



The role of gender in volunteerism for community resilience

Today, International Women's Day, UNV publishes the working draft of the research paper, "The role of gender in volunteerism for community resilience", which analyzes the relevance of gender roles, needs and interests in volunteering for community resilience, based on data collected in five communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Around the world, people volunteer in different ways to achieve diverse

impacts, both planned and unplanned. Most volunteering takes place through informal engagement between individuals, with only an estimated 30 per cent of volunteering taking place formally, through organizations. Much of this volunteerism – both informal and formal – takes place at the community level.

The 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR 2018) investigates the relationship between volunteerism and community resilience. It highlights that local volunteers can strengthen the capacities of their communities to cope with diverse stresses and shocks, such as climate change and disasters, and recognizes volunteerism as a fundamental community resilience strategy.

The SWVR research also reveals that local volunteerism is not inclusive by default, and that some groups in a community – such as women – may be excluded from volunteering. This exclusion, and the barriers to volunteering that they may face, reduces their potential as volunteers to address the vulnerabilities and risks that affect them, their families and communities.

“ Volunteerism is not gender neutral. Applying a gender lens to volunteering for community resilience is critically important, particularly as globally women volunteer more than men (57 per cent and 43 per cent respectively).

As Sustainable Development Goal 5 recognizes, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is crucial for sustainable development. For this to be realized and to ensure that no one is left behind, it is important to understand the role of gender in development in different contexts, including volunteerism for community resilience.

This research paper on the role of gender in volunteerism for community resilience analyzes data collected in five communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America to understand the relevance of gender roles, needs, and interests in volunteering at the community level.

It explores the distinctive contributions of volunteerism for gender equality and women's empowerment within resilience contexts. The paper provides

insights on how to enhance gender equality and inclusion in volunteerism as part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The analysis in this working draft comes to the following main conclusions:

- First, the voluntary responses of women and men to stresses and shocks interact and intersect with gender roles, relations, needs and interests. This juncture reveals that women’s voluntary actions contribute significantly to building resilience at the household and community levels.
- Second, ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership is a specific target under SDG 5. Through local volunteering, women – by themselves or with the support of external actors – participate and influence in decision making spaces and develop transformative bottom-up changes in gender relations.
- Lastly, gender equality and gender inclusion in volunteerism for community resilience can be strongly promoted through effective collaborations and sustainable partnerships that include the equal participation of women and men in the development and implementation of policies and interventions aimed at building community resilience, and at achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment at the household and community levels.

The paper is a working draft to be published as an input to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, mid-July.

The paper was designed with the kind support of [Online Volunteer](#) Diana de Leon.

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)