

Volunteerism



The concept of volunteerism is about the willingness for and practice of community service to engage and benefit all segments of society; including women, children, young persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, minorities, and those who remain excluded for social or economic reasons.

By definition, a volunteer is a person who expresses a willingness to undertake to provide a service free of charge for a specific event or cause. Volunteerism strengthens trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, by purposefully creating opportunities for participation.

Volunteerism is a source of community strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion. It can bring positive social change by fostering respect for diversity, equality and the participation of all. It is among society's most vital assets.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (Dec 5, 2009)



Volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at areas such as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, youth empowerment, climate change, disaster prevention and management, social integration, humanitarian action, peace building and, in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination.

A brief history

The idea of volunteerism and volunteering (the act of performing volunteer work) began in the West community's history where the term initially, in the 1750s, denoted civilians mobilized for military service in times of emergency and without pay for their services. During the 19th and 20th centuries, voluntary service movements and groups formed around the world in order to rebuild communities in the aftermath of war and disasters; and then later, to fight the war against poverty. In February 2012, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution recognizing December 5th as the International Day of Volunteers to promote the importance volunteerism for development around the world.

Volunteerism today

Today, volunteers around the world and in Pakistan can work with a variety of organizations and for different causes. Whether advocating for human rights, planting a tree, visiting the sick, organizing a local community development meeting, raising awareness about Polio or HIV/AIDS, teaching a young girl to read, or fundraising for an orphanage; these diverse forms of volunteering are all examples of the range of ways by which people can reach out and participate in actions of solidarity, development and social change.

By participating in volunteering and social activism, people can be empowered with the confidence, skills and knowledge necessary to effect change in their world. Volunteers can benefit directly from their involvement through:

- Assisting and contributing to the community.
- Working in a team, developing new skills and sharing knowledge.
- Opening up new social and work-related networks.
- Increasing confidence and self-esteem.
- Obtaining experience and creating a pathway to employment within a community.

SPARC's spirit of volunteerism

Child Rights Committees

SPARC, as Pakistan's leading child rights organization, has taken initiatives to promote volunteerism in communities by creating Child Rights Committees throughout the country. Today, these Child Rights Committees are active in 54 districts as voluntary groups of activists who independently follow up and conduct activities on child rights related issues in their districts. Members of child rights committees include teachers, lawyers, journalists, social activists, and members of local government.

Child Rights Clubs

Child Rights Clubs are another initiative undertaken by SPARC in collaboration with schools across the country, to promote volunteerism and child participation. These clubs consist of school children under the age of 18 years that voluntarily meet and undertake activities for the promotion of child rights as well as to effect social change in their communities.

Promoting volunteerism

In the spirit of volunteerism, anyone and everyone can carry out various actions and activities to promote volunteering and social activism in their community. You too can join the effort to make your country and the world a better place.

Help raise awareness: Talk about volunteerism and distribute information to your friends, family members and other interested people in your community.

Publish articles: Research and reflect about volunteerism and share your opinion in the local media such as with local newspapers, magazines, social media, SPARC's quarterly Expression (a newsletter sharing the views of children), etc.

Create a school/ community group to promote volunteerism: Start by recruiting friends with a common interest; engage the community and form a club, conduct activities.

Join with organizations working for development: Donate and volunteer with organizations working to provide humanitarian aid to those affected by the natural disasters in Pakistan such as floods.

How can you help?

If you have...

If you have 5 minutes

You could give blood.
You could start and/ or sign an online petition.
You could donate money for a cause.

If you have 1 hour

You could read stories or play games with children in hospitals.

If you have 5 hours

You could clean up a park or public area.
You could plant trees.

If you have 5 days

You could launch a book drive.
You could run a campaign against animal cruelty.

If you have 1 month

You could raise funds and collect or deliver goods for those in need.

If you have a summer

You could give administrative support at free health clinics.
You could start a sports camp, arrange activities and sports competitions.

If you have 1 year

You could volunteer to help teach children at a public school or orphanage.
You could volunteer at social welfare and/ or development organizations.



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