International Volunteer Day celebrates volunteer action for inclusion

5 December, 2019

Today, on International Volunteer Day, we celebrate and recognise all volunteers worldwide who make a difference everyday in their communities. More than one billion people globally are estimated to volunteer, making contributions worth 2.4% of the global GDP.

In so many areas of our lives we take volunteers for granted. The last time you attended a concert, a volunteer was there in case emergency aid was needed. While, when a natural disaster strikes, local volunteers are always the first ones to respond, risking their own lives to reduce the impact for others. Today, is a day we reflect on each and every volunteer action, and show appreciation.

From China to the Dominican Republic, from Zambia to Afghanistan, this year’s events focus on volunteering and inclusion. The current world challenges; whether climate change, poverty or the need for equality –
require everyone to be involved.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations states today: “Volunteerism is a powerful mechanism to engage people, especially those left farthest behind, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. When people volunteer they connect with others and foster a sense of purpose.”

Through volunteerism, communities around the world often experience strengthened solidarity and inclusion. Volunteering also can help in recognition of the inherent respect for all people; regardless of gender, age, ethnic background, disability or sexuality. By voluntary actions, people on the margins can become more included in societies.

For example, the '#HerStory initiative', with 500 volunteer editors throughout the Arab States, has increased the representation of women in the Arabic-language Wikipedia, achieving more gender inclusiveness in the culture of the region. While UN Volunteers in the Accessible India Campaign augmented accessibility for people with disabilities by auditing 1,600 public buildings across 25 major cities. And in refugee camps throughout the globe, displaced people themselves are volunteering for children’s education and better intercultural understanding.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

International Volunteers Day (IVD), is an international observance that was mandated by the UN General Assembly in 1985. The Day is an opportunity for us all to promote volunteerism, encourage governments to support volunteer efforts and recognize volunteer contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme coordinates a campaign to promote IVD every year, which is celebrated in over 100 countries worldwide. Find out more about this year’s campaign, Volunteer for an Inclusive Future, highlighting SDG 10 and the pursuit of equality, by following hashtags #volunteer4inclusion and #IVD2019 and https://www.unv.org/international-volunteer-day-2019

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide.
UNV mobilizes volunteers, advocates for volunteerism globally and encourages partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming. UNV’s vision is a world where volunteerism is recognized, within societies, as a way for all people to participate in the achievement of the SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities**