Summary of Side Event:

LET'S TALK VOLUNTEERING: EXPLORING FUTURE ISSUES & TRENDS

2 February 2022, 1:00-1:50 p.m. New York time

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised how volunteers as agents of change provide the practical action that builds hope and resilience, improves lives, and strengthens communities. In November 2020, IAVE (International Association for Volunteer Effort) commissioned research to create a body of knowledge about the strategic leadership role of national volunteering leadership organizations and to understand their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in their countries. Data was collected from across 67 countries and the research report '**Leadership for Volunteering: the COVID-19 Experience'** was launched in September 2021.

Shortly before IAVE commissioned its research, Forum (International Forum for Volunteering in Development) had commissioned research on the impact of the pandemic on volunteering for development. This research report **'COVID-19 and the Future of Volunteering for Development'** was also launched in 2021, which was also the year for UNV (United Nations Volunteers Programme) to publish the next state of the world's volunteerism report; '**State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2022: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies'** was launched in December 2021. It seemed important and opportune to bring these three pieces of global research on volunteering together to share knowledge, highlight and consider the strategic common issues/trends, and provide commentary on what this evidence indicated for the future of volunteering. The three organizations and VGA (Volunteer Groups Alliance) agreed to work together on the virtual side event 'Let's Talk Volunteering: Exploring Future Issues & Trends.'

IAVE Research - https://leadership4vol.iave.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Leadership-for-Volunteering-The-COVID-19-Experience_IAVE.pdf

Forum Research - https://forum-ids.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Forum-Research-Report-COVID-19-and-the-Future-of-Volunteering-for-Development.pdf

UNV Research - https://swvr2022.unv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/UNV_SWVR_2022.pdf

KEY ISSUES

- **Volunteers build bridges** by brokering relationships between communities and state authorities and other development stakeholders

- **Volunteer-state partnerships** are an important mechanism for expanding volunteers' roles and can help accelerate progress towards Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development

- Volunteering enables people **to shape and own the development**

- Engaging volunteers from **marginalized communities in partnerships with their governments** can help lay the foundation for a 21st Century social contract founded on inclusion and equality that is more responsive to local needs

- Volunteering **offers diverse paths to civic participation, but gaps in volunteer practices and aspirations** across countries and regions remain

- To **maximize on partnerships' potential to contribute to development,** new ways of working that engage volunteers as key partners are needed, and partnerships between volunteers and their governments should be embraced and nurtured

- By **partnering with governments,** volunteers ensure more responsive outcomes to communities' needs, which also helps to build a culture of participatory governance

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Recognise, work with, and support **community-led volunteering systems and informal volunteers** involving them as equal partners in the volunteering space

- Address barriers to volunteering faced by **marginalised groups** ensuring all volunteers are valued and supported as partners in social change

- Address **gender-related volunteering** disparities and inequalities

- Use **technology as an enabler of a blended volunteering future** to increase participation and access

- Leverage **volunteers' expertise, knowledge, and experiences** for development

- Invest in **volunteer data, research, and measurement**

- Engage **governments as partners and advocate for policies** supporting an enabling environment for volunteering

- Explore **national and global partnerships and collaborations** to leverage efforts towards supporting and promoting volunteering

- Build **coalitions and networks for learning and shared action** on developing and enabling environment for volunteering