



**United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme submission to the  
Independent Review of Australian Aid Effectiveness  
January 2011**

1. United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme appreciates the opportunity to make brief comments based on its specific experience in relation to the terms of reference of the Independent Review of Australian Aid Effectiveness. UNV has had a long interest in Australian aid effectiveness primarily through collaboration with Australian volunteers and also through the UNDP-Australia partnership<sup>1</sup>. UNV is administered by UNDP.
2. Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development, and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV believes that volunteerism fosters empowerment and broad-based ownership, through which even the most disadvantaged groups can contribute to more stable and cohesive communities and societies. Volunteerism is both a manifestation and driver of social capital and civic participation, involving people in the decisions that affect their lives. In particular, it helps disadvantaged populations to move from being passive recipients to becoming engaged actors in their own development and vision for the future.
3. ***The difference UNV makes is by demonstrating peace and development results and impact through volunteerism. UNV's comparative advantage is the ability and knowledge to bring about transformational change through volunteerism, community voluntary action and civic engagement through active partnerships with civil society, volunteer involving organizations, UN agencies and Governments. This is inspiration in action.*** UNV advocates for the integration of volunteerism in peace and development frameworks at global, regional and national levels through its Peace and Development Strategy (UNV Programme Strategy). The Strategy focuses on five priority areas: delivery of basic services, environment and climate change, crisis prevention and recovery, humanitarian assistance, and operational and capacity building support to UN missions.
4. The role and contribution of volunteerism to sustainable development and peace have been consistently acknowledged in various United Nations resolutions and reports. Yet volunteerism's contributions and potential as a development asset have been rarely recognized and harnessed. The international community understood this oversight when it designated 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV). In a ground breaking resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) at the end of IYV, Member States concurred that, ***"Neglecting to factor volunteering into the design and implementation of policies could entail the risk of overlooking a valuable asset and undermine traditions of cooperation that bind communities together"*** (A/RES/56/38 of 5 December 2001). Subsequently in 2008, another UNGA resolution (A/Res/63/153) reaffirmed the significance of volunteerism for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and called for the marking of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers or "IYV+10" in 2011. UNV was designated as the focal point for IYV+10. The resolution also called on the UN system to integrate volunteerism in its various forms into their policies, programmes and reports and encouraged the recognition and inclusion of volunteer contributions in future UN and other international conferences.
5. Building on the momentum and success of IYV, the objective of IYV+10 is to celebrate volunteering as an expression of our common humanity, respect, understanding, trust, solidarity and reciprocity;

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<sup>1</sup> See partnership Framework between the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2008-2015. See also UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011 Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development which discusses the UNV contribution to the UNDP programmatic work.



engage the will, positive energy and innovation of millions of people towards realizing the MDGs and create an enabling environment for citizen engagement.

6. Australia is renowned for its volunteering efforts, most notably through the Sydney Olympics in 2000 in the lead up to the International Year of Volunteers in 2001. The last ABS Voluntary Work, Australia Survey (2006) released in July 2007 showed that 34% of the adult population (5.4 million people) volunteers. The Australian Government's social inclusion agenda provides a vision and strategy to further advance the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteer service during IYV+10 and beyond. UNV commends Australia for its commitment to mark IYV + 10 through a National Volunteering Strategy in 2011.
7. The important role of Australia's international volunteers working for peace and development is also becoming increasingly recognized. Over 500 Australians have already served as UN Volunteers, including over 40 serving in 2010 in areas as diverse as UNV Aid Effectiveness Specialist in Cambodia, UNV Legal Translator in Timor-Leste, UNV Research Analyst in Afghanistan and UNV Programme Officer in Guatemala. UNV also operates an Online Volunteering service which connects volunteers with organizations working for sustainable human development. Volunteers contribute their skills online to help organizations address development challenges and 158 Australians (48 males and 110 females) contributed their skills in 2010. Since 2000 over 700 Australians have provided their services online to contribute to peace and development. The Australian Government's overseas aid programme could consider complementary work in online volunteering as an adjunct to the volunteer programme and the new Civilian Corps.
8. UNV notes the significant and increasing volume of Australian aid devoted to volunteer programmes including AUD 42 million in the 2010-2011 International Development Assistance budget. UNV also welcomes the development of the "new volunteer programme in 2010-11" to "make it easier for skilled Australians to become international development volunteers, contribute directly to challenges in developing countries and strengthen people to people links"<sup>2</sup>. This decision is a significant contribution to the marking of IYV + 10 and its objectives of facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteer service.
9. UNV commends the creation in 2010 of the Australian Civilian Corps to assist the "rapid deployment of civilian specialists to countries affected by natural disasters or conflict"<sup>3</sup>. The Hyogo Framework for Action adopted at the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction explicitly recognized the added value and contribution of volunteerism to disaster risk management, particularly in strengthening community capacities to respond to and prevent disasters. UNV focuses on supporting countries and situations where there is an identified risk and high vulnerability to disasters. In order to mitigate the effects of crisis and address the root causes, UNV supports global efforts to reduce the impact of such disasters by working at both national and community levels to encourage and support inclusive and coherent national disaster prevention and risk reduction strategies. Capacity development skills and local knowledge are some of the aspects of the added value of volunteerism. The presence of international and national volunteers who reside and work together with crisis-affected communities provides critical support to humanitarian partners. UNV

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<sup>2</sup> Australia's International Development Assistance Budget: A good international citizen. Statement by the Honourable Stephen Smith MP Minister for Foreign Affairs and The Honourable bob McMullan MP Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance 11 May 2010 pp62.

<sup>3</sup> Australia's International Development Assistance Budget: A good international citizen. Statement by the Honourable Stephen Smith MP Minister for Foreign Affairs and The Honourable bob McMullan MP Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance 11 May 2010 pp58.



has extensive experience and expertise with volunteerism in this sector, comprising almost 23% of its current support. UNV would welcome collaboration with the Australian Civilian Corps in responding to disasters such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake. UNV is currently developing an innovative approach to Haiti's recovery in Leogane (the earthquake's epicentre) and Cap Haitien in close collaboration with civil society organizations, community groups, UN agencies and Government authorities. The power of volunteerism and community action is being harnessed by building upon the innate social capital, capacity and culture, as well as the ancient traditions of self-help, goodwill and solidarity.

10. The UNV programme also provides direct opportunities for South South cooperation given the majority of its volunteers are mobilized directly from the South. The Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) was set up to provide opportunities for donors to support this given that many developing countries do not have the capacity to support their nationals to work as volunteers overseas even when they have the appropriate skilled expertise. An Australian contribution to the Special Voluntary Fund could help facilitate further South South skills transfer in Australia's immediate region and beyond<sup>4</sup>. Australia clearly has particular expertise and historical collaboration in the Asia Pacific region that provides a particularly valuable contribution that complements other multilateral and bilateral work in the region. The UNV programme in the Pacific is rapidly growing, and support is being provided by posting UNV development specialists to several UN Joint Presence Offices in the Pacific. Several UNV environment and tsunami recovery specialists are also based in the UNDP Multi-Country Office in Samoa. UNV can also provide a complementary bridge to other regions such as Latin America and Africa where the Australian Aid program and volunteer programme are being extended. Indeed, many Australian volunteers have already provided expertise there, for example, through the Australian Volunteer International programmes in Africa and Latin America.
11. The UN reform process to increase development effectiveness calls upon UN organizations to focus and deliver greater development results. In view of this, and in line with its own corporate objectives, UNV is working to align its interventions and support with those of UN agencies and other national development partners to increase impact and sustainability by contributing to systemic capacity development at all levels. Following the launch of the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence Report, "Delivering as One" pilots were initiated in eight countries – Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay and Vietnam. Under the leadership of UN Resident Coordinators, the pilots strive to capitalize upon the strengths of each of the participating UN entities, including UNV. UNV has supported the UN reform process through its participation in and support for the UN Common Country Programming cycle and its implementation as a partner in a number of countries, including the eight pilot countries. The concept of 'Volunteerism for Development', as a cross-cutting resource/strategy for UN development efforts has been integrated into United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and/or UN Agency Country Programme Action Plans in over forty countries to date. Through the UN common country programming cycle, UNV has also been engaged in joint programming by bringing in its comparative strength of volunteerism for peace and development. Volunteerism in its various forms (i.e. community empowerment, social mobilization, civic engagement) currently plays a significant role in capacity development, strengthening a wide range of UN system activities. This allows UNV to serve as a development asset to the UN system.
12. In the 2009/2010 biennium, more than 3,000 UNV volunteers supported peacekeeping, and special political and peace building operations annually in 19 United Nations missions in 18 countries and

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<sup>4</sup> For example consideration could be given to promoting the recruitment of Pacific nationals to the UNV database of candidates or encouraging the involvement of Pacific Islanders living in Australia with the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) programme or the full funding of national or international UN Volunteers.



constituting about 30 per cent of all international civilian personnel involved in these missions. Volunteers worked in areas ranging from medical, logistical, and engineering mission support, to child protection, rule of law, elections, human rights, civil affairs, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. From 1999 to 2008, UNV volunteers completed 20,000 assignments in 44 peacekeeping operations. In the biennium, 1,408 international UNV volunteers from various countries on the African continent contributed to peace, serving with United Nations missions in 10 countries on their continent. This supported United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations efforts to increase the success of peacekeeping missions by promoting regionalization.

13. Since 1992, UNV has been actively involved in emergency response and protracted crisis situations, largely through the placement of UN Volunteers who support the key UN humanitarian organizations including UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, and OHCHR. In recent years, well over 1500 UN Volunteer assignments per annum have been programmed in support of the mandates and programmes of these UN partners.
14. UNV is very encouraged by the work of the AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness, for example, its annual review and its recent constructive Working Paper on Good Practice Donor Engagement with Civil Society that emphasized direct assistance and “strengthening the enabling environment for civil society”<sup>5</sup>. UNV encourages further work on the contribution of civil society actors and particularly the contribution of volunteers to development effectiveness. The Accra Agenda for Action on aid effectiveness committed to work with civil society organizations (CSOs) to “provide an enabling environment that maximizes their contributions to development”<sup>6</sup>. The Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS) specifically called on all development actors to recognize the importance and diversity of civil society and of CSOs as political and development actors in their own right; that CSOs as development actors have distinctive and legitimate contributions to make to development and aid effectiveness, and that their efforts complement the efforts of other development partners<sup>7</sup>.
15. To follow up on the Millennium Summit of 2000, in September 2010 on the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the MDGs, world leaders from 160 countries came together to assess progress and reaffirm their commitment towards achieving the MDGs by 2015. UN assessments showed mixed results and called for finding innovative solutions and partnerships to achieve the off-track MDGs and to break with past strategies that have not worked. As indicated in UNDP’s MDG Breakthrough Strategy, and specifically the MDG Acceleration Framework<sup>8</sup>, strengthening participatory processes and building partnerships with civil society, which can be enhanced through volunteerism, are vital for achieving these goals<sup>9</sup>.
16. In their **September 2010 MDG Summit Outcome Document** (paragraph 17) world leaders unequivocally stated: ***“We call on civil society, including non-governmental organizations, voluntary associations and foundations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global levels, to enhance their role in national development efforts as well as their contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and commit as national Governments to the inclusion of these stakeholders”.***

<sup>5</sup> Working Paper: Good Practice Donor Engagement with Civil Society, AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness, June 2010

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2008), The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. Paris: OECD. p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2009), Better Aid: Aid Effectiveness - A Progress Report on Implementing the Paris Declaration. Paris: OECD. p. 126

<sup>8</sup> Unlocking progress: MDG acceleration on the road to 2015: Lessons from the MDG Acceleration Framework pilot countries September 2010, <http://www.undp.org/mdg/acceleration.shtml>

<sup>9</sup> This is also highlighted in paragraph 17 of the 2010 MDG Summit outcome document adopted by the General Assembly in September 2010.



17. MDG reviews and assessments clearly imply that a break is necessary from development approaches and engagements that have not worked in the past. This analysis further reiterates that to tackle global development challenges, plurality of constituency is needed and civil society engagement is at the heart of it. Their engagement is a necessity and not an option because neither governments nor CSOs<sup>10</sup> can address the daunting challenges of equitable and sustainable development alone. They need to complement and partner with each other.
  
18. Volunteers have repeatedly demonstrated the power of volunteerism for social, economic and environmental transformation. One of the most successful global campaigns of recent times, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, relied on the active participation of hundreds of thousands of volunteers. Large numbers of citizens have been mobilized around other campaigns in fields such as literacy, debt relief, human right, sustainable environment and violence against women. The environment and gender movements are volunteer movements at their heart. The power of volunteerism – drawing upon the immense social capital that exists in every society and community – if properly focused and harnessed can be equally successful in MDG acceleration and achievement. Volunteerism can become a powerful force for inclusion for the socially excluded and marginalized such as the income poor, the disabled, the unemployed and the aged. Volunteerism can empower communities all over the world to envision and shape their own futures and find their own MDG solutions, with support from Governments, development partners, civil society, the private sector and the media. Voluntary action has proven effective in the delivery of essential services, provided livelihood opportunities, helped in disaster recovery, increased transparency and accountability of government services, provided a channel for citizens to voice their concerns and has helped build the social capital necessary for more cohesive and integrated societies. Volunteers have repeatedly demonstrated that they give much more than just their time and money – they are, in reality, the transformational change agents and grassroots activists for global peace and development and are actively contributing to the MDG goal of forging global partnerships for development.
  
19. With only four years remaining until the MDGs achievement deadline, UNV is closely working with civil society, Government and UN partners to identify innovative and bold initiatives and approaches to position volunteerism as an indispensable instrument in the fight to achieve the MDGs. These will include the documentation of MDG results and impact brought about through volunteerism, community voluntary action and civic engagement through partnerships with civil society, volunteer involving organizations, Governments, UN agencies and other stakeholders. UNV is also developing approaches and initiatives for transformational change and large-scale MDG impact through volunteerism, community voluntary action, civic engagement and partnerships. Establishing global/regional/national MDG volunteer corps will be an integral part of this effort. These volunteers will be practitioners, facilitators and change agents drawn from leading research and academic institutions, professional networks and associations, private sector, media, retired UN and Government personnel as well as civil society, private sector and community leaders. Efforts are also underway to set up a strong partnership for volunteerism for peace and development as also recommended by

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<sup>10</sup> CSOs encompass a very broad range of types and serve an array of constituencies. However, one feature they all have in common is that their roots lie in volunteerism. People join non-governmental organizations to volunteer a wide range of services in every field covered by the MDGs. People also volunteer to serve in the governance structures of the organizations themselves. Volunteerism is also present, in a less visible way, through membership in innumerable grassroots associations found in every part of the globe. Generally drawing on long-established traditions of sharing skills, time, ideas and energy, the full alignment of volunteer action through community groups with the MDGs is critical in addressing the challenges.



the IYV+10 stakeholders meeting held in October 2010 in Bonn. As part of marking IYV+10, the volunteers stakeholders' group is planning several regional consultations as well as a Global Volunteerism Conference on "Volunteering for a Sustainable Future" in Africa in June 2011 to discuss a way forward on the above agenda culminating in two UN General Assembly Sessions dedicated to volunteerism in December 2011. In this context, UNV will launch the first State of the World Volunteerism Report in 2011.

20. As per its mandate, UNV will continue to assist programme countries to mobilize volunteers domestically through, inter alia, national volunteer schemes, volunteer centres and networks. The development of volunteer schemes to promote the contribution of volunteerism as a resource constitutes an important platform for programmatic interventions in both peace and development situations. Drawing upon its expertise in promoting and supporting the development of volunteer schemes at local, national, and regional levels, strategic efforts are being made to effectively support establishment of volunteer corps, volunteer networks and information and referral centres, as well as institutional capacity development in volunteer mobilization and management at the grassroots and community levels. UNV would welcome the opportunity to work closely with Australian volunteer partner organisations <sup>11</sup> and AusAID to link these initiatives to Australia's new volunteer programme in order to achieve synergies for development effectiveness.
21. UNV appreciates this occasion to make a submission to the Independent Review and would welcome an opportunity for UNV's Executive Coordinator Ms. Flavia Pansieri to make a verbal submission to the review panel when she is in Canberra in early February 2011. She can further elaborate on the importance of volunteerism for peace and development as a cost effective and complementary form of development assistance to increase the effectiveness of the Australian Aid Programme. UNV notes the recognition in the 2009 OECD Peer Review of Australia's increasing and positive multilateral engagement and encourages increased engagement by combining the joint strengths of Australian aid and volunteer efforts with UNV's global reach and multilateral links. Further, an Australian contribution to the Special Voluntary Fund would facilitate the achievement of peace and development results, especially the MDGs, through volunteerism. UNV works closely with Volunteering Australia and development agencies like Australian Volunteers International to promote the aims of IYV+10 and would welcome collaboration with AusAID and the Minister for Social Inclusion on a global effort to reinvigorate the spirit and power of volunteerism.

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<sup>11</sup> UNV has worked collaboratively with Australian Volunteers International for many years.