

## The International Volunteer Year (IVY) 2026

Through [Resolution 78/127](#), the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (short: International Volunteer Year; acronym: IVY 2026), thereby promoting and recognizing volunteerism as a significant force for sustainable development. The General Assembly calls on Member States, United Nations system organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and academia, to observe the International Year at national and regional levels. IVY 2026 launches on International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2025.

### Quick facts on volunteering

- **Volunteering means giving time, skills, and energy freely to benefit others or contribute to a cause**, without financial compensation. It can be formal or informal, local or global.
- **There are an estimated 1 billion volunteers worldwide.** Around 70 percent volunteer informally – directly helping people in their communities – while 30 percent engage through formal organizations.
- **Volunteerism takes many forms.** Volunteers contribute through local initiatives, online platforms and international assignments. This diversity strengthens the reach and relevance of development efforts.
- **Volunteers are resilient and adaptable.** They often work in challenging conditions, bringing creativity, empathy, and endurance to their missions.
- **Volunteers hold deep cultural and social significance.** Volunteering has long been a part of human society – from mutual aid traditions to organized movements – and is embedded in traditions and values across cultures. It fosters solidarity, civic engagement, and a sense of belonging.
- **Volunteering is for everyone.** People of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities can volunteer. Whether through informal acts of kindness or formal programs, volunteering offers a way for everyone to contribute meaningfully to their communities and to global development efforts.

## Key messages

**Volunteerism drives sustainable development.** Volunteers contribute across economic, social and environmental dimensions, accelerating progress toward the 2030 Agenda. From climate action and poverty reduction to education and health, volunteer efforts are essential to building inclusive and resilient societies. Their contributions must be recognized, measured, and reflected in development planning at all levels.

**All forms of volunteering matter.** Whether formal or informal, in-person or digital, local or cross-border, every act of volunteering counts. Volunteerism takes many forms, including mutual aid, caregiving, skill-sharing and civic engagement. Each deserves visibility and support. A holistic view of volunteerism ensures no contribution is overlooked.

**Removing barriers to volunteering is key.** Volunteering must be open to all, regardless of gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion or lived experience. To unlock full participation, governments and organizations must remove social, legal and economic barriers that limit access – especially for those facing discrimination or marginalization.

**Volunteers strengthen societies in times of crisis and peace.** From pandemic response and disaster relief to peacebuilding and long-term development, volunteers are often first to act and last to leave. Their efforts provide immediate support and build resilience. Supporting volunteers through safe, enabling environments and inclusive policies means investing in communities' ability to adapt, recover and thrive.

**Volunteerism is evolving.** Digital, skills-based and cross-border volunteering are expanding opportunities for engagement – especially in underserved or remote areas. To harness this potential, stakeholders must promote and support new and emerging forms of volunteering through knowledge and information platforms.

**Evidence matters.** Robust research, data and measurement frameworks are essential to understanding the impact of volunteerism. Evidence helps identify what works, where and for whom. Measuring volunteer contributions ensures they are counted and valued in decision-making, leading to smarter strategies and more effective policies.