



United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme

Service and Solidarity

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) is the Volunteer arm of the United Nations that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism and the mobilization of volunteers. Created by the UN General Assembly in 1970 to promote the ideals of Volunteerism and send volunteers around the world.

Diversity

UNV achieves its vision by supporting small-scale grass root projects that facilitate the promotion, networking and recognition of voluntary action. This is complemented through assigning skilled and experienced professionals who possess higher educational qualification in any field combined with at least over 3 years work experience. UNV operates in 140 countries placing over 7,300 UN Volunteers, 70 percent of who come from developing countries. UN Volunteers are required to have a combination of professional and personal abilities, adaptability, flexibility and a genuine interest and commitment to the spirit of volunteerism. Various schemes such as National and International UN Volunteers, UN Information and Technology Services, Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals, Online Volunteering and Corporate Volunteering are utilized to deploy people in Government, UN agencies and Civil Society Organizations.

Reaching Out

UNV Sri Lanka was established in 1974 and has since contributed to sustainable development, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, peace building and governance. Sri Lankan nationals play a pivotal role both in the national as well as international UNV programme which is important in tapping available human resources and promoting volunteerism. Since 2004, 31 Sri Lankans have been assigned overseas as UN Volunteers. Similarly, International volunteers are also provided the opportunity to render their services in another country and experience its culture. This knowledge sharing and cultural exchanges provide an enriching life experience for both parties. Presently 60 UN Volunteers (28 national and 32 international volunteers) representing 22 nationalities work in Sri Lanka in 7 of the 9 provinces. At any particular period, 70% of the UNV assignments are field based with the remaining 30% based in Colombo and surrounding areas.

Varied portfolio/partnerships

The volunteers supporting various institutions have diverse expertise and varied portfolios. Some areas of work that the volunteer specialists are currently involved in include programme and project development, transport and vehicle fleet management, health services, monitoring and reporting, disaster risk management, urban rehabilitation and reconstruction, information and communication technology and curriculum development, human rights and administration and management to name a few. The team of UN Volunteers in Sri Lanka support the work of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), Small Grants Programme under the Global Environmental Facility (GEF/SGP), UN HABITAT, United Nations Office for Drug Control (UNODC), Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC), Sunera Foundation, Ministry of Health, World University Services Canada (WUSC) and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

Managing disaster

In the aftermath of the tsunami disaster, UNV was quick to respond. Within 24 hours the first group of disaster risk management and information management specialists from India, Kenya and Laos were deployed to the affected districts. Additionally, UN Volunteers serving in different projects around the island were redeployed on a temporary basis to assist in the coordination of relief. Volunteers are now assisting in the institutional capacity building efforts of UN/HABITAT, World University Service of Canada, YMCA, Foundation for Goodness and Sunera Foundation. In addition, there are UNVs assigned to assist in disaster risk management at the district and divisional offices of the Government as well as the Small Grants Projects under the Global Environment Facility.

Future Direction

UNV Sri Lanka's immediate strategy will focus on support to the implementation of the UNDAF and government of Sri Lanka 10 year development and peace-building roadmap with volunteers and national volunteerism promotion. It will also include expanding partnerships under a number of new projects starting in 2008/2009 between UNV, government, civil society and UN agencies. The key focus of these projects will involve creating the platform necessary to revitalize the spirit of volunteering and encouraging the integration of the voluntary sector in development processes, peace building, MDGs and disaster preparedness planning...

Based in Bonn, Germany, UNV is the UN organization that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers. As a part of its activities, each year, UNV provides the opportunity for more than 7,000 skilled and experienced professionals, 70 percent coming from developing countries, to support peace, relief and development initiatives in some 140 countries. In addition, it engages thousands of other individuals in the work of the United Nations as online volunteers and manages the WorldVolunteerWeb, a global volunteering portal that serves as a knowledge resource base for campaigning, advocacy, information dissemination and networking.

For more information on the global program, please visit www.unv.org

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