

The Importance of Volunteering in Achieving SDGs: Focused on the Empowerment Theory

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In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to succeed the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) and provide a shared blueprint for eradicating poverty and achieve sustainable development for people and the earth. The SDGs set not only international goals but also national agenda by acknowledging existence of different national situation, capacities and development levels, which were neglected on MDGs. In December 2018, the ministry of environment of republic of Korea established the National Sustainable Development of Korea (K-SDGs), which are its country-specific goals and targets towards sustainable development.

The SDGs also emphasize that people are the core of sustainable development. This ‘humanistic approach’ can be found on the preamble of the declaration of SDGs ‘no one will be left behind’ and at the article 52 of the declaration ‘agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people’.

The United Nations has indicated that volunteering is an effective means of achieving SDGs. In the resolution 70/129, the United Nations recognizes that volunteering can be a powerful means of implementation for the SDG and welcomes the integration of volunteerism in 2030 Agenda and in related key documents. Also, the resolution recognizes UNV as the appropriate UN entity to support its implementation.¹ In sum up, people are the most important factor of achieving and conducting of the SDGs.

The definition of volunteering is differ from the scholars and countries, but generally considered an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial or social gain "to benefit another person, group or organization".² There are several theories on motivations in volunteerism including

¹ Resolution 70/129: Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond [UN Volunteers]. (2019. Jan 13). Retrieved from <https://www.unv.org/publications/unga-resolution-70129-integrating-volunteering-peace-and-development-plan-action-next>

² Wilson, John (2000). Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology* (26), pp. 215.

Maslow's hierarchy approach and Herzberg's two factor model, but the empowerment theory is the one can explain why volunteering is important in achieving SDGs.

The term empowerment introduced by social scientist Julian Rappaport in 1984, but the definition of the empowerment is differ from scholars. According to the Robert Adams' definition of empowerment, empowerment is the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives.³ The results of empowerment can be divided into personal, interpersonal, community aspects. **Personal empowerment** – improves self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-esteem, **interpersonal empowerment** - enhances interacts with others, and problem solving with people, and finally, **community empowerment** - encourages participation in social activities. Numerous studies have verified that there is a significant relationship between individual empowerment and motivation of volunteering.

In achieving SDGs, participation of the people is the most important factor. The SDGs is seeking universal and sustainable development at the global and domestic level and requires continued involvement of the people. Because SDG agendas are designed by people, of the people, and for the people. Therefore without participating the people, SDGs cannot be achieved.

Volunteering is the best way to make people participate in SDGs due to the empowerment effects. By participating in volunteer program, the people empower self-esteem and self-acceptance (personal empowerment), enhance problem-solving skills through interaction with others (interpersonal empowerment), and improve responsibilities in social problems (community and political empowerment). In other words, volunteering empowers the people to keep participate in SDGs.

SDGs are often criticized as 'encyclopedias of goals' with a wide range of detailed goals and targets. Therefore to accomplish those huge and detailed targets and goals, cooperation with the people with the government and civic society is the most critical factor. By participating the people in SDG, the people can suggest their needs to the goals and targets, and by volunteering the program, the people can

³ Adams, Robert. (2008). *Empowerment, participation and social work*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p.6.

empower themselves and keep themselves participate in the program. In other words, participation of the people is the key of SDG success.

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