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UNV Kyrgyzstan: The Kyrgyz Connection.....Online-volunteers!

July 21, 2005

Determining volunteerism's contributions to a country's economy is at the centre of a pilot project launched this summer, 2005, by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the U.S.-based Johns Hopkins University (JHU). The collaborative project will be carried out in nine countries—Brazil, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, the Philippines and South Africa.

Over the next three years, a UN Volunteer statistician placed in each country's statistics department will work with government officials and JHU experts to develop a separate national account capturing the total economic contribution of the country's nonprofit sector, including the work of volunteers, to its gross domestic product (GDP).

The project stems from the approval by the United Nations Statistical Commission of a new United Nations Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions in the System of National Accounts (NPI Handbook) developed jointly by JHU's Center for Civil Society Studies and the UN Statistics Division. This Handbook calls on government statistical agencies to capture the contribution that is made by civil society organizations and volunteers more systematically in regular national economic statistics.

To make the Handbook available in Russian, UNV in Kyrgyzstan asked one of the many thousands of online-volunteers around the world, Ms. Margret McAed Satterwaite, to help us with the translation from English to Russian. Margret is one of those fantastic people who put in many hours of very hard work to help.

The Russian version by Margret will be the connection to the former Soviet Union countries and bridge the language-divide in this part of the world. Having a Russian translation of the NPI Handbook is especially important because creating the separate account requires a complex interpretive process. This means that statisticians will need to refer constantly to the NPI Handbook for guidance. For example, the NPI Handbook helps statisticians to determine if the data they are finding fits the established definition of a nonprofit and to use standard measurement techniques to accurately calculate the work of volunteers. Translating the NPI Handbook into Russian will give statisticians in the region the opportunity to explore this economically important and fascinating sector of their economies.

The Handbook is a technical document with more than a 100 pages. Imagine translating this from English to a difficult language such as Russian! Margret is a professional translator which makes her contribution even more valuable for UNV and JHU.

Margret is a native speaker of both Russian and English. She is a professional demographer and sociologist, currently living in Moscow. Margret is fluent in 18 languages!!! UNV Kyrgyzstan was fortunate to get connected to Margret through the Onlinevolunteers.

The efforts of this online volunteer serve as an example of the power of volunteering for development. Margret provides an indispensable resource to UNV Kyrgyzstan: access to a world of skills and expertise. But Margret provides as well inspiration as she demonstrates to others how they can engage in initiatives that touch upon some of the biggest challenges facing developing countries. She represents the very best of what ordinary citizens can do online to support the work of the United Nations, NGOs and other organizations in the efforts to reach sustainable human development and achieve the MDGs.

Magnus Bjork, UNV PO Kyrgyzstan

For more information on the NPI Handbook project, please visit www.jhu.edu/ccss/unhandbook or email UNHandbook@jhu.edu.

For more information on UNV in Kyrgyzstan: <http://www.unv.org.kg>.