



PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 5 December 2011, 00:01 hours EST

Volunteer Action Essential for the Way Forward

People-centred approaches and partnership are key to delivering on the sustainable development agenda, United Nations report says

Bonn, 5 December 2011 (United Nations Volunteers) – The time has come to make volunteerism an integral part of the new development consensus, the first State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) stresses.

Volunteerism is an effective way to implement community-led strategies. The SWVR therefore responds to the recommendation of United Nations Member States in their 2010 review of progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. "Incorporating volunteerism into national development planning is likely to bring considerable benefits to the countries that are lagging furthest behind," UNV Executive Coordinator Flavia Pansieri said.

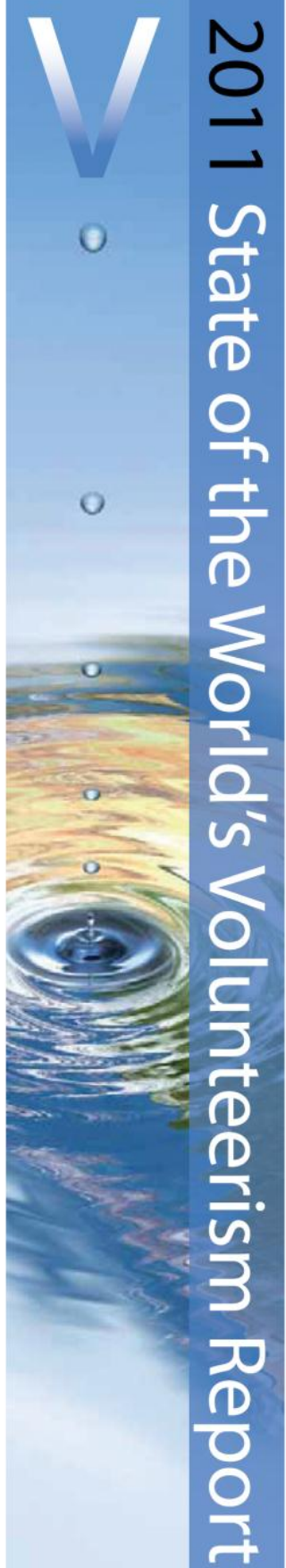
It is clear that major efforts are needed to sustain progress and achieve the MDGs. At the same time, there is growing recognition that the current development paradigm, based on economic development and access to services, is severely limited. The dimension of well-being, putting people's life satisfaction at the centre, needs more attention. "I hope that this report will provide an impetus to make greater use of volunteer action as a complement of other efforts," Ms Pansieri said.

However, volunteerism should not take the place of actions that are the responsibility of the state, the report notes. Volunteer action can play a powerful complementary role alongside other interventions. It is also important that the state should not overprescribe how to volunteer. This could have a negative impact on the spontaneity of volunteer action and on the values that inspire people to engage. "It is essential", the report highlights, "to understand and appreciate volunteerism in terms of the focus that it places on people-centred approaches, on partnerships, on motivations beyond money and on an openness to the exchange of ideas and information."

Concern is growing regarding the effectiveness of development cooperation. The focus needs to switch from the processes and coordination of aid to the downstream outcomes and impacts of those processes. Understanding the role and contributions of volunteerism is necessary in order to incorporate this vital resource into the development agenda.

For further information, contact:

Bonn/New York: Lothar Mikulla, T. +49 (0)228 8152113, M. +49 (0)1578 7679771, swvr@unvolunteers.org
www.unvolunteers.org/swvr2011





Research in this field is still largely absent in developing countries despite being one of the recommendations made by governments in the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

In June next year, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will be an excellent opportunity for greater recognition of volunteerism as a key way through which people who are poor engage in sustainable development, the report stresses. The SWVR calls for support for the role of volunteerism in sustainable development and for enhanced partnerships between governments and major groups, including volunteers. This is in line with the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

The report notes that there is optimism over volunteerism taking on a much higher profile as quality of life issues are given more attention as core national issues. "We are increasingly questioning what we value in life. The well-being benefits associated with the volunteering experience, together with bonds of trust and societal cohesiveness that derive from relationships forged through volunteer action, are likely to be at the forefront of such thinking," the SWVR concludes.

For further information, contact:

Bonn/New York: Lothar Mikulla, T. +49 (0)228 8152113, M. +49 (0)1578 7679771, swvr@unvolunteers.org
www.unvolunteers.org/swvr2011