



PRESS RELEASE

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Message from the Executive Coordinator

Bonn, 5 December (United Nations Volunteers) – The first State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) brings to light an unacknowledged renewable asset. Volunteerism is more than a tool for development. Its underlying values are key to moving the world towards a more sustainable future. Around the world, people are increasingly recognizing that our unsustainable production and consumption patterns need to change. In order to achieve this, political will alone is not sufficient. People need to participate and engage.

Volunteerism provides opportunities for many to be active in society and become agents of change. However volunteerism offers more: it promotes cooperation and contributes to the quality of life, well-being in a wider sense, of individuals and of society as a whole.

Volunteerism is not a panacea. It should not replace the responsibility of the state. Yet it is an essential component of any strategy that recognizes that progress cannot be measured solely in terms of economic return. Such development strategies acknowledge that people are not motivated by self-interest alone but by their deeply held values and beliefs.

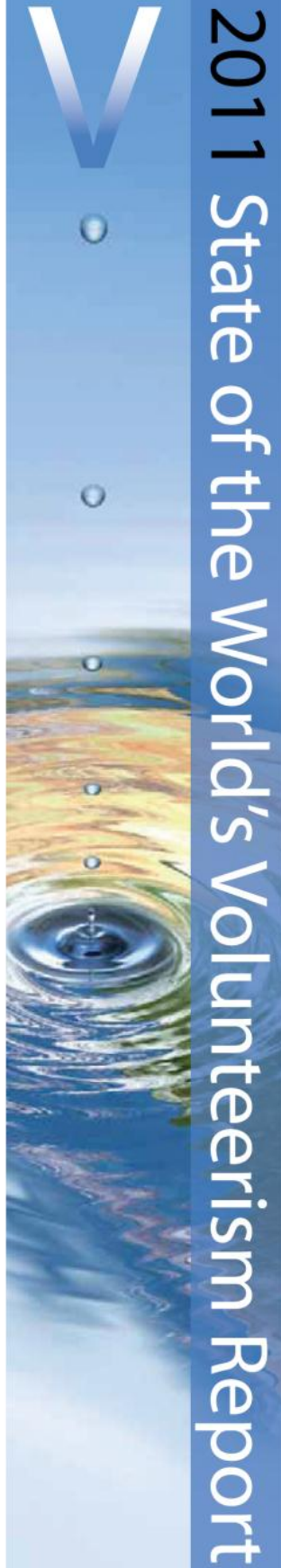
The SWVR focuses on the universal values that motivate people all over the world to engage for the common good. It examines the impact of volunteer action on societies and individuals. Numerous examples in the report illustrate the profound changes that volunteers produce and experience. These examples show why volunteerism, in its many and diverse forms, is crucial to human development. Above all, a truly human society should be motivated by the values of trust, solidarity and mutual respect which inspire every volunteer.

This report coincides with an intense debate about how societies should be shaped today and in the future. The rapid transformations of cultural and social norms caused by globalization bring benefits to some but exclusion and marginalization to others. Many people feel a loss of control over their lives. Volunteerism is a means by which people can engage in their communities and societies.

Even without the multiple crises that have afflicted the world in recent years, it is obvious that the efforts of governments and international actors need to be reinforced by the people. Meeting and sustaining internationally agreed development targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, needs the voluntary engagement and support of the people.

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Yet volunteerism still remains largely absent from the peace and development agenda. The report shows that this must change. The full potential of volunteerism can only be unleashed when it is recognized as a powerful and universal renewable resource and a vital component of the social capital of every nation. We expect this report to contribute to a better appreciation of this potential and to encourage greater strategic thinking and action in order to incorporate volunteerism into mainstream policies and programmes for peace and development.

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