

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Volunteer Groups' Thematic Paper to the HLPF 2018

Volunteer Groups

Volunteers and volunteer effort are essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The aim of eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity will not be realised without the contributions of millions of properly supported and enabled volunteers.

Volunteers extend the reach of SDG-related services, facilitating access to services in health, education and many other areas to some of the poorest, most marginalised or most vulnerable communities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

For poor and marginalised people, including minority indigenous peoples, refugees, those with disabilities, and others who are all too often on the edges of society, the opportunity to volunteer is a chance to move from being a passive recipient to being actively engaged in development processes.

Volunteerism is a universal phenomenon, but it does not occur at uniform rates, nor is it uniformly effective. It is strongest when it is recognised and supported.

Citizen-led monitoring offers opportunities to not only collect data at a level that is closer to poor and marginalised people, but when combined with participatory processes it has the potential to empower people in realising their rights as citizens.

Goal 6

Volunteers are active in ensuring water sources are clean by testing samples and clearing waterways of refuse around the world. Volunteers also educate whole communities on proper sanitation practices.

Goal 7

Volunteers are installing and maintaining solar panels, repairing infrastructure post disaster, contributing to Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) renewable energy improvement projects, and are even developing hydro-electric power schemes to make renewable energy accessible.¹²³

Goal 11

Sustainable cities are active cities filled with volunteer-driven NGOs and volunteers. Millions are involved with environmental volunteering, farming, building new and inclusive technology, actively educating each other, advocating and lobbying local and national governments, and more. Furthermore, millions of volunteers are first responders during natural and other disasters, working to safeguard neighbours and bounce back quickly.

1 <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/environment/dubai-youth-volunteers-clean-hatta-s-solar-panels-1.694822>

2 <https://www.unv.org/news/partnership-yamaha-motor-first-partnership-private-sector-japan>

3 <https://volunteer2030.org/2015/06/26/cooperating-with-cooperatives-in-vanuatu/>

Goal 12

Volunteers are consumers, workers and concerned contributors. Volunteers are crucial in efforts to lobby companies to improve production practices, and are at the fore of educating consumers about how the goods they purchase are sourced and produced to ensure our scarce resources are not squandered.

Goal 15

Volunteers are crucial to ensuring our natural environment is well cared for. India set a world record in 2017 by planting 66 million trees **on one day**, made possible through the work of 1.5 million volunteers.⁴

In Lebanon, a unique collaboration between the United Nations, local government, the private sector and volunteers resulted in 2,000 volunteers planting 5,000 cedar trees, part of a plan to where volunteers will be instrumental in planting 40 million trees by 2030.⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

Volunteer groups make the following recommendations to the HLPF for 2018, and in future years:

- 1) Formally recognise the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the SDGs in the Member States' voluntary national reviews at the HLPF
- 2) Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognised and supported in the national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda
- 3) Note the commitment of volunteer groups to sharing in the accountability for the successful delivery of the SDGs
- 4) Follow the lead of Member States by affirming their full support for the implementation of A/RES/67/290, which supports the participation of non-governmental actors
- 5) Ensure the data for monitoring the SDGs is captured through participatory processes and includes the perspectives of the most marginalised voices, as well as the volunteers that work closest to them
- 6) Ensure the accountability, transparency and review framework for the SDGs involves community consultation at all levels, including representation of the most marginalised voices, as well as the volunteers that work closest to them

⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/02/india-plants-trees-breaks-world-record/>

⁵ <http://www.lri-lb.org/en/news.php?page=2&t=17&i=270#news&panel1-1>