



In fact....

The Online Volunteering service – onlinevolunteering.org

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is committed to supporting global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), aimed at ending extreme poverty and addressing other development challenges through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers.

To meet this aim, the UNV programme has, in recent years, launched several initiatives to provide expanded opportunities for a wider group of citizens to volunteer for development. In addition to placing some 8,000 UNV Volunteers every year to support governments, UN agencies, communities and organizations in developing countries and economies in transition, the UNV programme also offers online volunteer opportunities through its Online Volunteering (OV) service.

Established in March 2000, the OV service connects development organizations and volunteers over the Internet and supports their effective online collaboration. By so doing, this service gives development organizations access to a broader pool of knowledge and resources to enhance their capacities, while it offers individuals around the world additional opportunities to volunteer for development and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This free, demand-driven service enables non-profit development organizations (CSOs, government institutions, academic institutions, United Nations organizations) to benefit from the support of individuals who:

- Provide technical expertise (e.g. advice on waste disposal, contract drafting)
- Support the management of projects and resources (e.g. project planning, volunteers management)
- Contribute to managing knowledge (e.g. data collection, database development)
- Facilitate communication and networking (e.g. newsletter production and translation, moderation of online discussion groups)

Online volunteers also benefit from this exchange. It is a perfect channel for people who want to volunteer but cannot take time off their work or studies, or be away from their families or other commitments. Not only do they learn about other cultures and countries, they also gain knowledge about the many issues faced by those living in the developing world. By volunteering online, they can exercise skills they have learned at school or in the workplace, or take on roles and assume responsibilities not always provided by their professional or academic life. It may also enable an expatriate to reconnect with and provide help to his or her country.

So far, more than 58,000 people have registered on the Online Volunteering website. Almost 900 development-focused organizations have posted some 12,500 online volunteering opportunities on the OV service; around 9,000 online volunteers from 169 countries were engaged; 60 percent are women. Reaffirming UNV's commitment to promoting South-South cooperation, approximately 60 percent of the organizations participating in the Online Volunteering service are based in the developing world, as are 40 percent of the online volunteers.



“Online volunteering helps to harness the wealth of willingness, resources and commitment that exists in the volunteer world. So often, people want to help, but simply don’t know how to get involved. The OV service provides a way that is both simple and accessible for such people and, yet, changes lives in very practical ways.”

An NGO based in Hong Kong

“Online Volunteering offered me a way of learning how to support social and economic development while contributing to organizations in many different ways. I would like other people to be able to learn about [the service] and get involved in it.”

Online volunteer in Argentina with a women’s NGO in India

“Because of my disability, I can’t go to [the field] and volunteer. Online volunteering has allowed me to be part of the development process, to be part of something I didn’t think I would be able to do.”

Online Volunteer in Canada

To find out how you can start making a difference online, please visit: <http://www.onlinevolunteering.org>