

Workshop Presentation

Topic: Globalization and Volunteering

Volunteering for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

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Abstract

In 2000, world leaders from rich and poor countries committed themselves to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which, when achieved, will end extreme poverty worldwide by 2015. Commitment to the MDGs was reaffirmed by the United Nations General Assembly at the recent 2005 World Summit. The Goals commit to raise the poor out of poverty and hunger, get every child into school, empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, and ensure environmental sustainability. Goal 8 explicitly recognizes that eradicating poverty worldwide can be achieved only through a global partnership for development.

Volunteerism is not just a theoretical concept. It is social capital, a live and powerful force for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Volunteers, organizations and networks around the world are taking action and catalyzing others to take action. There are inspiring examples within each the 8 MDGs demonstrating how volunteers are making creative and significant contributions to the achieving of national and global development goals. These examples demonstrate how innovative arenas, techniques, models and practices, and partnerships are emerging to strengthen volunteering for development. Examples include online volunteers who can successfully contribute their services from great distances; expert corporate managers advising local enterprises in developing countries; grass-root peer-to-peer interventions, and national networks effecting environmental policies. While many of these examples highlight the service of UN Volunteers, they are joined by international and national volunteers advancing the MDGs throughout the world.

Given the persistent challenges of poverty, disease, civil unrest, and inequality, we all should be committed to promoting and enabling volunteerism as essential for people-centred and people-driven development and for attaining and sustaining the Millennium Development Goals. We should be combining our efforts to convince governments, donors, the media, local communities, and all the sectors of society to recognize and invest in this key, but thus far, underutilized human resource capacity for development.

Introduction

Volunteerism is not just a theoretical concept. It is social capital, a live and powerful force for economic and social development that benefits society at large, communities and individual volunteers. It is an important component of any strategy to reduce poverty, to ensure that development is sustainable and health and education is improved; an important component to bring about social integration and, in particular, to overcome social exclusion and discrimination. These words are drawn directly from recent resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly.

At the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, world leaders from rich and poor countries committed themselves to a set of eight time-bound targets that, when achieved, will end extreme poverty worldwide by 2015. Goals 1 through 7 commit them to raise the poor out of poverty and hunger, get every child into school, empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, and ensure environmental sustainability. Goal 8 explicitly recognizes that eradicating poverty worldwide can be achieved only through a global partnership for development, with both rich and poor countries fulfilling their commitments. Commitment to the MDGs was reaffirmed by the United Nations General Assembly at the recent 2005 World Summit.

The Millennium Campaign supports citizens' efforts to hold their government to account for the Millennium promise. The Campaign's approach is to encourage existing organizations, networks, and movements focusing on issues like trade, education, health, women's rights, debt, AIDS, and development to come together to show a unity of purpose and the strength of common determination. The Millennium Campaign is not only drawing in traditional campaigning organizations like NGOs and faith-based organizations, but also local authorities, youth groups, parliamentarians, the media, celebrities, and the general public, through a massive citizen volunteer effort.

New communication technologies are creating innovative opportunities for volunteerism as individuals and organizations are connecting on a global basis. At the same time, more and more governments and other stakeholders are recognizing volunteerism as a strategy for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and national anti-poverty agendas. Volunteers are actively involved in both promoting accountability to the Millennium promise and participating in national development initiatives to meet the Millennium goals.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) promotes volunteerism for peace and sustainable development by focusing on mobilization, recognition, facilitation, and networking of volunteer action. Throughout the world, it is facilitating the contributions of individual volunteers, volunteer-involving organizations, and volunteer networks to the MDGs through local social and economic development.

Examples of Volunteering for the MDGs

Volunteers, organizations and networks around the world are taking action and catalysing others to take action. There are inspiring examples within each the 8 MDGs demonstrating how volunteers are making creative and significant contributions to the achieving of national and global development goals. While many of these examples

highlight the service of UN Volunteers, they are joined by international and national volunteers advancing the MDGs throughout the world.

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Successful poverty eradication initiatives build on poor people's efforts to improve their own situation. UNV and other volunteer involving organizations encourage participation, social cohesion and networking to enhance conditions for local communities and to connect them with potential development resources in the fight against poverty and hunger.

For example, in eastern Mongolia, UN Volunteers help women in impoverished communities to earn money by setting up felt workshops. They provide advice on management and marketing of the felt products made from wool discarded by nomadic herders. The success of the felt workshops, established with loans from the Community Conservation Fund (CCF) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has inspired men and other women to apply for loans to start up their own small businesses, such as furniture workshops and community shower facilities.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education

Failure to meet education goals will compromise the ability to attain the other MDGs. Volunteers address low enrollment, school dropouts and low literacy rates. Volunteers help to build the capacity of teachers and other professionals to deliver effective educational services.

Online Volunteer, Ana Maria da F.M. Saravia (Brazil), has invested her language skills to translate diverse research work on street children in Latin America from Spanish into Portuguese. Her host organization, Shine a Light, connects organizations serving street children in Latin America and uses digital technology to leverage local successes into international solutions.

Ana Maria is now working on the translation of a DVD-based curriculum for teachers in refugee camps. In order to apply on the point and culturally appropriate Portuguese terms when subtitling documentary videos that were made by refugee teenagers in the Colombian capital of Bogotá, Ana Maria has immersed herself in the vocabulary and culture peculiar to the refugee and migrant communities. Ana Maria's translations are helping to overcome barriers between community workers. They have made findings and experiences obtained in Argentina, Colombia and Mexico available to Brazilian organizations and have facilitated experience sharing and reciprocal learning.

"In short, being an online volunteer with Shine a Light has made me become aware of realities I was comfortably blind to and has also made me realize that I can contribute a few keystrokes a day to help some committed people who in turn will help others."

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Women play a pivotal role in family and social cohesion and are engaged in a wide range of economic activities. Their voluntary and collective engagement in

development is a key to social and economic transformation in a country.

Since June 2004, Samah Jaouny, a Palestinian UN Volunteer, has served with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). She works to mobilize and increase Palestinian women's participation in the social, economic and political life of their communities and empower them to become agents for change. She has focused on two rural clusters of women in the northern part of the West Bank, where women receive educational and vocational training courses, computer training, and Tawjihi classes for women who had to drop out from their schools and were unable to finish their education. They participate in awareness workshops, language training courses, lectures and seminars, and much more. They are determined to help and support themselves and their families. Revitalizing the women's centres and helping them in holding women's committee elections were the first steps, the second was to assess the women's needs, and then to prepare an action plan that corresponds to the different needs of each community.

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

Almost one in six children in Africa will not see their fifth birthday as a result of poverty, a lack of basic health care and HIV/AIDS. Local and international volunteers address child mortality through initiatives such as capacity development of local providers, organization of national immunization campaigns, and promoting ICT use to increase public access to information on prenatal care and health care for children.

UN Volunteer Balkees Farhan (Iraq) has been in Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor) serving as a medical nurse with UNMISSET. She says: Of the approximately 700 patients seeking treatment each month, almost one third are female. The majority of women are of child bearing age, making them a prime audience for health education, which they receive from the UNV nurses at the clinic. During consultations, I assess their needs and get them proper medical advice to improve and maintain a sound level of health. A wide range of information on various issues including personal hygiene, sexual health, prenatal care, antenatal care, delivery, postnatal care, child care, contraception, HIV/ AIDS prevention, plus advice concerning nutrition, water safety, malaria and dengue fever prevention are the most common issues.

Apart from my professional duty in the clinic, I volunteer at the maternity ward in the National Hospital. Money from the UNV mission budget has purchased hospital gowns and baby blankets. The gowns were delivered to the hospital, during a small celebration that was surrounded by happiness and appreciation from the hospital administration and medical staff.

Another contribution were our visits to the "Maubara Orphanage" just outside of the capital, Dili. The orphanage hosts some 40 children, slightly less than half of them are girls. During these visits, the children get check-ups and are told about food, and cleanliness. The nuns, who run the orphanage, assist us by monitoring and evaluating the children's health.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health

More than half a million women die each year during pregnancy or childbirth. Twenty times that number suffer serious injury or disability. Improvements have resulted from mobilization of community support for women during pregnancy and

childbirth and expanding family planning programmes.

Dr. Zariiat Djabrailova, or Zara as she is known by her colleagues, is an obstetrician/gynecologist. At the maternity hospital at Tassigui, a regional referral centre in Niger, this UN Volunteer performs an average of 47 operations a month on patients coming from surrounding districts of Konni, Madaoua and Bouza. Each month, Zara spends three days in each district checking on patients. When serious medical cases crop up, patients are taken to Tassigui to take advantage of better equipment. She also provides district doctors with training in emergency obstetrics and surgery. If the blood bank runs dry, she takes her own car and races between medical posts until she finds serum. She already saved the life of a comatose patient that way. Aside from her challenging medical tasks, the UNV assumes a social role as well. "Women in difficulty come to tell me their problems, and some are in tears," she says, adding that an important part of her daily work is to provide information to help keep risk pregnancies in check.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases

The involvement of local communities and groups is key to successful promotion of public health, including prevention and care of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

Since 1997 the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) community-oriented pilot projects have sought to reduce the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS by demonstrating that people living with HIV/AIDS can continue to work and be productive members of society provided adequate care and support is made available. Through GIPA, UN Volunteers – many of them themselves living with HIV/AIDS – work with regional networks of people living with HIV/AIDS and local institutions to develop prevention, care and support activities. Some of the activities include distributing condoms, promoting voluntary counseling and testing, conducting media awareness campaigns, providing home-based care and establishing micro-grant facilities for income-generating activities. To fight stigma, the participants share their experiences, knowledge and skills to empower their peers and influence development policies and programmes.

In the Caribbean, the GIPA UN Volunteers are supporting the Caribbean Regional Network of Seropositives (CRN+) to increase public awareness of HIV/AIDS and mobilize financial, medical and human resources. They work with political representatives to develop and enforce policies against HIV/AIDS-related discrimination and provide education in schools, prisons, the court system and other workplaces.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
- Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.

Volunteer groups have played significant roles in promoting environmental awareness and cooperation in responsible use of natural resources. Action to halt further destruction of the ozone layer shows progress is possible. Volunteers and

volunteer organizations are always in the forefront in emergency and crisis situations, offering survival and recovery assistance to the most vulnerable.

In India's Rajasthan State, national UN Volunteer and water specialist Kulwant Singh is deeply involved in reviving traditional rainwater conservation practices and stirring local activism as a sustainable solution to the region's recurrent water shortages. "Without involving the local communities, it is almost impossible to significantly reduce the effect of drought," says Kulwant.

"When I came to Rajasthan in 2001, the area was suffering from its third consecutive year of drought." says Kulwant. Together with three colleagues from the UNDMT, Kulwant identifies other causes of drought apart from the apparent lack of rain and failing crops. He discovered that neglecting traditional water conservation and agricultural practices worsens the situation. "The new systems are unsuitable to local conditions while traditional practices are slowly disappearing." Other aggravating factors include inappropriate water management and animal feeding techniques.

Under the Food-for-Work scheme, the team employs villagers to build water tanks and other water infrastructure to improve water supply and generate income opportunities. This multilateral project encourages villagers to build traditional "rain catchers" such as beris, johads and tankas (water tanks). "We optimized local knowledge by employing the assistance of local NGOs to form community self-help groups to enable them to design their own drought risk reduction programme. We also promoted traditional dry farming and fodder production, and opened a fodder depot."

He has also launched an advocacy campaign to adapt local water conservation and agricultural practices in collaboration with government agencies, the media and similar groups working to abate drought. Kulwant is convinced that involving all sectors of the society "will dramatically reduce drought".

MDG 8: Develop global partnerships for development

Fighting poverty is a collective undertaking and that all countries, rich and poor, have a stake in the results. Aid is critical for the poorest countries, while middle-income countries benefit more from trade. A meaningful partnership between rich and poor must also address developing countries' need for technology, medicines and jobs for their populations, particularly for the growing ranks of young people. Volunteerism is a creative and effective medium for building and strengthening global partnerships.

UNV's Corporate/Private Sector Partnership Programme is linking business and trade expertise of the private sector with companies in the developing world. Aleksandr and Evgenia Konovskoi own a small sausage factory just outside of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. They employ 25 people from the village. They produce over 25 different types of smoked and boiled sausage and 5 different dumplings. They sell their products in eight kiosks that they own and 40 other major retailers including the largest supermarket in Bishkek. They have 4 homemade static smokehouses, 1 forced-air smokehouse, 1 water boiling tub, sausage stuffer, mixer, 2 grinders, and a bowl chopper. They were nominated for an UNV/Private Sector mission team by Mercy Corps which had provided two micro-credit loans. The original objectives of the project were to help with quality, personnel management, process improvements and reducing costs. The team found that the company had already implemented much of what the team had come prepared to share and in other ways were limited because of cost and being in a rented facility. Acting with flexibility and creativity, the team then identified an opportunity to create some new products to expand the company's sales channels. With

the team providing the recipes, they developed beef jerky, chicken sausage, smoked pork chops, American style bacon and ham. They tested marketed the products and were able to connect Aleksandr and Evgenia with a local restaurant owner that is interested in these items.

Tegucigalpa, Honduras -- Art for All: In July 2004, 56 artists from Honduras and around the world volunteered their time and talent to visualize the MDGs through murals and sculptures. The artists spent 15 days out on the city's streets sharing their talent and exchanging ideas with local children, other artists and the public. During the two-weeks it took to complete the project, some 500 people helped create 45 pieces of artwork throughout the city. Support for the project came from many private companies, Honduras' First Lady, and several UN agencies. The project has beautified public spaces, provided the city's residents with a renewed sense of civic pride, and raised awareness on the MDGs. The city has been named the Ibero-American Culture City for 2005.

Conclusion

Volunteerism, when properly focused, is a powerful force for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These examples demonstrate how innovative arenas, techniques, models and practices, and partnerships are emerging to strengthen volunteering for development. Examples include online volunteers who can successfully contribute their services from great distances; expert corporate managers advising local enterprises in developing countries; grass-root peer-to-peer interventions, and national networks effecting environmental policies.

Volunteers, volunteer-involving organizations, and volunteer networks have long participated in local, national and international development efforts. As more and more governments in both the North and South are seeing the value of incorporating volunteerism into their development thinking and planning, it is important for us to work together to ensure that volunteers, volunteer-involving organizations, and participatory development strategies have supportive, encouraging, and promoting environments to support their success. Given the persistent challenges of poverty, disease, civil unrest, and inequality, we all should be committed to promoting and enabling volunteerism as essential for people-centred and people-driven development and for attaining and sustaining the Millennium Development Goals.

References

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