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Student volunteers in Malawi discussing gender-based violence issues in relation to their collaboration with ArtGlo's Make Art for Women's Activism (MAWA) project.

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Malawi marks International Volunteer Day with launch of the State of the World's Volunteerism Report

The fourth State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) 'Building equal and inclusive societies' presents new evidence on volunteer–state partnerships. The flagship Report of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme was launched in Malawi today to mark International Volunteer Day. This was the first country-level launch of the Report following a global launch at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York on 2 December 2021.

The Report reveals that cooperation between volunteers and governments helps build collaborative decision-making.

Increasing inequalities worldwide call for a new type of social contract with a renewed emphasis on inclusion. It is time for a global reset. The UN Secretary-General, Antonio

Guterres has spelled out the need for a New Social Contract that creates equal opportunities and respect the rights and freedoms of all.¹

Every seventh person in the world is a volunteer. Despite the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, global interest in volunteering has not waned, and volunteering in communities has endured despite limited mobility and resources. While restrictions have prevented many people from volunteering in person, many have switched to volunteering online.

The Report draws on case study research from several countries, including Malawi, and concludes that, the monthly number of volunteers aged 15 years and older amounts to over 850 million worldwide. And the average monthly volunteer rate – defined as the share of working-age persons (15 years or older) that volunteer in a month – amounts to almost 15%.

“In Malawi, the ArtGlo initiative, showcased in the Report, illustrates how young people living with HIV collaborate with state authorities and use art to sensitize public officials to the health issues they are facing. In so doing, youth volunteers help shape health priorities. By serving as mediators between communities and state authorities, they act as bridge-builders,” said Kyoko Yokosuka, UNV Deputy Executive Coordinator while launching the Report.

This research comes at a crucial moment as countries start to build forward from the pandemic and institutions need to engage volunteers as key partners.

“We do dramas and songs which helps people from our communities understand the dangers of violence,” a young volunteer from ArtGlo initiative in Malawi said in the Report.

The Report identifies three models to highlight volunteer-state relationships – deliberative governance, co-production of services and social innovation – and offers policy recommendations. Decision makers are encouraged to:

- Promote volunteering beyond service delivery to include social innovation and inclusiveness.
- Strengthen public social recognition of volunteers especially as they are not financially rewarded.
- Create space where both volunteers and state authorities can share their experiences and establish common ground.
- Invest in measurement and data on volunteers and support research on volunteerism.

East and Southern Africa

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