Delegates from across Asia and the Pacific region discuss the future of volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangkok

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) co-organized the Regional Consultation on the Plan of Action for Integrating Volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific on 26 March 2019. The consultation outcomes and recommendations will feed into the Global Technical Meeting in 2020 on reimagining volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda.

The consultation facilitated substantive discussions and generated great interest from partners to further strengthen and leverage the role of volunteerism to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The outcome and recommendations from the consultation will feed into the Global Technical Meeting in 2020 on reimagining volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda, which, in turn, aims to provide special impetus to volunteering during the High-Level Political Forum during the same year.
Most often, volunteerism becomes the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. But this is not enough. Each Ministry is responsible to integrate volunteerism into local and national level policies. -- Ganesh Pandey, Under Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Nepal

The Regional Consultation brought together 77 delegates from 21 countries across Asia and the Pacific, including representatives of 16 governments, and of UN entities, civil society, academia and the private sector. The key findings from the Plan of Action synthesis report from Asia and the Pacific steered the conversation around the future of volunteerism in the region. The event invigorated dialogue around the need for measuring volunteerism, and called for a standardized methodology to be developed for government and volunteer-involving organizations.

The discussions also strongly highlighted the importance of South-South knowledge exchange on volunteerism in the region and led to the identification of specific needs for regional and sub-regional exchanges on policy frameworks, recognition of volunteers and youth volunteerism.

There are many volunteers who try out different solutions to local problems. If we have South-South cooperation and South-South exchanges, we can share those solutions already discovered by volunteers across Asia and the Pacific. -- Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, General Secretary of Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka

Volunteer stakeholders stressed the need to further raise awareness on the SDGs within the volunteer sector and ensure volunteerism is integrated in national development frameworks for SDGs. Several participating government officials displayed a keen interest in collecting nation-wide evidence on volunteerism in 2019 which will allow them to showcase volunteer activities in their respective countries and leverage the potential of volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda.

We know that volunteerism is a powerful way to engage people and accelerate the 2030 Agenda. Millions of people could be mobilized for the very needed acceleration efforts to make the Sustainable Development Goals a reality in Asia and the Pacific region. -- Kaveh
Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Regional Consultation provided a multi-stakeholder platform where UN Member States, private sector and volunteer-involving organizations demonstrated interest and commitment to build evidence around volunteerism. UNV reaffirmed its determination to assist stakeholders in sharing the knowledge and expertise that resides in the communities and support South-South exchanges across Asia and the Pacific region.

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