



UN

Volunteers

In FACT: International Volunteer Day, 5 December

International Volunteer Day (IVD) provides an opportunity for volunteer-involving organizations and individual volunteers to work together on projects and campaigns promoting their contributions to economic and social development at local, national and international levels. By merging UN support with a grassroots mandate, IVD is a unique opportunity for government agencies, non-profit organizations, community groups, the private sector and volunteer-involving organizations to work together to attain common goals.

International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Developmentⁱ was established by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 40/212 on 17 December 1985. Since then, governments, the UN system and civil society organizations have successfully joined volunteers around the world to celebrate the Day on 5 December.

IVD and the International Year of Volunteers 2001: Building momentum

Following a proposal of the Government of Japan to the United Nations Secretary General, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in its 52nd session on 20 November 1997. Resolution 52/17 was co-sponsored by 123 countries. The UN Volunteers (UNV) programmeⁱⁱ was designated as focal point for the Year within the UN system.

The idea for an International Year of Volunteersⁱⁱⁱ at the beginning of the 21st Century was to stimulate national and international policy debate around, and to advocate for, the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of voluntary action. The year led to a much better appreciation of the power of volunteerism in its many forms and the ways to support it.

One specific result was a substantial strengthening of IVD. While in 1996, 69 countries observed IVD, by 2003, more than 125 developing and industrialized countries marked the Day. As well as highlighting and recognizing volunteer action, many countries, 76 in 2003, strategically used IVD to focus on volunteering for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): a set of time-bound targets to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women.

The organization of IVD is generally the result of a partnership between the UN system, governments, civil society organizations including national and/or international volunteer involving organizations, and committed individuals. Representatives from the media or academia, foundations, the private sector, faith groups, and sports and recreational organizations are also often involved.

Promoting and getting involved in International Volunteer Day

In response to calls by volunteer groups and government representatives around the world, the United Nations General Assembly in November 2002 adopted Resolution A/RES/57/106 that invited UNV to develop a global Internet volunteer resource to take forward gains made during IYV through expanded networking and knowledge management. The UNV programme responded by launching the WorldVolunteerWeb portal, which hosts a wide range of IVD-related tools and resources that can be downloaded.^{iv}

The "Plan your event" section on the WorldVolunteerWeb highlights best practices and lessons from previous IVDs. Starting with advice on forming or joining IVD planning committees, it outlines steps to develop a national theme, plan activities, network internationally, produce promotional materials, develop a media strategy and, finally, document outcomes.

The section also points to other useful resources that are available on the WorldVolunteerWeb: ideas on what to do for the Day, advice on how to integrate the MDGs, information on promotional tools and how they can be obtained, and guidance on downloading and modifying the IVD emblem and poster.

One key activity to further expand the outreach of IVD is strategic networking. The WorldVolunteerWeb provides a directory of national focal points connecting individual volunteers to a country's IVD committee where one exists.



**International
Volunteer Day**

Get involved

www.worldvolunteerweb.org/ivd

United Nations Volunteers

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



Through this, volunteers can learn what organizers currently plan for the Day or become involved by joining the team. In countries where an IVD committee has yet to be established, interested organizations can use the directory to liaise amongst themselves, network and form a committee.

The WorldVolunteerWeb also provides an opportunity to share resources with a global network of volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations. As the Day gets closer, an increasing number of users check the web portal for information. Most IVD committees and other involved stakeholders start sending their IVD planning, news and event details months ahead of 5 December.

After IVD, committees are encouraged to submit a summary report on events and activities held. These reports enable organizers, volunteers and visitors to the WorldVolunteerWeb to capture the wealth of activities undertaken around the Day. This information exchange helps to promote the potential of IVD in furthering the value of volunteering for development.

We encourage you to participate in this year's IVD to make the occasion an even greater success!

Based in Bonn, Germany, UNV is the UN organization that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers. As a part of its activities, each year, UNV provides the opportunity for over 7000 skilled and experienced professionals, 70 percent coming from developing countries, to support peace, relief and development initiatives in some 150 countries. In addition, it engages thousands of other individuals in the work of the United Nations through www.onlinevolunteering.org, and manages the WorldVolunteerWeb, a global volunteering portal that serves as a knowledge resource base for campaigning, advocacy, information dissemination and networking.

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ⁱ www.worldvolunteerweb.org/ivd

ⁱⁱ www.unvolunteers.org

ⁱⁱⁱ www.worldvolunteerweb.org/events/iyv/index.htm

^{iv} www.worldvolunteerweb.org/ivd