



**United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme submission to the
Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid
June 8 2012**

1. United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme appreciates the opportunity to make brief comments, based on its specific experience, in relation to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid. UNV strongly affirm the recognition in the Consultation paper for the review of the White Paper on Irish Aid that: “the high levels of support for overseas aid in general is due, in no small part, to the long tradition of engagement and action including missionary work, volunteering, campaigning and advocacy, fundraising and education by organisations in Ireland” (p22). UNV also endorse Irish Aid’s positive role in supporting such efforts, including through UNV, as well as the contribution of the Irish Aid Information and Volunteering Centre opened in January 2008. UNV also note the positive support for volunteering’s role in development and peace, expressed by a number of other submissions to the Review. UNV values the continued support of the Irish Government on volunteering for development in national, European and global fora.
2. MDG reviews and assessments clearly imply that a break is necessary from development approaches and engagements that have not worked in the past. Civil society engagement is a necessity and not an option because neither governments nor Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)¹ can address the daunting challenges of equitable and sustainable development alone. They need to complement and partner with each other. In this regard, the advent of mobile communication technologies and online volunteering has enabled many more people to participate in peace and development programming while contributing to the development of capacities of both the volunteers and the organizations they support.
3. With only three years remaining until the MDGs achievement deadline, UNV encourages the development of close partnerships among civil society, government and UN partners to identify innovative and bold volunteerism initiatives and approaches to MDG achievement. UNV also advocates for approaches and initiatives for transformational change and large-scale MDG impact through holistic community-centred sustainable development approaches, community voluntary action, civic engagement and partnerships, especially with national and local institutions and civil society. Voluntary civic action should be part of the framework for sustainable development goals beyond 2015.
4. The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness outcome document ‘Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation’, includes explicit reference to the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness² which acknowledges volunteer contribution to development effectiveness. The framework was adopted by more than 240 CSO representatives from 70 countries. With the input of over 3,000 CSOs, the International Framework is a statement from civil society regarding its effectiveness as a development actor.
5. Volunteers have repeatedly demonstrated the power of volunteerism for social, economic and environmental transformation. 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,

¹ 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.

² The Siem Reap CSO Consensus on The International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness Agreed by the Second Global Assembly, Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, Siem Reap, Cambodia, June 28 – 30, 2011 http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-global-report_052-.html



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. It has provided a channel for citizens, including marginalized groups, to voice their concerns and has helped build the social capital necessary for more cohesive and integrated societies.

6. In its 2011 publication “Better Policies for Development, Recommendations for Policy Coherence” the OECD clearly highlights the value of philanthropic activities, such as volunteerism to the progress of societies arguing that *“a consensus has now emerged on the need to complement standard economic measures with a range of indicators covering other dimensions of people’s well-being and societal progress. [...] What happens at the level of the entire economy does not necessarily tell us what happens to individuals and households. For example, standard numbers, such as GDP, [...] do not cover the many important services that households produce at home. These include, for example, [...] volunteer activities. Taking such dimensions into consideration will give a very different picture of performance and progress across countries”*³. This suggestion is further highlighted and discussed in the “State of the World’s Volunteerism Report: Universal Values for Global Well-being”. A central thesis running through the Report launched by UNV on 5 December 2011, was that the values inherent in volunteerism endow it with far-reaching potential for human development. This notion of development includes factors such as solidarity, social inclusion, empowerment, life satisfaction and individual and societal well-being.
7. There is a recognized need for increasing **ownership within** partner countries by involving a variety of national stakeholders beyond central government (other levels of government, civil society including citizens, NGOs, private sector, etc.). Volunteering is a means to promote knowledge exchange within local communities which contributes to the ownership and cost-effectiveness of responding to development problems on the ground. This is also clearly demonstrated in the 2011 UNDP publication “Supporting Transformational Change”⁴. It highlights a series of case studies where development work undertaken by UNDP and its partners has led to transformational change at the national level. The power of volunteerism as a means to build and sustain national capacity thereby building ownership is stressed, for instance in the case of Bangladesh⁵, where over 60,000 national volunteers affiliated with national NGOs, such as the Bangladesh Scouts, have been trained thus building the countries human capital in the area of disaster management.
8. 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. Promoting and supporting the development of volunteer schemes at local, national, and regional levels, strategic efforts must be 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 grassroots and community levels.
9. UNV appreciates this request from the Minister to make a brief submission to the Review, and would welcome an opportunity for further dialogue on incorporating volunteerism into development programming by Irish Aid.

For further information contact:



³ “Better Policies for Development, Recommendations for Policy Coherence”, page 63, OECD 2011:

http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,3699,en_2649_18532937_1_1_1_37413_00.html

⁴ UNDP, October 2011 “Supporting transformational change”: http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/supporting_transformationalchange.html

⁵ UNDP, October 2011 “Supporting transformational change”, pages 58, 60, 63 ,65