

News
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Exchanging experiences and knowledge of youth volunteering in ASEAN and beyond

A conference facilitated by UNV promotes South-South cooperation and highlighted the role of volunteerism to common development challenges in countries across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and beyond. Focusing on the value of youth volunteering, participants from across the region shared experiences and knowledge of the value of volunteerism to the global sustainable development agenda, finding inspiration and strategies for scaling up approaches and creating shared solutions.



Participants in the Youth Volunteering Innovation Challenge discuss the localization of the SDGs through volunteerism. (UNV, 2017)

From 20-23 June in Bangkok, Thailand, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) co-hosted a conference entitled [South-South Exchange on Youth Volunteering for the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\): Sharing Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Other Approaches from Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\) Countries](#). The event was an important milestone in creating a platform for peer learning, innovation sharing and partnership-building around volunteerism in ASEAN countries, and beyond.

The conference focused on the theme of youth to highlight the experiences of ASEAN member states in channelling youth volunteering for sustainable development. On this theme, more than 100 participants from national and subnational governments, UN agencies, youth organizations, volunteer involving organizations, civil society organizations, and the private sector shared their strategies and projects linking volunteering to development challenges in the region.

“UNV can support development in ASEAN countries. UNV can help strengthen the volunteer system in the region because UNV has a long experience in promoting volunteerism and already has mechanisms and platforms to coordinate volunteer programmes across the globe. There are many areas UNV and ASEAN can collaborate, contributing to expand our horizon and deliver more on our intention to become a responsible member of the global community,” stated Ms. Rodora Turalde-Babaran, Director of Human Development, ASEAN Social-Cultural Community Department, ASEAN Secretariat.

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In Thailand, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) approach, developed by His Late Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, is used to promote sustainable development. The approach recognizes the contributions of youth

volunteering to projects as an important channel for Thai youth to develop their qualifications, while channelling their energy, skills, and innovative thinking for sustainable development.

“Volunteering is deeply embedded in the Thai community and SEP emphasizes the importance of sustainability, moderation and social cohesion. The people-to-people connection is one of the fundamental aspects of peace and development,” confirmed Mrs. Suphatra Srimaitreephithak, Director General of TICA.

Through discussions and a field visit to nearby SEP project sites, conference participants learned the importance of building strong multi-stakeholder partnerships that are focused on local needs coupled to effective volunteer infrastructures that are responsive to local communities. Throughout many examples, it was evident that development challenges, such as localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), enhancing life and work skills within communities, promoting regional identity, and creating innovation and partnerships, all benefit from volunteerism.



Professor Chairawee Anamthawat-Kierig explains the details of a project based on the principles of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). (UNV. 2017)

On UNV’s contributions in the region, His Excellency, Mr. Tauch Choeun, Director General for Youth, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, Kingdom of Cambodia, stated, “UNV plays an important role in South-South Cooperation and multi-stakeholder collaboration because it can coordinate and mobilize resources and develop a framework based on the common interests of different stakeholders. For example, [UNV] can develop a framework as a road map for all stakeholders to come together for youth volunteering.”

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Competing at the conference, 29 young volunteer innovators from ten teams across ASEAN participated in the

Youth Volunteering Innovation Challenge (YVIC). The theme, *Impact ASEAN*, gave them an opportunity to pitch their ideas and scale up their programmes leveraging volunteerism to achieve the SDGs. With the support of the Government of Germany in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the ASEAN Foundation, the ASEAN Secretariat, and SAP, the three finalists, [Ecofun](#) (Indonesia), [Nino Nina Co](#) (Philippines) and [Tune Map](#) (Indonesia), were awarded mentorship and financial support for their projects.

Alexandra Solovieva, UNV Chief Programme Coordinator, emphasized the distinct role of youth as critical thinkers, opinion-makers, and innovators. “To fully harness this potential, youth need to be empowered, and volunteering is a powerful mechanism to achieve this. It is through our partnerships that we can facilitate further South-South cooperation to expand volunteer initiatives, which has a multiplier effect— the key to achieving the SDGs,” she stated.

Watch some [TV coverage of the event](#) at NBT World.

Bangkok, Thailand

[Youth Volunteering South-South cooperation UNDP ILO ASEAN Thailand](#)

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

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