



Volunteerism and the Millennium Development Goals Success Stories from the UNV programme


Volunteerism is considered a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and a crucial renewable resource for social and environmental problem-solving throughout the world. General Assembly resolution A/Res/56/38 asked the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to provide technical cooperation in the field of volunteerism to realize its potential as a resource for attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). UNV volunteers provide technical expertise and promote local capacity building, and are supporting the mandates of 23 United Nations entities and 19 missions, bringing expertise in over 100 professional categories.


The contributions of volunteers to the daily lives of people, actions, ideas, development and governance have been widely recognized. *“Each of us can [...] make an enormous difference for the better in protecting our planet and achieving the MDGs. Volunteers and volunteerism have an important role to play in this”*, said UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark.


Indeed, achieving the Millennium Development Goals will require the ingenuity, solidarity and creativity of millions of ordinary people through voluntary action. The willingness and ability of citizens to give freely of their time out of a sense of solidarity will have a major influence on poverty reduction. Not only can volunteers serve to address a specific challenge or pursue a precise development objective, but just as importantly, volunteerism promotes human development by facilitating individual transformation. Voluntary work additionally represents an increasingly rare opportunity for bringing together people from very different social and cultural backgrounds thus directly fostering understanding, tolerance and recognition of the necessity to respond to the challenges facing human development with both local solutions and global awareness.


UNV has the potential to open the doors for a wider and larger participation as well as local involvement by the communities. The UNV programme is streamlining its programmatic focus to respond more directly to MDG challenges and national development goals of programme countries. Political will and sustained efforts on the part of national governments, supported by the international community, can only complement what will ultimately depend on the active participation of people worldwide. Six billion people have something to contribute to these efforts.


Examples of UNV’s contribution to the achievement of the MDGs at the local level


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1 The project “Supporting the Empowerment of Local Communities through Community Radio Stations in Jordan” brings the power of the media to the marginalized who become active participants in working towards the achievement of the MDGs in articulating the development priorities for their own communities. Impoverished and traditionally marginalized from the development debate, women, youth, people with disabilities and children are working with reporters, radio and local government to have their concerns and challenges addressed by policy makers.
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2 Local volunteer organizations and individual volunteers address low enrolment, support the training of trainers for national education systems, encourage community-based organizations to provide literacy courses and practical skills training for children who do not attend school and help develop innovative curricula adapted to local realities and needs. UNV volunteers contribute to improving primary education within the Distance Teacher Education Programme through teacher training.
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3 In Morocco, in an innovative approach to apply gender concepts down to grassroot activities, a dynamic team of 6 national UNV volunteers was fielded as the gender-sensitive eyes and ears across six UNDP pilot projects. “Gender Mainstreaming through Results-based Management (RBM)” makes project reporting gender sensitive with quantitative and qualitative indicators, and translates gender issues into practical, down to earth project activities. Furthermore, the UNV project to combat female genital mutilation (FGM) in Sudan was mainstreamed and replicated by UNICEF and UNFPA. In Egypt, UNV worked with national partners and other United Nations entities in FGM-Free Villages, where national UNV volunteers raised awareness and advocated against the social pressure on young girls and women.
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4 UNV partners with UNDP, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), WHO, Government and national health institutions to enhance service delivery and access to services, reduce child and maternal mortality. In 2009, about 850 UNV volunteers served in the health sector to address child mortality, including through local health committees and village pharmacies run by indigenous people.
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5 Thousands of volunteers serve as health workers and birth attendants in communities around the world, helping women prepare for the life-giving tasks relating to motherhood. They expand the outreach of medical care, such as through mobile medical units. They also help set up local health committees to promote village health centres and pharmacies.
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6 Fighting disease and bringing hope through their care, volunteers fill vital human resource gaps caused by epidemics such as HIV/AIDS. They mobilize the support of volunteer-involving organizations (VIOs) for health campaigns in areas such as immunization, the use of condoms and contraceptives, and cleaning of disease breeding places. From 2006 to 2008, medical caravans were organized at several stops of Egypt’s “Sailing the Nile for the Millennium Development Goals” campaign, including gynaecological and family planning consultations.
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7 In Morocco, Volunteerism is a critical component of the Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) programme, and stands out as a major tool for adaptation to climate change. CBA projects build on traditional practices of volunteerism, solidarity and collective work to help the communities formulate and implement adaptation solutions to preserve the ecosystem on which they rely and to sustain their livelihood. In the Oasis of IGUIWAZ (south of Morocco), the entire community unites in order to protect their environment and adapt to the effects of climate change. The message voiced with other communities in Morocco and other parts of the Arab world was captured in a recent community-produced Video, is “TIWIZI - together, we can adapt to climate change and protect our environment”.
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8 UNV continues to strengthen partnerships with United Nations entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), academic institutions, foundations and the private sector, by engaging in joint programming and advocacy for volunteerism and development, in particular at local and community level to stimulate participatory development. Through its unique joint initiative “Sailing the Nile for the Millennium Development Goals”, 18 UN Agencies, government institutions, NGOs, civil society, donors, academia and the private sector put their efforts together to raise awareness about the MDGs in Egypt.