



## In FACT:

### UN Volunteers in disaster preparedness and recovery

For many years, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has supported relief efforts in the aftermath of disasters such as Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998, the cyclones in India's Orissa state in 1999, the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, and most recently, the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan.

Scores of UN Volunteers have been involved in helping coordinate relief efforts, share information between governments and relief agencies, mobilize resources and rehabilitate devastated communities. Their rapid deployment, skills and prior experience in disaster response deliver immediate assistance to communities overwhelmed by the destruction at hand, bringing hope to thousands. Their presence also serves as a communication channel from the community to national governments, donors, international aid organizations and UNV's network within the UN – a crucial exchange to tailor assistance to local needs and conditions.

Based in disaster prone regions, UN Volunteers, often serving in their own communities, work with residents, local and regional officials and representatives from NGOs to empower the population to be better equipped to respond in the wake of disaster. They help develop community-based disaster mitigation programmes that reflect the local environment. Thousands of villages across several countries are now ready to face and survive disasters.

In promoting South-South cooperation for disaster risk management (DRM), experienced UN Volunteers from India were assigned to Sri Lanka in 2003 and to countries following the tsunami disaster of 2004. In the latter case, less than 24 hours after the tidal waves hit, they were redeployed to assist UN country office teams in many of the affected countries to identify relief and recovery priorities. In the weeks that followed, additional UN Volunteers arrived to assist in coordinating the massive relief effort. In Indonesia, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka, UN Volunteers helped set up and manage information networks and databases that play a vital role in the distribution of aid to victims. UNV continues to support UNDP, other UN agencies and national governments in the immediate and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Beyond response, UNV is active in promoting the vital contributions of volunteers and voluntary action – at local, national and international levels – in disaster mitigation. Through its global outreach, UNV advocates the importance of including trained and organized volunteers in any disaster response. It also works towards the advancement of national policies and concrete actions to strengthen support for, and recognition of, volunteers in disaster preparedness and response activities. In Pakistan, the government has recently established a National Volunteer Movement to mobilize Pakistani citizens to support relief and rehabilitation activities in quake-hit areas. UNDP and UNV collaborated with the government in the creation of the volunteer movement that, once the emergency phase is completed, is expected to focus on disaster preparedness. In addition, UNV plans to mobilize Pakistani UN Volunteers to help the volunteer movement in the initial start-up phase.



*Anticipating evacuation routes: A UNV from India (left) works with community members in Sri Lanka to prepare them for the aftermath of disaster.  
Photo: UNV Sri Lanka*

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UN Volunteers is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



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2/2

*UNV is the UN organization that supports the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers. To this end, UNV provides the opportunity each year for more than 7,000 women and men - 75 per cent coming from developing countries - to support peace, relief and development initiatives in some 140 countries. In addition, it engages thousands of other individuals in the work of the United Nations through [www.onlinevolunteering.org](http://www.onlinevolunteering.org), and manages the [WorldVolunteerWeb.org](http://WorldVolunteerWeb.org), a portal that serves as a knowledge resource base on volunteerism worldwide.*

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