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International Volunteer Day

by: **Arden Jobling** in: **Editor's Desk**

Happy International Volunteer Day! 10 years down the road... what is the state of volunteerism around the globe?

BE INSPIRED!

If the fact that it's the holiday season doesn't make you want to give back to your community, then perhaps the fact that today is International Volunteer Day will motivate you to make a change ... beyond your wardrobe.

Today we celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteer, established by the UN in 2001 to recognize both the importance of those who commit their time to helping others as well as the field of volunteerism.

To commemorate this momentous occasion, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme released the first ever [State of the World's Volunteerism Report \(SWVR\)](#). According to the UNV website, the report "examines important contributions in diverse fields such as sustainable livelihoods, social inclusion, social cohesion, disaster risk reduction, governance and political participation." While the report, which can be viewed in-full online, allows us to see the development of volunteerism at an international level, it is equally important to look at how volunteerism has changed closer to home.

A Canadian survey on giving, volunteering and participating called [Caring Canadians. Involved Canadians](#), published in 2007 by the authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada, suggests that since the last study performed in 2004, there have been significant changes to volunteerism in Canada including:

- A 5.7% increase in the total number of volunteers (from 11.7 million in 2004 to 12.5 million in 2007)
- A 4% increase in the total number of volunteer hours (from 1,983 million to 2,067 million).
- A 16% increase in the average number of hours volunteered by those with only school-aged children (from 142 hours to 165) and a 10% increase by those with no the children in the household (from 173 to 191).

In addition to positive statistics that illustrate a steady increase in Canadian volunteerism, the study also suggests that there are significant ties between those who volunteer and those with high levels of education and income. Inevitably, those with less are unable to give as

much as those with more and in a way it is reassuring to know that those who have enough to give, are, in fact, giving. That being said, the statistics remind us that volunteering is a luxury that not everyone is able to afford.

So, during this holiday season, and during the 364 days that follow... what are you doing to make a difference in the world around you? Whether it's through the distribution of winter gloves to shivering bodies during the cold winter months, volunteering at a food bank over the Christmas break, or assuming a more permanent role as a tutor or community volunteer in your hometown - no action is too small to make a difference in someone's life, even if that someone is you! Still in need some motivation? In an effort to forward the volunteer effort, singer and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Angélique Kidjo has joined forces with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, dedicating her song 'Agolo' to volunteers everywhere. Click [here](#) to listen and get excited!

Finally, as you click your way out of this article and resume your holiday routine of buying [back to top](#) gifts, baking ginger bread and sipping on eggnog (preferably with a dash of rum and a sprinkle of cinnamon), do keep in mind that festive favourite that reminds us: *"It's not the things you do at Christmas time, but the Christmas things you do all year through."*

Visit UN Volunteer and partake in the online campaign to further volunteer efforts around the world: <http://volunteeringmatters.unv.org/>

For volunteer opportunities throughout Canada, visit Volunteer Canada: <http://volunteer.ca/about-us>