

UNV Newsletter

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IVD Special Bulletin

February 2010

In This Issue

- 1 [Home Headlines](#)
- 2 [Bonn Bulletin](#)
- 3 [Meet your Colleague](#)
- 4 [Notice Board](#)
- 6 [UN Calendar](#)
- 7 [Upcoming Holidays](#)
- 8 [From the UN Stress Counselor's office](#)

Home Headlines

Celebrating International Volunteer Day 2009

International Volunteer Day (IVD) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985 to acknowledge the potential that volunteers promise towards betterment of social conditions, promotion of economic development, and empowering people to take charge. On **5 December 2009** the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme celebrated **IVD** with the theme '**Volunteering for our Planet**'.

UNV India played a leadership role in organizing IVD events in partnership with a number of organizations involved in voluntary sector. UNDP India, Ministry of Environment & Forest, Government of India, Indian Council for Cultural Relations and various national and international development organizations such as VSO, American Center and media partners such as Times Foundation, among others, joined hands together to celebrate IVD 2009. Swechha played a key role in coordination of events.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) and UNDP Resident Representative (UNDP RR), Mr. Patrice Coeur-Bizot observed the events gracefully in New Delhi on the IVD day. He addressed the events highlighting the roles of volunteers on the protection of environment.

The IVD events were primarily divided into two phases: the first phase was the campaign phase wherein, effort was directed towards mobilizing scores of volunteers, recognizing their efforts and advocating various aspects of volunteerism among a wide audience comprising students from schools, colleges, and professionals. The second phase was the IVD event which was to be observed on 5 December to celebrate the spirit of volunteerism engaging volunteers in various activities.

During the first phase, various workshops were organized for sensitizing students on climate change and global warming. These workshops were conducted in 30 government and private schools covering all social strata in Delhi. The workshops were very well received by the students and teaching staff. A 'volunteer space' was also created in each school by gifting them a wall magazine where they could write about and share ideas on volunteering with their peers and school mates.

The workshops became a highly animated and interactive forum for the students to discuss their own ideas and concepts, and what it means to them to be a volunteer. Also, students were encouraged to meet and interact with volunteer heroes, including representatives of UNV who shared their experiences of volunteering with the students. The IVD event in New Delhi was phenomenon unprecedentedly in bringing together a cross section of people comprising students, media-persons, policy-makers, environmentalists and other volunteers from various organizations.



Mr. Patrice Coeur-Bizot, UNRC/UNDP RR addressing IVD 2009 in New Delhi.'

Highlights of IVD 2009

A **Massive Shramdaan** (volunteering for manual labour), where over 3000 volunteers — school and college students, National Cadet Corps (NCC), the UNV India Country office team, environmental activists, government officials, celebrities from the world of fashion, music and art, as well as citizens of Delhi — gave their time and effort on 5 December for cleaning the banks of the river Yamuna at Kudsia Ghat.

The Yamuna caters to the needs of millions of people along its course and beyond. Yet, the river has been widely abused all along its course. The IVD 2009 celebrations were designed to have a two-fold purpose: firstly, foster the spirit of volunteerism and secondly, focus the spotlight on what can be described as Delhi's most significant environmental concern.

At the end of the Yamuna clean-up more than a truck-load of garbage was collected from the river bank and taken to the landfill. This event helped in reaching out to a large number of people, mainly youth who have now become a part of the 'We for Yamuna' campaign.

Representatives of various organizations spoke to inspire the participants to volunteer and highlighted the importance of Volunteering for our Planet.



Volunteers clean up the banks of Yamuna at Delhi's Kudsia Ghat



Visitors at the UNV stall



School students in Delhi participate in a workshop on 'Volunteering for our Planet'



Volunteers at the IVD venue in Delhi

Mr. Patrice Coeur-Bizot, UN RC/ UNDP RR also joined the volunteers in cleaning the banks of the Yamuna, thereby motivating them and reinforcing the urgent need of engaging ourselves in innovative ways to help our planet.

Musical Performance by Menwhopause, a Delhi-based band that is hugely popular on the city's musical circuit, started the musical part of the event and set the tone for the performances that followed.

Musical Performance by Terra Naomi, an accomplished singer, songwriter and musician based in the USA, who was on a two-week tour of India. She performed at the International Volunteer Day event on 5 December and also at the "Say It's Possible Climate Change" Concert in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Musical Performance by Indian Ocean, one of the country's best known bands. The band performed a number of their popular songs at the event, as well as songs that were relevant to the occasion. These included songs that are a call to social action and change, and odes to rivers.

The event was also attended by several noted celebrities including fashion designers Rina Dhaka and Ritu Kumar, singer Shibani Kashyap and Ms. Nafisa Ali, a politician.

UNV India also organized various events in Orissa, Mumbai and other parts of India. UNV Volunteers working in far flung areas took initiative unprecedentedly and organized events on their own. They deserve our appreciation heartedly for putting resources together voluntarily.

IVD in Orissa

UNV India and UNDP India commemorated the International Volunteer Day (IVD) on 5 December 2009 at Bhubaneswar, Orissa in collaboration with local partners - Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) and Bakul Foundation. In the event, about 700 participants from all across Bhubaneswar and adjoining areas took part at the CYSD campus in Bhubaneswar. They visited information stalls set up by various organizations working particularly in the field of volunteerism, environment protection and conservation. The information stalls provided an ideal platform for the existing and potential volunteers to interact with each other and explore possibilities of working together.



Young & experienced volunteers signing up for IVD in Orissa



Gifting a plant instead of flowers to guests



Street play by young volunteers focusing on environment protection

The day-long programme focused on mobilization of volunteers towards protecting the degrading environment. A number of activities marked the event in Orissa such as photography exhibition, group art activity, quiz on environment, film shows that not only highlighted the need to protect our environment, but also motivated volunteers to act promptly to save our planet. They were participating actively in the voluntary action performing dramas and left the IVD venue imprinting deep impression of IVD for collaborative action to save our Earth. To sum up, the IVD 2009 event at Bhubaneswar, Orissa was very successful in highlighting the need for voluntary action both at an individual and institutional level.

IVD Events at other places

IVD was also observed enthusiastically at various places across the country, largely led by the National UNV volunteers working with various projects across India. While Mr. Minaram Patnaik initiated plantation of trees by mobilizing volunteers from various sectors at Ganjam district in Orissa, Ms. G.N. Krupa from Chennai interacted with school children on various ways to protect our environment. Mr. Sandeep Saxena from Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh, observed the IVD with support from the local Krishi Vigyan Kendra, (a centre of Agriculture University Madhya Pradesh) and Jan Abiyan Parishad, a state government organization.



UNV Volunteers mobilized local students in Chhattisgarh

Mr. Dnyanesh Rengutwar from Mumbai organized an interactive session with nine women leaders who have successfully addressed the water problem in their village Dalkan located 100 km away from Mumbai. The event was organized in coordination with Jalswaraj Project Unit of Thane district in Maharashtra. Mr. Gopal Gore along with other team members mobilized volunteers in the village to participate in the discussion on water crisis and its impact on women.

Mr. Bhaskar Rao, Mr. Vishal Singh and Ms. Archana Meshram from Raipur, Chhattisgarh, sensitized 45 social welfare students on climate change and volunteerism. In a sensitization workshop wherein scientists, volunteers and NGO representatives participated, discussion was focused on the impact of global warming in our society and the role of youth volunteers in combating it. A meeting was also organized on environmental issues on 5 December, 2009 involving the Self Help Groups (SHGs) of 3 villages of Durg district. This is industrialized areas of Durg facing pollution and water shortage. The SHG members have expressed commitment to plant trees and take care of them. The Forest Department supported the plantation by providing indigenous variety of plants to the SHG members free of cost along with valuable technical inputs.

Concluding Remarks

The IVD events in 2009 marked a huge success because of contributions made by individual volunteers and organizations which put together resources equivalent to more than \$ 300,000 in monetary term. A team of over 50 volunteers from colleges in Delhi University worked closely with Swechha to organize and coordinate all aspects of the event in Delhi. The overwhelming responses were received for IVD events from all walks of lives including students, organizations, the Government of Delhi, and Delhi Police. The footprints left over by the level of response have encouraged people to do more for our Planet.

The music concert was attended by an equal number of people — street children from Salam Baalak Trust and Jamghat, students from Delhi's private and government schools, NCC Cadets, employees of organizations such as Tata Consultancy Services, Genpact and Whirlpool. In addition, thousands of people registered with partner NGOs and organizations to volunteer their time and skills in the future for similar activities or campaigns and contribute towards making a positive change in the environment.

The efforts of UNV volunteers in the preparatory phase of the IVD event also carried a significant meaning. The message of Volunteering for our Planet was sent out not only to those who participated in the workshops and the event, but also to those who could not make themselves in the event through coverage by media partners. UNV India and its partners will continue to keep in touch and work with the volunteer groups that attended the event on 5 December. Many schools, colleges and corporate houses have pledged to take on and carry out action projects in their neighborhoods and offices. It is hoped that that the IVD events touched the hearts of Indian people and infused the passion of volunteerism, particularly for protecting our Planet.

IVD Snapshots



*Singing for the cause of environment:
Performance by Menwhopause on IVD at
Delhi*



*“Say It's Possible: Performance by Terra
Naomi at Srinagar*



*Let's work for a beautiful planet: volunteers
participate in group art at IVD celebrations in
Orissa*



Creative expressions by volunteers



*The ‘Seal the Deal’ stall at IVD event in
Bhubaneswar*



*Volunteers sharing their experience in
environment protection in Orissa*

“There is a volunteer in each one of us and it is up to us to harness the volunteer within”

Aditya, a young wildlife conservationist in Orissa.

Bonn Bulletin

"Volunteers do. Volunteers act. They are doing something about climate change; making things happen and improving lives. Millions of people are taking action for the environment as volunteers. Their actions are more powerful than any statement about solving climate change and they deserve recognition and support..."

Flavia Pansieri
UNV Executive Coordinator

More than 1.5 million volunteering hours registered!

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme partnered with the United Nations 'Seal the Deal' campaign and encouraged UNV volunteers and people around the world to volunteer for the planet. UNV Executive Coordinator, Ms. Flavia Pansieri stressed that voluntary action was the key to the birth of the environmental movement and will continue to play a vital role. "This is a crucial year in the international effort to address global warming," said Ms. Pansieri. "The Copenhagen Conference, starting just two days after International Volunteer Day, was the world's best chance to seal a deal on climate change, and volunteerism is going to be a part of it."

She called upon the 8,000 UNV volunteers worldwide to make an impact straight away by signing the 'Seal the Deal' petition and getting involved with Climate Action Week in September 2009. Volunteers around the world registered more than 1.5 million hours (1,558,427 volunteering hours registered) of environmental activities during our campaign, covering six months to International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2009. The UNV programme reported this number to the delegates of the UN Climate Change Conference, COP15, in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009.

During a press conference at the COP15 meeting, UNV Executive Coordinator Flavia Pansieri said that the UNV campaign for International Volunteer Day, 'Volunteering for our Planet', had drawn a massive response from volunteers in developing countries. "Volunteers are a huge, under-used source of renewable energy. Their efforts are bringing benefits where they are needed the most, that is, at the community level, in developing countries. 1.5 million hours is a large response but it is the tip of the iceberg: an iceberg that is growing.

Meet your colleague: Janisar Akhtar, a dedicated young professional

Mr. Janisar Akhtar is a young professional and vibrant volunteer presently working with UNV India. He graduated in Information Technology and has completed his Masters Rural Development. He has five years experience in development sector and has worked extensively on community organisation and public health. Prior to joining as a National UNV volunteer, he had worked as a researcher in a WHO project on primary health care in Rajasthan. He is now working as a District Support Officer in the UNDP -assisted project, 'Capacity Development for District Planning' at Chaibasa in West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand since June 2009.

"I firmly believe that volunteerism is something which is based on one's free will, motivation and solidarity. "This is my first experience as a UNV volunteer and I really like it," says Janisar. He now plays the role of a catalyst and a facilitator for district officials and community members for inclusive, participatory and integrated planning. He is taking a lead in the Integrated Village Planning Process (IVPP) in 100 villages of the district.

Janisar has also created an E Group for UNV volunteers working in the project to keep abreast of each other's activities and share information. 35 UNV volunteers as member of this group working in UNDAF states are now sharing information regularly." I am basically a people's person and love to work with them. It makes me happy when people respond to me positively in various ways. I am thankful to UNDP and UNV for this opportunity." says Janisar about his volunteering experience.



**Top: UNV volunteer Janisar Akhtar;
Bottom: Interacting with community members**



Notice Board

UNDP staff meeting: Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh staff

A meeting of UNDP staff, including UNV volunteers, of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh was held on 18 November 2009 at Bhopal. In the meeting, besides discussing UNDP priorities in India and the role of state offices, UNDP focus and main programmes in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh were also discussed. The current status of the ongoing projects such as SSPHD, CDLG, CDDP, UEVRP, which are being implemented in both the states, was also discussed in the meeting.

Discussions also revolved around programmatic concerns, work environment, reporting issues, support desired from State Office & Country Office. The meeting also focused on general concerns of staff, entitlements of UNV volunteers, security issues, UNDP/UNV peer-support system, e-sharing forum for colleagues and other HR and administrative issues. The meeting also had its share of the moments of fun and learning with lot of interesting games played during the sessions. The games highlighted the significance of coordination, prioritization, strategizing, team building, decision-making etc. The UNV volunteers working with various UNDP projects in both the states actively participated in the discussions, activities and games making the meeting a success.



UNV volunteers participating in UNDP workshop in Bhopal

STRUCTURAL CHANGES AT UNV HEADQUARTERS

To better support the United Nations system and other partners in their important work in Peace and Development, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has restructured its operations.

One of the biggest structural changes at UNV is the merger of a number of our previous organizational units into a single **Volunteer Programme and Management Group**, or 'VPMG', headed by the Deputy Executive Coordinator. This new group comprises two closely-coordinated divisions that better reflect UNV's core mission of contributing to peace and development through volunteerism.

The **Peace Division** will partner with UN peacekeeping, peace building and humanitarian agencies in particular. It will focus on conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, early recovery, peacekeeping and peace building, and post-conflict electoral assistance.

The **Development Division** will focus on the longer-term development issues of delivery of basic services, crisis prevention and recovery, and environment and climate change; as well as the cross-cutting pillars of youth, gender and marginalized people.

The Peace and Development Divisions will each comprise a number of 'portfolios' of countries managed by our in-house volunteer and programme management experts. Every country supported by UNV will be managed by one of these regionally- and thematically-grouped portfolio teams, which will be the 'one-stop-shops' for our partners as well as our UNV volunteers and staff in the field.

In addition, there are two headquarters sections and a support unit to complement the Peace and Development Divisions, namely:

- The **Volunteer Recruitment Resources Section**. This will provide the portfolio teams with suitable UNV volunteer candidates sourced from our extensive roster of experienced and qualified specialists.
- A **Volunteer Knowledge and Innovation Section** to boost UNV volunteer learning, to share knowledge and best practices across our field offices, and to propose innovative volunteer management and programming ideas and solutions for the future.
- A **Quality Assurance Unit** to oversee the consistency of approaches across all the UNV portfolio teams. This will ensure that partnering with UNV remains the same experience whatever the country or region of operation, and all our procedures and policies are effective and transparent.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2010

UNV HQ has drafted a strategic plan 2010. This document is entitled the Development Division Strategic Plan (also called “Strategy” in this text), and it focuses on the programme and operations areas for which the Development Division is primarily responsible. Thus, it does not attempt to address programme and operational activities related to the Peace Division, or global programming initiatives.

However, it is envisioned that in the aftermath of the organizational change process, the Development Division will work with the Peace Division and other sections within UNV to expand the scope and depth of the current document and develop an all encompassing programme strategy for the organization.

Since three of the four Corporate Plan (CP) outcomes are programme focused, this Strategy makes explicit contributions to the CP outputs and indicators. In the end, the programmatic activities, outputs, and results will be UNV’s, not only those of the Development Division. Beyond the Development Division portfolios, other sections and units will also be invited to support the implementation of this Strategy and the related CP indicators. It does not presume to define how other sections, units and groups are expected to contribute.

As a result, this document is dynamic, and will change with the context and the various stakeholder contributions. All UNV volunteers are advised to kindly go through the full document. (Strategic Plan 2010, UNV HQ)

“Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children.”

Kenyan Proverb

FEBRUARY 2010

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UN Calendar

International Day of Commemoration in memory of the Victims of the Holocaust	Jan 27
World Day of Social Justice	Feb 20
International Women’s Day	March 8
World Water Day	March 22
World Health Day	April 7

Upcoming Official Holidays

Holi	March 1
Ram Navami	March 24
Good Friday	April 2

Tips from the UN Stress Counselor's office

Maximizers vs. Satisficers

Maximizers are individuals who aspire to find and accept only the absolute “best”. They want the best job, the best car, the best significant other and the best dreams at night! **Satisficers** (a term coined in 1957 satisfy + suffice) are those who settle for something that is “good enough”. That doesn't mean they settle for mediocrity; their standards can be very high, but as soon as **they meet those criteria they select that option** and are satisfied. They make decisions based on the information at hand. Some of their characteristics are highlighted below:

MAXIMIZERS

- Maximizers are like perfectionists, who need to be assured that their every decision was the best that could be.
- They wait for the best & often can't recognize the best even after an exhaustive research.
- Despite being quite successful and high achieving tend to be less optimistic, less satisfied, have lower self-esteem and are less happy.
- Spend a lot more time, attention, money and energy to reach a decision, and are often anxious about whether they are, in fact, making the best choice.
- *Decision avoidance i.e. they are more likely to avoid making decisions because of fear of regret; and even when they decide it takes long.*

SATISFICERS

- Not worried about the possibility that there might be something better.
- Run the risk of missing out on the “optimal” solution since they make decisions based on available information.
- Believe in: *An available decision is sometimes the “best”, since it is all that is necessary to accomplish your goal or at least prevent complete failure.*
- Work under the premise that the added investment of resources (time, money) does not guarantee a better outcome.
- Satisficing is recognition that the costs of obtaining superior information are greater than the costs of making a mistake

Both styles of information gathering and analysis have their advantages and disadvantages. Most people are a mix of both approaches, which means that one strategy does not work all the time. Further, sometimes the difference between the “**BEST**” and a “**GOOD**” decision is significant. E. g., you would want to adopt a maximizing strategy while buying a house, but you would be better off applying a satisficer approach when buying toothpaste.

How to determine what your style is and improve your skills:

- **For the next week, monitor a few areas in your life where decision -making occurs.** E. g. Career/Work, Relationships, Family, Money, Travel and Health.
- **Then each time you make a decision indicate if you are maximizing or satisficing.** Focus on: How fast you are responding; how much information you require; were you asked to make a decision or did you felt compelled?
- **Keep track over the week.** Start with a sample. You don't need to record every decision. The idea is to get your thinking process going and introduce these concepts.

Here are some suggestions how to avoid the problems created by pondering too long to decide:

- **Choose when to choose:**
Maximizing is ok on a limited basis. Develop some rules of thumb about how many alternatives to evaluate. E. g. Visit no more than two stores when shopping for clothes.
- **Learn to accept good enough:**
Settle for a choice that meets your core requirements and is “good enough” rather than searching for the elusive “best.”
- **Make decisions non-reversible:**
Once a “good enough” decision is made, consciously limit how much you ponder on the seemingly attractive features of options you reject. Stop looking back and put you energy into making the decision work.
- **Look for the best in your decisions:**
Every experience can have both delightful and disappointing aspects. Look for the positive aspects in your choices, rather than worrying whether or not the decision you made is the “right” one. Enjoy the fruits of your decisions as, time is the most precious and non-renewable resource we have.
- **Anticipate Adaptation:**
Adaptation is the effect that no matter how excited and pleased we are with our initial decision, over time we will become less satisfied. Even the best ice cream loses its effect after the third bowl.
- **Avoid social comparison:**
We tend to evaluate the quality of our experiences by comparing ourselves to others. Avoid it as it is very subjective.
- **Control expectations:**
“Don't expect too much and you won't be disappointed” is a cliché. This advice is sensible if you want to be more satisfied with life.
- **Learn to love constraints:**
Freedom of choice eventually becomes the tyranny of choice.

Editorial Team

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