

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT THE WINNER

AS VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS EXCEED 1.5 MILLION HOURS

Campaign draws thousands of supporters in developing countries

14 December 2009

Bonn, Germany – Thousands of volunteers around the world have registered more than 1.5 million hours of effort to tackle climate change and other environmental issues, as part of a campaign to promote International Volunteer Day on 5 December.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme launched the global campaign 'Volunteering for our Planet' to promote voluntary effort for the environment. Since the website launched in October, tens of thousands of people have visited the website, www.VolunteeringForOurPlanet.org, to register the time that they spend on a voluntary basis, helping communities to adapt and innovate and to mitigate the causes of climate change.

As the total registered effort passed 1.5 million hours, volunteers in developing countries had registered the most time and activities. The top five countries were India, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria, and the Philippines. Only one western country, the United States, appeared in the top 10 (see table below for the top 40).

"This sends a very strong message that volunteers make a significant contribution to development and that everyone can be a part of the solution to climate change," said UNV Executive Coordinator Flavia Pansieri. "It is highly relevant that developing countries are so well represented in this campaign, because they will be among the most affected by global climate change."

UNV is continuing to collect information about environmental volunteerism and will present the result of the campaign at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen which opens on 7 December. "Governments



Volunteering for our Planet

Volontaires en faveur de notre planète

Voluntarios por nuestro planeta

志愿行动 拯救地球

Волонтеры для нашей планеты

التطوع من أجل كوكبنا



are increasingly recognizing both the urgency of addressing climate change, and the support they have from their citizens to do this. In Copenhagen, they have the opportunity to turn this powerful voluntary force into agreed international actions," Ms Pansieri said.

Volunteers are taking action across many areas, including environmental education in Egypt, agriculture in Brazil, energy in China, waste and pollution in Germany, water and sanitation in Australia and biodiversity in Canada. People registering on the website have given details of many different ways that they are volunteering. One couple volunteered 1000 hours to teach environmental conservation to communities in Malaysia. In Turkey, a woman volunteered for 100 hours to build more energy-efficient buildings, while a man in Liberia spent 50 hours installing water pumps and mobilizing young people to volunteer for environmental projects.

"People are committed and they are taking positive action to do something about this issue," said Ms Pansieri. "Taken on their own, a few hours of effort by an individual volunteer might not look like very much, but the fantastic response to this campaign demonstrates that the combined actions of thousands of volunteers around the world add up to a tremendous contribution to the global effort to address climate change."

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated on World Environment Day 2009, "Our planet needs more than just action by governments and corporations; it needs each of us. Although individual decisions may seem small in the face of global threats and trends, when billions of people join forces in common purpose we can make a tremendous difference."



UN
Volunteers

inspiration in action

Ms Pansieri noted that volunteerism was instrumental to fighting climate change. “Volunteers started the global environmental movement and we are an essential part of the solution to climate change. That is why UNV established ‘Volunteering for our Planet’ as our theme for International Volunteer Day. We want political leaders to recognize that the solution lies not only with governments and industry, but with every one of us. We are sending a strong signal to the Copenhagen conference that people should be encouraged to volunteer to be part of the response to climate change. Our climate is changing and everybody needs to get involved to help us cope. Every hour counts.”

‘Volunteering for our Planet’ is the UNV contribution to the UN campaign to Seal the Deal in Copenhagen. The website is recording voluntary contributions made between 5 June and 5 December. Contributions will continue to be recorded until the closure of COP15 on 18 December, when the final results will be released.

The United Nations Volunteers programme is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace

and development worldwide. Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing volunteers. UNV is the UN focal point for International Volunteer Day, celebrated internationally every year on 5 December and marked in a variety of ways by governments, institutions and individuals worldwide.

To learn more about the campaign please visit <http://www.VolunteeringForOurPlanet.org>

Top 40 countries

Hours registered by 2 December, on the website [VolunteeringForOurPlanet.org](http://www.VolunteeringForOurPlanet.org). Hours volunteered in the six months to International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2009.

For more information visit: <http://www.VolunteeringForOurPlanet.org>

	Country	Hours registered		Country	Hours registered
1	India	53,917	21	Mexico	6,846
2	Pakistan	40,710	22	China	6,410
3	Kenya	32,277	23	Nicaragua	6,393
4	Nigeria	31,647	24	Rwanda	6,037
5	Philippines	26,112	25	Haiti	5,810
6	Ethiopia	19,165	26	South Africa	5,523
7	USA	17,157	27	Serbia	5,181
8	Nepal	16,742	28	Egypt	4,759
9	Cameroon	14,317	29	Tanzania	4,620
10	DRC	13,361	30	France	4,466
11	Indonesia	10,798	31	Viet Nam	4,420
12	Bangladesh	10,761	32	Germany	4,254
13	Sudan	10,754	33	Sierra Leone	4,045
14	Canada	10,514	34	Romania	3,188
15	Uganda	10,209	35	Zimbabwe	3,071
16	Ghana	9,565	36	Spain	2,873
17	Colombia	9,507	37	Senegal	2,717
18	UK	9,066	38	Peru	2,285
19	Niger	7,882	39	Somalia	2,001
20	Iran	7,237	40	Sri Lanka	1,991

Campaign graphics: <http://bit.ly/5sdUvg>

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