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Victoria de Mello



Youth volunteerism helps climate action go further, stronger, together

United Nations Youth Volunteer Victoria de Mello from Salvador, Brazil briefly explains how her personal experience convinced her about the power of youth volunteerism for climate action.

Coming from a place where inequality and urban violence are the rule, my beautiful city is also under immense environmental pressure from climate change and deforestation. As part of the few with access to higher education in Salvador, having the opportunity to earn a Law degree and volunteer for climate justice projects in University helped to make me a potential solution to the challenges facing my community.

Like me, there are millions of young people from places facing problems similar to Salvador.

These young activists are the ones who are playing a key role in tackling climate change through youth volunteerism. The potential of volunteering allows for huge contributions to climate action and youth empowerment simultaneously. And this, in my opinion is great. However, volunteers and particularly youth volunteers, are often overlooked, under-capacitated, and even persecuted. Therefore, volunteerism needs to be continuously advocated for and supported.

My recent personal experience was during COP23 in November 2017 in Bonn where I was given the opportunity to address the Intergenerational dialogue. While speaking eye-to-eye to decision-makers, I could proudly highlight how volunteerism harnesses the creative energy of youth for climate action and sustainable development. COP acts as the platform for young people and decision-makers to discuss how to enhance the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of the SDGs. Since evidence-based policies are discussed here, it is important to give great emphasis on the importance of evaluating volunteering to demonstrate impact, develop capacities and advocate for their greater role in climate action.

A great example of this theme is UNV's own flagship publication : the State of the World's Volunteerism Report. The next report - to be released in 2018 -features original research from 15 communities around the world on the theme of resilience. Preliminary findings of the fieldwork draw attention to many risks facing communities where volunteerism really shapes people's opportunities to cope and adapt. Research also shows that although young men and women in all communities and societies are actively playing their part, they are really most effective when young people are permitted leadership roles to bring new ideas, identify priorities and challenge norms. In such communities, support mechanisms are in place to provide coordination, training and implement young people's experiences back into decision-making processes.

Volunteerism and youth are a powerful combination for climate action, but they are not sufficient. We need investments and programmes to widen access and innovations to support the actions of ordinary young people through volunteering. Platforms like COP are a great opportunity to allow the voice of many volunteers from around the globe reach the decision-makers.

"My name is Victoria de Mello and I am a United Nations Volunteer from the city of Salvador in Brazil". These were my opening words at the Intergenerational dialogue in COP23 and I can truly say that I am proud to be part of an organisation like the UNV that stands ready to support youth volunteerism by developing stronger volunteer infrastructures and deploying youth volunteers for climate change and sustainable development. Afterall, youth volunteerism helps climate action go further, faster and together.



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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 13: Climate change](#)