



## UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS

### OVERVIEW

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. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation.

UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced UNV volunteers, throughout the world.

UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity as well as the values that sustain it: free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity.

We help countries to foster and develop volunteerism as a force for sustainable development. We provide strategic advice on the role and contribution of volunteerism in development programmes. We also help countries to improve public inclusion and participation in social, economic and political development, and support the growth of volunteerism within communities as a form of mutual self-help. UNV also partners with non-profit and private sector organizations worldwide.

“Volunteering is about empowering individuals and communities at the grass-roots level. It is about giving them a voice and letting them take the lead. And it is the foundation upon which rests achievement of the MDGs. For over 30 years, the United Nations system has been tapping into this vital human resource through the fielding of skilled and experienced professionals under the UN Volunteers programme.”

*UN Deputy Secretary-General  
Asha-Rose Migiro, 2007*

Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges worldwide. Everyone can contribute their time, skills and knowledge through volunteer action, and their combined efforts can be a significant force for achieving peace and development.

To optimize the impact of volunteerism on peace and development, UNV works with the public sector, civil society and the private sector, with support from the United Nations system and the world community. Individual citizens also have an important role to play through volunteering.



*‘Mama Mariam’ Yahya serves as a Neighbourhood Volunteer in the Kibera area of Nairobi, Kenya, forging paths for peace among communities affected by the post-election violence in early 2008. (Harald Franzen, 2009)*



*Nafi Ndong (right), Manager of the microfinance institution "Thiapy", with Rigobert Diouf, President of the Association des Handicapés pour le Développement du baol. UNV helped local handicapped people establish their own shop in Bambe, Senegal (Blazej Mikula, 2008).*

Volunteerism enhances the capacity of people to exercise choices to set and achieve their own development objectives, which can result in real improvements that benefit others as well as themselves.

Every day, individuals around the world are engaged in development initiatives through volunteer actions both large and small in an effort to improve conditions for others and themselves. Volunteerism by many millions of people is critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Every year, we directly mobilize more than 7,500 UNV volunteers, at home and abroad. More than 75% of UNV volunteers come from developing countries and more than 40% volunteer within their own countries. UNV volunteers help to organize and run local and national elections and

support a large number of peacekeeping and humanitarian projects in post-conflict and disaster-prone areas. UNV volunteers comprise almost one third of all international civilians working in UN peacekeeping operations.

UNV operates the Online Volunteering service ([OnlineVolunteering.org](http://OnlineVolunteering.org)) in order to connect development organizations directly with thousands of online volunteers, so that they can contribute to peace and development through the provision of services and advice over the internet.

We also manage the World Volunteer Web ([WorldVolunteerWeb.org](http://WorldVolunteerWeb.org)) as a global clearinghouse for information and resources about volunteerism that can be used for campaigning, advocacy and networking.

For more information, please visit [UNVolunteers.org](http://UNVolunteers.org)

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*National UNV volunteer Seelan Thanigaseelan distributes human rights-related materials to students of the Malharushams School in Kalmunai, a tsunami affected community in Sri Lanka. As part of the UNV Human Rights and Access to Justice programme, UNV volunteers conducted human rights workshops for students to make them aware of their rights to post-tsunami entitlements (Veronica Balderas Iglesias, 2007).*