

Why a Forum?

The Forum on Corporate Volunteerism presents a concerted effort by stakeholders across sector-specific boundaries – private, non-for-profit and development - to increase knowledge and raise awareness of the idea of Corporate or Workplace Volunteerism, especially among the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a tool for national development in Trinidad and Tobago.

The idea to create a platform for brainstorming and advocacy and to sharpen the profile of employee volunteerism resulted from the realization that voluntary action in the private sector remains a largely unexplored field among the majority of homegrown companies. Particularly, the SME community finds itself hampered by capacity constraints, resource limitations and lack of awareness in volunteerism and would benefit greatly from a frank exchange of thoughts, ideas and experiences on the issue with other business leaders.

While participants will be invited to discuss the most important aspects of corporate volunteer management, partnerships with Civil Society and Lessons-Learned in six consecutive workshop sessions, the Forum will also see the launch of a Corporate Volunteerism Network (CVN) to serve both the twin islands' business community (particularly SMEs) as well as local NGOs as a primary reference frame for networking, capacity building and advocacy efforts relating to workplace volunteerism.

The UNV initiative comes as a follow-up event to the first-ever regional conference on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) 'Creating Value through Private-Public Sector Partnerships' organized by UNDP Trinidad and Tobago on the 27th October 2009. This exploratory gathering of CSR practitioners witnessed the participation of public and private companies, academia and labor sector representatives. The event was driven by the need to recognize, document, assess and make accessible national and regional CSR initiatives and sought to heighten public awareness of corporate ethics practice in the Caribbean. Conference delegates paid particular attention to developing recommendations for joint action and closer collaboration between public and private sector. While the public sector was urged to adopt a more pro-active legislative role and get more strongly involved in policy-making and standard-setting, the private sector's challenge was perceived as developing the ability to integrate CSR principles more directly into strategic and business plans.

The Forum aims to encourage participation of the following groups of attendees:

- Volunteer coordinators
- NGO professionals
- Corporate volunteer managers
- Corporate Communications managers
- Volunteer centre staff

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) professionals
- HR professionals
- Social entrepreneurs
- Funders and philanthropists

The event will be hosted at the

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