

MEDIA RELEASE

11/9/00

United Nations Volunteers IYV Regional Workshop for Asia and the Pacific

On the initiative of the Government of Japan, the General Assembly of the United Nations has designated the year 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV 2001). During the year governments and communities around the world are encouraged to recognize the contribution of volunteers and to promote volunteer service.

As the UN-designated focal point for the Year, the United Nations Volunteers program (UNV), aims to get everyone involved and launch into a new era of global volunteer co-operation. From 2 to 3 November the UNV program, in collaboration with the local office of the United Nations Development Program, hosted 54 representatives from government, non-government organizations and academia from countries throughout Asia and the Pacific at a workshop in Dhaka to plan for IYV 2001. The workshop was made possible with funding received from the Government of Japan. Fourteen seemingly diverse countries, such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Fiji and Samoa, participated in the workshop, bringing a variety of perspectives on volunteering and volunteerism.

“Volunteers all over the world are playing a very useful role in poverty reduction, health care, mass literacy programs, conflict resolution and in peace building efforts. The need for greater recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism around the globe ... can hardly be over emphasized.” With these thoughts Mr. Manik Lal Somaddar, Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports opened the IYV Regional Workshop for Asia and the Pacific in Dhaka. Mr. Kazuyoshi Urabe, Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh, reinforced these words by emphasizing the role that volunteers play in the development and betterment of the communities in which they work.

The workshop provided an opportunity for countries to prepare their own plans to give IYV 2001 both a regional and a national focus in obtaining the IYV objectives of recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism. With only a short time until IYV is launched on 5 December, the International Volunteer Day, countries at different stages of preparation were able to share their experiences and ideas. Some countries are well advanced; others still have much work to do. However, the workshop participants unanimously called upon governments and peoples from all walks of life to support and celebrate IYV 2001.

Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the major themes to come out of this workshop was the common history and culture of volunteerism in Asia and the Pacific. The concept of ‘self-help’ and supporting others is nothing new to the communities of Bangladesh, especially in times of natural disaster. Likewise, communities in the Pacific, South East Asia and South Asia come together in times of need. Recognizing and promoting this is at the heart of IYV.

In closing the workshop, Ms. Setsuko Yamazaki, UNV Chief of Asia Pacific, Europe and CIS section, called upon the participants to “maintain the momentum” of IYV in 2001 and beyond, and to continue the strong culture of volunteerism in Asia and the Pacific.

Contact Information

For further information on the IYV Regional Workshop for Asia and the Pacific:

Ms. Georgia McPeak
UNV Program Officer
United Nations Development Program
Tel: 811 8600, 811 8632-7
Fax: 811 3196
E-mail: georgia.mcpeak@undp.org

For information regarding the United Nations Volunteers program (UNV) and the International Year of Volunteers (IYV 2001):

Ms. Natasha Mistry
Team IYV -UNV
Postfach 260 111
D-53153 Bonn, Germany
Tel: 49 228 815 2254
Fax: 49 228 815 2959
E-mail: natasha.mistry@unv.org
team@iyv2001.org

For information regarding the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Bangladesh: