



UNV position statement on the post-2015 development agenda

Volunteerism is key to social, economic and environmental transformation

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has a long history of integrating volunteering into global and national strategies, policies and plans for peace and development. The post-2015 agenda offers a historic opportunity for UNV to advocate for volunteerism and the values it stands for, as an inherent component of any future global development framework.

UNV supports meaningful consultations on the new global framework and calls on Governments and UN entities to enable civil society to substantively engage the formulation and implementation of the next generation of internationally agreed development goals. Volunteerism is universal and strengthens social inclusion, solidarity and ownership. It is a global phenomenon that transcends boundaries, religions and cultural divides; it goes by different names and finds different applications in different contexts. It is an expression of civic engagement, and of individuals' involvement in their communities (be it local, national or international). To achieve sustainable economic, social, and environmental progress, volunteering and civic participation are key ingredients in all programming, whatever the thematic focus—for example sustainable livelihoods, health, education, employment, environment, gender, or youth. Volunteerism forms the backbone of national and international civil society organisations as well as many social and political movements. It is a powerful force in the public sector and is increasingly a feature of the private sector.

Therefore

1. Volunteerism is universal and strengthens civic engagement, social inclusion, solidarity and ownership.

It is a strategically viable global mechanism through which the implementation of new global goals and targets can be supported. People are the real wealth of nations (HDR 1990) and volunteerism is a key opportunity that allows people to be valued in development plans, to be an anchor in the face of global changes, to significantly contribute to economic and social well-being, to be a source of community strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion and to sustain the universal human values that connect individuals and societies.

Well supported and facilitated volunteerism, integrated into national practices and policies, gives people and communities the opportunity to directly engage in their own development and to have an impact on the global goals and targets, through their action across the world. The State of the World's Volunteerism Report (UNV, 2011) argues that countries, people and communities that exhibit high levels of volunteerism are more economically and socially vibrant, and are in a better position to meet global challenges. Acknowledging the importance of volunteerism in the current discussions on sustainable human development empowers people to give shape to their own future.¹

¹ "Recognizing that volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at, inter alia, such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management and social integration and, in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination" (United Nations General Assembly A/RES 63/153)



2. Volunteerism should be part of a new measuring framework that goes beyond GDP and demonstrates progress in human well-being and sustainable human development.

Measuring volunteerism in its many facets will contribute to better understanding of human well-being and Sustainable Human Development, and also to demonstrate the scope and quantum of action towards the post-2015 global targets. In UNV's State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR), volunteerism is seen as an element of people's well-being and of more socially cohesive societies.

Currently most measurement of the "response" to global targets is done through finances – the amount of money spent/invested as an indicator of level of activity. By being able to measure volunteerism and relate that to different targets and goals, one can see how the people's responses are taking shape – it is the combination of the financial (formal) and the volunteering (non-formal) response that will give a more realistic/complete picture of how Global Goals are being acted upon and assimilated in different societies. This in itself goes beyond the "well-being" measurement and is the added value that volunteerism brings.