

If post 2015 and the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals are an opportunity for Forum members and VIOs - what to do next?

1. Post 2015 provides new opportunities for volunteerism

The MDGs have galvanized global efforts to reduce poverty; efforts to achieve the MDGs need to be continued while addressing the “missing elements” beyond 2015. They have been instrumental in focusing the attention of development partners on key priorities in order to galvanize unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest.

However, as it turned out over the period of implementation, there were also many ‘missing elements’ of the MDGs. The MDGs neglected the role of people in development, the capacity of people to mobilize, the capacity of people to outreach, as well as the relevance of social cohesion.

- a. As the global conversation evolves about a new post-2015 developmental framework, a number of important opportunities are emerging for civil society engagement to promote the recognition of volunteerism. The post-2015 discussions are focused on expanding the definition of development progress through an integrated perspective of the three sustainable development dimensions, and are also considering targets and indicators to measure human well-being that go beyond GDP.
- b. Volunteerism plays a role in this regard from a number of perspectives. It is a mechanism that engages people from the bottom up. It is a way of “getting the job done”, based on the premise that sustainable development results cannot be delivered by institutions alone.
- c. Many global efforts to change the game in terms of development bottle-necks have relied on the mobilization and contributions of volunteers: be it the Campaign to eradicate polio, to roll back malaria or the global environmental movements. Volunteerism forms the backbone of national and international civil society organizations as well as many social and political movements all over the world.
- d. Volunteerism therefore needs to be seen as a way to strengthen the connection between people and the state, and as a way to leverage the voices as well as the capacities and skills of people to engage in the issues shaping their livelihoods.

2. What are the opportunities?

a. Engage people in contributing to their own development

Enhancing the partnerships for the implementation of the new sustainable development goals will be key if the delivery of results is to reach all the way to the local level!

Volunteerism is a means of implementation for delivery across thematic areas AND an

innovative way to engage people in the context of more complex and participatory citizen-state relations.

It engages people's minds and hearts and thus can lead to changing mindsets and attitudes. People acting as volunteers care about their community and society, and feel a sense of responsibility towards the common good.

It leverages and develops people's skills and capacities and fosters attitudes of responsible and responsive citizenship. It is therefore intrinsically connected to the conversation about complementary means of implementation for a universal and holistic development framework, placing people at the centre of every effort.

b. Partner with citizens for monitoring and mutual accountability

The consultation processes that have taken place over the last couple of years on the port 2015 and the sustainable development goals have generated a global appetite and recognition that people want and need to be involved in shaping and owning development solutions. New technologies mean that there are multiple ways that will enhance civic engagement in development.

Volunteerism is also a crucial means of implementation when it comes to strengthening the accountability between citizens and the state: the MyWorld Initiative has powerfully demonstrated that voluntary engagement is both, a way to roll out the conversation and carry it into the most remote areas as well as a way to engage people in developing solutions to address the issues raised.

Volunteerism provides a bridge to engage people in accountability frameworks that demand a stronger and more direct people-state connection. Such a framework should be based on increased and up-scaled partnerships that leverage all talents and capacities in society, while strengthening the feedback loop for people to hold their governments accountable for the promises they make.

c. Measuring human development progress beyond GDP

The conversation about the need to define progress beyond GDP is receiving much recognition from development practitioners. The focus on institutional capacity and financial means for the implementation of the MDGs was not sufficient to address the breadth of factors that contribute to the delivery of development goals.

Non –monetary assets, such as trust and hope in the future, are increasingly recognized as fragile goods that need to be cherished and entertained for societies to be stable and peaceful. This is particularly true as we look at the role of young people who demand to be able to play a constructive role in societies, which allows them to participate, engage in the decisions that affect them and project themselves to a positive future.

Currently most measurement of the “response” to global targets is done through

finances – the amount of money spend/invested as an indicator of level of activity. By being able to measure volunteerism and relate that to different targets and goals, one can see how the people’s responses are taking shape – it is the combination of the financial and the people engagement response that will give a more realistic/complete picture of how Global Goals are being acted upon and assimilated in different societies. This in itself goes beyond the “well-being” measurement and is the added value that volunteerism brings.

3. Partnering for impact - Volunteer Involving Organizations

a. Evidence, Research and knowledge building

As Volunteer involving organizations we need to upscale our efforts to provide evidence and knowledge of volunteerism’s contribution to development

The new development framework will require us to more convincingly demonstrate the relevance of volunteerism to development efforts. Investment in developing the evidence demonstrating the contribution of volunteers and volunteerism to poverty eradication, combating exclusion and to development will need to be prioritized if we are to seize the opportunities provided by the post 2015 framework and embed volunteerism firmly in the development space. As development partners, be it donor or programme countries, foundations, private sector or tax payers, increasingly demand hard data and transparency before they allocate any funding, VIOs are also under pressure to provide credible evidence of impact.

The publication of the first SWVR in, 2011 has consolidated and highlighted data on the fundamental role volunteerism plays across the globe in peace and development. This corporate effort has established a base from which UNV hopes to further expand evidence-based research agenda.

A key lesson is that success in this over the next decade will require the generation of broader and more robust evidence.

Given the critical gaps in the evidence base for the contributions of volunteerism to peace and development, a key focus during UNVs work over the next 4 years will be to work with partners from academia and from other VIO’s to: (i) develop a global research agenda on volunteerism, building collaboration and cultivating research in the South, (ii) continue publications of SWVRs (the next of which will be on collaborative Governance, and (iii) increase measurement of volunteering at national levels, especially in developing contexts.

b. Advocacy as a means of using evidence to influence policy, resource allocation and volunteer mobilization

The inter-governmental process is Member State led. The inclusion of “volunteer groups” in the UN GA Resolution that defines the architecture of the HLPF (A/67/L.72) is a huge hook, volunteer involving organizations need to use in claiming their space at the table. In the resolution, “volunteer groups” are explicitly recognized as stakeholders that are expected to work with the Major Groups to provide their expertise to Member States on issues of

relevance to the new sustainable development agenda. This opens up a space for volunteer organizations to influence the post-2015 development goals. The next step will be the utilization of this space by volunteer organizations.

In order for VIOs to translate the evidence building efforts into recognition at the policy and resource levels, there will be need for strong and focused advocacy that aim at influencing national governments over the coming months. It will be crucial to engage with countries to tailor successful national examples where volunteerism has made a difference, where volunteerism has produced concrete results. This will enhance chances for a government to take the position forward. Coalition-building at national level is therefore key. Volunteer involving organizations need to seize the spaces that have opened for them at the institutional and inter-governmental level and transform them into opportunities for joint advocacy at national and community levels where volunteerism is experienced in all areas of life.

c. A decade on Volunteerism – People at the centre of development in order to ensure sustainability of development gains

On 20 December 2012 in New York: The UN General Assembly adopted the Resolution 67/138 co-facilitated by Brazil and Japan on "Integrating Volunteering in the Next Decade". A decade for volunteerism could provide a systematic opportunity to cement and roll out all the above opportunities. In order for that to happen, however, we need a strong coalition of volunteer groups from all over the world to coordinate and collaborate on this in keeping with the 2012 resolution which opened the door for this. We need to work on the plan to do just that.

UNV, as the UN entity focusing on volunteerism can definitely help facilitate the process, but it must be the volunteer organizations that own the agenda.