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Volunteers Build Resilient Communities – Regional Launch of SWVR 2018 in Sri Lanka

There are nearly 29 million full-time equivalent volunteers in Asia and the Pacific region, ranking as the world's second highest number of full-time equivalent volunteers, the report reveals. This means that there is a great potential in Asia-Pacific for drawing on local volunteers' support in facing peace and development challenges.

On 10 December 2018, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme launched a flagship report, the State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018: The thread that binds, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, as part of the global celebrations of International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2018. The report was translated to two local languages, Sinhala and Tamil. This was the

Asia-Pacific regional launch of the report which addressed the key findings on how volunteerism is connecting individuals, empowering youth and enabling everyone to take action to build resilient communities.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator and Representative of Food and Agriculture Organization Ms. Nina Brandstrup, UNV Regional Manager for Asia and the Pacific Ms. Shalina Miah, UNDP Country Director and Heads of UN Agencies Mr. Jorn Sorensen graced the occasion.

The eminent panelists comprised of Emeritus Professor of the University of Colombo Prof. Siri Hettige, General Secretary of Sarvodaya Dr. Vinya Airyaratne, Director of National Secretariat for the Elderly - Ministry of Social Welfare and Housing Mr. M. Ramamoorthy, Actress Ms. Pooja Umashanker, Assistant Treasurer of Sri Lanka Girl Guides Ms. Parathana Liyanage, Previous V-Awards Finalist Ms. Sharmini Perera. Members of the National Steering Committee on Volunteering for Sri Lanka including volunteers and volunteer involving organizations participated in the regional launch.

According to the report, more than one billion people volunteer globally, majority of them working in their own countries in the most difficult of circumstances. Considering the hours they contribute, this is the equivalent to over 190 million full-time workers. This global volunteer workforce, or “Volunteeria” as the report calls it, exceeds the number of people employed in six of the 10 most populous countries.

Since 2008, 68 more countries found to have introduced or updated policies, legislation or other measures specific or relevant to volunteering globally, including Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Japan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

“ In the Asia and Pacific region, there are 28.7 million full time equivalent volunteers. Looked at another way, if every person who volunteered, volunteered for one hour per week, then around 1.15 billion people would be actively involved - a huge resource for peace and development.” -- Shalina Miah

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As volunteers are active in every major shock and stress experienced by communities, decision-makers need to better understand the relationship between volunteerism and community resilience so that voluntary action has the best opportunity to contribute to the

collective and public good.

The significance of the SWVR 2018 launch and the panel discussion in Sri Lanka is that the key findings and perspectives of the global research – the importance of volunteerism in community resilience building - was reflected according to pressing issues and priorities in Sri Lanka and the Asia-Pacific contexts. It also addressed critical support needed to volunteering and enabling environment creation to enhance potentials of volunteering and positive impacts.



Panel discussion during the launch of SWVR 2018 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. UNV, 2018

From the panel discussion, key recommendations for Asia and the Pacific include:

- Engaging community leaders in mobilizing voluntary action and front line-leaders need to make the best use of volunteer opportunities
- Taking more precise actions to facilitate support to marginalized communities not only in Asia and the Pacific but also around the world.
- Providing adequate support and resources volunteers need to move from coping to preventing and adapting to shocks
- Ensuring there is access to volunteering opportunities and moving beyond a

- “project by project” approach, including those who prefer to work informally
- Promoting the principle ‘leaving no one behind’ by supporting equal distribution of volunteer labor and impact

Watch the videos of the event

 <http://unv.org/swvr/resilientcommunities>

 <http://unvuk.org/regional-launch-of-swvr-2018/>

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