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The SWVR 2022 Africa regional launch took place today in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the attendance of H.E Ergogio Tesfaye (left), Minister of Women and Social Affairs, and Ms Lucy Ndungu, Manager of UNV's East and Southern Africa Regional Office.
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Minister hails power of volunteerism to engage people in their development priorities at SWVR launch in Ethiopia

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 fourth State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR), ***Building Equal and Inclusive Societies***, is designed to strengthen understanding on volunteerism and demonstrate its universality, scope, and reach in the twenty-first century.

The flagship report of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme was launched today in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, by H.E Ergogio Tesfaye, Minister of Women and Social Affairs for

Ethiopia at the UN Economic Commission for Africa. The launch was also attended by H.E Ambassador Mohamed Lamine Thiaw, Permanent Representative of Senegal to Ethiopia and the African Union, H.E. Ambassador Hans Lundquist, Ambassador of Sweden to Ethiopia, Mr Cleophas Torori, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative among other representatives from UN Member States, UN entities, the African Union Commission, diplomatic community, volunteer community and the private sector.

The SWVR findings provide an interesting and timely opportunity to analyze the strategic role of volunteering for peace and development in the African continent. The regional launch in Africa provided key stakeholders with an opportunity to shine the spotlight on transformative volunteering models that have emerged across the continent around service delivery, policymaking and participation, governance, decision-making and social innovation.

The launch took the global discussions to the regional level to initiate and generate momentum for a sustained regional conversation on the report's findings, raise awareness among stakeholders, policymakers and institutions active in volunteering and the wider public audience in the region, and ignite conversations to take recommendations forward into peace and development programming, policy and practices in African continent.

Speaking during the launch, H.E Ergogie Tesfaye noted that through volunteerism, more people participate in development at all levels of society, empowering them to fully engage in their development priorities.

“ Volunteering delivers essential capacities for communities and nations to pursue social, economic and environmental goals. --H.E Ergogie Tesfaye, Minister of Women and Social Affairs of Ethiopia

The report draws on case study research in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Among the five regions, Africa demonstrated the highest volunteer rates – the share of the total working-age population (15 years and over) who volunteer. While other regions have monthly volunteer rates of nine to 10.6 per cent, Africa far exceeds this with monthly volunteer rates of 17.5 per cent.

Additionally, two African countries – Senegal and Kenya – were selected for a 2021 global multi-country survey by UNV and Gallup that informed the SWVR 2022 findings on the contribution of volunteers to COVID-19 response in the global South. The survey found relatively high levels of volunteer participation in COVID-19 response in Senegal and Kenya, with volunteer action rates of 98 per cent and 92 per cent respectively, the highest among the ten countries that participated in the survey.

Speaking during the launch of the Report, Mr Cleophas Torori, Deputy Resident

Representative for UNDP Ethiopia noted that volunteerism provides an important opportunity for everybody, including marginalized groups, to have their voices heard and their actions recognized. "Engaging and integrating volunteers will help us move forward together, allowing us to mitigate future challenges and sustain our resilience as a human collective," he said.

“ The findings of the report provide critical information for policy makers to ensure we 'leave no one behind' in our quest for development, particularly following the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the inequalities in the region and the world. -
-Ms Lucy Ndungu, Manager of UNV's East and Southern Africa Regional Office

The SWVR 2022 comes at a crucial moment as countries start to build forward from the pandemic and institutions need to engage volunteers as key partners. "To build forward better, it will be very important for volunteers to be regarded as essential partners in development," said Mr. Benjamin Mirichi, an International UN Volunteer from Kenya serving with UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

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 a 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.

As part of the SWVR preparation, UNV and Gallup conducted research to study the patterns of volunteerism during COVID-19. The multi-country primary data collection was conducted in March-April 2021, including a survey of eight thousand people in eight countries: Bolivia, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Senegal, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

East and Southern Africa

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