

UNV EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR

MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

5 December 2010

This year, International Volunteer Day (IVD) comes at a vibrant time. 'Share the Story' is the theme of UNV's IVD campaign. UNV is using social media to engage in a global online conversation focused on how volunteering contributes to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

People the world over joined UNV on Facebook yesterday (4 December) for a 24-hour online film festival to celebrate the worldwide impact of volunteerism. The festival showed volunteers in action, featured volunteer stories and hosted discussions on how volunteerism contributes to ending poverty.

'Share the Story' shows how the incredible spirit of people all over the world inspires others to get involved. On-site or online, in their own community or abroad, at the national or at the global level, volunteers deliberately take action to address peace and development issues such as ending hunger, improving healthcare, addressing conflict, tackling gender inequality and dealing with the impact of climate change. Volunteers don't wait for others to solve the problems; they engage and play an essential role as active citizens in shaping their societies.

As we recognize and appreciate the contributions and impact of all volunteers, we are also celebrating the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and launching the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV+10). The year 2011 offers an exciting opportunity to recognize the contribution of volunteers to peace and development. UNV will work with its many partners to mark the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers in the coming year and promote greater recognition of the values that inspire volunteer action.

We know that volunteerism can enhance and extend people's access to services, promote social inclusion and bring the marginalized into decision-making processes that affect them. We need policies and institutional and organizational frameworks that advocate, encourage, support, and promote the contributions volunteers make. Many far-reaching civil society initiatives started with the voluntary engagement of just a few individuals who pursued a vision of change with great commitment.

UNV has been joining forces with a host of partners and stakeholders to measure the impact of volunteers and volunteerism. We are documenting the findings and plan to share the results through the State of the World's Volunteerism Report, which we intend to launch on IVD next year.

Today, I wish to pay tribute to the three UNV volunteers who lost their lives in the January earthquake in Haiti and to all volunteers we lost or who were injured while serving others.

As we celebrate this International Volunteer Day, we thank the many volunteers who continue to give their time, talent and skills, often in difficult circumstances, to promote peace and development. You are an inspiration to us all.