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المنظمة العالمية للحركة الكشفية

## **Volunteer Action Plays Key Role in Community Life.**

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*"As we mark International Volunteer Day, we thank all volunteers, Scouts and non-Scouts, young people and adults alike, for their actions and showcase the impact of volunteering particularly during the COVID-19 public health crisis. IVD is an opportunity for us all to promote volunteering, encourage governments to support volunteer efforts and recognize volunteer contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at local, national and international levels."*

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**5 December 2020, International Volunteer Day:** I joined my first Cub Scout pack in Tamale when I was 7 years old. We learned many things at Cub Scouts. In one of our meetings, we were taught about helping other people by doing a good turn every day, just as young Cubs all over the world do. So, as I walked home and came to the regional Library, I met some foreigners with a lot of luggage who were obviously in need of help. I offered to assist them, but they turned me down, saying that people took advantage and stole from them many times before. I was visibly disappointed that I had been let down on a duty I desperately wanted to do. Many more opportunities would, however, come for me to help and make a difference in the lives of others. I am grateful for the chance to be part of a movement that offers service and has volunteerism at its core.

My Scouting journey began in Tamale in Northern Ghana where I have lived for almost 30 years. In these almost three decades, I have lived in and known my community well. It is a rare thing when people take responsibilities into their own hands and do many good turns to help a friend, neighbour or a stranger in need. Unfortunately, many people look and pass by situations of need with so much apathy and disregard for a broken social system.

When I pledged to be a Cub Scout, I promised with these words: "I promise that I will do my best. To do my duty to God and to my Country. To help other people. And to keep the Cub Scout Law". That short phrase gave me a different outlook as a young child growing up to what has been my life all these years.

People the world over engage in volunteerism for a variety of reasons: to help eliminate poverty and improve basic health and education; to tackle environmental issues; to reduce the risk of disasters and to combat social exclusion and violent conflicts. In all of these fields, volunteerism makes a specific contribution by generating well-being for people and their communities. Volunteers are motivated by values like those of justice, equality and freedom as expressed in the United Nations Charter. A society which supports and encourages different forms of volunteering is likely to be a society which also promotes the well-being of its citizens.

Personally, the world in which we currently live needs much more volunteerism to help make it a safer, interconnected support structure that cares and offers peer support for humanity to grow and transform. Being a Scout is one sure way towards this process of ensuring that the ideals of volunteerism are propagated to support not just the immediate Scout Patrol but to render effective community service to others through simple acts of kindness of service.

If nothing else, the 2019-2020 period is one that has clearly heightened the merit of volunteering, considering the health, physical and psychological effects of COVID-19. It has been really inspiring to see Scouts from all over Africa and the world offering tremendous service to help many people and communities battle the pandemic.

In my own neighbourhood in Tamale, Ghana, our Rover Scouts in a project dubbed "Electoral Peace and Safety During COVID-19" are contributing to peace and safety in their community amidst a national electioneering period and the COVID-19 public health pandemic. Through a door-to-door campaign in rural communities, the Scouts distributed PPEs, water buckets and constructing tippy taps to help people practice safe handwashing techniques. Many other projects have been implemented to serve communities in this time, but what I sincerely like about this piece of volunteerism is the simplicity it depicts, reaching the low-income people living in the mud and grass-thatched housing units in a rural community. Scouts have provided grocery delivery services for those most at risk, made and distributed masks, face shields and hand sanitizer to communities.

When Cyclone Idai struck on March 15, 2019, it left parts of Southern Africa to bear catastrophic consequences. Considered one of the worst weather-related catastrophes in the history of Africa, Cyclone Idai affected at least 500,000 people, leaving half of them homeless from mass devastation across Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Malawi. As part of Scouting's commitment to serving the community, Scouts of Mozambique were among the first responders alongside humanitarian actors rushing to provide critical aid to thousands of people affected by the disaster. Over 700 Scouts mobilized across the destroyed cities of Beira, Dondo, Mafambisse, Buzi, Chimanemane Park, Gondola, Mopeia, Nicoadala and Mocuba, demonstrating their readiness to being active and responsible citizens in their communities.

Over the last eight years, Scouting has been providing life-changing opportunities, hope and a sense of belonging to thousands of children and young people at the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Garissa County, Kenya. The Scouting for Refugees programme run by the Kenya Scouts Association with the support of the AVSI Foundation that is funded by U.S. State Department has continued to empower young refugees and asylum seekers drawn from Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi through education, skills development, community service and citizenship activities. In partnership with UNCHR, AVSI Foundation and other partners the movement is assisting young people to learn, acquire essential skills, develop their leadership abilities and prepare them for life outside the refugee camps.

These examples of Scouts doing voluntary work are just a snapshot of many many examples of Scouts defining what it means to Volunteer to serve our communities. We serve where we see the need, on the ground, with passion and empathy for our communities. We support the delivery of essential services to help create a better world for those around us.

Volunteering can play a key role in the community and societal life. The social frameworks and structures of our society can only be strengthened by practices that bridge our socio-economic, cultural and religious divides. There is value volunteering as it combines community life, participation in development processes and building stronger and more resilient communities. This, we have particularly witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we mark International Volunteer Day (IVD), we thank all volunteers, Scouts and non-Scouts, young people and adults alike, for their actions and showcase the impact of volunteering particularly during the COVID-19 public health crisis. IVD is an opportunity for us all to promote volunteering, encourage governments to support volunteer efforts and recognize volunteer contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local, national and international levels.

Volunteer action is truly a powerful force for now and the future. Let this be a day when we, individually and collectively, remind ourselves "Together We Can through Volunteering." Let us be inspired to always be ready to offer ourselves to help make life better and more meaningful for others through simple acts of kindness and service.

We recognize and appreciate the efforts of local, national and international volunteers and celebrate their impact despite all the challenges they face. Receive our gratitude and feel our love. Happy International Volunteer Day.

*"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands - one for helping yourself, the other for helping others." — Audrey Hepburn*

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