



ITEMS FOR ACTION

COMMISSION ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE & ACTION

CVSA Launches First-Ever U.S. People's Report on SDG Shortfall and Potential Viable Solutions



CVSA volunteers produced, promoted and distributed the first U.S. People's Report on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda – including its shortfall in the United States and potential viable solutions – in July at the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, held at United Nations New York headquarters.

Compiled by CVSA volunteers with the participation of 30 grassroots organizations from across the country, the 64-page report was accepted and praised by over 200 diplomats, NGO representatives and staff members of UN agencies. They all encouraged CVSA to continue this important work of bringing this internationally agreed-to blueprint for action to end poverty and save the planet, to communities across the U.S.

“The U.S. People's Report we compiled not only provides the hard facts as to why each of the 17 Goals need to be implemented here in the U.S., but also the actions and policies that people across the country told us would build solutions to achieve the goals we so urgently need nationally and internationally,” explained Jennifer Perez, CVSA Administrative Assistant.

In the eight years since the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were unanimously adopted by all 193 member states of the UN – including the U.S. – proclaiming their commitment to “work tirelessly” for the achievement of all 17 Goals by 2030 and to “leave no one behind,” the U.S. is one of only five of the 193 member states of the UN that has not brought a single written Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the annual forum on progress towards the Goals being achieved in their countries. The other four are Yemen, Haiti, South Sudan and Myanmar, each a war-torn and economically devastated country; conditions that impose hardships limiting their participation.

CVSA's People's Report is a demonstration of commitment by volunteers and community leaders in the trenches across the country who are independently organizing and building real solutions to the growing poverty, hunger, lack of access to health care, pollution of our water, air and oceans, the rapidly warming climate and more. Despite the blackout in the U.S. mainstream media and the silence of U.S. elected officials about the 2030 SDGs, the range of organizations, individuals and businesses who participated in compiling and

Continued on page 3



Photo: CVSA

(Left to right) Susan Angus, Executive Director, and Indulekha Tharun, CVSA Volunteer Liaison to SAVE, at the United Nations during the 2023 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with Lateefat Odunuga from Nigeria who is working with youth in the U.S.

Editorial:

Government Abandonment Follows Disasters from Sea to Shining Sea

From Lahaina, Hawaii to rural Kentucky, from coastal Florida to farm worker communities in California and throughout Puerto Rico, our communities are sustaining tremendous losses from horrific fires, mega-storms, flash-flooding and extreme heat disasters.

Insult is added to injury in the aftermath. Immediately after the disaster you did not see thousands of troops or social workers or medics in these areas quickly providing aid, cleaning up, erecting temporary housing and putting a plan together with the people of the affected areas for their restoration and putting in the resources needed to carry out the plan. And when the initial scenes of destruction are no longer in the headlines, time and again communities find they must depend on each other and on the nongovernmental, volunteer-driven organizations who step up and respond to the need, gather what resources and physical help they can mobilize to clean up, rebuild and together fight for answers and solutions to the disaster aftermath.

In Lahaina, on the west side of the Island of Maui, Hawaii, it's been over two months since the horrific fire that devastated the

Continued on page 2

Government Abandonment Follows Disaster from Sea to Shining Sea

Continued from page 1

town while no warning signals were given. 22,000 homes and other structures were destroyed, leaving 7,000 people in need of shelter and still grieving over the loss of loved ones, loss of businesses, all belongings and loss of their historic ancestral town of Lahaina. Little clean-up and rebuilding has begun. The county has begun to evict people they temporarily housed in hotels outside the burn area in order to allow tourists to return, yet no new housing has been built in the burn area.

One resident, Alfonso Basurto, whose family of five lost their home and everything in it, reported that the only call he got from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was with an "offer" of one-way tickets to the mainland continental states if they can establish a home to go to and stay there. Friends have received the same call. "Of course, we refused. They are trying to get rid of us so they do not have to rebuild this historic ancestral town the way we want to. People who are getting these calls are very upset, and refusing." Many in Lahaina are also not taking financial assistance offered by the county or state that requires the recipient to waive their right to sue for wrongful death or negligence. Determined to keep the community together and



Photo: Terry Adams

In the Kentucky 2022 flood, resident waits for rescue.

restore the historic original capital of Hawaii, Basurto founded Rebuild Maui, working with others in the community to build temporary homes and food gardens on land just outside the burn area. "It's the community that is at the forefront of picking up the pieces and rebuilding," he said, "but we need resources and funding without those strings."

In the summer of 2022, in Eastern Kentucky, 16 inches of rain fell in 48 hours, leaving 39 dead, 542 homes destroyed and more than 4,500 homes with major damage. Flash flooding wiped out infrastructure for water, electricity, communications and transportation. Six out of 10 of the affected households had incomes less than \$30,000. The towns in the region do not have the resources to recover from or prepare for future disasters

Continued on page 6

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COMMISSION ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE & ACTION

ITEMS FOR ACTION is published quarterly by **Commission on Voluntary Service & Action (CVSA)**. CVSA's mission is to promote, interpret, coordinate and extend the field of independent voluntary service and action programs serving people and communities in need of systemic solutions to economic, social and environmental problems.

CVSA is a consultative and coordinating body of nongovernmental, voluntary service organizations based primarily in North America as well as around the world. **CVSA** publishes **INVEST YOURSELF — The Catalogue of Volunteer Opportunities**; works to expand the ability of individuals to donate their time and services to people in need through organizations and free of government restraint; and promotes full-time volunteer service as a vocational choice toward achieving social change.

CVSA holds Special NGO Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN, thus provides a voice for independent, nongovernmental voluntary service and action organizations and the constituencies they serve, bringing local needs into global context and global context to local efforts. **CVSA** affirms the tenets of the UN Charter and is committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the U.S. and around the world. **CVSA** mobilizes involvement of U.S.-based volunteer organizations and their allies for the achievement of the universal, transformative and indivisible Sustainable Development Goals in the U.S., in order to end all poverty in all its forms everywhere.

ITEMS FOR ACTION is **CVSA's** newsletter information service for organizational members. **ITEMS FOR ACTION** reports and provides analysis of news related to the voluntary service field on a national and international level, as well as political and economic developments relevant to the independent voluntary service sector.

Your submissions to **ITEMS FOR ACTION** of information, news, advice, photographs and graphics depicting your work or simply your comments and concerns are instrumental to the process of growth and advancement of voluntary service as a whole. We always look forward to receiving them.

ITEMS FOR ACTION is free to **CVSA** members. Subscription rate for U.S. residents is \$20/year. Canadians and those abroad please add \$20 for additional mailing costs. Send your order and submissions of articles for publication to **CVSA**.

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Editor..... Jennifer Perez
Production..... Jennifer Perez, Indulekha Tharun
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Founded in 1945, **CVSA** is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable corporation with an all-volunteer staff. Volunteers are needed in all aspects of **CVSA's** work. Your financial contributions are also urgently needed and tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Contact CVSA: 1284 S. Sycamore Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90019 (323) 933-2872 • www.cvsainvestyourself.org

First U.S. People's Report on SDGs Shortfall and Solutions

Continued from page 1

sponsoring the CVSA Peoples' Report shows that support for the Goals in the U.S. is widespread.

Perez, along with Susan Angus, CVSA Executive Director; Caryn Maxim, CVSA East Coast Membership Coordinator; and Indulekha Tharun, CVSA volunteer, staffed the CVSA exhibit in a highly trafficked hallway of the General Assembly Building for the eight days of the 2023 HLPF on Sustainable Development, distributing the Report and talking about it with diplomats, NGO representatives and UN Staff. Ellen Bickal and her daughter Sarah, from the Camphill Communities of North America, also joined the team for a day, and Jeremy Valle, CVSA volunteer from Marymount Loyola University in Los Angeles, joined the team for two days while home for the summer in New York.

The diplomats from Latin American, African, Asian and European nations who stopped at CVSA's exhibit, who have been bringing reports on their work towards achieving the 2030 SDGs in their countries, expressed gratitude for CVSA's work, eagerness to read the U.S. People's Report and pleasure in meeting people from the U.S. who are organizing for the implementation of the 2030 SDGs in the U.S. at the grassroots level.

A representative from the Economic Affairs division of the Malawi Permanent Mission to the UN commented on how unacceptable it is for the U.S. to be the host country of the United Nations, yet not even educate their own population about the agreed-upon Goals or bring reports of their own domestic efforts to achieve them. A diplomat from Brazil was shocked as he read in the Goal 6 section of the report that water utilities are cut-off to tens of thousands of low-income households each year because of inability to pay the bills, and commented on how U.S. representatives at the UN



Photo: CVSA

Indulekha Tharun (left), CVSA volunteer, explains to one of the many diplomats who visited CVSA's exhibit table how the U.S. People's Report on the SDGs was compiled.



Photo: CVSA

Jennifer Perez (left), CVSA Administrative Assistant, talks with an NGO representative from Kenya.



Photo: CVSA

Caryn Maxim (right), CVSA East Coast Membership Coordinator, enlists U.S.-based NGO representatives to participate in compiling a 2024 U.S. People's Report on the SDGs.

so frequently try to tell other countries what they should be doing differently, but are not addressing the domestic needs of their own people.

Several representatives from other Nongovernment Organizations (NGOs) with social, economic and justice programs in the U.S., such as Sr. Durstyn Farnan, NGO Representative for the Dominican Leadership Conference; Dr. Uzma Gul of International

Continued on page 7

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Transform Our World: The 2030

What is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

On September 25, 2015, all 193 member nations of the UN, including the United States, voted unanimously to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strive to achieve these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 in every country — developing and developed — as national domestic and international policy priority.

Each country, including the U.S., signed on, stating: “... *We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet.*”

Who wrote it?

Millions of people were involved. The Rio+20 Summit held in 2012 (20 years after the first Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro) was attended by 172 governments and over 2,400 representatives of NonGovernment Organizations (NGOs), indigenous groups and other stakeholders from all continents. A major outcome was the establishment of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development to launch the process to write the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda and Goals (SDGs) that would address the systemic transformations needed to both end poverty and save the planet.

Through this framework, the UN coordinated the largest, most inclusive and transparent international consultation program in its history over a three-year period. Input was received from thousands of local and regional consultations and surveys held in communities of all sizes in most countries around the world.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with the 17 interrelated Goals and 169 Targets is a voluntary, nonbinding agreement that each nation pledged to carry out, and requires the participation of the people of each country to ensure it is achieved. It says:

“It is ‘we the peoples’ who are embarking today on the road to 2030. Our journey will involve Governments as well as parliaments, the United Nations system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community — and all people. Millions have already engaged with, and will own, this Agenda. It is an Agenda of the people, by the people and for the people — and this, we believe, will ensure its success.”

CVSA’s Call for the Implementation of the SDGs in the U.S.:

CVSA calls on the U.S. government to carry out its pledge to implement the 2030 SDGs in the U.S. and form a national SDG Coordinating Council. State and local councils should also be set up to oversee data collection, draw up implementation plans, coordinate policies and monitor the progress or implementation in their state and submit those to the national coordinating body. Make the process public and open.

Members on the councils at all levels should include representatives from nongovernment volunteer organizations, faith-based service organizations, social service administrators, educators, labor leaders, scientists, low-income people’s representatives, family farm leaders, health advocates, legal justice specialists, environmental specialists, religious leaders, credit unions and community banks, small business representatives and other stakeholders.

In the absence of U.S. governmental action to date towards this promise, we call on CVSA member organizations and all other stakeholders to “take ownership” of the SDGs in your work and seek partnerships with others on the local level for the 2030 SDGs. CVSA can provide consultation, coordination and tools to:

- Promote the SDGs in your community through the work your organization is already doing, bring more stakeholders into this discussion and build alliances.
- Raise the demand for the 2030 SDGs to your local government, demanding involvement and accountability.
- Contribute information to include in CVSA’s annual People’s Reports on the SDGs in the U.S. to the Economic and Social Council of the UN, based on your organization’s direct experience.
- Join CVSA in building this movement to increase our collective strength and transform our world while insuring no one is left behind.

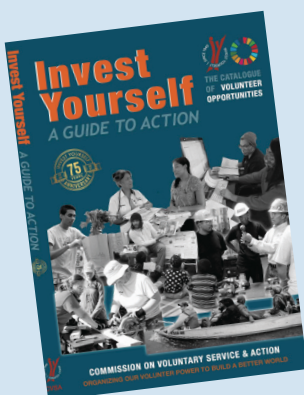
Sustainable Development Goals

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|--|---|---|---|
|  | Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere |  | Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries |
|  | Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture |  | Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable |
|  | Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages |  | Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns |
|  | Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all |  | Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts* |
|  | Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls |  | Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development |
|  | Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all |  | Goal 15. Protect, restore, promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss |
|  | Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all |  | Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels |
|  | Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all |  | Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for sustainable development |
|  | Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation | | |

* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Read the whole 35-page document: *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, in the Appendix of *INVEST YOURSELF: A Guide to Action*, or at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

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The 2023 U.S. People's Report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Compiled by Commission on Voluntary Service & Action



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Government Abandonment

Continued from page 2

because of the poverty, the lack of affordable housing, and the lack of jobs developed to replace the diminishing coal industry in the area. At least 40% of the population was already living in substandard, overcrowded, or unaffordable housing. In southeastern Kentucky, there is a high reliance on mobile and manufactured units, homes that are energy inefficient, which further exacerbates the cost of housing, and are not strong enough to withstand storms. The Appalachian Mountain region has become warmer and wetter over the last several decades, increasing the rain and potential for landslides. Large scale land disturbances like surface mining, clearcuts, and oil and gas extraction increase the severity of floods and destabilize soil and rock.

All of these *interrelated* problems — lack of living wage jobs, unaffordable safe housing, crumbling infrastructure, toxins in the land, destruction of the environment, unabated carbon emissions, absence of accountability by responsible government agencies — that add up to deadly disasters and increased poverty and inequality, are addressed by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In California, in March 2023, an “atmospheric river” dumped torrential rain on the central coast where a levee that had not been maintained properly broke (lack of Goal 9), forcing close to 2,000 residents in Pajaro, most of them farm workers, to evacuate with only the clothes on their backs. The flood washed huge amounts of soil from nearby agricultural fields into people’s homes and cellars with mud contaminated with pesticides (lack of Goal 2) and waste oil that was being stored in a nearby facility. Soon the dried mud turned to dust, releasing toxins in the air (lack of Goal 3 and 15). Families live paycheck to paycheck on farm

worker incomes with no savings (lack of Goal 8), and many are ineligible for government aid because of their undocumented status (lack of Goal 10 and Goal 16). Soon the community realized that no matter their legal status, no one was getting aid from FEMA because FEMA considered this disaster too insignificant. The people of this community harvest and pack the strawberries, artichokes and lettuce that people across the country eat, which comprises a \$5.75 billion industry. Outraged residents marched through the streets of Pajaro with signs “Where Is FEMA?” and “Pajaro Needs Justice.”

FEMA was impelled to open a disaster center, but months later most claims have been rejected. Two months later the emergency shelters that had been set up were shut down (lack of Goal 11 and 16). It is the independent, nongovernmental, volunteer organizations, who are still there providing needed food, face masks, cleaning supplies, clothing, and providing leadership in organizing for systemic solutions to this failure of government.

Not only is our government not carrying out its responsibility to protect and restore us — from sea to shining sea — when we are devastated by disasters caused by rapidly increasing global warming, they are not cutting the amount of green house gas emissions needed to avert catastrophic climate disasters, and they refuse to acknowledge the commitment they made in 2015 to “end all poverty in all its forms everywhere” through implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals domestically.

We must rally and mobilize together, combine our volunteer efforts to demand our government, at all levels, work with us in implementing the 17 SDGs in the U.S. and, as the Sustainable Development Agenda says, “leave no one behind.”



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First U.S. People's Report on SDGs Shortfall and Solutions

Continued from page 3

Alliance of Women; and Annemarie O'Conner, NGO Representative for Passionists International, expressed their appreciation for the work CVSA did to compile the report and signed up to participate in the production of the next one for the 2024 HLPF.

The U.S. People's Report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides data on each of the 17 Goals – what the true conditions and problems are, experienced by communities throughout the U.S., that show why each Goal urgently needs to be achieved. For each Goal, the Report also lists the recommendations made by leaders of community service organizations, of actions the U.S. government at all levels should take to solve these problems and achieve these Goals.

The Report is a product of communications by CVSA volunteers with leaders of nongovernmental community-based organizations across the country, who are actively engaged in serving communities in need. Organizations who submitted material for the report include Akwesasne Freedom School, Black Women for Wellness, Camphill Communities of North America, Community Help in Park Slope, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Inclusiv (formerly the National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions), Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO), Part of the Solution (POTS), SAVE - Sustainability in AV, Silver Valley Community



Photo: CVSA

(Left to right) Caryn Maxim, East Coast Membership Coordinator, Jennifer Perez, Administrative Assistant, Susan Angus, Executive Director, and Indulekha Tharun, CVSA Liaison to SAVE-Sustainability in AV, staffing the CVSA exhibit in the General Assembly Building of the United Nations during the 2023 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York.

Resource Center, Women Graduates-USA, Water Insecurity Correction Coalition and Yes We Can Peacebuilders.

The Report is now being distributed across the country by CVSA for use by organizers, teachers, business leaders and clergy as an educational and organizing tool for promotion of the 2030 SDGs to mobilize more people, institutions, businesses and organizations into action for their implementation in the U.S. Please contact CVSA for a copy of the report, and to participate in the compilation of the 2024 U.S. People's Report on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.



Photo: Amy Wang

Thank you to **Etta** restaurant in Culver City who donated the wonderful fatata, potato, bacon, salad and chia pudding breakfast, **Co-opportunity Market** for the fresh squeezed orange juice, and **Starbucks** in Culver City for the coffee and pastries.



Photo: Amy Wang

A Friday Morning Breakfast Celebration

The CVSA Friday Morning Breakfast for People and Planet on October 27 brought together staff and members of **Grid Alternatives, Black Women for Wellness, Water Insecurity Correction Collective, Good Earth Community Garden and Part of the Solution (POTS)**, with CVSA volunteers and organizers, hosted by the **Center for Climate Change Education** on West LA College campus, to celebrate the first U.S. People's Report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the expansion of CVSA's campaign for the 2030 SDGs to be carried out domestically in the U.S.



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Volunteer with CVSA

Organizing Our Volunteer Power to Build a Better World!

Organizer Training & Education

All CVSA volunteers and staff of CVSA member organizations are welcome to participate in our organizer training programs which include on-the-job practical training as well as classes in history, strategy and methods of organizing and current world affairs.

INVEST YOURSELF Publications Production

On-the-job training is provided in publications work sessions. If you have skills in writing, editing, proofreading, desktop publishing or Photoshop, you can become one of the trainers!

Community Outreach Events and *INVEST YOURSELF* Distribution

Volunteers participate in information tables and speaking engagements. This is CVSA's most valuable means of connecting with people from all walks of life looking for meaningful and productive volunteer opportunities.

Membership Organization Communications, Consultations and Training

Volunteers participate in our site visits, consultations and training workshops with member organizations of CVSA, help maintain and build more arenas of communication with member organizations around the country and collect news for the newsletter.

Nationwide Community Education Campaign for the Implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

Volunteers learn to give presentations to community groups, coordinate the collection of reports to be submitted to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the UN, do research and develop tools for CVSA member organizations, mobilize community groups, businesses and faith-based groups to build a groundswell of involvement for implementation of the 2030 SDGs in the U.S. On-the-job training provided.

Volunteers are needed at CVSA's headquarters in Los Angeles. You can also volunteer from wherever you are by being an *INVEST YOURSELF* representative, or taking on other special projects and roles. Call us at (323) 933-2872 for more information or to schedule a time to come in or to take an assignment from wherever you are.