



Backgrounder

About the United Nations Volunteers programme and the State of the World's Volunteerism Report

United Nations Volunteers programme

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the United Nations organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced United Nations Volunteers, throughout the world. UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity as well as the values that sustain it: free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity.

State of the World's Volunteerism Report

Through their voluntary actions, millions of people from most societies around the world make significant contributions to economic and social development, especially to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The first State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) promotes a better understanding of volunteerism by demonstrating its universality, scope and reach and by discussing new trends in volunteerism in the twenty-first century. The Report examines important contributions in diverse fields such as sustainable livelihoods, social inclusion, social cohesion and disaster risk reduction. SWVR also provides an alternative vision of a better society and considers how to take volunteerism forward.

The Report will help volunteerism to move into a new era in which its true dimensions and significance are integrated into the general discourse on global issues.

For further information, contact:

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The SWVR is expected to enhance recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism worldwide. It will also increase recognition of the critical role of UNV as an organization that sets standards in volunteerism within the United Nations system. It is anticipated that SWVR and successor reports will result in fundamental changes. These will affect the perception, discussion, research and practice of volunteerism in the future.

Framework

The target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals is 2015. With only four years left, there is a very real prospect of falling short of many of the goals identified by world leaders in 2000. Volunteers and volunteerism are acknowledged as a powerful, potentially transformational, force for world peace and development. However, this has not yet been the subject of a focused and systematic study.

Since the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in 2001, successive resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) have recognized the significant contributions of volunteerism to economic and social development. UNGA resolution A/Res/63/153, adopted in 2008, reaffirms the significance of volunteerism for the achievement of the MDGs. It calls for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers to be marked in 2011 as "IYV+10". UNV is designated as the focal point for IYV+10.

As an expression of its convening role at the global level for IYV+10, UNV has considered this an appropriate moment to commission a global publication entitled State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR). This report offers both information and advocacy for the role and contribution of volunteerism in peace and development which includes achieving the MDGs. The first SWVR will be presented to the United Nations General Assembly on 5 December 2011 in New York, United States. It will also be launched in many countries around the world as part of global and national events being supported by UNV to mark IYV+10.

Process

The preparation of the State of the World's Volunteerism Report involved a wide range of research and related activities. These were undertaken to ensure the widest possible consideration of available information. Also considered were the opinions of stakeholders in the field of volunteerism such as politicians, government officials, international civil servants, academics, development practitioners and volunteers. Activities included a literature review; research on estimating the magnitude of volunteerism using national data; analysis of volunteerism terminology using international data banks; preparation of thematic and regional background papers; in-depth interviews; establishment of a network of online researchers on proverbs and media; online discussions in development networks; and regional and thematic consultations.

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The following consultations were held with participation of stakeholders:

October 2010

Technical Advisory Board Meeting, Bonn, Germany
Multi-Regional (Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States, Middle East) Consultation, Istanbul, Turkey

November 2010

Civil Society Consultation, Bonn, Germany
North America Consultation, Washington DC, United States

January 2011

Francophone Africa Consultation, Dakar, Senegal
Anglophone Africa Consultation, Nairobi, Kenya
Asia-Pacific Consultation, Bangkok, Thailand

February 2011

Latin America Consultation, Buenos Aires, Argentina

March 2011

Civil Society and Media Consultation Meeting, Bonn, Germany

May 2011

Second Technical Advisory Board Meeting, Bonn, Germany
High-level Advisory Board Meeting, New York, United States