



**INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF
YOUTH**
AUGUST 2010-2011
OUR YEAR OUR VOICE

Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

Fact Sheet: Youth and Volunteerism

- In Sudan, youth are partnering to combat female genital mutilation.
- In Honduras, youth are promoting volunteerism through a national campaign, sharing training materials and resources.
- In Ukraine, young people are working to increase youth volunteers, empower other young people, and address the issues of youth inclusion and employment.
- Around 80 per cent of online volunteers mobilized through the UNV Online Volunteering service (www.onlinevolunteering.org) are between the ages of 18 and 35, 62 per cent of whom are from developing countries.

Young people represent at least 18 per cent of the world's population. In most African countries, youth constitute about 70 per cent of the population. Through greater citizen participation, youth volunteering facilitates access to work and contributes to forming young leaders for today and tomorrow.

As a potential tool to address development challenges, youth volunteerism needs to be recognized, encouraged, supported and promoted at global, national and regional levels.

United Nations and Youth Volunteerism

The UN entities working on youth issues encourage policymakers, communities and youth themselves to empower young people as a valuable but under-utilized resource. UN efforts focus on encouraging youth participation in programming and policy-making, preparing younger generations to exercise their rights and becoming contributing members of societies.

Recognizing the potential for youth volunteerism and the need to create a global forum for youth to undertake this work, the United Nations General Assembly established and mandated the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in 1970 to promote volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. In 1976, the General Assembly widened the mandate to include advancing the role of youth in development.

Progress

With UN System support, several national Government and NGO partners have developed programmes and mechanisms enabling youth volunteerism in development.

Since 2007, the Liberian National Youth Volunteer Service has recruited university graduates as volunteers in education, health, agriculture, peace building and development affairs, strengthening social cohesion and encouraging self-help.

Youth volunteerism can also contribute toward achieving gender equality. In Sudan, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNV UNICEF and the Ahfad University for Women implemented an innovative programme to mobilize local communities to combat female genital mutilation.

UNV is supporting the National Youth Institute in Honduras, by implementing "Promoting volunteerism in Honduras". This initiative aims to increase national coordination through a network of Volunteer Involving Organizations,





promote volunteerism through a national campaign, and strengthen volunteer management capacities by sharing training materials and resources within the network.

Creating an enabling environment in the Ukraine, UNV and UNDP partnered with the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sport, national and international stakeholders and NGOs in developing the Youth Social Inclusion for Civic Engagement project to increase the number of youth volunteers and empower young people while simultaneously addressing the issues of youth inclusion and employment.

Through the UNV Online Volunteering service, www.onlinevolunteering.org, UNV has significantly increased youth volunteerism in peace and development, with approximately 80 per cent of volunteers mobilized via the service being between the ages of 18 and 35, and 62 per cent from developing countries. This initiative has enabled youth participation from all educational, social and cultural backgrounds over the Internet.

The Way Forward

Government support is essential when establishing youth volunteer schemes and programmes. It is also important that youth volunteerism be clearly linked to national development objectives. By integrating volunteerism into youth policies, supporting youth volunteering programmes and increasing training and capacity-building opportunities for youth, Governments will bolster youth contributions to peace and development, yielding benefits for the whole society.

Often, civil society organizations have experience in youth volunteering along with the knowledge required to provide a wide array of training – specifically in leadership, management, fundraising and project implementation skills. This expertise should be utilized to empower youth through volunteering.

The UN system can support capacity-building initiatives and work with national partners to improve opportunities for youth volunteering, incorporating more inclusive and efficient future programmes. For example, by late 2011, UNV will publish “The State of the World Volunteerism Report”, which will present an opportunity to analyse the global situation of volunteerism and have some policy recommendations on youth volunteerism as well.

International Volunteer Day, celebrated each year on 5 December, focuses attention on the contributions of volunteers. The year 2011 marks the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers. Overlapping with the International Year of Youth, it offers a unique opportunity to promote the combined role that youth volunteers can play in advancing development.

For further information

- World Volunteer Web: <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org>
- UNV website: <http://www.unv.org/what-we-do/thematic-areas/youth.html>
- “Youth volunteering, social integration and decent work: Inspiring leadership” Discussion paper for the 48th Session of the UN Economic and Social Council side event by United Nations Volunteers with support from Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA), Johannesburg, South Africa.
- “Volunteering and Social Activism: Pathways for Participation in Human Development” Joint publication of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) and UNV, 2008
- 2003, 2005, 2007 World Youth Report: Youth Participation in decision making and social inclusion. Youth Examples throughout the report show how youth volunteering is a crosscutting method in combating all challenges facing youth today.

This Fact Sheet was prepared by United Nations Volunteers. It is part of a series of Fact Sheets developed under the coordination of UNPY to support the International Year of Youth.

