



INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

5 DECEMBER

International Volunteer Day (IVD) is a chance for individual volunteers, communities and organizations to promote their contributions to development at the local, national and international levels. By combining UN support with a grassroots mandate, IVD is a unique opportunity for people and volunteer-involving organizations to work with government agencies, non-profit institutions, community groups, academia and the private sector.

IVD was established by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 40/212 on 17 December 1985. Since then, governments, the UN system and civil society organizations have successfully joined volunteers around the world to celebrate the Day on 5 December.



International Volunteer Day: A focus on partnership and development

Through the years, IVD has been used strategically: many countries have focused on volunteers' contributions to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of time-bound targets to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women.

The organization of IVD is generally the result of a partnership between the UN system, governments, volunteer-involving organizations and committed individuals. Representatives from the media or academia, foundations, the private sector, faith groups, and sports and recreational organizations are often involved too.

The International Year of Volunteers: From 2001 to 2011

Following a proposal of the Government of Japan to the United Nations Secretary General, the 52nd session of the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. Resolution 52/17 of 20 November 1997 was co-sponsored by 123 countries. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme was designated as focal point for the Year within the UN system. The year led to a better appreciation of the power of volunteerism in its many forms and the ways to support it.

On 18th December 2008, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution reaffirming its recognition of the work of UNV as the focal point for the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers, and requesting it to continue to raise awareness of the contribution of volunteerism to peace and development, to act as a convener on the subject for the various interested stakeholders, to make available networking and reference resources and to provide technical cooperation to developing countries, upon their request. Resolution 63/153 was co-sponsored by 75 countries.

The UN General Assembly is supporting the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers in 2011. A chance to build on the momentum created in 2001, this year's International Volunteer Day is thus an excellent moment to reflect on what the 10th anniversary might achieve for volunteer-involving organizations, volunteers and communities around the world.

The cultural form and definition of a volunteer may change depending on circumstances, but the underlying principle never wavers: every individual can make a difference in society. Beyond helping to promote the greater good, volunteers enrich their own lives. As one volunteer recently put it, "I feel as though I am able to make a difference in the world and use my skills. It allows me to genuinely feel as though I am part of the world community."

*United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2008*



How to get involved in IVD

The World Volunteer Web – the global focal point for the IVD campaign – hosts a range of IVD-related tools and resources.

Plan your event: Learn from best practices and lessons from past activities commemorating IVD. Form or join IVD planning committees, consult on a national theme, plan activities, produce promotional materials, develop a media strategy and document the impact of the event.

Ideas: IVD is an excellent opportunity to give people the 'big picture' about volunteerism, promote specific volunteering initiatives or launch new ones. Consider how to advocate the impact of volunteering, integrate the MDGs, or address community needs through a voluntary initiative.

Resources: Make use of promotional tools available online, like the IVD logo and templates for clothing, banners, bookmarks, postcards and posters. You will also find the statements of the UN Secretary-General, UNDP Administrator and UNV Executive Coordinator online at the beginning of December.

Network: Access the directory of national focal points online, which connects individual volunteers to the IVD committee in their country. You can initiate a committee in your country if none exists yet.

Share experiences: Send information, photos and videos about your IVD events to info@worldvolunteerweb.org for posting on the website. Please include "IVD (country name)" in the subject line of your emails; send photos as .jpeg files and keep written materials below 300 words. Your reports enable organizers, volunteers and World Volunteer Web readers to capture the wealth of activities undertaken around IVD. This information exchange helps advocate the value of volunteering for peace and development.

Find out more at www.worldvolunteerweb.org



UNV volunteer Adel Sabaeneh raises awareness of the MDGs in the occupied Palestinian territory during IVD 2008. (Photo: UNDP/PAPP archive)

About United Nations Volunteers

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development, and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing volunteers.

For more information about UNV's work, please visit these websites:

www.unvolunteers.org

www.worldvolunteerweb.org

www.onlinevolunteering.org

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