

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Report encourages policy makers to 'Build Forward Better' together with volunteers

The fourth State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) '**Building Equal and Inclusive Societies**' presents new evidence on volunteer-state partnerships. The flagship Report of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme will be launched today at the United Nations in New York.

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The Report reveals that cooperation between volunteers and governments helps build collaborative decision-making.

Increasing inequalities worldwide call for a new type of social contract with a renewed emphasis on inclusion. It is time for a global reset. The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres has spelled out the need for a New Social Contract that creates equal opportunities and respect the rights and freedoms of all.¹

Every seventh person in the world is a volunteer. Despite the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, global interest in volunteering has not waned, and volunteering in communities has endured despite limited mobility and resources. While restrictions have prevented many people from volunteering in person, many have switched to volunteering online.

The Report draws on case study research in Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and concludes that, the monthly number of volunteers aged 15 years and older amounts to over 850 million worldwide. And the average monthly volunteer rate - defined as the share of working-age persons (15 years or older) that volunteer in a month - amounts to almost 15%.

"While volunteerism is often viewed as an instrument to deliver on development, the SWVR provides fresh insights that links it to equality and inclusiveness." says Toily Kurbanov, UNV Executive Coordinator.

Volunteerism is a collective action undertaken to improve society and civic life. It includes voluntary service in local communities as well as participation in government decision-making.

This research comes at a crucial moment as countries start to build forward from the pandemic and institutions need to engage volunteers as key partners.

“In this new normal, it will be incredibly important for volunteers to be regarded as essential partners right from the outset,” says Gladys Mutukwa, a 73-year old volunteer from Zambia.

The Report identifies three models to highlight volunteer-state relationships - the deliberative governance, the co-production of services and the social innovation - and offers policy recommendations. Decision makers are encouraged to:

- Promote volunteering beyond service delivery to include social innovation and inclusiveness.
- Strengthen public social recognition of volunteers especially as they are not financially rewarded.
- Create space where both volunteers and state authorities can share their experiences and establish common ground.
- Invest in measurement and data on volunteers and support research on volunteerism.

As part of the SWVR preparation, UNV and Gallup conducted research to study the patterns of volunteerism during COVID-19. The multi-country primary data collection was conducted in March-April 2021, including a survey of eight thousand people in eight countries - Bolivia, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Senegal, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

Notes to Editors:

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For the full Report and other resources go to:

<https://swvr2022.unv.org/>

About the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme:

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. UNV is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/tackling-inequality-new-social-contract-new-era>