

Youth Declaration
The 24th International Youth Forum
New Paradigm in Youth Volunteerism
August, 7-14, 2013 Seoul and Goesan, Republic of Korea

Preamble

75 youth participants from 33 countries gathered in Seoul and Goesan, Korea from August 7th to 14th, 2013 to seek ways towards a “New Paradigm in Youth Volunteerism.”

The United Nations has suggested that there are three defining characteristics of volunteering:

1. The activity should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward, although reimbursement of expenses and some token payment may be allowed.
2. The activity should be undertaken voluntarily, according to individual’s own free will, although there are some gray areas here too, such as school community service schemes which encourage, and sometimes require students, to get involved in voluntary work and Food for Work programmes, with explicit exchange between community involvement and food assistance.
3. The activity should be of benefit to someone other than the volunteer, or to society at large, although it is recognized that volunteering brings significant benefit to the volunteer as well.

Declaration

The participants of this forum affirm that the above definition remains relevant to the youth of the represented countries. Volunteering can be undertaken from the local through to the international level and the activities that can be classified as volunteerism are various. While there is recognition of the personal benefit of volunteering to the individual, the participants feel that the potential impact on society is the driving force for most voluntary work.

Youth volunteerism in the 21st century is becoming characterized by an increasing alignment of volunteering with professional areas and is likely to become more specialized with time. Youth volunteerism is likely to be future-focused and a combination of planned activities and spontaneous volunteering opportunities. The role of technology and particularly social media, in countries where it is present, will increase and change the face of youth volunteerism during the 21st century.

Meaningful youth volunteerism has a tangible community impact, involves volunteers who are properly informed on the relevant issues and offers an opportunity for self-reflection after the completion of the activity. Those involved in the administration of volunteering will need to incorporate training and appropriate orientation, risk management and mechanisms for creating and maintaining a sufficient number of high quality opportunities.

Stakeholders in youth volunteerism include governments, educational institutions, private enterprises, the media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and those involved in international collaboration related to volunteerism. These organizations play a vital role in promoting an environment in which youth volunteering can flourish. Through a continued

active involvement in youth volunteerism, these stakeholders can support youth to achieve social goals that would not otherwise be realized.

The participants of this forum present the following recommendations to facilitate youth to work towards a “New Paradigm in Youth Volunteerism”.

Government

Government plays a key role in advancing causes that provide social benefits. We believe that youth volunteerism has a complementary role in helping government to achieve this part of their mandate.

We therefore recommend that governments (at national, provincial and/or local level):

- a. Allow youth to establish NGOs and encourage them to do this by simplifying procedures;
- b. Provide monetary and in kind resources including publicity and facilities to support youth volunteer organizations and youth volunteer projects;
- c. Create mechanisms that recognize and reward youth volunteers and organizations;
- d. Work with governments of other nations and non-governmental organizations to facilitate and ensure the safety and well-being of youth volunteers overseas;
- e. Work with organizations involved in the promotion of youth volunteerism between nations to advance youth volunteerism internationally; and
- f. Governments should closely work with other nations to adopt new volunteer strategies and revise and promote current strategies and policies.

Educational Institutions

Educational Institutions have a role in fostering youth volunteer programs that encourage students to access both local and international volunteering opportunities.

We therefore recommend that educational institutions:

- a. Incorporate core values such as empathy and provide students with opportunities to volunteer as part of their school curriculum. Educators’ positive attitudes can strongly influence the likelihood of young people continuing to participate in service;
- b. Provide volunteer opportunities that are relevant to the skills and interests of their students;

- c. Offer classes in entrepreneurship, leadership and time management to foster awareness among students of the issues around them and give them tools through which they are able to implement solutions;
- d. Conduct forums for NGOs and other foundations to introduce themselves and their work to students and encourage the students to participate in various volunteering opportunities;
- e. Create structures that increase collaboration between high schools, vocational education centers and universities on service projects providing younger students with mentors, increasing college enrolment, and reducing project overlap; and
- f. Create more clubs in cooperation with NGOs, primarily those that correspond with youth interests, so that more young people can participate in volunteering.

Private Enterprise

Many private enterprises have become involved in corporate social responsibility (CSR) in an effort to brand a positive image of the corporation. The participants feel that it is essential that CSR initiatives have a tangible social impact and should extensively support youth initiatives.

We therefore recommend private enterprises:

- a. Work together and conduct projects as a team so as to improve the image of CSR and prevent overlap;
 - b. Participate in youth volunteer projects by directly providing monetary and in-kind support to selected youth organizations so as to make youth volunteering more accessible;
- ;
- c. Provide youth with the opportunity to propose and evaluate CSR project ideas and action plans;
 - d. Develop partnerships with various educational institutions or NGOs to organize events and to manage and train volunteers; and
 - e. Actively promote youth volunteer opportunities through established consumer networks and encouraging employees to take part in the process.

Media

The media is a powerful tool able to disseminate information quickly to a wide audience while simultaneously educating the public about important social issues. The media has the ability to strongly support youth volunteerism into the 21st century.

We therefore recommend that the media:

- a. Advertise projects to increase volunteer numbers and expand impact, including in-kind support;
- b. Develop social media outlets and systems to connect youth volunteers with projects that interest them, share about their progress with friends, and give feedback and report results. This will increase the quantity and quality of volunteer projects increasing public and private support;
- c. Profile celebrities and correspondents who volunteer, providing youth with role models; and
- d. Runs stories profiling youth volunteer activities, highlighting their successes and the challenges that they faced, as commonplace to increase the profile of youth volunteerism and thereby expand its impact.

Non-governmental Organizations

We recognize that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an essential role in youth volunteerism and this role can be further strengthened.

We recommend that NGOs:

- a. Use new technology and social media to create and update interactive databases that match local current projects with a volunteer's own interest;
- b. Work with the media, government, and international organizations to better advertise opportunities to volunteer especially through social media;
- c. Implement recognition and acknowledgement systems to retain and reward outstanding volunteers;
- d. Offer opportunities for volunteer feedback and be receptive to said feedback;
- e. Increase participation by providing opportunities to volunteer with friends, family, and neighbors; and
- f. Encourage youth to establish NGOs by simplifying regulatory procedures.

International Organizations

International organizations such as the United Nations perform a leadership role in coordinating youth volunteerism globally. The 24th International Youth Forum whose participants have compiled these recommendations stands as an excellent example of the results of effective collaboration between nations on the topic of youth volunteerism.

We therefore recommend that international organizations:

- a. Recognize and reward the services of exemplary volunteering organizations;

- b. Establish and promote additional international days of youth service aligned with major world sporting and music events;
- c. Bring global citizens together through international dialogues such as international volunteerism forum or conferences to come up with positive messages and share ideas; and
- d. Work between countries to facilitate and ensure the safety and well-being of volunteers overseas.

It is the hope of the participants of this forum that the recommendations of this declaration can make a meaningful contribution to youth volunteerism and expand its impact. In this way, youth volunteerism can continue in a proud tradition of effecting social change as the 21st century continues.