

Preface – The art of the possible

This second State of the World's Volunteerism Report on volunteerism and governance argues that volunteerism and placing people at the centre of development policy and investment offer untapped potential for sustainable development. The report posits volunteerism as an additional resource and vehicle for bringing skills, knowledge and expertise to enable voice and participation, accountability and responsiveness as key pillars of good governance complementing other development solutions and resources.

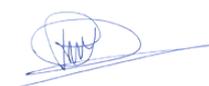
Based on a wide body of evidence, the report highlights how volunteerism can promote peace and development. It shows what has been achieved in certain contexts and thus draws out the potential contribution of volunteers and volunteerism. This "art of the possible" is illustrated by case studies, providing a striking range of examples of how people, as individuals and in groups, are pooling their energies to act in the different governance spaces. This report also shows that when governments and other governance actors create an enabling environment and invite people into closed spaces, change can emerge that is more broadly owned and supported.

Examples of formal and informal volunteering attest to the fact that those who are marginalized, such as women, indigenous populations and disempowered young people, can create spaces where their voices can be heard and where they can affect governance at local levels. This report addresses the issue of women's engagement,

providing interesting examples of how women have been able to engage in spaces outside the traditional norms, hold authorities accountable and ensure responsiveness to their needs and those of their communities. One can clearly see how marginalized groups build alliances and work with the few resources they have to inform and make change in their communities.

Governance was the subject of an unpublished chapter in the first report released in 2011. Even with the knowledge that it would be challenging to gather evidence on volunteerism and governance, current global discourse on the sustainable development agenda and the recognition that new multi-stakeholder partnerships will be an essential part of the means of implementation have made it important that we tackle the subject now. Further research and innovative strategic partnerships are needed for better understanding, documenting and measuring volunteerism and its contribution to peace and development. This report starts a conversation that can and needs to be deepened.

With this report, we hope to show the art of the possible. When we bring all available resources to the table of development, we make the challenges of our times seem surmountable. By creating environments for people to volunteer their time, it is possible to use their skills and knowledge for the common good in the sphere of governance. It is possible that we can broaden the number of people who have voice, who can participate and who can hold governance actors to account.



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