

SDG 4 - Quality Education

Thank you, Mr. Moderator,

I am speaking on behalf of the **Volunteer Groups Alliance** and want to remind everyone of the important role volunteers play in achieving SDG 4: ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. In addition to the important role governments at all levels play in achieving the SDGs, volunteers and civil society are also making critical contributions which must be recognized.

In Nepal, for example, VSO is working to promote access to education for marginalized girls through the Sisters for Sisters program, funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). Community volunteers are trained to act as "big sisters" and mentor girls who are at risk of dropping out of school. Volunteer teachers work alongside Nepalese teachers to improve the quality of teaching, and British and Nepalese youth volunteers are working to raise awareness of the value of education and to challenge some of the traditional attitudes and cultural norms which are preventing girls from attending school, such as child marriage. The project has led to significant increases in both attendance and achievement for girls, with 98% of the girls from the first phase of the project remaining in school.

Over the last 15 years through its Grow in Family program, United Way Chile has mobilized more than 11,000 volunteers from companies committed to improving early education. The effort addresses problems that affect children's healthy development: lack of quality pre-schools and toxic or unsupportive environments at home. Volunteers are sensitized to the importance of the early years in life and provided with opportunities to take action, such as helping to improve educational infrastructure and learning environments and facilitating workshops for parents. All this has led to more opportunities for about 27,000 children.

In Senegal, volunteers through a local partner of France Volontaires, le GREF, supported the development of a training plan on early childhood learning which has been subsequently developed into a national plan and adopted across the country following a partnership with the national government.

Volunteers are critical to achieving the SDGs. We must acknowledge and support their contributions if we are serious about creating lasting change.

Thank you.