

## Volunteer Groups' Governance Structure

The international coalition of volunteer groups, working in 146 countries, is self-organized according to GA Resolution 67/290 around the "Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group."

### Background on the Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group

In 2011, Volunteer groups marked the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV+10) at the global, regional and national levels. The Year enhanced perceptions of the critical role of volunteers, community voluntary action and civic engagement in achieving peace and development results, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and humanitarian targets. It resulted in increased solidarity among the volunteering community, and strengthened a volunteering alliance.

United Nations member states marked IYV+10 in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 5 December 2011, with the adoption of UN GA **Resolution 66/67** which recognizes that volunteerism "is an important component of any strategy aimed at, inter alia, such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, youth empowerment, climate change, disaster prevention and management, social integration, humanitarian action, peacebuilding and, in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination." More importantly, RES/66/67 also emphasizes "the important contribution of volunteering and the participation of individuals and communities to the achievement of sustainable development and related initiatives."

In view of the success of IYV+10 in 2011, the volunteer groups convened in New York in early 2012 to self-organize and engage in the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Volunteer groups active engagement in Rio+20 Conference and their commitment to sustainable development was fully recognized by Member States in the Outcome Document of the Conference (UN GA **Resolution 66/288**) by explicitly mentioning "volunteer groups" as one of the "relevant stakeholders" whose "meaningful involvement and active participation is required to achieve sustainable development." Member states agreed in Rio to work more closely with the volunteer groups and encourage their active participation "in processes that contribute to decision-making, planning and implementation of policies and programmes for sustainable development at all levels." (Para 43)

The explicit governmental recognition achieved in the Rio+20 Conference further mobilized volunteer groups to define their commitments to sustainable development. At their 2012 Annual Conference of International Volunteering and Cooperation Organizations (IVCO) they approved the "Ottawa Declaration" which identifies a set of joint priorities and actions to ensure that volunteerism is explicitly recognized and supported in the Post-2015 development agenda.

The year 2012 ended with another important governmental recognition milestone for volunteer groups; the UN GA **Resolution 67/138** was approved on 10 December. This critical UN resolution, “Integrating volunteering in the next decade”, calls “Member States and other stakeholders to favor the integrating of volunteering in all relevant issues of the United Nations, in particular to contribute to accelerated achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as giving appropriate consideration to the issue in the discussions on the Post-2015 United Nations development agenda. (Para 9).

In response to the challenge posed by Member States, volunteer groups committed to scale up efforts to make the impact of volunteering even more visible in the post-2015 process. To that end, a task force of volunteer groups was established in 2013 to support a more systematic integration of volunteerism as an enabling factor for the implementation of the sustainable development goals, including through related indicators to measure the achievements of some of the SDGs.

Self-organizing efforts by volunteer groups were immediately recognized again by the international community when in July 2013, Member States once more explicitly recognized volunteer groups as a relevant stakeholder in UN GA **Resolution 67/290** on the “Format and organizational aspects of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development.” Additionally, volunteer groups welcomed the Secretary-General Report “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015” which again recognized that “the transformative actions of the post-2015 development agenda should be supported by multi-stakeholder partnerships, including volunteer groups” (**SG Report A/68/202**).

In 2014, the volunteer groups’ task force evolved into a more focused Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group, coordinated by the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum). Volunteer groups gathered to share their experience and commitment to sustainable development and agreed to re-state their widespread commitment to an inclusive Post-2015 process in the “Lima Declaration.”<sup>1</sup>

The coordinated efforts of volunteer groups and the strong recognition of member states to volunteerism received a very strong endorsement by the UN Secretary-General in his Synthesis Report “The Road to Dignity by 2030” (**SG Report A/69/700**) which makes a strong statement on the role of “volunteer groups” by stating: “As we seek to build capacities and to help the new agenda to take root, volunteerism can be another powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation. Volunteerism can help to expand

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<sup>1</sup> The Lima Declaration is a statement of agreed priorities and messages as international volunteering cooperation organizations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <http://forum-ids.org/conferences/ivco/ivco-2014/lima-declaration/>

and mobilize constituencies, and to engage people in national planning and implementation for sustainable development goals. And volunteer groups can help to localize the new agenda by providing new spaces of interaction between governments and people for concrete and scalable actions.” (Para 131).

### **Objectives of the Group**

- Achieve the full recognition of the specific contribution made by volunteers to the implementation of global and national development agendas.
- Achieve full recognition of volunteerism as a cross-cutting mean to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Support governments to strengthen their nationally owned accountability mechanisms including through working with civil society, volunteers, community groups and all those who support delivery of national development goals.
- Provide spaces for civil society, including volunteer groups, to engage in decision making processes around the implementation of the Post 2015 agenda.
- Increased representation of volunteer voices from the global south and support the participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in Post 2015 discussions at global, regional and national level.
- Identify continued opportunities at regional level, i.e. through the Beyond 2015 Coalition, Civil Society Organization Consultations etc. for Post-2015 Volunteer Working Group members to collectively or individually engage and promote the above actions.

### **Participating organizations**

The Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group is open to all organizations that work with and through volunteers - locally, nationally and internationally. The members of the Working Group represent the diversity of volunteerism and reflect the universality of the Post-2015 agenda.

Members include international volunteer and cooperation agencies, volunteer-involving NGOs and academic institutions, as well as those working through corporate volunteering, diaspora volunteering, reciprocal volunteering and through volunteers in their own countries.

Membership to the working group implies acceptance of the objectives listed above and a desire to work in collaboration to bring about these objectives.

No financial contribution is required to be a member of the Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group. Representatives of organizations on the working group do so on a voluntary basis.

Interested organizations can register via the [Volunteer Action Counts](#) website, during the annual IVCO conference or in discussions with the Chair, Coordinator or members of the Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group.

### **Role and Scope of work**

- The Working Group is an ad hoc and informal body which does not have representational mandate or responsibility
- The Working Group is meant to be a resource for a growing network of organizations, and provide them with opportunities which they can carry further into their own organizations and networks
- Teleconferences are held once a month, according to meeting plan which is set up at the beginning of each year.
- Sub-working groups, such as the Indicators Working Group, meet between the teleconferences and report to the Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group
- Drafting of documents, in accordance with division of labor
- Liaison with UNV on policy and practical issues (including sending out information to wider network)
- Mobilization of other volunteer groups and strategic stakeholders
- Participation in New York-based arenas/meetings as representatives of respective volunteer involving organizations, according to accessibility

### **Coordination**

The Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group is coordinated through teleconferences, by the Chair of the working group supported by the Coordinator. The time of the teleconferences is rotated every month to allow for maximum participation of members across the globe.

The Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group has created an Advocacy Toolkit to help Volunteer Involving Organisations meet the objectives of the group. Members provide feedback to the working group on their actions undertaken at the national level at each of the teleconferences and key decisions are made during those meetings.

The working group is financially independent and fully supported by the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum) who provides human capacity (the Coordinator). The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme supports the work of the Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group by covering the administrative costs.

The working group circulates minutes of each of their meetings to its membership and publicizes its work to the wider volunteer-involving organizations through for example, updates to the Forum Board which informs its membership, the IAVE membership, through the volunteer action counts and other umbrella organizations represented

within the group.

### **Speaker nominations**

For the post-2015 negotiations in New York, members of the working group having identified a potential speaker bore the costs of bringing speakers to New York. Nominations were revised by members of the working group which tried to maintain a gender and regional balance in the representation. Representation from the South are given a preference. Selected participants were responsible for representing Volunteer Groups during the Intergovernmental Sessions, including with delivering of statements.

The Coordinator is responsible to disseminate broadly opportunities to speak and participate in the Sessions.

### **Position Papers**

Any member of the working group may lead the process of drafting position papers on behalf of the working group, with the support of the Coordinator. Position papers are always draft in consultation and are only finalized with the permission of the Chair.

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The working group structure means that the group relies on the financial support of its member organisations and does not employ staff directly. It has also meant that participation at major events, including intergovernmental negotiations, has been limited to organisations with more financial and human resources, or those that could secure funding for participation.

The working group structure offers a number of advantages, including...

- Saving human resources
- Allowed us to be flexible and nimble
- An organisation risks being seen as a competitor to the members
- Requires less commitment / leadership from CSOs.