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PUBLICATION LAUNCH: VOLUNTEERING & SOCIAL ACTIVISM PROMOTE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

24 October 2008

Today, United Nations Day and World Development Information Day, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme are pleased to launch a joint publication, *Volunteering and Social Activism: Pathways for participation in human development*. The paper is based on a study undertaken by the three organisations in 2007-2008.

The background study finds that **both volunteering and social activism are important strategies for fostering people's participation in social change and human development.**

Flavia Pansieri, the Executive Coordinator of UNV, said, *"This initiative among UNV, CIVICUS and IAVE which had its beginnings during the International Year of the Volunteer (IYV), stemmed from our joint recognition that volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges and that it can transform the pace and nature of development."*

CIVICUS' Secretary General, Ingrid Srinath, expressed her hopes that *"This paper will help promote greater dialogue and engagement between volunteering and social activist organisations around shared development objectives – and in so doing, strengthen citizen participation aimed at reducing poverty and inequality around the world."*

Echoing this sentiment, the President of IAVE, Kang-Hyun Lee said, *"I hope this paper is widely utilised to further partnerships between volunteering and social activist organisations and encourages people's participation for human and social capital development."*

The paper argues that volunteering, like social activism, can be purposeful and change-orientated. Volunteering can be directed at influencing agenda-setting, policy-making, decision-making and representation, and is also an important mechanism for promoting empowerment, personal transformation and social inclusion.

The paper also highlights the complementary and supporting roles that volunteering and activism play in fostering participation. For example, social activism plays an important role in providing leadership, defining areas for engagement and mobilising individuals. However, social activism depends on the contributions of volunteers to effect the change it seeks.

“We must celebrate the distinctive contributions of diverse forms of participation, both through volunteering and social activism, and draw on these experiences to create stronger and more enabling environments for people’s participation,” noted co-author Helene Perold.

Embracing best practices in volunteer management, and creating diverse opportunities for individuals to take action, is also critical for promoting people’s participation in development.

In the paper, CIVICUS, IAVE and UNV call for a shared understanding of the common and interdependent characteristics of volunteering and social activism, so that the vast potential of volunteerism for advancing human development and social change can be released.

The full publication is available for download, free-of-charge at:

<http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/resources/research-reports/global/doc/volunteerism-and-social-activism.html>

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