

DEFINING DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

Message of the Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme

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The cover of this year's annual report is an exciting expression of what UNV can bring to development. The young man and woman featured on the front and back are not UNV volunteers. They did however participate in a UNV supported programme in Burkina Faso that supports disadvantaged youth to overcome poverty and social exclusion through skills training and self-esteem counselling. Soon we expect them to volunteer themselves and to share their skills and experiences with their peers.

The three areas of distinctive contributions that characterize UNV's work and that are introduced in this report are well illustrated by this programme. The first distinctive contribution focuses on enabling disadvantaged groups and communities to gain wider access to opportunities and services and to enhance the delivery of these services. In the example, and through our partners, young people are offered opportunities to obtain skills training and to find employment. The second distinctive contribution focuses on inclusion and participation and involves promoting the involvement of all stakeholders, in particular the disadvantaged, in processes that affect their well-being. Again, the programme in Burkina Faso provides an excellent example of the inclusion of young people by improving their chances for reintegration into society. The third distinctive contribution focuses on community mobilization through voluntary action. The young people who participate in the programme are in turn encouraged and coached to volunteer to help further address local development needs.

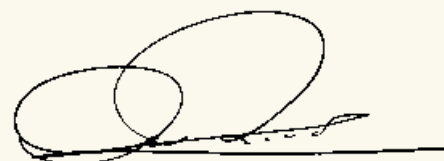
These distinctive contributions describe the impact and added value of our work in each country where we are present, especially within the context of meeting the eight MDGs. Achieving the Goals will require the engagement of many millions of citizens through voluntary action, especially in their own communities. These millions include the many thousands of UNV volunteers who

serve each year. By tapping into, and building up, the stock of knowledge, social entrepreneurship and solidarity in a country, volunteerism helps to develop sustainable capacities and strengthens values based on collaboration and partnership. We call this 'volunteerism for development' or 'V4D'. Such capacities and values will be important in addressing the challenge of the MDGs.

Where properly recognized and strategically promoted and facilitated, voluntary action can make all the difference. We are, therefore, increasingly engaged in ensuring that volunteerism in its multiple forms activates drivers of development effectiveness, such as building national capacities, promoting national ownership, advocating and fostering an enabling environment, seeking South-South solutions, promoting gender equity, and forging strategic partnerships. It is for this reason that UNV has become intentional about its impact as a global advocate for V4D as well as a promoter for integrating the concept of volunteerism into development planning and programming. This approach is grounded in the UN General Assembly's resolution A/60/128, adopted on 16 December 2005, which reaffirmed the international community's recognition of volunteerism as an important component of any strategy aimed at poverty reduction and singled out for special mention the contribution made by UNV.

In 2005, more than 8,100 UNV volunteers from 168 countries worked in 144 countries worldwide. Some 76 per cent of them came from developing countries with almost half of these volunteering in their own countries.

Our actions over the past year, in collaboration with other UN Departments, Agencies, Funds and Programmes, and other partners, helped to establish momentum towards the achievement of the MDGs. I am very proud of what the programme and the thousands of UNV volunteers across the globe have achieved. The distinctive contributions they made through their solidarity-driven engagement, commitment, dedication, pragmatism and people-centred approaches, are illustrated throughout this report and they continue to be a source of inspiration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, positioned below the main text.