

ADVOCATING FOR PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-2015 AGENDA: **ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS NATIONALLY, REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY**

Over the past decade, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have generated unprecedented global efforts to reduce poverty and inequality. Now, as the post-2015 agenda is taking shape, a number of historic opportunities for civil society engagement are emerging – both within the UN system and in interaction with member states at the global, regional and national level that will have the potential to contribute to the formation of an ambitious and transformational framework for the future.

Since 2012 volunteerism and the values it stands for, has been recognised in a number of key outcome documents related to the post-2015 conversation, as a way to address the need to engage people in efforts to attain development objectives. Two UN General Assembly Resolutions - A/RES/66/288 (Para 43) and A/RES/67/290 (Para 16) and the latest UN Secretary-General Report on the Millennium Development Goals - A/68/202 (Para 98) contain specific mentions to “volunteer groups” and provide the legislative basis for the recognition of “volunteer groups” in acknowledgment of the wider diversity of non-state actors that want to engage with member states in the definition of the next development agenda. “Volunteer groups” have been officially recognised as a relevant stakeholder in its own right at the institutional level and are now encouraged to engage with member states in the policy discussions about the next generation of internationally agreed development goals (i.e. the Sustainable Development Goals) and the post-2015 conversation.

The International Forum for Volunteering in Development and other Volunteer Involving Organisations have the opportunity now to engage more actively in the processes which will define the post-2015 global development agenda. It is in our common interest to work for increased recognition and integration of volunteerism on various levels – nationally and internationally.

This document highlights the unique role for organisations involved in international volunteering to contribute toward the shaping and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and policies that will inform the development agenda for the next decade.

The purpose of this paper is to be a starting point for discussion within Forum member agencies and with other Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) gathered at IVCO 2013 in Paris.

The paper also provides specific recommendations to Forum for action points to be discussed and adopted at its Annual General Meeting to be held in Paris on 30th October 2013.

Introduction

In line with the objectives of Forum's 2013 - 2015 Strategic Plan, members developed "the Forum Ottawa Declaration" at IVCO in October 2012 and committed to:

- Continued mobilisation of our members, partners, individuals and communities where we work by rallying all stakeholders to pursue sustainable development;
- Work more closely with Major Groups and encourage participation of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations in processes that contribute to decision-making, planning of policies and programs and also to ongoing mobilisation of volunteers and organisations working with communities and individuals across the world as change actors for sustainable development during the next three years and post-2015.

In the Ottawa Declaration, we further stated that our organisations stand ready to:

- Substantially participate in the Major Groups and in the intergovernmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals;
- Commit to actively engage with other volunteering organisations and other stakeholders in support of the deliberations of The Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of eminent persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and to engage with the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development;
- To actively engage through our national constituencies in discussions about the post-2015 development agenda at the national level, including the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) consultations organised around the world.

Therefore, in March 2013, Forum issued a position paper called "Forum and the post-2015 development agenda" summarising the processes for the development of the post-2015 agenda and key messages:

- Although the UN General Assembly has recognised the critical impact of national and international volunteerism in 2002 and 2012, Forum restates that "people-centered development" contributes an important set of dynamics to the development effectiveness;
- Civic participation plays a critical role and should be a cornerstone of the development architecture like the 64 million individual actions captured in the "Volunteer Action Counts Campaign" demonstrate to have contributed tangible outcomes towards a fairer, more caring and socially just world and is a catalyst for practical achievements;
- International volunteering for development provides a uniquely effective avenue for the creation of constructive relationships between nations, communities and individuals, and across cultures. It is based on principles of solidarity and reciprocity, and shared ways in which key stakeholders can work together to achieve sustainable development outcomes. This is demonstrated in the evidence cited in the Secretary General's Report on the "Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers" (A/67/153).
- As the world becomes increasingly globalised and interconnected, volunteerism has the capacity to channel the energy and commitment of millions of people, especially young people to play a meaningful role in society.

More recently, from September 22nd to 25th 2013, a Forum Board delegation participated actively in High level events related to the post-2015 agenda in New York in preparation of the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

They attended the event: “Advancing regional recommendations on post-2015: A dialogue between Civil Society, governments and UN representatives”. Where M. John Ashe, President of the GA and M. Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General stated that they see a large positive space in the UN system for civil society, as one of the key messages they have received from The Global Conversation. Civil Society involvement is absolutely essential to craft the framework.

They also reflected on the long and difficult process leading to adoption of the MDGs, and pushed for:

1. The crafting of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that truly integrate reducing poverty and sustainable development through an holistic approach;
2. A transparent intergovernmental process is essential, including involvement of civil society. A life of dignity for all with nobody left behind;
3. Ensuring the close link between social, economic, environment sustainability and climate change are considered;
4. Civil society has an important role to shape, sustain and monitor this shared and multilateral coherence at UN and at national level.

The Forum delegation attended a two days United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Stakeholder meeting involving volunteer sending, volunteer engaging organisations and UNV representatives. The objectives were to reflect on opportunities for volunteering to advocate for a better recognition of contribution to the MDGs and positioning for the post-2015 agenda.

The key outcomes are:

- Volunteering has already been influential and asserted in the key resolutions of the post-2015 process;
- Forum and members have a better understanding of the post-2015 intergovernmental process;
- Networking with other involving agencies has been strengthened; we have stated our desire to see greater impact of volunteerism in the post-2015 intergovernmental processes as a common goal;
- Establishment of a cross-agency Task Force which will develop a shared position statement and advocacy strategy for ensuring that volunteerism and volunteer involving organisations are recognised as key partners/actors in the post-2015 agenda formulation and implementation;
- Established contact with the Major Groups, and appointed representatives from Forum in the Steering Committee (Gill Greer/VSA and Christina Jenkins/Forum) which will work on preparing two Intersessionals to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development; and
- For the first time ever, a representative of Forum/ Gill Greer delivered a statement at the UN on behalf of “volunteer groups” during the Special Event of the President of the General Assembly on the Millenium Development Goals on September 25th. Forum was one of eight civil society representatives selected from 900 participants to have the right to speak to member states at the UN on this occasion thanks to strategic communication with key stakeholders and substantial support from UNV during the past year.

As a result of that presence in New York, Forum member agencies increased their participation and visibility at key high-level events on the MDGs and post-2015 agenda and we would like to see more of the Forum members as well as more VIOs participate in the future nationally, regionally and globally.

Recommendations for Forum, for discussion at IVCO and approval at Forum's Annual General Meeting

Opportunities for Forum

The increased visibility of volunteering/volunteer groups at the UN, and greater recognition of volunteer groups and volunteering in recent General Assembly reports and resolutions, together with processes related to the new development framework, have led to a number of landmark/unprecedented opportunities for Forum. These align clearly with Forum's Strategic Plan 2013-15 objectives. They also have a relatively urgent time frame as they are linked to the development of the post-2015 framework.

These include formulating and implementing strategies to encourage the inclusion of volunteering and volunteer groups in the post-2015 agenda. They also offer potential for increasing the engagement and visibility of Forum, its members, and volunteering at the national and global levels resulting in greater policy influence and recognition (and thus indirectly also a possibility of increased funding) for Forum and its members. There are also opportunities which could increase the membership of Forum geographically and numerically, or for it to become part of a wider alliance/network which could join together for specific activities and increase the shared learning and knowledge base. Most importantly of all, these could enhance Forum's ability, and its members', to contribute to people-centred development.

These opportunities include:

- building on the recommendations in central General Assembly resolution and the Secretary General's report, recognising volunteer groups as a "constituency" that is part of a "multi-stakeholder partnership" that will support "the transformative actions of the post-2015 agenda".
- building on the potential for new relationships and partners through the Task Force established and among other stakeholders that attended the UNV stakeholder meeting in September 2013.
- anchoring volunteering and the values it stands for substantively in the conversation about enabling factors, targets and indicators for the new framework.
- Taking up any of these opportunities will have resourcing implications, in terms of time, people and money.

1. That Forum prepare a position paper with key messages, and a list of relevant research articles that provide evidence of the effect and impact of volunteering, which can be used to support the rationale for inclusion of volunteering/voluntary groups, in the post-2015 agenda. Such a position paper should also identify key messages parallel with central themes which will be discussed in the UN in relation to the emergence of new global sustainable development goals (e.g citizen participation, governance, human wellbeing, means of implementation, etc).
2. That Forum develops a comprehensive strategy for encouraging the recognition of volunteers/volunteering in the post-2015 agenda, including a budget and resource mobilisation plan for any of the following recommendations. In addition members should consider what resources they can allocate both for their individual involvement, as well as for collective involvement through Forum.
3. That Forum establish a new Working Group at the Annual General Meeting in Paris in October 2013 to follow up post-2015, and that all Forum members who wish to be active nationally, regionally and/or globally are encouraged to appoint a post-2015 focal person in their organisations which the Working Group can liaise with.
4. That Forum continues to strengthen its strategic relationship with UNV and participates actively in the new cross-agency Task Force, recognising that these alliances will require human resources, time and costs.
5. That Forum consider the involvement and resourcing of an intern (e.g in collaboration with UNV or one of Forum's member organisations) for a specific period to assist in the implementation of these strategies, depending on the level of work that is envisaged.

6. That Forum proactively seeks to build a network of organisations engaged in volunteering, involving both those that are international volunteering and cooperative organisations as well as other volunteer involving organisations. This would enable further opportunities for exchange of information, best practices, joint advocacy/awareness raising, developing a joint research agenda and/or possible programmatic partnership.
7. That Forum seeks United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accreditation at the UN.
8. That Forum, in co-ordination with the newly established task force, engages with the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals as well as the High Level Political Forum charged with developing the SDGs and overseeing their implementation in line with paragraph 16 of the UNGA resolution, which includes volunteer groups as stakeholders which are expected to work with the Major Groups to provide their expertise to Member States, and therefore allowed to attend all meetings of the Forum:
 - a) access all information and documents
 - b) intervene in official meetings
 - c) submit documents and present written and oral contributions
 - d) make recommendations
 - e) organise side events and roundtables in co-operation with Member States and the UN Secretariat
9. That Forum, also in co-ordination with other members of the task force, engages in the process of intergovernmental negotiations during the 69th session of UNGA which will lead to the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, specifically, with the General Assembly events to be convened by the President of the General Assembly under the theme “The Post-2015 Development Agenda - Setting the Stage”.

That Forum as a part of its position paper, considers the following options to engage in the intergovernmental processes along with partners, taking into account of relevant resource requirements:

- i. to establish a new Major Group
 - ii. work with partners to join an existing Major Group
 - iii. to remain a separate stakeholder
10. That Forum confirms its representation on the Steering Committee for the intersessional of the Open Working Group.
 11. That Forum encourages its members to engage with communities, civil society and local and national governments, parliamentarians and other stakeholders, to encourage them to recognise the value of volunteering to the MDGs and to the new development agenda and national plans.
 12. That Forum members contribute actively to ongoing and future campaigns which will strengthen the participation of volunteer voices from the ground in the post-2015 development agenda (e.g the ongoing UN My World campaign” as well as a future “Imagine a world without volunteers” if this is developed by UNV or the Task force), and to support the involvement of high level volunteering ambassadors in such processes.
 13. That use of the Forum website is maximised to highlight appropriately the implement of any of these recommendations.