



SUMMARY PRESS RELEASE

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Well-being should be an Essential Part of a New Development Architecture

Discourse on well-being has to recognize the reciprocal values of volunteerism, says United Nations report

Bonn, 5 December 2011 (United Nations Volunteers) – Policy-makers should take well-being into account when designing any new development architecture, the first State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) stresses.

The view that gross domestic product (GDP) provides an adequate picture of a society is increasingly being challenged. The report states that "strong and healthy economies are desirable, but only inasmuch as they enable people to lead lives that bring them well-being." Solidarity, passion for a cause and the desire to give back to society are inherent in both well-being and volunteerism.

The relationship between volunteerism and well-being has been widely studied in developed countries. However, the report finds there is ever more evidence that people in both the developing and developed world have similar notions of well-being. This makes the concept important for the world as a whole.

The report cites the findings of studies that illustrate the impact of volunteerism on well-being at individual level. Impacts include decreased psychological stress and enhanced life satisfaction, will to live and self-respect. Other effects are better physical health and lower mortality rates, according to studies. At community level, volunteerism increases social capital and contributes to healthy societies. Studies also find that volunteerism increases community capacity to engage and mobilize resources to respond to difficult situations.

"It is essential to make a clear connection between volunteerism and well-being in working toward a new development architecture," UNV Executive Coordinator Flavia Pansieri said. "This will ensure that policymakers take this valid asset into account to achieve healthy societies in which people enjoy living."

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The report finds that the time has come for a new development paradigm. By focusing only on competition and self-interest, mainstream economics has failed to bring about fair and broad-based progress. It is time to recognize that human well-being is an essential indicator of progress and that it is enhanced by the core values of volunteerism including compassion, cooperation and solidarity.

“It is clear that measuring progress only in terms of GDP growth fails to consider all essential parameters for progress,” said Ms Pansieri. “A new development architecture is needed, based on new ways to measure progress. GDP remains essential, of course, but measures of individual and social attainment also need to be considered. Values like participation, engagement and inclusion are all needed to promote the well-being of individuals and society.”