

December 5: International Volunteer Day

Every year, on the 5th of December, we celebrate International Volunteer Day. The day honours the thousands of individuals who dedicate their time to volunteer. They continue their work, unknown to the rest, despite many setbacks. These volunteers work hard across all sectors. Volunteers are also largely unpaid. The work can range from saving wildlife, helping the elderly, or providing cancer care. Here at THRIVE, we want to recognise that valuable contribution, and think it deserves dignified respect. Their work keeps us safe and secure while making others happy in the process. On this day, we salute these leaders of society.



A smile can make someone's day. Photo by [RODNAE Productions](#) from [Pexels](#)

Background and Formation

The UN General Assembly was the first to acknowledge the need to recognize the services of volunteers throughout the world. The [resolution 40/212 of the 17th of](#)

[December 1985](#) stated the importance of volunteership. Thus, the decision was made to observe December 5 as the International Volunteer Day for [Economic and Social Development](#). Governments took measures to strengthen the awareness of the importance of volunteer service. Now, more and more people from all over the world offer their services as volunteers.

International Year of Volunteers

In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly determined 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. The Japanese Government proposed this idea first. This was later supported by 123 other countries. The year marked the volunteer service as an essential contribution to addressing [social](#), [economic](#), [cultural](#), [humanitarian](#), and [peacebuilding issues](#). However, for this to happen effectively, there is a need for greater [recognition](#) and [facilitation](#) of [volunteer work](#). Also, more networking must happen to coordinate the best practices of volunteers. As well as vigorous promotion of volunteer service.



Volunteers supplying food and medicines. Photo Courtesy [Rodnae Productions](#) on [Pexels](#).

Major Volunteering Agencies

Global Volunteers:

A not-for-profit organization engaged in human and economic development through its volunteer programs. The [United Nations](#) granted them a [Special Consultative Status](#) to build a relationship with UNICEF. More than [33,000 people](#) from 34 countries are involved in this group. They help to resolve issues such as [poverty](#) and [hunger](#). While teaching the [importance of education](#).

Conservation Volunteers:

Located in [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#), this group has been operating since 1982. Their main goal is to create a healthy and [sustainable environment](#). They are involved in the care of [land resources](#), improvement of the [population](#), preserving [natural heritage](#), and [post-disaster reconstruction](#). Participants from other countries have to pay a fee to be a volunteer with this group.

VSO:

A British organization with the goal to raise the standards of living in [poor countries](#). They focus on [educating](#) children and adults. As well as [improving the local medical care](#) and [health system](#). Moreover, VSO helps those people living below the poverty line to improve their living standards. This organization prefers professionals as volunteers rather than ordinary volunteers. They pride themselves on providing quality support and assistance to those who need it.

Service Civil International:

Established in 1920, this organization [promotes peace](#). They do so by organizing volunteer projects and contributing to the world's welfare. People of [any age and background](#) can volunteer to be part of this group. They currently have [42 branches](#) in the world with many growing numbers of partner organizations. The organization has short term and long term projects, both including educational sessions. Moreover, there are opportunities to work as a local activist in certain regions.



Volunteers sorting donations. Photo by [Julia M Cameron](#) from [Pexels](#)

UN Volunteers:

The [United Nations volunteers](#) is a program aiming to contribute to peace and world development. UN Volunteers is represented [worldwide](#) and are active in [130 countries](#) each year. One can become an international volunteer – stay and help locally. Or they can do so online. An international volunteer must be at least [25 years old](#) and have a university degree or higher technical diploma. Further, they must have at least 2 years of experience and a good level of English, Spanish, or French.

The work of volunteers

Volunteerism is an important tool for the [social](#), [environmental](#), and [economic](#) transformation of communities. It also has a tremendous ability to change people's mindsets, attitudes, and behaviours for the better. Through this, communities are built which brings forth changes in society. These can be reflected at the local, national, and international levels. While [not all volunteering is helpful](#), when practiced appropriately it can direct growth in achieving

sustainable human development and global peace. The [United Nations Volunteers \(UNV\)](#) program recognizes the shared [universal values](#) of volunteerism – [free will](#), [commitment](#), [equity](#), [engagement](#), [solidarity](#), [compassion](#), [empathy](#), and [respect](#) for others.

Volunteering during the Covid-19 pandemic

Volunteering during any emergency requires more than just the above skillsets. It requires true commitment towards communities. Not to mention a global outlook. When the Covid-19 pandemic raged across the world, volunteers were an integral part of the fight for survival. Even now, volunteers continue to assist [vulnerable groups](#), [correct misinformation](#), and [educate children](#). They also provide essential services to the [elderly](#) and supports [front-line health workers](#). Through this, a wave of solidarity has spread across the world.



Volunteers with relief materials. Photo by [RODNAE Productions](#) from [Pexels](#)

Emergency Workers

[Tous Bénévoles \(All Volunteers\)](#) witnessed a doubling in those registering in [2020](#). They received [40,000](#) new volunteers. Coming from a wide range of backgrounds, volunteers responded to various needs. Their services begin from helping the [elderly](#) to supporting the [disabled](#), [migrants](#), and [school children](#). Volunteers also helped [organize food banks](#). The International Committee of the Red Cross confirms the rise in these numbers. This ranges from hundreds to thousands of new volunteers across the world. Including [48,000 new sign-ups](#) in the [Netherlands](#) and [60,000 in Italy](#).

Conclusion

On this International Day of Volunteers, let us celebrate volunteers across the world and all the work they do. Especially those that worked during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their service and solidarity in fighting the disease is phenomenal. Even now, volunteers in certain parts of the world work tirelessly day and night to stop the spread of the virus. Their efforts and commitments are appreciated on this special day. On this occasion, as a volunteer myself for The Thrive Project fighting for sustainability on earth, I appreciate the work of my fellow-mates. If you want to help out, [THRIVE is always looking for more volunteers](#).

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