

Volunteering in addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals

A set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, are a call to action, emanating from all countries – the rich, the poor and the moderately developed. It aims to improve the protection and well-being of our planet, to tackle poverty, injustice and inequality, fight climate change by 2030.

Volunteers were recognized as a stakeholder to achieve key global goals at The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

So, what can volunteers do to achieve the 17 SDGs?

Firstly, it is extremely important to have a wide range of people who can be involved in the process of achieving Sustainable Development Goals. As everyone knows, volunteering can attract a large number of people. It turns out that without volunteer groups it is impossible to achieve the SDGs.

Secondly, volunteering can involve people in planning and implementing Sustainable Development Goals. Volunteers are a «bridge» between people and governments that provides new opportunities for interaction between them for specific actions.

Moreover, volunteers try to minimize the gap of the disadvantaged or difficult to reach by helping people. Volunteering seeks to ensure that every person is heard. Volunteer organizations act as intermediaries who link government initiatives with voluntary community action.

It is worth noting that volunteering is a means of sustainable development. Volunteers contribute to the improvement of civic engagement and social responsibility, and the deepening of tolerance and solidarity. By their actions, they establish a trusting relationship between people. Volunteering allows communities to take part in their own growth and in improving their lives.

In addition, volunteers and volunteer organizations can provide basic services and technical support. They also exchange good local and international experience, good practices and skills.

Most importantly, many of the Sustainable Development Goals require a lot of time to fulfill them, and also require changes in people's perception of the world, the way they live and their behavior. Volunteers change people's minds and inspiring them by sharing skills and information.

In conclusion, volunteering is one of the most significant elements in achieving SDGs. Why? Because, as Dr. Gill Greer (CEO, Volunteer Service Abroad) said, «Volunteering is about action and service, about active citizenship, social cohesion, partnership and relationships. Its impact on local, national and global development can be transformational».