to society. To me, volunteerism means giving up my time, knowledge, energy, and heart for the greater good. In giving my service, I have received a truly rewarding experience.

A former UNV staff and International Volunteer, my now colleague Cristina Birsan, External Relations and Partnerships Officer at WHO Botswana, keeps reminding me that ‘once someone becomes a volunteer, the volunteer spirit is forever carried along.’ That is a mantra I am proud to live by.”



Ms Violet Mathenge at work at the WHO office in Botswana



Ms Violet Mathenge with colleagues, coordinating the distribution of COVID-19 rapid response kits, 2021



Partnership Powerhouses: Energizing Health Through Connection

Achieving global health goals takes a world of expertise. That's where the mission of WHO's External Relations, Partnerships, and Governing Bodies (EPG) comes in—fostering powerful connections that drive real impact. WHO partners with five hosted partnerships, over 100 collaborative initiatives, and more than 800 collaborating centres worldwide. From UN agencies and governments to experts, non-state actors, goodwill ambassadors, and advocates, these partnerships bring a collective force of change. Together, these collaborations amplify WHO's reach, tapping into diverse knowledge and expertise to strengthen national health systems and push forward life-saving programs. It's through these united efforts that WHO can truly make a difference on a global scale.




These volunteers have acted as the bridge-builders behind powerful global collaborations, ensuring that life-saving health initiatives have the support they need to thrive. Through their work in external relations and partnership, they foster vital connections, from coordinating meetings with partners, donors, government officials, and embassies to crafting compelling proposals that spark action. Their expertise in resource mobilization and donor communication ensures that funding flows where it's needed most, driving real change on the ground. They are inspiring global cooperation, ensuring that every handshake, conversation, and partnership leads to healthier futures for communities worldwide.



Abigail

Ademboro Amoak-Afoko

Title: External Relations & Partnerships Specialist

Country of assignment: Algeria/ Lesotho   **Nationality:** Ghana 

My proudest moment was having to lead the country multi-sectoral team of 40 people made up of both government and other health partners technical focal persons, to develop proposals for the acclaimed pandemic fund. I enjoyed being part of something bigger in improving the health outcomes of populations.

“I enjoyed being part of something bigger in improving the health outcomes of populations. The opportunity to understand the works of global health, to be part of it and as well contribute towards improving health systems for the attainment of universal health outcomes and the sustainable development goals.

I am proud of the partnerships I was able to create and strengthen for the WHO country office and helping increase the funding levels of the office to better support the ministry of health of the country.



My proudest moment was having to lead the country multi-sectoral team of 40 people made up of both government and other health partners technical focal persons, to develop proposals for the acclaimed pandemic fund.

By virtue of this initiative, interventions in communities incorporate the fresh views of young African women bringing an additional perspective to helping communities.”



Ms Abigail Amoak-Afoko (middle) with co-facilitators and some participants of the AVoHC-SURGE onboarding training of first responders as part of the WHO Emergency, Preparedness, and Response (EPR) Flagship Initiative, in Leribe, Lesotho, May 2024

Alice

Iribagiza Rwema

Title: External Relations & Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Mauritius  **Nationality:** Rwanda 

Recently, I've initiated a creative approach to fundraising by forging partnerships with the private sector, a first for WHO Mauritius on this scale.



“The impact of this initiative is immeasurable in a sense that it gives you unlimited possibilities of what you can achieve as a young woman.

Recently, I've initiated a creative approach to fundraising by forging partnerships with the private sector, a first for WHO Mauritius on this scale. Mobilizing resources in Mauritius, an upper middle-income country, comes with its challenges, especially given the limited presence of traditional donors. The early signs are promising. Collaborating closely with colleagues and the Ministry of Health and Wellness to bring this vision to life has been both rewarding and

impactful.

Collaborating with experts from diverse countries and backgrounds has been incredibly rewarding and has exposed me to new ways of thinking and doing things, ultimately enhancing my work.

On a personal level, I am also developing essential people management skills, which are crucial for career advancement. My confidence in my capabilities and the value I bring to the organization has grown since joining the initiative.”



Ms Alice Iribagiza (second to left) during the Covid-19 Transition Plan Workshop with health sector stakeholders, hosted by WHO Mauritius and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, to promote the preparedness and response of authorities and other sectors in the event of another pandemic, May 2024 ©WHO Mauritius

Audrey

Mutasa

Title: Writer/Editor; External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Congo/ Malawi   **Nationality:** Zimbabwe 



I applied, and when I got the response, I was so happy because I knew that I was going to contribute to a wider community. Right now, I contribute to the whole of Africa, which is big.

“As a journalist, writing has always been my thing. So when I saw this opening, I was like yes, I can do this one. So I applied, and when I got the response, I was so happy because I knew that I was going to contribute to a wider community. Right now, I contribute to the whole of Africa, which is big.

Working for WHO is a bit challenging but it’s exciting. The environment is really good, to have people who are always ready to hold your hand.

My words out there to anybody, I didn’t believe that it’s possible until I made it here. So anybody can.”



Ms Audrey Mutasa during a Measles-Rubella vaccine integration campaign with a just vaccinated baby (Victoria), in Tongwe village of Zomba, Malawi, 24 October 2024



Ms Audrey Mutasa at the distribution of Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) supplies at Bwaila hospital Lilongwe during a cholera outbreak, Malawi, December 2022



Ms Audrey Mutasa (right) with Dr Diallo Abdourahmane, WHO Representative to Kenya (left), handing over a token of appreciation after completing a 3-week capacity-building mission in Nairobi, Kenya, 12 July 2024

Christelle

Fanny-Ange Matchoum Kouogue

Title: External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Togo 🇲🇵 **Nationality:** Cameroon 🇨🇲

I was able to learn more about albinism, but more importantly, I saw how tough it may be for these people to live in an atmosphere where they face discrimination. I think it is important to thank those people who thought of this initiative.

“I had the privilege of being designated to represent the WHO country office at the evaluation workshop of the 2018-2022 strategic plan of the National Association of People with Albinism in Togo. I was able to learn more about albinism, but more importantly, I saw how tough it may be for these people to live in an atmosphere where they face discrimination. It’s time to create a new future where people with albinism can

take their place throughout society!

I think it is important to thank those people who thought of this initiative, as well as the United Nations Volunteers, for providing us with the opportunity to find abilities that we may not have realized we have.”





From left to right: Mr Issa Niang, Communication Officer; Ms Christelle Fanny-Angé Matchum; Dr Claude Senou AMOUZOU, Global Health specialist; discussing how to increase partner's visibility in the newsletter, in the hall of the WHO Togo office, 2022



Ms Christelle Fanny-Angé Matchum (right) photographed with Dr Fatoumata Binta Diallo, WHO Representative in Togo (left), June 2022



Ms Christelle Fanny-Angé Matchum (left) with Ms Laure Amana-Amoussou, Mobilisation and Partnership Officer (right) at the UNV Togo office, 2022

Clarisse

Lobo

Title: External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Comoros  **Nationality:** Cote d'Ivoire 



One of my biggest achievement is being part of the team to establish a cholera health cluster, contributing to better coordination of the cholera response.

“Africa Women Health Champions has given me the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of communities, to strengthen the impact of health programmes and to actively participate in concrete actions to improve the quality of life of people in need. It’s a chance to work with committed teams and learn at the same time.

As a UN Volunteer, the experience profoundly enriched my personal development and career perspective. It allowed me to strengthen my skills, expand my professional network, deepen my commitment and increase my resilience. As part of my assignment, I

have offered support in the writing and submission of 8 project proposals, 2 of which have been funded and 5 are awaiting results, including the fund to fight pandemic. One of my biggest achievement is being part of the team to establish a cholera health cluster, contributing to better coordination of the cholera response.

I would like everyone to fully commit to their projects because every effort is precious. Volunteering provides an opportunity not only to give but also to grow and learn. Together, we can create a lasting and positive impact in our communities.”



Joint project supervision mission on neonatal health in Caritas, Comoros, with colleagues from WHO and the Ministry of Health, 2022 ©WHO Comoros



Ms Clarisse Lobo (right) with a beneficiary of the oral health project, discussing good practices to prevent dental caries after receiving the health kit in Anjouan, Comoros, 2023 ©WHO Comoros





Visit of a Koranic school, beneficiary of the WHO-CSO project in 2022 ©WHO Comoros

Fleur

Malease

Title: External Relations & Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Gabon  **Nationality at birth:** Congo, Democratic Republic of the 



At the heart of every initiative are the people, and none of WHO's achievements in the Gabonese Republic would have been possible without the dedication of its citizens, particularly its healthcare professionals.

"Being part of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative marked a major milestone in my career.

Under the mentorship of Dr Magaran Bagayoko, WHO Representative, I learned a critical lesson: the importance of aligning resource mobilization with broader health objectives, rather than channelling funds solely through WHO. The Gabonese Republic, with its relatively limited donor engagement, requires stamina and perseverance to mobilize resources. Recognizing each UN agency as a potential partner in advancing health initiatives was the foundational step toward that goal.

The dinner hosted by H.E. Ryu Chang Soo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, was not merely another

diplomatic engagement, but a manifestation of this collaborative vision. Conversations centred on a prospective UNICEF-UNESCO-WHO joint project, with a focus on enhancing children's health through the training of health professionals.

At the heart of every initiative are the people, and none of WHO's achievements in the Gabonese Republic would have been possible without the dedication of its citizens, particularly its healthcare professionals. They are savvy, passionate, and resourceful. It was a privilege to work alongside and learn from them, and I wholeheartedly encourage anyone considering a UN Volunteer tenure in partnership development to explore opportunities in the Gabonese Republic."



Discussion about potential funding opportunities for the Gabonese Republic at the WHO's office, 19 October 2021 © WHO Gabon

On the photo from left to right: Ms Wilhelmina Van De Ven, Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Libreville; H.E. Catharina Geertuida Maria Tjoelker-Kleve, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Benin; Dr Magaran Bagayoko, WHO Representative in Gabon; Ms Fleur Malease



Photograph during a dinner centred on a prospective UNICEF-UNESCO-WHO joint project funded by the Republic of Korea, at the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea's residence, 16 December 2021 © Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Gabon

On the photo, Mr Noel Marie ZAGRE, UNICEF Representative in Gabon (seated left); H.E. Ryu Chang Soo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Gabon (seated second to left); Mr Eric VOLIBI, UNESCO Representative in Gabon (seated right); Ms Fleur Malease (standing third to left), and other colleagues

Jeannette

Sandrine Mouehla Abega

Title: External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Congo  **Nationality:** Cameroon 

Over the year following my recruitment, the increased responsibility and autonomy I received were clear indicators of my professional growth and the trust my supervisors placed in me. Dr Moeti's belief in the competence of young African women truly empowered me.

"I succeeded in setting up a regional agenda of capacity development on the pillars of resource mobilization from which around 400 WHO staff benefitted, in the regional office and in the clusters. I also wrote a case study on 'The Impact of the WHO-CSOs Initiative on health promotion since 2021'.

Indeed, WHO has been able to triple its collaboration with local associations and non-governmental organizations, as close to the communities as possible, so that they can have access to healthcare in isolated areas, even in emergency situations.

Being an Africa Woman Health Champion helped



me boost self-confidence. Being selected from among hundreds of candidates was a profound affirmation of my capabilities and potential. Dr Moeti's belief in the competence of young African women truly empowered me, setting a powerful precedent for others to follow. Over the year following my recruitment, the increased responsibility and autonomy I received were clear indicators of my professional growth and the trust my supervisors placed in me. This life changing experience reinforced my belief that dedication to skill development can indeed lead to significant professional advancements."



Ms Sandrine Abega with beneficiaries during a sensitization campaign against hypertension in Comoros

Lissungu

Mazula

Title: External Relations Support Officer

Country of assignment: Mozambique



Nationality: Mozambique



Together, we can break barriers and create a world where every African woman can thrive.

“Dear Young African Women,

Believe in your power, your voice, and your potential. You are the future leaders, innovators, and changemakers of our continent. Embrace your identity, nurture your dreams, and never let anyone

define your limits. Together, we can break barriers and create a world where every African woman can thrive. Stay bold, stay brilliant, and always support each other.

With strength and solidarity.”

“WHO in the African region has faced big challenges when it comes to external communications because we do not have enough people in country offices doing external communications and so that has been a real gap for decades. The Africa Women Health Champions initiative is helping fill this gap in country offices which do not have that expertise. Through this programme, we have managed to hire women who are helping countries improve their external communications and the visibility of WHO across the region.”

Ms Saya Oka

Director of Strategic Communications and Public Information Division,
MONUSCO, Democratic Republic of the Congo
Former Regional Communications Manager, WHO AFRO



“Through the AWHC initiative, women from the continent are directly contributing to achieving universal health coverage and responding to health emergencies and the well-being of people in communities, thus contributing to WHO’s triple billion goals to bring better health for everyone, everywhere. I am happy to see that the women health champions are serving with motivation and integrity.”

Dr Mahen Sandrasagren

Former Director, General Management and Coordination, WHO AFRO

Mtisunge

Agatha Khembo

Title: Resource Mobilization, External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: South Sudan 🇸🇸 **Nationality:** Malawi 🇲🇼

To facilitate the Ministry of Health’s attendance and enhance the efficiency of the meetings while ensuring South Sudan’s representation, I developed the Country Office’s WHO regional committee and World Health Assembly Standard Operating Procedures.



“Being able to work in a nation that has been classified as a high-risk post-conflict country with restricted access to healthcare is something I am really proud of. In order to facilitate the Ministry of Health’s attendance and enhance the efficiency of the meetings while ensuring South Sudan’s representation, I developed the Country Office’s WHO regional committee and World Health Assembly Standard Operating Procedures. The aim was to ensure that South Sudan is well-positioned to present its capacity and challenges for better global health governance, negotiation and advocacy, resource mobilization, collaborative decision-making,

and technical expertise and guidance during the meetings. This has really helped to guide the country office to support the MOH better.

The initiative helped to give me confidence in my work, being able to realize that I am good enough to do the work. I developed good communication, writing, advocacy, and negotiation skills. There is power in learning from others, and this initiative will indeed help you to know that you are not alone and you can achieve greater things.”



Ms Mtisunge Khembo coordinating the Health Development Partner Group Meeting at the WHO conference hall in South Sudan, June 2024



Ms Mtisunge Khembo attending the WHO “Walk the Talk” event in Juba, South Sudan, 2023

Nokuthula

Gwebu Lucas

Title: External Relations & Partnerships

Country of assignment: Seychelles 🇸🇪

Nationality: Eswatini 🇸🇼



“For every challenge, there has been a great opportunity to collaborate with others to address them. I joined the World Health Organization (WHO) at a pivotal moment in my life.

“I joined the World Health Organization (WHO) at a pivotal moment in my life, driven by a strong desire to contribute to the global pandemic response. The initial challenges of pioneering new ideas, taking on additional responsibilities, and managing resistance to change are inevitable, even when such changes are ultimately recognized as beneficial for the staff and the organization’s ability to fulfil its mandate. However, for every challenge, there has been a great opportunity to collaborate with others to address them.

The most outstanding achievement has been the

greater visibility of the WHO presence in the country, extending to increased community understanding of the WHO mandate beyond that of COVID-19 and health emergencies, but into all aspects of WHO’s target to champion health and well-being for all. Partners have appreciated having a focal point in WHO dedicated to collaborative actions and have expressed that it brings WHO work closer to the public and the people whom we serve.

No matter where I go, I will remain, proudly WHO.”




Official launch of the initiative at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, 6 March 2020

Nyasha

Mutizwa

Title: Communication Officer

Country of assignment: Rwanda 

Nationality: Zimbabwe 



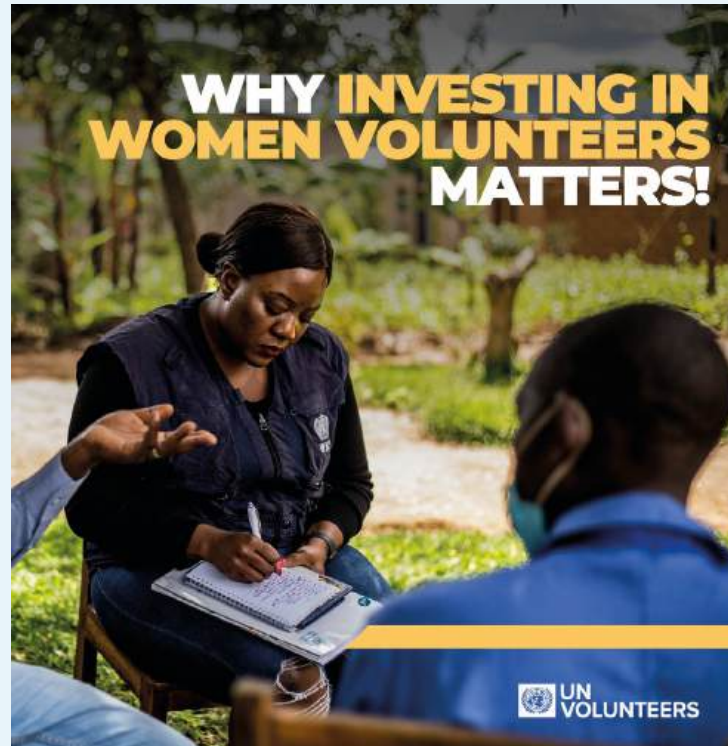
Women can do and be anything.

“Initially, being acknowledged as a seasoned professional because of the ‘volunteer status’ was a challenge but this changed over time.

Meeting Dr Moeti and her acknowledging my work was a proud moment for me. The Africa Women Health

Champions initiative continues to affirm that women can do and be anything.

Interacting with other volunteers on International Volunteer Day was also a major highlight for me.”



Ms Nyasha Mutizwa conducting an interview on Malaria progress in remote parts of Rwanda, 2022



Ms Nyasha Mutizwa (right) photographed with Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa (left)

Pearl

Yuniya Kobuyenje

Title: Emergency Preparedness Project Officer; External Relations and Partnerships

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴 **Nationality:** Uganda 🇺🇬



“The opportunity to contribute to tangible change in health systems is both rewarding and empowering. I’m most proud of facilitating and coordinating the WHO AFRO Regional Committee. This initiative strengthened my resilience and adaptability.

“What I enjoyed the most was working alongside passionate and dedicated women from diverse backgrounds, all united by a shared vision to improve health outcomes in Africa. The opportunity to contribute to tangible change in health systems is both rewarding and empowering.

One of the achievements I’m most proud of during my time with the WHO Africa Women Health Champions initiative was facilitating and coordinating the WHO AFRO Regional Committee. It was an incredibly complex task, involving collaboration with health ministers, policy-makers, and various stakeholders

from across the African continent.

This initiative strengthened my resilience and adaptability. Working in fast-paced, high-stakes environments taught me to remain focused and solution-oriented, even when faced with significant challenges.

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative is an incredible opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and communities across Africa, both directly and indirectly.”

Prudence

Nzapa

Title: External Relations & Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Comoros  **Nationality:** Cameroon 



AWHC will provide you an extra work space to share your challenges and success with your peer from other countries.

“Africa Women Health Champions has enhanced the role of women in the promotion of health activities. I appreciated the team work and support provided to each health champion in case of need by our colleagues and supervisors.

I would like to encourage young women willing to be part of this initiative, do not hesitate to apply. Africa Women Health Champions will provide you an extra work space to share your challenges and success with your peer from other countries.”

Rose-Marie Bouboutou-Poos

Title: Donor Communication Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇷🇵 **Nationality at birth:** Congo 🇷🇵



This experience deepened my understanding of the health landscape in Africa. One moment I am particularly proud of during my time with the AWHC initiative was the creation of a news-style animated video series.

“Engaging with passionate individuals who were dedicated to improving health outcomes for communities was truly inspiring. I honed my skills in donor communication, learning how to effectively convey the importance of health initiatives to various stakeholders. This experience deepened my understanding of the health landscape in Africa and the critical role of advocacy in driving change. It also positioned me to transition into a professional role within the organization.

One moment I am particularly proud of during my time with the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was the creation of a news-style animated video series.

These videos were designed to convey simple,

accessible messages about key health tips and insights, making important information easy to understand and share. One video reached 98.9k views, while another garnered 60k views. Seeing such a wide audience engage with content that can empower individuals to make informed health decisions was incredibly rewarding. This accomplishment highlighted the power of creative communication, reinforced my belief in the importance of reaching diverse audiences with vital health information and demonstrated how innovative approaches can lead to meaningful engagement and positive impact in the community.

Being part of such a transformative initiative reinforced my belief in the power of women as agents of change in their communities.”



Ms Rose-Marie Bouboutou (right) with a WHO colleague during a mission in Bangui, Central African Republic, May 2024



At the External Relations, Partnerships and Governing bodies (EPG) office during the UNV visit in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, 12 June 2024

On the photo from left to right: Ms Rose-Marie Bouboutou; Ms Adjoa Sika Ahawo, Regional Portfolio Specialist, UNV East and Southern Africa; Ms Sandrine Abega, External Relations & Partnerships Officer (Health Champion); Ms Pamela Drameh-Avognon, Coordinator, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, WHO AFRO; Ms Anna Onguri, Programme Assistant, UNV Congo; Ms Rosalia Framil; Ms Prisca Rakotomalala, Partnership Officer, UNV East and Southern Africa; Ms Corinne M'poussa, Human Resources Assistant (Health Champion); Ms Caroline Andressa Parise, External Relations Officer (UN Volunteer); Ms Younhong Min

Santa-Mika

Ndagiyiza

Title: External Relations Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇩

Nationality: Burundi 🇧🇮



The experience led me to become deeply interested in mentorship, and I was fortunate to take on the role of leading the Mwele Malecela Mentorship Programme.

“The Africa Women Health Champions initiative has made a significant difference in the communities we served by fostering greater diversity and encouraging more youth to join the global health workforce bringing in fresh perspectives and innovative ideas.

The experience led me to become deeply interested in mentorship, and I was fortunate to take on the role of leading the Mwele Malecela Mentorship Programme. This programme is dedicated to empowering women working in neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), aligning perfectly with my newfound passion for fostering growth and development among women in our field. What I enjoyed most about being part of the Africa

Women Health Champions initiative was the incredible sense of solidarity among the UN Volunteers, both at the regional and country levels. This initiative created a strong network where we could genuinely support one another in our role.

This initiative offers a unique platform to make a real impact in global health, develop valuable skills, and build meaningful connections. Embrace the challenges as opportunities for growth and be proactive in contributing your ideas and energy. Your dedication is unique and has the possibility to drive significant change and inspire others!”



Ms Santa-Mika NDAYIZIGA during 14th Annual Neglected Tropical Disease NGO (NNN) Conference in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, September 2023

Shirley

Amimo

Title: External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Eswatini 🇸🇼

Nationality: Kenya 🇰🇪



I have learnt a lot about respect and self-control. Most of what I have learnt is about interaction with others aside from gaining professional experience at WHO.

“My day includes monitoring and managing the WHO Eswatini website, documenting success stories for the country office, researching funding opportunities and also proposal development.

I have learnt a lot about respect and self-control. Most of what I have learnt is about interaction with others

aside from gaining professional experience at WHO.

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative has affirmed my belief that you can always win when you set your mind to it.”



International Volunteer Day 2021 celebration at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville with the Resident Coordinator, Chris Mburu, other heads of UN agencies, and all UN Volunteers serving in the Republic of the Congo, including the Health Champions Volunteers, 3 December 2021

Tambudzai

Theresa Mutale

Title: External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Sao Tome & Principe/Congo 🇸🇩🇨🇳 **Nationality:** Zambia 🇿🇲



I have always wanted to contribute to the health of the population to ensure that we achieve universal health for all. I am responsible for communicating with all our partners and showing visibility of our work as WHO.

“My role involves donor relations and resource mobilization. I am responsible for communicating with all our partners and showing visibility of our work as WHO and also looking at gaps, seeing where we need funding, and looking around from our partners to increase investments in health in the country.

I have always wanted to contribute to the health of the population to ensure that we achieve universal health for all. So, for me it is really a proud moment miles

away from home but I feel at home because of the achievements and work I have been able to contribute in Sao Tome and Principe.

I have since moved on from my UNV position and transitioned to a staff position in WHO Solomon Islands, this all thanks to the rich experience and guidance I received as a UN Volunteer.”



Ms Theresa Mutale (standing, second from left) with the WHO Sao Tome and Principe office team after the “Walk the Talk” event, outside the UN house, 25 April 2022



Ms Theresa Mutale (left) with Dr Sara Pereira, a WHO colleague, working on the country cooperative strategy, at the WHO Sao Tome and Principe office, June 2023

Virgo

Edgar Ngarbaroum

Title: External Relations and Partnerships Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴

Nationality: Chad 🇨🇩



Africa Women Health Champions initiative enabled me to grow both personally and professionally. It was my first international work experience, and it opened other doors and professional opportunities for me.

“The initiative has had a great impact, bringing together young professionals committed to making a difference in the community.

I’m very proud to have led the implementation of the Congo Women Health Leaders Programme, which, in collaboration with the Congolese government, technical and financial partners, has strengthened the capacities of women working in the health sector in Congo. Thanks to this programme, they have created an association which to this day continues to implement innovative projects.

Africa Women Health Champions initiative enabled me to grow both personally and professionally. It was my first international work experience, and it opened other doors and professional opportunities for me.

I strongly encourage young women to apply for this programme, which will not only give them great professional experience, but will also enable them to participate in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and improving the living conditions of those we serve.”



Ms Virgo Edgar Ngarbaroum (standing) conducting a training for partners, as a PSEA focal point, in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, 2022

Wendabo

Diane Laurette Kabore

Title: Spécialiste de Partenariats

Country of assignment: Burkina Faso  **Nationality:** Burkina Faso 

I proposed the inclusion of the sections “Spotlight on...” and “Discovering...” in the quarterly newsletter of the country office. Through these sections, the partners’ contributions are highlighted to increase their trust.



“I am proud and grateful for the rich experience I gained through the Africa Women Health Champions initiative. During my mission, I worked with various programmes to enhance the visibility of technical and financial partners in the health field. To this end, I proposed the inclusion of the sections “Spotlight on...” and “Discovering...” in the quarterly newsletter of the country office. Through these sections, the partners’

contributions are highlighted to increase their trust.

Contributing to strengthening resource mobilization capacities in the security and humanitarian context of Burkina Faso is exhilarating considering the opportunity this position offers to interact not only with all the programmes of the country office but also with various external partners.”



Ms Wendabo Laurette (left) at the WHO Burkina Faso warehouse, loading medical kits for the Sahel region, 2023



Operational Architects: Making Things Happen

This cluster is all about unlocking potential—ensuring that WHO’s financial, technical, and human resources are managed with precision and purpose. The goal? To fuel excellence, drive top performance, and deliver world-class services, all while creating an environment where staff are inspired to learn, grow, and thrive. The administration section leads with innovation, shaping smart business strategies that push WHO forward. Recognizing that strong management is the backbone of success, WHO is committed to empowering its people to excel and maximizing every resource to make a real impact on global health.

They keep the organization running smoothly, ensuring every critical mission is supported from the ground up. From administration to HR, these behind-the-scenes champions manage everything from recruiting top talent to keeping teams organized and thriving, some of them even actively contribute to recruiting the other Health Champions. They handle procurement and supply with precision, making sure essential resources reach where they are in high importance, often in some of the world’s toughest environments. With sharp attention to reporting and executive assistance, they keep leadership well-informed and ready to act. These dedicated volunteers are not just desk seating at a desk—they are powering the engine that drives life-saving health initiatives forward, ensuring that every detail is in place to make a global impact.



Constance

Djeneba Kouame Bi

Title: Procurement Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇩 **Nationality:** Cote d'Ivoire 🇨🇮

I facilitated the formal signing of long-term agreements (LCA) with all six suppliers for Comoros, which is the first SIDS country to achieve this goal.

“My active role in the SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) Group Pharmaceutical Procurement initiative is to sign contracts with six suppliers. I facilitated the formal signing of long-term agreements with all six suppliers for Comoros, which is the first SIDS country to achieve this goal.

The initiative was a transformative era that underscored the crucial importance of women leaders in global



health initiatives. It established new standards for what women in leadership can accomplish, regardless of the background or the atypical life a woman from this continent may have experienced. WHO has not only opened doors for many women like me but has also shown us that our contributions are invaluable.”



Ms Constance Kouame-Bi (left) photographed with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General (right)



Mr Koffi Agblewonu, Head of the Contracting and Procurement Service unit, WHO AFRO (left) and Ms Constance Kouame-Bi (right) during the 1st cohort of Vendor's Trainings, at the WHO Africa Regional Office in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, September 2022



Ms Constance Kouame-Bi (fourth to right) and other colleagues from the WHO procurement unit during the AFRO Regional Procurement Workshop for the 47 Countries Procurement accord, in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, April 2024

Corinne

Débora M'poussa Foumanet

Title: Human Resources Assistant

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇩 **Nationality:** Congo 🇨🇩

My greatest accomplishment is contributing to the recruitment of nearly 120 African women with WHO. Through the challenges I encountered during this initiative, I learned better organization and self-management in my role.

“Being a volunteer is a passion for me and I strongly encourage those who want to join this programme not to hesitate because it is very beneficial for the career development of young talents. The greatest accomplishment I have made is contributing to the recruitment of nearly 120 African women with WHO. What I appreciated most about this initiative is sharing experiences with other countries regarding Human



Resources management.

Through the challenges I encountered during this initiative, I learned better organization and self-management in my role. This initiative has eventually made a difference in my community as it has allowed us to showcase our talents and experiences.”



From left to right: Dr Egide Rwamatwara, Regional Human Resources and Talent Manager, WHO AFRO; Ms Corinne M’poussa and Ms Doris Guinhouya, both Health Champions

Malika

Amadou Sabi

Title: Program Reporting Assistant

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇬

Nationality: Niger 🇳🇪

“AWHC made a great difference in the communities, by bringing them together for collaboration. I supported countries to build strong health systems by producing guidelines on preventing and treating health conditions.



“Africa faces a double burden of infectious and chronic diseases. While infectious diseases still account for most deaths in the African region, deaths from chronic diseases are on the rise. WHO is supporting countries to adapt to the evolving health landscape by pushing for improved routine childhood vaccination and other actions aimed at curbing the spread of infectious diseases, while also promoting care for chronic conditions along with healthy eating, physical exercise and regular health checks.

Africa Women Health Champions made a great difference in the communities, by bringing them

together for collaboration. A good example of this is Illara, a Kenyan healthtech startup focused on building a network of tech-enabled primary healthcare clinics (PHCs) across Africa – delivering care to underserved populations.

I supported countries to build strong health systems by producing guidelines on preventing and treating health conditions, championing universal health coverage and training health professionals.”



Ms Malika Amadou Sabi (sixth to left) during a training of French-speaking consultants to support the development of national policies and strategies relating to the quality of healthcare, at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, September 2023



Ms Malika Amadou Sabi (standing) with colleagues during a meeting between WHO and the African Development Bank Group in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

Mubaraq Ibiteye Yusuf

Title: Project Manager

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇩 **Nationality:** Ghana 🇬🇭

The most rewarding aspect of being part of the AWHC initiative was the opportunity to connect with an incredible network of women from diverse cultures and professional fields. These interactions not only broadened my horizons but also led to friendships that will last a lifetime.



“It was a humbling experience to have my capabilities recognized by my superiors and to make a meaningful impact on the cluster goals.

The experience played a pivotal role in equipping me with the confidence and skills needed to successfully pass my Project Management Professional (PMP) exam, along with other relevant certifications that have advanced my career.

The initiative introduced a fresh perspective to processes that were critical for improving health

outcomes. By fostering collaboration and innovative thinking, we were able to bring new energy to longstanding issues and contribute to tangible improvements in the communities we served.

I would encourage anyone interested in joining to fully embrace the role of a volunteer. Engage proactively in various tasks, as each experience offers valuable learning. No effort is wasted—every contribution builds your skill set and enhances your ability to make a difference.”



Ms Mubaraq Ibitye Yusuf (left) photographed with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General (right)



Ms Mubaraq Ibitye Yusuf participating at the WHO “Walk the Talk” event in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, 25 August 2024

Suzanne Harouna Labo

Title: Procurement Officer

Country of assignment: Congo  **Nationality:** Niger 

I am proud of the achievement of pooled procurement SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) to harmonize the requirements for the targeted formulations and to negotiate the prices of medical products and equipment.

“I am not a medical doctor, but WHO gives me the opportunity to contribute to the achievement of its mandate because I strongly believe that health promotion without supply of quality goods and services, is limited. I am proud of the achievement of pooled procurement SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) to harmonize the requirements for the targeted formulations and to negotiate the prices of medical products and equipment. This initiative increased efficiency of the members states’ procurement

processes, facilitating the economy of scale.

While joining the UNV family, I was a PhD doctorate and pregnant. The sharing experience of women leaders through webinars challenged me to not give up, the road may be difficult, but it is possible. I am aware of my contribution of promoting health and serving vulnerable populations. These, make me proud to be a UN Volunteer, a health champion.”



Wanangwa

Rachel Mganga

Title: Project Management Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴

Nationality: Malawi 🇲🇼

This role significantly enhanced my project management skills, particularly in coordinating large-scale initiatives and managing resources in complex humanitarian settings.

“One of the most fulfilling aspects of being part of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was the opportunity to advocate for and support young women’s inclusion within the WHO workforce.

Navigating the complexities of resource mobilization in challenging humanitarian contexts was a challenge I had to face, coordinating across 47 countries with varying socio-economic and political climates required adaptability and strong communication skills. I overcame this by building strong partnerships, utilizing available resources efficiently, and aligning our goals with local contexts to maximize impact.



This role significantly enhanced my project management skills, particularly in coordinating large-scale initiatives and managing resources in complex humanitarian settings. I also developed strong strategic oversight and technical support capabilities in programme and grant management, which have been valuable to my professional growth.

The initiative has had a transformative impact on the communities we served by advancing gender parity in the health workforce, which in turn has improved access to health services, particularly for women and young people.”



Health Impact Agents: Guiding the Path to Better Care

WHO takes immense pride in its dedicated public health experts—true Health Champions who are driven by results and committed to making a difference. These agile professionals work across country, regional, and global levels, tackling the toughest health challenges with evidence-based strategies to achieve the highest standards of care.

From nutrition and food safety to maternal health and disease prevention, these champions are driving life-changing health initiatives worldwide. Whether battling tuberculosis, tackling tobacco use, or ensuring clean water and sanitation, their efforts ripple across the globe, transforming lives and shaping a healthier tomorrow. Some volunteers have had the privilege to offer advice and technical support to nations, engaging directly with policymakers to influence the well-being of entire communities. They ensure that even the most vulnerable in remote areas are cared for, promoting healthy diets, physical activity, and better health habits. Others have empowered health workers and monitored service quality, laying the foundation for stronger, more resilient health systems. These champions are not just making a difference—they are building the future of health, one community at a time.




Achai

Deng Biong Mijak

Title: Integrated Service Delivery Associate

Country of assignment: South Sudan 

Nationality: South Sudan 

Being a woman in health was a source of inspiration for the women of the community. This initiative is life-changing in all spheres of life.



“As a woman in health, I experienced a lot of gender bias from men in the community. On the other hand, being a woman in health was a source of inspiration for the women of the community. I saw this as an opportunity to include more women in forums, discourses and activities being implemented by the agency.

I’m proud that the Africa Women Health Champions initiative enabled me to empower communities, especially women, to prioritize, demand for, and take ownership of preventive health services. I enjoyed engaging directly with communities to understand

their socio-economic determinants of health and in turn used that information to create change in health service delivery.

Working with vulnerable populations with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in a country with a huge gender disparity enhanced my leadership and communication skills. This was through continuous interactions and collaborations with different stakeholders in the communities, government and healthcare.”



Ms Achai Mijak (left) conducting a clinical examination of a child with acute flaccid paralysis during an AFP Cluster Investigation as the child's father looked on, in Rumbek East, Lakes state, South Sudan, 15 September 2023



Ms Achai Mijak (in the boat) with colleagues from WHO and the Ministry of Health, ensuring that the measles and oral polio vaccines reached the most remote and hard-to-reach islands on the Nile during the integrated measles and OPV reactive vaccination campaign in Awerial county, Lakes state, South Sudan, October 2023

Ame Dioka

Title: Program Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴 **Nationality:** Botswana 🇸🇸

Seeing the tangible impact of our efforts—like increased access to maternal health services and South Africa implementing the National Health Insurance Bill—was incredibly rewarding. I am particularly proud of my role in the planning and coordination of the Africa Health Workforce Investment Forum.



“I truly enjoyed being part of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative because it allowed me to work at the intersection of my passion for women’s health and my commitment to universal health coverage. Seeing the tangible impact of our efforts—like increased access to maternal health services and South Africa implementing the National Health Insurance Bill—was incredibly rewarding.

This experience not only deepened my understanding of health systems but also inspired me to continue advocating for policies that support women’s health across Africa.

I am particularly proud of my role in the planning and coordination of the Africa Health Workforce Investment Forum. This event was crucial for bringing together key stakeholders to discuss strategies for strengthening the health workforce across the continent and launching the Health Workforce Investment Charter. This achievement reinforced my belief in the power of collaboration and dialogue in addressing health challenges.

I look forward to seeing how the initiative evolves and continues to make a difference in the lives of women.”



Ms Ame Dioka (second to left), photographed with colleagues from the WHO Africa Regional Office and the WHO Namibia Country Office during the Africa Health Workforce Investment Forum, in Windhoek, Namibia, May 2024

Bibata

Doulla Biga Tahirou

Title: Chargé(e) du Programme Santé Infantile, Adolescent et Jeune

Country of assignment: Niger  **Nationality:** Niger 

I have done a lot to raise awareness and help teenagers and young people about their sexual and reproductive health rights and provide psychological support. I really appreciated our courage, our bravery and our determination to meet the multiple challenges facing our communities.

“This initiative allowed me to strengthen my skills and to adapt to all types of situations, particularly working under pressure and in any context.

I have done a lot to raise awareness and help teenagers and young people about their sexual and reproductive health rights and provide psychological support because often times they feel lost without any reference points, as they cannot confide in their parents because sexuality is a taboo subject in our societies.

I really appreciated our courage, our bravery and our



determination to meet the multiple challenges facing our communities, but also our potential to transform the world through our actions, particularly in our African societies where women face many challenges.

I can tell all women to never underestimate themselves, we are capable of achieving everything we desire, and our inner strength is unshakeable. This initiative is a great opportunity to discover yourself and know your strength so try your luck as many times as you need and NEVER GIVE UP.”



Ms Bibata Tahirou leading a health education session for women who came for prenatal care at the Urban Nursing Health Centre of Matameye in the Zinder region, Niger, 2022



Ms Bibata Tahirou correcting a midwife on how to perform postnatal care during one of the supervision missions on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health in the Zinder region, Niger, 2022

Caroline

Anyango Olyet

Title: Case Management Nurse

Country of assignment: Uganda 🇸🇩 **Nationality:** Uganda 🇸🇩



Seeing smiles on the faces of the Ebola and COVID-19 survivors was one of the most rewarding things in this experience.

“The Africa Women Health Champions initiative has made a significant difference in the communities both directly and indirectly. Empowering young women to stand up to take up positions in leadership has made a drastic impact in the lives of many young women.

My favourite aspect has been the hands-on work in executing nursing care, and active participation in promotion, prevention and control of health emergencies. Professionally, the initiative has

sharpened my skills in case management, particularly in dealing with complex health emergencies like Ebola and COVID-19. Seeing smiles on the faces of the Ebola and COVID-19 survivors was one of the most rewarding things in this experience. I’ve gained valuable experience in training healthcare workers, managing outbreaks, and implementing public health interventions, which has broadened my understanding of healthcare systems and crisis management. It also motivated me to upgrade my education.”



Ms Caroline Olyet Anyango donning in protection during the second wave of COVID-19 at the Mulago National Referral Hospital CTU in Uganda, June 2021

Chidinma

Opoko

Title: Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Risk Factors Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴 **Nationality:** Nigeria 🇳🇮

I provide technical support to the 47 countries in the African region to tackle the issues of alcohol availability, acceptability, and affordability and I have received great feedback and support from my colleagues, my team and my director.

“As a medical doctor and a public health physician, my position as a female UN Volunteer and public health professional has been a unique experience. I have been able to gain hands-on experience, while connecting with leaders and peers, both in and out of the health field. It is very rewarding to see the impact of my service, both in the country and in the community.

In my current role as Technical Officer, Tobacco and Other NCD risk factors and focal person for the reduction of the harmful use of alcohol in the African region, I provide technical support to the 47 countries in the African region to tackle the issues of alcohol availability, acceptability, and affordability. This



includes the raising of awareness and involving civil society, academia, and other stakeholders to inform the policy development process, through workshops, meetings, podcasts and webinars, advising and supporting Member States on the development and implementation of policy, legislations and regulations to control the production and marketing of alcohol.

I have received great feedback and support from my colleagues, my team and my director. The WHO Africa Women Health Champions initiative is a great one and has been of immense benefit to me.”



Ms Chidinma Opoko sharing her journey and experience as a Health Champion during the International Volunteer Day 2022 celebration at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

Christine

Akasing Nkerifac

Title: Technical Officer - Environmental Health Promotion/Chemical Safety

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇬

Nationality: Cameroon 🇨🇲

I have participated in training the health workforce on air pollution and clean energy access for health in Rwanda and attended online the commemoration of the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week 2023 in Angola.

“Air pollution is a major public health concern and affects everyone. My work entailed communicating health risks from air pollution exposure and the long lasting damaging health effects of lead particularly to children, and the progress previously made on lead poisoning prevention .

In an effort to drive actions towards a Lead Free Future, I have participated in training the health workforce

on air pollution and clean energy access for health in Rwanda and attended online the commemoration of the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week 2023 in Angola.

There is still need for improved multisectoral approach to lead management and better coordination amongst the concerned sectors as well as improved awareness on lead as a major chemical of public health concern.”



Elodia

Cheutou Siewoue

Title: Technical Health-Program Officer

Country of assignment: Congo  **Nationality:** Cameroon 

“One of my biggest achievements was supporting the drafting of the the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation (STBF) proposal extension submitted for donor’s approval. The proposal was approved and funded USD 45,324,000 until September 2025.

“I feel like a champion. This initiative is definitely the best thing that has happened in my professional life. I hope it lasts forever to give the chance to more women across Africa to build their skills and contribute to the world’s engagement on health-related topics. I have learned a lot about WHO, public health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, maternal and newborn health, nutrition and a quite new and very interesting topic: healthy ageing. I got lots of certificates via the WHO iLearn platform.

One of my biggest achievements was supporting the drafting of the the Susan Thompson Buffett



Foundation (STBF) proposal extension submitted for donor’s approval. This included the development of content, supporting the coordination of the inter-cluster writing team, and held one-on-one calls with 18 targeted countries to discuss and review their work plan, and compiled all inputs for submission to the donor. The proposal was approved and funded USD 45,324,000 until September 2025.

I am proud to see more women are involved in finding solutions to health-related topics; this is very important especially because women are front liners when it comes to providing health to families.”

Esther

Njinembo

Title: Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Risk Factors Officer

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇬 **Nationality:** Cameroon 🇨🇲

I have supported 4 countries to adopt and implement policies promoting healthy diets. I have supported 5 countries to raise awareness of the benefits of healthy diets and physical activity.



“I serve as the regional focal point for healthy diets and physical activity promotion, supporting governments in the 47 Member States of the WHO African region to put in place regulatory policy measures to promote healthy nutrition and to provide enabling environments for people to make healthy choices (SDG 2, 3). I have supported 4 countries to adopt and implement policies promoting healthy diets. I have supported 5 countries to raise awareness of the benefits of healthy diets and physical activity. I have built the capacity of 30 community volunteers and 15 community health workers in 2 countries to promote healthy diets and physical activity which have led to

improved nutrition and improved health outcomes among the population including women.

I feel very proud being a woman health champion in such a time and being able to support governments in Africa to adopt policies that take into consideration women is deeply fulfilling. I am able to engage in policy dialogue with government and policymakers to advocate for policies which will promote an enabling environment for people to make healthy choices, especially in the area of healthy diet, consumption and the promotion of physical activity.”



Dr Esther Njinembo (centre) participating in the WHO awareness campaign on drowning, sensitizing the local community in the suburbs of Djoue, Brazzaville, during the World Drowning Prevention Day celebration, 25 July 2022



Dr Esther Njinembo during the International Volunteer Day 2022 and 2nd anniversary of the WHC initiative celebration, at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, 3 December 2022

Evalyne

Chagina

Title: Public Health Analyst

Country of assignment: Kenya 

Nationality: Kenya 

I am a nurse by training. The impact has been immense in terms of seeing the increased number of women attending antenatal care or receiving family planning, especially in hard-to-reach areas.



“I work across the health system strengthening cluster and the family and reproductive health, specifically the Reproductive, Maternal and Neonatal Child Health programme. I am a nurse by training. The impact has been immense in terms of seeing the increased number of women attending antenatal care or receiving family planning, especially in hard-to-reach areas and in complex counties like Wajir, Mandera, and Lamu, where their geographical setup is quite different.

I believe volunteering connects you to your purpose in life. It has changed the way I look at challenges and communities. Sometimes, we forget about marginalized communities, forget about people in hard-to-reach areas, and volunteering has opened up a world of understanding how to reach these communities, how to bring in inclusivity, how to ensure that all genders are involved, and how to be equal across all ages, not forgetting adolescents and young people at work.”



Dr Egede Rwamatwara, Regional Human Resources and Talent Manager, WHO AFRO, speaks during the International Volunteer Day 2022 celebration at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

Maria

Gorret Nantaayi

Title: Case Management Nurse

Country of assignment: Uganda 🇺🇬 **Nationality:** Uganda 🇺🇬

I loved taking part in community engagement meetings which were aimed at integrating survivors back into their communities in Bojala area in Jinja without being stigmatized.



“As a Case Management Nurse attached to WHO Uganda, I could say I received maximum support from my supervisors. My immediate supervisor was Dr Senyonga who was at Entebbe Emergency and Trauma Unit (ETU) and Dr Bodo Boromin who was the case management pillar at WHO country office in Uganda. They offered full support whenever we needed help, they were just a phone call away.

We received all the required supplies and everything we needed to have a smooth volunteering experience. At some point, the clinic even donated to the nearby government facility. I also had a very good working

relationship with my team members. We were 4 volunteers from WHO.

I loved taking part in community engagement meetings which were aimed at integrating survivors back into their communities in Bojala area in Jinja without being stigmatized. I thank the WHO country office for the opportunity they gave me to volunteer with them. It was a very wonderful experience for me, and I would take up that opportunity anytime it calls. Thank you.”



Ms Maria Gorret participating in IPC training at the Entebbe treatment unit, Dec 2022



Ms Maria Gorret (right) taking blood pressure for one of the Ebola survivors in the survivors' clinic at the Entebbe treatment unit, March 2023

Muziya

Chika

Title: Quality of Care & Service Delivery Technical Officer

Country of assignment: Zambia 🇿🇲

Nationality: Zambia 🇿🇲

I have acquired skills in data analytics, strategy development, project management and evaluation and facilitated the development of the National Quality of Care and Patient Safety Strategy which will soon be launched.

“This initiative has broadened my knowledge in my scope of practice especially in the WHO health systems building blocks as I have been working in the health systems strengthening unit at the WHO country office. I have acquired skills in data analytics, strategy development, project management and evaluation, and facilitated the development of the National Quality of Care and Patient Safety Strategy which will soon be launched.

Coordinating various assessments to ensure data



availability for informed decision making was one of my favorite aspects of the initiative. I coordinated the aspect of continuity of essential health services during the cholera outbreak in the country.

I would like to encourage women not to miss an opportunity in joining this initiative as it presents a platform to bring out innovative ideas to better serve the community and contribute positively to the achievement of good health outcomes.”



Comment from Muziya Chika's Supervisor

“Muziya’s contribution was really great, although she was assigned here as a UN Volunteer to work on the service delivery aspect and quality of care aspects of the overall health systems, her engagement was throughout all health system-related activities. It includes governance, healthcare financing, health workforce, drugs, medicines and technologies.”

Prudentienne

Musabyimana

Title: Technical Officer – Violence & Injuries Prevention

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴 **Nationality:** Rwanda 🇷🇼

I decided to even leave behind my family and the country, to see how I can even expand my experience to serve vulnerable people, including women and children.

“I have been lucky to work with different organizations, where I have shared responsibility with some volunteers who were very committed to serving people. And then, I thought maybe I could work outside of my country, that’s why I decided to even leave behind my family and the country, to see how I can even expand

my experience to serve vulnerable people, including women and children who are suffering from different problems.”

Prudentienne won the Gender Prize during the 2021 International Volunteer Day.





Group photo from the International Volunteer Day 2022 celebration at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

Tendai Makamure

Title: Infection Prevention and Control Specialist

Country of assignment: Kenya 🇰🇪 **Nationality:** Zimbabwe 🇿🇼



One of my proudest achievements as an IPC specialist was supporting 12 of these countries in developing and strengthening their national IPC strategies.

“I had the chance to be at the forefront of safeguarding public health during critical moments as an Infection Prevention specialist in the emergency preparedness and response efforts across 20 countries in East and Southern Africa.

One of my proudest achievements as an IPC specialist was supporting 12 of these countries in developing and strengthening their national IPC strategies. This initiative not only helped build sustainable infection prevention programmes but also resulted in measurable progress in core capacities under the International Health Regulations (2005), as reflected in improved Joint External Evaluation (JEE) scores for IPC.

Witnessing the resilience of healthcare workers and their commitment to protecting their communities was incredibly inspiring and fulfilling. The initiative provided me with hands-on experience in responding to outbreaks such as COVID-19, Cholera, Mpox, and Ebola, allowing me to develop a deeper understanding of emergency preparedness and response. The Africa Women Health Champions experience also fostered resilience and a strong sense of responsibility to drive meaningful change in public health, which I carry forward into future projects.”

Zita

Monjoa Monono

Title: WASH Expert

Country of assignment: Congo 🇨🇴

Nationality: Cameroon 🇨🇲



I was able to foster collaboration between partners working in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector in countries within the implementation of the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Drinking water and Sanitation (GLAAS)

“The Africa Women Health Champions initiative gave me a platform to serve humanity in another dimension. I had the opportunity to speak and be heard. I was able to foster collaboration between partners working in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector in countries within the implementation of the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Drinking water and Sanitation (GLAAS) and wrote an article on the effectiveness of external funds absorption to overcome identified gaps in the WASH sector in Africa.

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative gave me room to explore and learn new skills such as data analysis which I currently use in collecting and collating data in the region on WASH monitoring.

I believe this initiative has contributed immensely to communities through the proactive service rendered to communities.”

03

Going
Forward



Phase one of the Africa Women Health Champions initiative was a resounding success. In continued cooperation, WHO and UNV launched phase two of the initiative in 2023 during its third anniversary on International Women's Day celebration in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.

The Africa Women Health Champions initiative targets to recruit more young women to reinforce health career development opportunities by expanding volunteer mobilization to all 47 WHO countries within Africa. It aims to include younger talents and people with disabilities, especially from under-represented regions and countries in Africa such as Portuguese-speaking countries.

The Africa Women Health Champions will be placed as international and national UN Volunteers in the WHO Africa Regional Office and at WHO country offices. Together, WHO and UNV intend to collaborate on a career development programme on WHO's iLearn portal and an annual work plan. These efforts are aimed at ensuring support for technical training and mentorship for health champions at the country and regional level.

I would like to reiterate the immense value of the UN Volunteers to our work in WHO, to sustainable development in the Region, and to assure you of our continued commitment in working with UN volunteers to save lives, to promote health and to serve the vulnerable to contribute to development on the continent.

Dr Matshidiso Moeti

WHO Regional Director for Africa



Change is about small actions that can have a real impact and create a better world. This partnership is one of these actions. There is still much to do to achieve better health for everyone on the continent. WHO and UNV are pursuing the second phase of the initiative with more scale and new ambition, with a focus on diversity, with outreach to under-represented countries, and with commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Mr Toily Kurbanov

UNV Executive Coordinator

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Acknowledgement

As we conclude this report, we stand in awe of these incredible Health Champions whose stories have shaped this journey: stories that are not just testimonies, but sparks of transformation. Along with many others who could not be featured in this edition, they are the women reimagining Africa's healthcare, defying barriers, and crafting solutions that speak to the heart of the communities, becoming the next generation of health leaders.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Dr Egide Rwamatwara, Mrs Nene Bah, Dr Joseph Cabore, Ms Sika Ahawo Somda, Mr Pacifique Essereke, Ms Lilian Tahiru, Ms Corinne M'poussa, Ms Yawa Doris Guinhouya, Ms Ketsia Saya, Ms Anna Onguri, and Ms Prisca Rakotomalala, who have developed and fostered this initiative since 2020. Your efforts, often performed without fanfare, are a testament to your fierce determination and boundless creativity.

We also give a huge shoutout to the marvellous WHO and UNV Communications team who supported behind the scenes to bring this project to life. A massive thank you to Mr Bakano Otto, Ms Kadijah Diallo, Mr Kevin Ochieng, Mr Edwin Odhiambo, Ms Aminah Mbacke, Mr Joseph Basse, and Mr Moustapha Dia. Each of you brought your unique skills, energy, and passion to the table, and this report wouldn't have been possible without you.

We're beyond grateful to the organizations, mentors, and partners who have walked beside these women, offering guidance, amplifying their voices, and empowering them to keep pushing forward.

Finally, we thank the readers, advocates, and changemakers who are committed to lifting up the voices and stories of these extraordinary women. As you engage with their journeys, may you be inspired to take action and contribute to a future where every young African woman has the opportunity to lead, innovate, and thrive in the health sector and beyond.

This catalogue is not just a collection of stories, it's a celebration of innovation, resilience, and the unbreakable spirit of young African women who are rooting for a better tomorrow. May their stories continue to inspire, ignite, and catalyse changes for Africa's development.

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AFRICA WOMEN
HEALTH CHAMPIONS

