

The Hong Kong Declaration on Volunteering

Volunteerism is an essence of humanity. It embodies the values of charity, freedom and respect for human dignity. It is universal and inclusive, regardless of differences in culture or race and gender. It is an indispensable feature of civil society and a key plank bridging the profit and nonprofit sector.

We recognize that Volunteerism is a Driving Force for Community Building in that:

Volunteering underlies individual and group action in pursuit of values of freewill, human dignity, care and share, and through which people can realize their compassion, talent and potential, exercise their rights and their responsibility to the wider community and address social challenges;

Volunteering not only benefits others and the volunteers themselves, but also constitutes a significant force of community participation to build trust and reciprocity which contribute to a cohesive and sustainable community;

Volunteering shapes the future – what we do today on volunteerism will have a positive effect on what will go on tomorrow not only in volunteerism, but also on tomorrow's community.

For these reasons, volunteerism must be made sustainable within set social conditions. Sustainable volunteerism will be possible if different sectors in society play their part in its materialization, namely the government, the private sector and civil society which are present in this Conference. Therefore, we as advocates and practitioners of volunteerism will strive to:

1. Sustain belief in volunteer action and help build a healthy, cohesive and sustainable community having regard to United Nations Millennium Development Goals;
2. Secure a social framework facilitating the development of sustainable volunteerism;
3. Provide meaningful opportunity and access to all people including minorities and underprivileged groups to exercise the right to volunteer responding to social causes, changing needs and community expectations, having regard to their characteristics and needs;
4. Enhance the capacity of people to realize their full potential including self-reliance and creativity;
5. Ensure effectiveness and accountability in operation through sound governance and a professional approach to the management of volunteers;

6. Seek to work in strategic partnership with the government and the business sector for development of volunteering;
7. Mobilize cross-sector partnership to facilitate broader networking and greater participation;
8. Use technology and global information networks to create new opportunities for communication, participation and connectedness, and to expand exchange of knowledge and opportunity;
9. Keep abreast of social changes and trends and map strategies for the development of volunteerism;
10. Offer a platform for policy makers, administrators and volunteer leaders worldwide to broaden and deepen the value of volunteer effort, strengthen international networking and exchange, and generate a global agenda for sustainable volunteerism.

We call upon all stakeholders to take effective steps to establish a social framework with conditions in which sustainable volunteerism may be advanced in building a sustainable community. We urge:

Government to recognize volunteering as significant social capital and to provide a favourable environment for sustaining volunteerism with steady provision of resources and support for infrastructure bodies, as well as recognition of the initiative and independence of voluntary action;

Business to support volunteering as part of corporate social responsibility and as a partner in capacity building of civil society;

Mass Media to communicate actively to the public the value of volunteerism and assist in sustaining an environment for community involvement in volunteer action;

Education institutions and parent groups to provide a platform for young people to achieve all round learning through volunteer participation;

Professional bodies to mobilize and facilitate their respective sectors to volunteer their skills and expertise to serve the community and to address community issues;

Religious bodies to affirm volunteering as an appropriate response to the spiritual call to serve;

Volunteer Involving Organizations to create a volunteer-friendly work environment and to respond to changing expectations of volunteerism, creating models and mapping strategies and directions that strengthen volunteer effort worldwide.

We look forward to the passage of the United Nations resolution reiterating the need to continue supporting volunteerism, and will respond to United Nations' call on marking International Year of Volunteers 2001+10 (2011).

The Declaration was endorsed in the 10th IAVE Asia-Pacific Regional Volunteer Conference held in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, on 8 November 2005.