

ADVOCACY

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme advocates for greater understanding and recognition that volunteerism is a sustainable and culturally adapted asset for development and peace. UNV promotes volunteerism as an integral part of international, regional and national development agendas and advocates to put in place systems that develop capacities and foster volunteerism.





5.1

Advocating Volunteerism for Development

The UNV programme promotes enabling environments within which volunteerism can flourish. It supports partners in developing regulatory frameworks conducive to volunteerism, thus harnessing the potential of volunteerism for the advancement of their societies.

UNV convenes, facilitates and networks amongst key stakeholders. It works with governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and UN agencies, funds and programmes to organize and support national and international dialogue about volunteering and to lend support to policy formulation. UNV cultivates interest in, and appreciation of, volunteerism and encourages people to volunteer their time and expertise towards development targets. It supports and facilitates local volunteer contributions towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and regional and national priorities.

Voluntary action is a vast resource available to most societies that can and must be engaged to meet development goals. To encourage and support volunteerism, UNV pursues the establishment of policies and frameworks that enable communities and individuals to contribute to development, peace, and economic and social growth. UNV has been expanding its support to programme countries in the establishment and strengthening of volunteer infrastructure aimed at enhancing national capacities to promote and nurture volunteerism.

During 2007, UNV advocated for volunteerism in different fora, including meetings, conferences and publications, volunteer fairs, parades and sports competitions. As a result, people at all levels of society in developed and developing countries have gained a greater appreciation of the potential and application of volunteerism for development.

'Sailing the Nile' for the Millennium Development Goals



6.2

UNV advocates volunteerism as a means of engaging communities in their own development. UNV volunteers can also serve as catalysts for involving other volunteers and communities. A pilot campaign in Egypt demonstrated the value of this approach in mobilizing community support for the MDGs.

Egypt's 'Sailing the Nile' campaigns in 2006-2007 played a significant role in engaging national and local governments, civil society groups and vulnerable sectors of society to raise awareness of the potential of volunteerism to address local development challenges. UNV initiated this innovative idea and was part of a unique partnership that brought together the Government, an unprecedented number of 18 UN organizations, plus civil society organizations, media, academia and the private sector.

Raising awareness and encouraging people's engagement towards the achievement of the MDGs, eight feluccas (boats) sailed the Nile from Aswan to Cairo over several weeks, making stops en route at eight harbours to interact with communities and volunteer groups. Various cultural and art activities held at each stop attracted, in a creative manner, thousands of committed young people to volunteer for development. At each location, local volunteers informed communities about one of the MDGs and launched a series of events celebrating human rights, development and youth volunteerism.

'Sailing the Nile' was widely acclaimed a success, both for its creativity and its decentralized approach to mobilizing communities for development, and won the UNDP Administrator's Award 2006 for Innovation and Creativity. UNV supported the Government in mobilizing hundreds of local volunteers and establishing volunteer coordination units. Communities continue to mobilize and engage in initiatives to address development needs and achieve specific goals. The campaign was repeated in 2007 and will occur annually until 2011.



6.1



Valuing women's contributions to development

UNV aims to strengthen, make visible and recognize women's volunteer involvement in participatory processes. It is helping to clarify the value of women's unpaid contribution to society and strengthen women's influence on local participatory decision-making processes.

In Latin America, UNV has been working with the United Nations Development Fund for Women to promote and support volunteerism, especially by women, in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru.

UNV volunteers ensured the increased availability of methodologies and tools to advocate and conduct gender budget analysis at local, national and regional levels, as well as improved practices and policies to enhance gender equality.

The project led to increased participation of women in decision-making processes and better coordination and organizational capacity among women's volunteer groups. In the municipality of Cochabamba in Bolivia, this prompted local governments to allocate more resources to fulfil women's needs, such as literacy training for migrant women, municipal child-care centres and vacation programmes for children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

In Villa Salvador, Peru, women's representative groups are using new tools to monitor and analyse the public expenditure of municipal governments from a gender perspective. In Rosario, Argentina, and in Cuenca, Ecuador, women elected to community decision-making bodies have started women's networks, neighbourhood groups and other volunteer-based organizations to tackle violence and other social issues.

Supporting development through sports



8.2

Volunteerism is a vital component of sports activities that foster the positive development of society. Together with governments, UN and other partners, UNV volunteers are active in sports programmes that are helping to restore post-conflict societies and engage youth and other marginalized sectors in society and in development activities.

In Sierra Leone, a project aimed at reintegration and peace-building used sports to involve communities affected by the war in the consolidation of peace. Working in 11 communities, UNV volunteers organized 3,000 youth to take part in sporting activities, 40% of them girls. Football and netball galas were held in several districts to spread the spirit of volunteerism and strengthen community bonding.

UNV actively supports sports-based development programmes, ranging from coaching youth in conflict in Kyrgyzstan to helping train volunteers for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

In the town of Karakol, Kyrgyzstan, UNV worked with UNDP to use sport and volunteerism to address conflicts between secondary school students. UNV volunteers trained informal youth leaders representing 11 schools on conflict prevention and teambuilding exercises. The youth were then encouraged to organize basketball coaching and hold a tournament between their schools. The activities are being spearheaded by a youth organization founded by local volunteers.

In China, UNV shared international best practices on volunteer legislation with the Municipality of Beijing, many of which were integrated into the city's Regulations on Promoting Voluntary Service adopted in September 2007. UNV partnered with the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad to enhance the capacity of Olympic and Paralympic Games volunteers and is encouraging citizen participation in sustainable development through 'Green Olympics' awareness-raising activities.



8.1



9.1

Advocating volunteerism for post-conflict reconstruction

Creating an environment conducive to volunteerism can generate the momentum to tackle serious developmental challenges. Fourteen years of civil unrest and armed conflict in Liberia have had devastating effects on the population, especially the country's youth.

In 2006, the newly elected Liberian Government made the inclusion of youth in the national development programme a national priority and called upon universities to collaborate in this regard. UNV worked with a wide network, comprising UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre and national partners to promote the concept of a national volunteer scheme.

UNV convened a meeting of university students to discuss the role of volunteerism in reconstruction and development. This contributed to the establishment of a National Youth Volunteer Scheme in 2007, which provides opportunities for students to volunteer in rural communities to improve the provision of services and promote inclusive volunteer initiatives.

**Six years on:
Progress since the 2001
International Year of Volunteers**



10.2

In 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General will report to the General Assembly on progress since the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2001. The General Assembly proclaimed IYV to enhance worldwide recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of voluntary action and volunteer service in all its forms.

Since 2001, UNV has deployed many more volunteers, mobilized greater trust fund resources and broadened its terms of engagement. The financial magnitude of UNV almost doubled in this timeframe, from US \$107 million in 2001 to US \$192 million in 2007, while the number of UNV volunteers increased from 5,090 in 2001 to 7,521 in 2007. There is greater diversity among UNV volunteers, with a gender ratio of 36% female to 64% male. Overall, 77% of UNV volunteers came from developing countries in 2007. The nature of their assignments has broadened to encompass all fields of development including governance, humanitarian response and peacekeeping.

UNV, together with partners, launched the World Volunteer Web in 2002 to provide a dynamic, interactive global platform. This platform expands information sharing, knowledge and resources for volunteerism. The website worldvolunteerweb.org catalyzes partnerships among volunteer stakeholders. It has a constituency of more than 27,000 organizations and individuals and receives 30,000 monthly visitors.

UNV has increased recognition of volunteerism as a means of engaging communities in development programmes and enhancing the delivery of long-term development objectives. Every year, UNV actively promotes International Volunteer Day (IVD) on 5 December in order to highlight the contributions of governments, volunteer organizations and individuals to development around the world.



10.1

Facilitating an enabling environment for volunteerism

UNV supports the creation and strengthening of volunteer infrastructure, with the aim of reaching a common understanding of volunteerism and a shared appreciation of its value.

In Niger, UNV and UNDP supported the Government in developing and adopting a decree establishing a national scheme for Volunteerism for Development. The Government played a leading role in the steering committee driving this process, underlining national ownership. The decree established the status of volunteers, the management structure and the conditions for engaging and deploying national volunteers in development projects. UNV volunteers continue to support this process.

The project has fostered learning exchanges and facilitated partnerships between the Government and voluntary organizations, while strengthening the capacity of volunteer associations and piloting the recruitment, fielding and management of national volunteers.



Measuring the economic value of volunteerism

UNV promotes the worldwide acknowledgement of volunteerism as a significant force for economic and social development. It strives to improve data on volunteering so as to enable governments and policy-makers to factor it into budgetary and other areas of decision-making.

Working with the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, the United Nations Statistics Division and other partners, UNV is helping to measure the contributions made by civil society, volunteering and philanthropy. This is facilitated by the United Nations Handbook on Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts.

UNV supports institutions in charge of national accounts data in nine pilot countries to establish national capacity for the production of solid economic data on non-profit institutions and volunteering. Analysis of the data produced so far reveals that non-profit activity accounts for an average of 5% of national gross domestic product in the pilot countries.