

20 June 2013

State of the World's Volunteerism Report

Volunteerism and Social Cohesion

World Refugee Day

 **June 20**www.unv.org  @UNVolunteers

Volunteerism and Social Cohesion: An extract from the 2011 State of the World's Volunteerism Report

Today, 20 June, is World Refugee Day. There are over 43.7 million refugees and internally displaced people around the world. The United Nations established World Refugee Day to honour the courage, strength and determination of women, men and children who are forced to flee their homes under threat of persecution, conflict and violence.

To mark this Day, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme launches an extract from the 2011 State of the World's Volunteerism Report, [Volunteerism and Social Cohesion] which focuses on the role of volunteer action in promoting

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It draws on growing empirical evidence that, contrary to common perceptions, the income poor are as likely to volunteer as those who are not poor. In doing so, they utilize their assets, which include knowledge, skills and social networks, for the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities. These assets are extremely relevant in strengthening local capacity to address disasters and, on the broader front, to assist the more vulnerable to secure livelihoods and to enhance their physical, economic, spiritual and social wellbeing.

UNDP reported that "Peace can be agreed by high level leaders gathered around negotiating tables, but such accords must be matched by initiatives which promote the ability of society to deal with and overcome conflict in the short, intermediate and long-term. Peace building requires that communities learn to address the past, adjust to the present and plan for the future."*

The extract contends that social cohesion can be created and reinforced by people supporting one another, largely at local level, through volunteer action. It provides examples of volunteer-based interventions that can help to prevent tensions, mitigate the impact when tensions spill over into violence or assist recovery when the tensions subside. It pays particular attention to women and young people as these are the two segments of the population most affected by violent conflict in addition to their role as real and potential peace builders.

To learn more, read, [Volunteerism and Social Cohesion: An extract from the 2011 State of the World's Volunteerism Report](#). *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Evaluation Office (EO). (2003). *Volunteerism and development. In Evaluation Office (Ed.), Essentials*. New York, NY: UNDP and EO.

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