



Australian Volunteer and colleague. Photo: Anthony Plummer/AVI



Forum and the post-2015 development agenda

Volunteering. engaging. unifying.

The Purpose

This paper follows a 2012 survey of Forum members by Peter Devereux, for UNV; the presentation of the paper, *MDGs, Sustainable Development Goals and the post 2015 agenda: opportunities for consolidating the recognition of volunteerism* (Peter Devereux and Kornelia Guse) at Forum's IVCO meeting in Canada in October 2012; the Ottawa Declaration; and Forum members' participation at the London High Level meeting in January, and contribution of an on line submission as part of the preparatory process for the second high level meeting in Monrovia.

Part One of the paper is intended to provide Forum members with a summary of processes for the development of the post Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework, and an outline of some relevant issues.

Part Two provides suggested key messages. It is hoped that these may be useful for members' work with representatives of national and global civil society, governments, and other stakeholders as they seek to demonstrate why the value of volunteering for international development should be recognised in the post-2015 framework, and encourage support.

Part One: the process

As the world moves towards 2015 a number of processes are underway to ensure consultation on the post-MDG framework. A number of these are UN led and include a High-level Panel of 26 Eminent Persons, including civil society, and co-chaired by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia; Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia and David Cameron, PM of the UK. The Panel will present its report to the Secretary-General in the second quarter of 2013.

Other UN processes include national consultations led by UN Resident Co-ordinators and thematic consultations led by UN agencies, on a range of topics including health, environmental sustainability. A further consultation, the Global Conversation, is intended to capture the views of civil society and citizens using a web platform, *The World We Want* (www.worldwewant2015.org).

A number of specific civil society meetings have been held, and coalitions such as the Beyond2015 platform have been formed. Representatives of civil society from across Africa have also called for continued civil society engagement in consultation, planning and implementation.

Issues

Some concern has been expressed that while the debate on the future development framework increases in intensity, the MDGs remain unfinished, with many countries unlikely to achieve them within the 2015 timeframe. This supports the view expressed recently by Bill Gates that the next framework should, in fact, be an expansion of the MDGs. "Many of the potential new goals don't have unanimous support, and adding many new goals, or goals that are not easily measurable, may sap momentum," *The Guardian* (London), UN WIRE 4 February). Yet for some advocates and champions it is clear that those issues which were not specifically identified as priorities in the MDGs were overlooked and underfunded, and they are determined this should not happen again.

For many, including some Forum members, the major omission from the MDGs which needs to be most urgently addressed, was the failure to recognise social justice and human rights. For others the lack of meaningful goals related to women, migration, young people and the “youth bulge”, and the need to recognise of the role of civil society are paramount.

Following the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) a separate process was agreed to integrate economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability through a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For many advocates these have become the non-negotiable “Must-Haves” of any new global development framework. Others question whether placing the overarching priority on sustainability or poverty elimination can be sufficient, and seek to bring the two processes together in one set of goals. At the same time ongoing debate continues about the effectiveness of the MDGs, or the value of any global framework, as lessons learned are analysed and the impact of the MDGs on aid, and on governments’ decision making is assessed.

For many, despite all this, there is a sense that the MDG framework, partly because of its much criticized simplified, simplistic structure has driven decision making and funding priorities through a common development platform, and achieved valuable significant changes in many countries, despite some weak targets and indicators.

The UN Task Team has suggested sustainability, human rights and equality as core values. It recommended concrete end goals and targets along the four key dimensions of inclusive social development; inclusive economic development; environmental sustainability; peace and security. This more holistic approach would help avoid the siloed structure of the MDGs, and add a focus on human rights.

There is a growing view too, among some, that the agreements of Paris, Accra and Busan, together with the burgeoning influence and diversity of the G20; multiple crises and increased recognition of the inexorable impact of climate change mean that the binary model of development and aid must change, with the development of new modalities, including coalitions across governments, civil society and the private sector, a greater emphasis on countries’ own resources, South:South and triangulated relationships, and greater “in kind” support.

The role played by CSOs in partnerships for development was a major omission from the MDGs, including MDG8. This needs to be addressed in the post-2015 Framework, in line with the Busan 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness where participants “agreed to implement fully their respective commitments to enable CSOs to exercise their roles as independent development actors, with a particular focus on an enabling environment consistent with agreed international rights, that maximises the contribution of CSOs to development”.

Part Two:

What can Forum members do?

It is clear that more attempts are being made to involve those other than governments in the consultative process than in the lead up to the MDGs. Reports from consultations will contribute to the work of the High-Level Panel, and the special summit on the MDGs and the post -2015 development agenda at the 68th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2013.

Forum members include members of civil society, NGOs, the private sector, academic and research institutes, and government agencies. Their involvement over the next few months in as many of the consultation processes as possible, and discussions with stakeholders and governments is particularly important. Members may also be able to seek to be included in government delegations, or seek the few places that will presumably be allocated to non-government participants at UN regional and global meetings.

While it is likely that Forum members may have different views about some of the priorities and issues, there are a number of principles and values that they have agreed on, and a sense of shared vision and collective purpose that is articulated in the Forum Charter and other base documents. These provide the basis for a number of key messages that members might use in a variety of settings: in country and on-line consultations, in stakeholder discussions, and UN meetings.

Key Messages

Forum is the global peak body for international volunteering in development. Its mission is to be a global movement of volunteers working for a just world. The MDGs are a high priority for the 24 networks and organisations that are members of Forum, the global peak body for international volunteering for development.

Although the General Assembly of the United Nations has recognised the critical impact of national and international volunteerism in the Secretary General's reports in 2002 and 2012, Forum also believes that 'people-to-people development' contributes an important set of dynamics which are currently not fully acknowledged in the MDGs, nor in many of the discussions on development effectiveness. Such models of people-centred development build broader human understanding and the capacity of organisations and individuals, and should be integral to the spirit and goals of the post-2015 framework.

The critical role of civic participation in development should be a cornerstone of the development architecture. International volunteering is based on relationships, partnership, mutual exchange, reciprocal learning, and skills exchange. The "64 million individual actions" captured in the "Volunteer Action Counts Campaign" demonstrate that civic participation through national and international volunteering has contributed tangible outcomes towards a fairer, more caring and socially just world, and is a catalyst for practical achievements in tackling shared and diverse development challenges, including climate change, environmental degradation and sustainability.

In summary, international volunteering potentially has an important part to play as a key mechanism that can generate a contribution to the achievement of key post-2015 objectives. To do this we must convey the case for international volunteering and how we can achieve outcomes at an appropriate level of scale within the context of the post-2015 agenda. Case studies presented at 2012 IVCO provide examples of this, and members will have others that are appropriate to specific discussions.

The basis for international volunteering derives from its unique mode of contribution:

- Facilitating and implementing poverty-focussed objectives in the poorest countries of the world;
- Enhancing and broadening social capital at community level within and between the nationals of different countries;
- Building and replicating a constituency of support for advocating a pro-poor agenda globally.

Forum recognises:

- the necessity for broad consultation on the post-2015 framework, the proven incentive of concrete goals and targets, and the critical centrality of sustainability, poverty eradication, equality, inclusiveness, social justice and human rights.
- there will be considerable debate regarding the primary focus of the post-2015 Development Framework, in particular how to balance poverty eradication, human rights, social inclusiveness, equality, and sustainable development. Forum believes that sustainable development encompasses the social, spiritual, cultural and economic well-being of people and involves the use of all resources for the benefit of future generations, as well as the present.
- by empowering people to determine and participate in their own development, volunteerism makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the MDGs, providing direct and sustained people-to-people linkages which go well beyond purely transactional relationships.
- that wide engagement of civil society is critical to the planning processes at all levels of the post-2015 agenda and to its implementation.

Forum members are committed to:

- people-centred development, believing, in the words of the Secretary General's report to the UN in July 2012, that "Volunteerism should be an integral part of the post-2015 development framework. The mainstreaming of volunteer engagement will ensure that people are placed at the heart of sustainable peace and development efforts." (A/67/153)
- global peace and social justice founded on constructive relationships between nations, communities and individuals. Respect, reciprocity, trust and mutual responsibility are key elements that form the basis of such relationships (Forum Charter).

Concluding Remarks

International volunteering for development provides a uniquely effective avenue for the creation of constructive relationships between nations, communities and individuals, and across cultures. It is based on principles of solidarity and reciprocity, and shared ways in which key stakeholders can work together to achieve sustainable development outcomes. This is demonstrated in the evidence cited in the Secretary General's Report on the 'Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers' (A/67/153). As the world becomes increasingly globalised and interconnected, volunteerism has the capacity to channel "the energy and commitment of millions of people, especially young people to play a meaningful role in society."