

A Volunteering New Zealand Summary Report

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**STATE OF THE WORLD'S  
VOLUNTEERISM REPORT**

**2016**



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## ABOUT VOLUNTEERING NEW ZEALAND

Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) is an association of volunteer centres, national and other organisations that are committed to volunteering.

Our purpose is to benefit communities in New Zealand by promoting, supporting, encouraging and representing volunteering.

We do this by providing services and assistance which support the development of effective volunteering; and raising the interest and awareness in New Zealand of the value of volunteering in benefiting the common good so as to encourage increased participation in volunteering.

Our tools, such as the Best Practice Guidelines for Volunteer-Involving Organisations and the Competencies for Managers of Volunteers, campaigns, such as National Volunteer Week and intelligence, such as local and international research and practice are all available free on our website\*.



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## ABOUT THE UN STATE OF THE WORLD'S VOLUNTEERISM REPORT (2015)

The State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015 is the second such report issued by United Nations Volunteers and represents the first review of the impact of volunteerism on governance around the world<sup>1</sup>. The Report examines the many means by which volunteers around the world are transforming governance and identifies the key strategies used by volunteers at all levels to engage with governance actors<sup>2</sup>.

The Report draws on research in the areas of political theory and public administration, as well as a wide range of case studies from all around the world. It aims to demonstrate "how ordinary people are volunteering their time, energies and skills to improve the way they are governed and engaged at local, national and global levels"<sup>3</sup> and to build a foundation of evidence relating to the impact of volunteerism on governance.

The Report aims to inspire a global conversation about the role of volunteers in transforming governance at the global, national, and local levels.<sup>4</sup>

The Report also draws attention to the need for more, and better, research into an area which is currently under-researched.<sup>5</sup>

**This summary report represents VNZ's interpretation of the key points of the State of the World's Volunteerism Report (2015)\* relevant to the New Zealand volunteering context. It is not written to replace or otherwise substitute the UN report, which readers are encouraged to engage with independently of this report.**

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\* <http://www.volunteercountrycounts.org/en/swvr-2015.html>





On September 25th world leaders gathered in New York to ratify the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These 17 global goals replace the Millennium Development Goals and aim to eradicate poverty by 2030. They address all areas of concern, from poverty and hunger to social justice and climate action, and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic, and environmental. The catch phrase of this new development agenda is “leave no one behind”, a goal which will not be achieved without volunteers.

➤ The State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015 focusses on the idea of “transforming governance” because good governance is critical for sustainable development.

The report argues that volunteerism is an often untapped resource in development, offering a range of skills, knowledge and expertise which can be used to transform governance in a variety of ways.

The SDGs are not just for developing countries: they are global goals and apply equally here in New Zealand. As this report demonstrates, volunteers in New Zealand have a role to play in transforming governance and ensuring no one is left behind.

# SUMMARY OF THE REPORT'S FINDINGS

## Headlines and Key Messages

VNZ believes there are four key “headlines” highlighting the role of volunteers in development to date, and their potential to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. *Volunteers are acting as champions of change worldwide – opening doors for people to take part in decisions that affect their lives and urging those in power to listen and respond to their needs.*
2. *Volunteers are working with governments and civil society organisations to hold those in power to account, to influence policies and laws and promote the rights of those who are left out of development decisions.*
3. *Development efforts to date have left many people behind and need to be re-thought. As the world's governments prepare a new roadmap to overcome global poverty, volunteers can be catalysts for a fairer and more equal world – if they're invited to the table.*
4. *Governments need to go beyond the rhetoric of participation and take concrete steps to help the world's volunteers actively contribute to the decisions that affect people's lives.<sup>6</sup>*

The Report also highlights four key considerations for amending development processes and strengthening governance practices:

1. *Volunteers at the local level can help to build the capacity of people, increasing voice and participation.*
2. *Those governments who create the enabling conditions for volunteerism increase social inclusion.*
3. *Volunteer networks globally are promoting voice, participation and accountability.*
4. *Volunteerism will be instrumental in drawing in the resources necessary for the achievement of the SDGs.<sup>7</sup>*

## Findings and Conclusions

The Report summarises its findings into five key policy threads which stand out from the evidence considered and which will be critical in meeting the SDGs:<sup>8</sup>

### 1. **Volunteerism has the potential to transform governance at all levels.**

Many frontline programmes rely on volunteers, and volunteers have the capacity to draw policy makers' attention to new and developing issues, knowledge and research. In this way volunteerism can flag issues which impact marginalised or vulnerable groups and thereby greatly enhance the responsiveness of governance actors.<sup>9</sup>

### 2. **Volunteerism must happen on a level playing field.**

Volunteers have different opportunities, access to different spaces, and face many different obstacles. Minorities of all kinds and others who are marginalised are often excluded or unable to access formal forms of volunteering at the local, national and global levels. This leaves them at a great disadvantage as their voices are often not heard in local, national, and global fora.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. **An enabling environment is critical for volunteerism to have any meaningful contribution to the realisation of the SDGs.**

The extent to which volunteers can or cannot contribute to transforming governance is dictated by the greater social, political, and legal environment. Volunteerism is most effective in improving participation, responsiveness and accountability where the overall socio-legal framework supports such contributions.<sup>11</sup>

### 4. **Collaboration between volunteers, civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector, governments, and other actors is necessary in order for volunteerism to be successful.**

The Report shows that "enabling closer interaction between governments and CSOs can create channels for volunteer engagement to enhance the capacity of governments to implement policy." Such alliances can also afford opportunities for promoting standards, policies, and global agreements which support volunteerism, as well as providing additional knowledge and resources, and enhancing the legitimacy of local and national efforts.<sup>12</sup>

### 5. **More research is needed into the contribution of volunteers to transforming governance around the world.**

Measuring the contribution of volunteers to development at all levels is critical. The Report highlights four key challenges to collecting data for research:

- a) defining and describing the vast range of volunteer activities undertaken around the world;
- b) using quantitative measures to capture the scale and scope of different kinds of volunteerism;
- c) using qualitative methods to capture the nuances, distinctions and complex contributions of volunteers within their diverse contexts; and
- d) committing to better data collection, including culturally grounded qualitative data regarding the ways in which volunteerism is defined and practised in different countries.<sup>13</sup>

# TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE

## WHY ‘TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE’? WHY NOW?

Although discussion on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) highlighted many significant achievements in development, it has also drawn attention to the flaws in the MDGs, illuminating some of the underlying reasons why development may fall short.

**The lack of good governance—governance which is accountable, responsive and participatory—is one of these reasons.<sup>14</sup>**

Governance is a critical barrier or enabler to successful development. Therefore, it is now widely agreed that the success of the SDGs, the successors to the MDGs, adopted by the UN in September 2015, will be dependent on better governance at all levels.<sup>15</sup>

The catch-phrase of the post-2015 development agenda is “leave no one behind”, an ambitious goal which will require a global change in the way that individuals, communities, the private sector, governments, and international institutions do business. This new approach to development must be one that focusses on civic engagement and participation, responsiveness of governance actors, and robust accountability. **Achieving the SDGs will require “good governance that engages people in planning and monitoring, and that ensures good governance.”<sup>16</sup>**

## IMPACTS OF VOLUNTEERISM

The Report uses case studies from a diverse range of countries, including Chile, China, Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Kenya, Lebanon and Nepal, to demonstrate “how ordinary people are volunteering their time, energies and skills to improve the way they are governed and engaged at local, national, and global levels.”<sup>17</sup>

### LOCAL

The Report identifies four key areas where volunteerism is transforming governance at a local level. Examples cited in the report include:

- i. **Influencing decision-making through participation** by promoting and supporting the participation of women in local bodies.
- ii. **Making governments more accountable** by championing the right to information from key local governance actors, such as local councillors.
- iii. **Volunteers are engaging in invited spaces** by becoming “participatory watchdogs – not opposing the government but ensuring the transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery on the ground.”<sup>18</sup>
- iv. **Volunteers are effecting institutional responsiveness** for example by applying pressure to ensure governments respond to their calls to adopt new mechanisms to improve accountability and responsiveness.<sup>19</sup>

## NATIONAL

At the national level, volunteerism is transforming governance by enhancing citizen voices and enabling participation and civic engagement, and by calling for, and working with governments for greater accountability and responsiveness.<sup>20</sup>

Volunteers are working with governments to bring about critical legal reforms, improve electoral accountability, and post-conflict peace building. They are also influencing legal reforms by drawing attention to the needs of the marginalised and under-represented, influencing institutional practices by ensuring citizens understand and can exercise their rights, and influencing the rules of engagement in different spaces by calling for and implementing laws around rights of access to information.<sup>21</sup>

The Report highlights that the relationship between governments and volunteers is a reciprocal one with two key aspects. The first of these is governments leveraging volunteerism to achieve their development goals by engaging volunteers in diverse areas of state functioning such as providing avenues for participation in the legislative process and encouraging monitoring of public administration by citizens. The second aspect of the relationship is volunteers seizing the initiative to effect change through collective action by engaging with and influencing decision makers.

Areas in which volunteers might seize the initiative and influence governance at the national level include legislative reforms, government institutions and practices, and the rules of engagement among groups.<sup>22</sup>

## GLOBAL

The pillars of good governance—voice and participation, accountability, and responsiveness — have a different form at the global level: most global organisations answer only to states, multinational corporations answer to their board, and many international civil sector organisations answer to their donors over the people whose ideas and lives they represent. Individuals have very little standing at the international level.<sup>23</sup>

The Report illustrates how volunteers engage with elements of governance at the transnational level in three key ways:

- i. **Volunteers are critical in making people’s voices heard at the global level** by mobilising “global public opinion on issues of concern where policy makers may not be acting with urgency”.<sup>24</sup>
- ii. **Volunteers work at the local and national levels to localise global policies, conventions, and agreements**, mobilising these in support of local and national initiatives by anchoring long-standing demands on a global norm.
- iii. **Volunteers are crucial in seeking accountability for the actions of global actors who are not directly accountable to individuals** by supporting movements at all levels to improve the accountability of trans-national actors on human rights issues.<sup>25</sup>

NEW ZEALAND AND PACIFIC



## HOW IS VOLUNTEERING TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE IN NEW ZEALAND AND THE PACIFIC?

Volunteers are transforming governance in New Zealand and across the Pacific at both the local and national levels in a number of different ways. These include influencing government policy, giving girls and young women the skills to speak out on the issues that affect them, and partnering with governments to implement much needed legal reforms.



### **Transforming governance in New Zealand Volunteering NZ: influencing legislation and policy**

Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) is the “voice of volunteering” in Aotearoa. Our vision is for a New Zealand that promotes, values and supports effective volunteering for the benefit of individuals and communities – and our mission is to promote, support and advocate for volunteering.

We are the only national organisation in New Zealand that focuses purely on volunteering. This helps ensure that volunteering occurs within a positive environment where it is encouraged and fostered.

Volunteering NZ is involved in transforming governance at a national level by influencing legislation and policy reform through submissions to select committees and various government departments, including the Productivity Commission, and the Ministry of Justice.

For example, in July 2015, VNZ made a submission to the Department of Internal Affairs regarding the overarching review of New Zealand’s Fire Service. The New Zealand Fire Services is one of VNZ’s National Organisation Members and is comprised of over 80% volunteers, split between rural and urban fire brigades; however, the current structure of the fire service senior management does not include a position with a specific focus on volunteers.

The Fire Services Discussion Document released as part of the DIA review outlined the challenges fire-fighters face and what resources they have to meet them. It also discussed potential changes to the organisational structure, which were intended to be more effective in terms of both cost and governance.

VNZ wrote a formal submission to the DIA which urged that any restructuring of the Fire Services include an increased role for volunteers. Specifically, the submission asked that a senior management position be created who has responsibility for and is answerable to volunteer fire-fighters. This individual should have volunteer experience so as to be better able to relate to the Fire Service volunteers and to understand their needs.

The submission also urged that strategies be adopted within the general Fire Service management which would take into account the differences in motivations between paid and volunteer staff<sup>26</sup>.



## **GirlGuiding New Zealand: Enhancing the voices of girls and young women**

GirlGuiding New Zealand, one of VNZs member organisations, is also transforming governance at a national level by enhancing the voices of girls and young women, both within the organisation and across New Zealand.

Over the last 18 months GirlGuiding New Zealand have made huge changes to their governance structure, changing from a girl-focused organisation to a girl-led one, encouraging girls to take ownership of GirlGuiding, and providing more leadership opportunities for girls and young women within the organisation.

Dubbed “The New GirlGuiding”, this shift reflects both the World Association of GirlGuiding and Girl Scouts’ policy to enhance the voices of girls and young women around the world, and the desire and expectation of girls and young women themselves to have their voices heard. GirlGuiding New Zealand recognises that New Zealand is a country with real potential for change and decided, out of an awareness of the capability of its members and their desire to lead now, that they should be leading by example and providing girls and young women with greater opportunities to have their voices heard within the organisation.

While GirlGuiding is already girl focussed and increasingly girl-led at a unit level, the changes aim to make the organisation as a whole truly girl-led. These developments are also in addition to the opportunities already in place for young women to have their voices heard, such as the Young Leaders (ages 18-30). These are regional delegates representing the voices of young leaders, who hold an independent vote at the National Forum.

GirlGuiding are also proud to have three young women on their National Board of eight.

Part of the change involves the development of Girl Advisory and Participation Groups, at both the area and national level, whose role will be to advise the National Board and Guiding Development Committee on a range of topics including the development of programmes, uniforms, and other issues relevant to girls and young women. Girls in the National Group will also have a vote in their own right at the National Forum.

Another new development is the Ranger Advocacy Panel, whose role will be to speak out on the issues girls and young women think are important, both in GirlGuiding and in the wider New Zealand context. This panel will be responsible for directing GirlGuiding’s advocacy efforts and acting as spokespersons for GirlGuiding New Zealand. Long term, GirlGuiding also sees the potential to expand these groups to include not only Rangers (ages 12-17) but also Guides (ages 9-12).

By developing participation and advocacy groups GirlGuiding New Zealand aims to give girl-members a means to speak out for themselves and others, and to offer significant direction to the organisation.

The aim is to strengthen the development of girl leadership, and to become an organisation that is truly led by girls. Through these developments, they aim to not only provide girls and young women with leadership skills, but the opportunities to use those skills in a meaningful way.



## **Transforming governance in the Pacific VSA in the Solomon Islands: Legal advisers transforming governance**

Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA), another of VNZs member organisations, is currently involved in transforming governance in the Solomon Islands, through the provision of legal advisers to the national and provincial governments of the Islands.

VSA has been working in the Solomon Islands since 1965, and volunteers now work in education, infrastructure and improving rural livelihoods. VSA volunteer assignments are dictated by VSA's local partners, to ensure volunteers are fulfilling a real need. VSA believes the role of volunteers is to build their counterpart's capacity so the volunteer leaves the organisation able to continue with good, sustainable, development.

Over the last 10 years one of VSA's programmes in the Solomon Islands has been the provision of legal advisers to the national and provincial governments there. To date, VSA have sent 27 legal advisers, from a range of backgrounds, to the Solomon Islands. These advisers work in partnership with both the national and regional governments to improve transparency, accountability, and democracy.

This is a prime example of a government leveraging volunteers. By engaging with VSA, the government of the Solomon Islands is able to undertake critical legal reforms much more effectively than would otherwise be possible.

Some of the work they are involved in includes digitising and updating old legislation, drafting new legislation, and working with provincial governments to conduct elections.

They have also been involved in lobbying for legal reforms around gender equity, campaigning for better laws regarding domestic violence and protection for those working at safe houses.

One of the key areas where VSA have seen real success is around increasing participation in local elections. Last year, VSA recommended that provincial elections be deferred so that a voter drive could be run, as enrolment numbers were very low. This was very successful, and around 12,000 new voters were enrolled, the majority of them younger voters.

# CAPACITIES FOR THE NEW DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

## THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

*“The potential of volunteers to help create truly people-centred development is enormous, but, as yet, far from fully tapped. Achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals will be helped by the participation of all sections of society. Volunteers have a critical role to play in representing the voices of those who are often excluded from development decisions, including women and other groups who may be marginalised”* – Helen Clarke, UNDP Administrator<sup>27</sup>

The flaws and failures of the MDGs have led to the adoption of a new development agenda, embodied by the SDGs. The catch phrase of this new development agenda is “leave no one behind” and this will not be achieved without volunteers.<sup>28</sup>

The Report 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 pillars of good governance.”<sup>29</sup>*

In addition to the five policy threads identified in the Report’s findings (discussed above), the Report calls on governments to:

1. *“Engage more volunteers in the process of crafting policies and putting them into action;*
2. *Integrate volunteers formally into national development frameworks and SDGs strategies;*
3. *Enact laws and policies to provide the necessary ‘enabling environment’ for volunteers to operate; and*
4. *Engage more volunteer women, youth, and marginalised groups in local and national decision making.*

The report also calls on private sector and civil society leaders to do more to incorporate the contributions of volunteers, especially those from under-represented groups.”<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this report align with Volunteering New Zealand's constitution, and should therefore be prioritised.

The government has yet to announce its aspirations, targets and strategies for achieving the SDGs in New Zealand and the Pacific Region, but we believe that it is important that Volunteering New Zealand is present at the table from the beginning.

To this end, the Board makes the following recommendations:

1. *That VNZ identify New Zealand's aspirations regarding the SDGs, how to achieve these, and what the role of VNZ will be in that process.*
2. *That VNZ proactively work to ensure volunteers are formally integrated into the New Zealand government's strategies for achieving the SDGs, and that the role of volunteers in achieving the SDGs is recognised at a national level.*
3. *That VNZ communicates regularly with its volunteers, member organisations, supporters, and wider networks about the role of volunteers in achieving the SDGs.*
4. *That VNZ continue to champion the role of volunteer women, youth and marginalised groups in local and national decision making.*

## APPENDIX



## TERMINOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The report uses the definition of volunteerism adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002, which states that:

*"[t]he terms volunteering, volunteerism and voluntary activities refer to a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principle motivating factor"*<sup>31</sup>

The report also recognises that "volunteerism and social activism are not mutually exclusive"<sup>32</sup> but that they overlap and converge, and treats them accordingly.

The definition of governance used in the report is that adopted in 1997 by the United Nations Development Programme. According to this definition, governance is

*"the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences."*<sup>33</sup>

The Report analyses the data collected from the perspective of "pillars", "levels" and "spaces". The "pillars" refer to the different elements of good governance, and the Report focuses on three of these pillars: voice and participation, accountability, and responsiveness. The "levels" are the different contexts in which volunteers are working and the Report focuses on the local, national and global levels.<sup>34</sup>

"Spaces" are an analytical tool used "to help analyse who can participate, where and under what rules of access and engagement."<sup>35</sup> The report identifies three key "spaces" where volunteers are working.

The first is closed spaces, where defined rules restrict who may participate. In such spaces, decisions are made by elites and there is no pretence of involvement or consultation with outside parties. The second is invited spaces, where participation is invited by governance actors, but the terms of that participation are set by the inviter. The third key space identified by the Report is claimed spaces.

These are spaces which have been claimed or created informally by less powerful actors, often through social movements, community associations or purely organically as citizens "voluntarily gather to debate, discuss and resist."<sup>36</sup>

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