Volunteerism is a fundamental source of community strength and resilience that exists in all societies throughout the world. The role of volunteerism, in general, and mobilizing and managing volunteers, in particular, are important components of any disaster risk management strategy that aims at fostering community recovery, strength and resilience in vulnerable areas. In the last decade, almost one million people have been killed by disasters, many of them volunteers who were at the forefront of responding to emergencies, and more than one trillion dollars have been lost. Even though every dollar invested in disaster preparedness saves seven dollars in disaster aftermath, and thousands of lives, only 1% of international aid is spent on minimizing the impact of disasters.

The current Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) explicitly recognizes the contribution of volunteerism to disaster risk management, particularly in strengthening community capacities to respond to and prevent disasters. The Priorities for Action of HFA suggest that community participation in disaster risk reduction includes the strategic management of volunteer resources and calls for the development of specific mechanisms to engage active stakeholder participation in particular by building on the spirit of volunteerism. Volunteerism is also highlighted as a way of contributing to community resilience, community engagement and good governance for all stakeholders, particularly those most vulnerable to disasters, and marginalized groups, such as women, youth and/or people with disabilities.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is convening a side event in the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai (Japan), together with different governmental partners and volunteer-involving organizations with a global presence across the globe. UNV is presenting its findings in the area of volunteerism and disaster risk reduction. UN Volunteers will share how volunteerism for disaster risk reduction has transformed their lives and will also show how volunteerism as a form of civic engagement provides an avenue for people of all ages and
Skillsets to strengthen their role and take action in society for disaster risk reduction.

View the statement of the Executive Coordinator of UNV, Richard Dictus, at the 6th Plenary Meeting of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan.

Sendai, Japan
Japan disaster risk reduction DRR emergencies

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 13: Climate change