



International Volunteer Day 2011

Statement by UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark

On this tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, we celebrate the work of volunteers worldwide and the contribution they make to the development and wellbeing of communities.

Every day, volunteers make a difference for the environment, for peace, for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and much more.

There are countless examples of volunteering having an incredible impact. In Nepal, nearly 50,000 female community health volunteers, supported by UNICEF, UNFPA, USAID, and the Gates Foundation, have helped cut child mortality by two-thirds over the past fifteen years.

Japanese Red Cross volunteers played an indispensable role in dealing with the aftermath of the terrible earthquake and tsunami earlier this year. UN Volunteers form a significant part of UN peacekeeping missions, making up around one third of the international civilian staff in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Liberia, and elsewhere.

A guiding principle for UN Volunteers is that people closest to the problems are also often the people most able to contribute to the solutions. The first State of the World's Volunteerism Report released today says that there is still plenty of room in development for volunteer and citizen action. If all seven billion people in our world were working together to find solutions to our shared problems, what a difference that would make!

As the international community comes together at the climate change talks in Durban in December and at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro next June, I encourage ever more people to make a difference for sustainable development in their own communities - through civil society participation, and individual actions. I also encourage leaders to continue opening up space for their citizens to take part in the development of their communities and countries.

On this tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, let's remember that on the path to a better future, volunteering can and does change our world for the better.