Background

Volunteering is an important form and manifestation of youth participation across the globe. It is increasingly recognized that young people’s approaches to participation are changing and becoming more diverse, especially as a result of globalization processes. According to the State of the World’s Volunteerism Report 2011, “healthy societies need young people who are involved with their communities. Volunteer action can be a highly effective route towards such involvement.”

Volunteerism helps to:

- Enable young people to become active leaders and citizens, and serves as an important tool for engagement in society
- Strengthen the bond between young people and their communities
- Improve employment prospects for young people through practical experiences which enhance both hard and soft job-related skills

India has a long and proud history of volunteerism. The country’s National Youth Policy (2014) proposes to initiate affirmative and positive action to foster national values in all young people, especially among youth volunteers working under the aegis of leading youth development agencies of the country – Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and National Service Scheme (NSS). The policy proposes to engage with youth clubs and youth development agencies to play a pivotal role in developing appropriate initiatives for young people.
About the project

With the overarching aim of taking forward the National Youth Policy, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and UNDP have partnered to strengthen key youth associations in the country.

The overall aim of the project is to provide catalytic support to the Youth Volunteer Schemes of the Ministry and facilitate greater youth participation and voice in peace and sustainable development programmes. The aim is to support young people in realizing their full social, economic and human potential. It is expected that the project will help young people gain a strong sense of civic engagement and transform their communities.

Developments so far

- Strengthened the national youth volunteer infrastructure of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) by placing three national United Nations Volunteers (UNV) at MoYAS at national level and 29 UNV District Youth Coordinators (DYCs) (one UNV in one district in each of 29 states of India)
- Developed four Action Plans for the implementation of the National Youth Policy (2014) in the areas of Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction, Gender Justice and Equality, Social Entrepreneurship, and Social Inclusion
- Developed draft training manual for youth work professionals in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD)
- Facilitated a discussion platform of experts on youth development and volunteering issues in India
- Formed 1058 new youth clubs across 29 districts with over 11,500 youth volunteers as members and conducted youth development and volunteering programmes reaching out to over 15,000 youth
- Reached out to most marginalized youth including young women from minority communities, disabled youth, and others through youth clubs in States like Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, J&K, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and others
- Engaged more than 500 youth through thematic debates on promotion of youth volunteerism with special focus on SDGs
- Engaged youth through advocacy and awareness campaigns on key flagship programmes including Swachh Bharat Campaign (Goa, West Bengal, Mizoram, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, and others), Atal Pension Yojana (Jharkhand, Assam), Namami Gange Project (Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand)
- Collaborated with different government agencies for skill development and other training for youth (Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Rural Self-Employment and Training Institute, District Rural Development Agency, District Industries Centre, District Disaster Management Authority, and others)

Looking to the future

- Generate evidence-based studies on youth volunteerism (disaggregated by gender) in India
- Support in the development of state specific youth volunteering programmes linked to skill enhancement programmes
- Support exchange of experience on youth volunteerism through peer-to-peer learning with other countries
- Create a knowledge exchange platform for youth networks, volunteer-involving organizations, civil society, governments and the private sector to promote recognition of youth volunteering
- Engage with Rajiv Gandhi National Institute for Youth and Development on generating research activities and knowledge sharing on youth volunteerism through online and offline platforms
- Encourage national and state-wide debates on youth and volunteering for advocacy and promotion of volunteerism specifically focused on SDGs
- Support advocacy initiatives to bring voice and ensure recognition of the special needs and interest of diverse groups of young people including from differently-abled and marginalized groups
- Develop and support new collaborations on Environment & disaster risk reduction, social entrepreneurship, social inclusion, and gender justice and equality
- Develop and disseminate information, communication and education materials on youth volunteerism for capacity development and training of rural youth

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UNDP has worked in India since 1951 in almost all areas of human development, from democratic governance to poverty eradication, to sustainable energy and environmental management. UNDP’s programmes are aligned with national priorities and are reviewed and adjusted annually.