When we think about volunteering, the common perception has been that volunteering is about the North helping the South. But examples of people’s voluntary actions from across all borders, countries and regions during health and environmental crises challenge this view.

“Beyond regional solidarity, countries of the South are working together through volunteering”, said Ambassador Neil Pierre, G77 Coordinator, Permanent Mission of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations. He further stressed the need to change our mindsets to recognize the diversity of volunteering practices in both northern and southern countries.

This was one of the key points raised during the opening session of the Global Technical Meeting on ‘Reimagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda’ (GTM2020) which took place virtually today. Over 1500 people attended the event from across the globe.

UN Deputy Secretary General Amina J. Mohammed opened the meeting by reminding the global community that the efforts of 1 billion volunteers is an important foundation at a pivotal moment for development to enable us to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

But for volunteers to make an even bigger difference in local and global communities, their contributions need to be better recognized, supported and integrated into wider efforts.
One way of doing this, according to Xavier Castellanos, Under Secretary General for Programmes and Operations of IFRC, is by providing insurances, incentives and other measures to support and protect volunteers from all backgrounds, particularly informal volunteers, migrants and those furthest left behind.

The inclusion of all groups of people was another key thread that emerged during the discussions. Both speakers and participants stressed the urgency of unleashing the power of volunteering to build more equitable societies – for example, by using new technologies and innovation to reach more people and allow for exchange of knowledge, skills and experience.

“Volunteering has so much potential to transform societies and accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals,” expressed Kamilla Sultanova, a volunteer at Global Dignity Finland.

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner agreed, and furthered, “We tend to focus on the formal sectors of our economy, and yet in our communities, there is a clear development contribution through volunteering, both through the activities that volunteering delivers, but also the ethos or spirit embedded when we work together”.

“We need to rediscover that spirit as part of development efforts”, Steiner concluded.

WHAT’s COMING

Day 2 to focus on knowledge, evidence and policy integration

The back-to-back sessions on Tuesday will explore answers to the questions, ‘how can evidence and knowledge help us reimagine volunteering?’, and ‘how can we best embed volunteering into policy coherence and integration efforts for the 2030 Agenda’ Check out the programme for more information.

Read the related documents:
• Measuring Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda: Toolbox of Principles, Tools and Practices
• Acceleration Matrix: Volunteering for the SDGs (Working Draft)

#GTM2020 ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Check out some tweets from today’s session

See the social media wall here: https://walls.io/volunteerSDGs
Keep following #GTM2020 on social media. Interact with us on Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram and LinkedIn using #volunteerSDGS #GTM2020 #HLPF2020
TWITTER WALL

UN Volunteers @UNVolunteers - 3h
@UNVolunteers @AchimSteiner shares his thoughts on the need to rediscover the spirit of volunteering for development #GTM2020 #HLF2020 #volunteersDGs

“We tend to focus on the formal sectors of our economy, and yet in our communities there is a very clear development contribution through volunteering, both through the activities that volunteering delivers, but also the ethos or spirit embedded when we work together. We need to recover that spirit as part of development efforts.”

Achim Steiner
UNDP Administrator

UN Volunteers @UNVolunteers - 5h
What does “reimagining volunteering” mean for the value that we assign to volunteers? @KamillaUbuntu discusses the need for incentives and recognition #volunteerSDGs #HLF2020 #GTM2020

In Finland volunteering is worth 3 billion Euro or 1.8% GDP. We need incentives and recognition in line with this contribution.

MS Kamilla Sultanova
Volunteer Representative, Global Disability Fellowship

UN Volunteers @UNVolunteers - 6h
#GTM2020 #Keynote speaker UN Deputy Secretary General Amina J. Mohammed reminds us that the efforts of the one billion volunteers are critical for “building back better” from #COVID19 #DecadeOfAction #volunteersDGs #HLF2020

Deputy Secretary General Amina J. Mohammed reminds us that the efforts of the one billion volunteers globally provide an important foundation at this pivotal moment for development enabling us to recover from #COVID19

Amina J. Mohammed
Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Tolly Kurbanoval @TollyKurbanova - 1h
If you care about volunteering, then this knowledge portal is for you. knowledge.un.org/volunteering_d...

Tolly Kurbanoval @TollyKurbanova launched the UNV Knowledge Platform containing the most important data and evidence on volunteering at the world level #volunteersDGs #GTM2020

Richard Blevitt @richardblevitt - 6h
"Our volunteers have been critical in the time of COVID-19. The volunteers need to be better accepted and supported to do their work." @Blevitt_NYC @agan_chauhan @Francescoconca @UNVolunteers @cece_aifdef @amjadmsaleem