

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
YOUTH CONVENTION 2019

# WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION

VOLUNTOURISM

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TOPIC GUIDE

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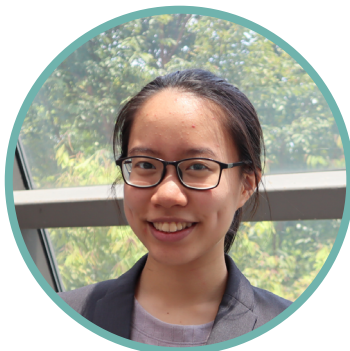
## ABOUT THE CHAIRS

### ***Riya Vig - Head Chairperson***

Being a Year 6 in NUS High who has foolishly taken up way too many commitments, Riya still considers MUN to be a meaningful and fun experience. Though she largely suffers from resting tired face, she hopes delegates won't be too scared to talk to her. She has a strong love-hate relationships with puns, so saying a bad pun has a 100% success rate of breaking the ice with her. Now in her third (and last) year in the MUN circuit, she hopes delegates who have any queries during the conference feel comfortable to ask her for advice. She hopes delegates leave SDYC with good memories and experience, as well as a lot of puns.



### ***Hsiao Yu Jer - Vice Chairperson***



Yu Jer is a Year 6 student of NUS High. Whilst slashing off stuff from her to-do list, Yu Jer finds time - and joy - in completing jigsaw puzzles too (surprise, surprise!). This process of creating order out of initial chaos brings serendipity into solitude, which has proven to be a great source of bliss. Likewise, she appreciates the art of MUN in consolidating a myriad of perspectives that ultimately reinforces an idea or goal. Yu Jer is deeply honoured to be back chairing in SDYC 2019, and looks forward to meaningful council debates where delegates put together each of their "pieces" and uphold the goals of the UNWTO.

### ***Trivikram Mohan - Vice Chairperson***

An avid fan of anime and food in general, Trivi often wonders why he signed up to be a MUNner in the first place. Having started his MUN journey last year during SDYC and absolutely loving it, Trivi is certainly new to the MUN circuit. He also enjoys debating and is passionate in Biology, finding the subject fascinating. He wishes delegates at the UNWTO to have the same amazing experience he had at SDYC, and sincerely hopes that everyone will have a fun time and learning experience.



## COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the leading international organization in the field of tourism including 158 member-states, 6 territories and over 500 affiliate members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

Founded in 1920 as the International Union of Tourist Publicity Organizations, it restructured itself into the International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO), comprising of national tourist organizations, industry and consumer groups. In 1970, realizing the need for enhance its role on an international level through the creation of an inter-governmental body to function in cooperation with other international agencies like the United Nations (UN), the IUOTO formed the World Tourism Organization (WTO), coming into operation in November 1st, 1984. Most recently in 2003, the WTO became a specialized agency of the UN while preserving its “complete financial and administrative autonomy”, not only giving it increased visibility through the recognition that will be accorded to it and but also placing tourism on equal footing with other major activities of human society.

It's foremost goal is to promote tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

On the ground, UNWTO generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training, and works to make tourism an effective tool for socio-economic development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries.

The key deliverables of this agency in relation to voluntourism are to mainstream tourism in the global agenda by advocating its value as a driver of socioeconomic growth and creating a level playing field for the sector to develop and prosper, and improve tourism competitiveness through excellent policy planning, marketing and promotion and crisis management. Additionally, it serves to promote sustainable tourism development by supporting policies which make optimal use of environmental resources and respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities. Finally, contributing to poverty reduction and development by maximizing tourism as a tool for socio-economic development is a key item on its agenda.

It actively promotes the use of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, which is implemented by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics to maximize the contribution of tourism to socio-economic development of countries, while minimizing its disadvantages. The committee serves to promote and disseminate the code and evaluates its principles. Particularly, it recognizes the role of sustainable tourism, geared towards the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment, the improvement of quality of life and the economic empowerment of women and youth, especially in developing countries.

## KEY QUESTION

**How can we balance voluntourists' personal need for gratification with maximising the benefits of voluntourism and minimising its negative implications incurred to countries so as to create an environment which promotes socio-economic development and respects the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities?**

## KEY DEFINITIONS

### ***Voluntourism:***

Voluntourism is defined as a form of tourism in which the tourist primarily participates in voluntary work as their form of sight-seeing. Such voluntary works include distributing supplies to the needy, building houses as well as other forms of labour, as well as raising funds or donations. Voluntourism is most prominent in developing and underdeveloped countries, especially soon after natural disasters in the referenced area. Examples of such countries include Namibia, South Africa and Haiti.

### ***Voluntourists:***

Voluntourists are defined as participants of voluntourism.

## KEY CONCEPT Regarding the Controversy of Voluntourism

It's controversy arises amidst the growing trend of corrupt organisations and individuals in these target countries exploiting the voluntourism industry. In this manner, these corrupt individuals are able to earn money off the needy and voluntourists, while in fact the target group does not experience any benefit of the voluntary work done. In fact, in some cases the target group is put at a disadvantage.

A key example of this would be the growing number of fake orphanages in Haiti, meant to draw in donations and funds from well-meaning voluntourists. These orphanages, however are a teeming ground of child traffickers and kidnapped children who have been separated from their families either via false promises or violence in order to act as orphans in these institutions.

This propagates a discussion on how voluntourism can be controlled by supervising bodies such as the UNWTO in order to achieve a win-win situation for both, the target group, as well as the voluntourists, in a sustainable and fair manner.



# KEY ISSUES

## 1. Fast Growing Industry

Voluntourism is a practice that is no stranger to controversy.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, the voluntourism industry has taken a variety of forms. It traditionally started as a non-profit, community-oriented organization; In the 1990s, it was an outgrowth of the ecotourism movement that drove volunteerism to specialise in environmental sustainability.<sup>2</sup> Under the influence of commercialisation and globalisation, such economic and relief works through professional experts are driven not by noble feelings of altruism and communities anymore but by the private profit sector.

Today, it involves travellers participating in organised short-term voluntary work to help communities, the environment and/or research in the voluntourism destination. Travellers now rebel against package trips and resorts and are willing to pay in search of a more authentic experience. This includes more interaction with the target group, visible direct impact of their efforts, as well as a greater feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment at the end of their experience. With such increasing trends of demand and supply, thousands of volunteer organisations in developed and even developing countries now run such chargeable programmes.

Today, estimates of the industry's size vary widely. An expert on voluntourism from the University Virginia Tech Nancy Gard McGehee laments that 10 million voluntourists are spending as much as \$2 billion annually on this endeavour of travel with a purpose.<sup>3</sup> The US-based corporate Thrive Global that offers science-based solutions to improve productivity and performance claims that voluntourism is now a more than \$173 billion dollar industry with the "make a difference" tagline.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "TODAYonline | Boom in 'voluntourism' sparks concerns over whether ...."

<https://www.todayonline.com/world/boom-voluntourism-sparks-concerns-over-whether-industry-doing-good>  
Accessed Feb 28, 2019

<sup>2</sup> "The business of voluntourism: do western do-gooders actually do harm?."

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/sep/13/the-business-of-voluntourism-do-western-do-gooders-actually-do-harm>  
Accessed Feb 28, 2019

<sup>3</sup> "Global boom in volunteer tourism raises concerns - Travindy."

<https://www.travindy.com/2015/07/global-boom-in-volunteer-tourism-raises-concerns/>  
Accessed Feb 28, 2019

<sup>4</sup> "Annual \$173 Billion Worth Of Volunteer Tourism Industry Is Enough To ...."

<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/annual-173-billion-worth-of-volunteer-tourism-industry-is-enough-to-make-a-change/>  
Accessed Feb 28, 2019



The controversy in this rapid growing multi-billion dollar industry lies in the question as to whether voluntourists do more harm than good. With increasing occurrences of high volunteering fees without transparency, concerns over untrained foreigner involvement in projects like children welfare and volunteers overtaking jobs of locals. There is no doubt naysayers pinpoint the vulnerability of overflowing numbers of voluntourists in developing countries and critique that this fast-growing industry is a rising cause of concern to many countries.

## 2. Critique on the Lack of Management / Regulation of Voluntourism, and its Implications

An underlying fault line in the voluntourism industry today is the lack of regulation for accountability among voluntourists' organisations.<sup>5</sup> Owing to the fact that voluntourism is a relatively new business niche, there are several organisations that chose to exploit the popularity of well-meaning charity for profit. Often times, such lack of oversight and distorted motivations of voluntourism translates into work by unskilled volunteers that is at best redundant and ineffective and at worst harmful.

Currently, many voluntouring programmes charge voluntourists a large sum of money that is ambiguously said to cover transportation, meals and project fees. As if poor cash flow transparency and accountability isn't big enough a flaw, a number of operating programmes have also gained notoriety for its profit-driven - rather than community-driven - framework. While sending well-meaning volunteers seems appealing, many of these operations choose to perform work even if they are clearly at odds with the community's desires or worse still bring voluntourists to sites which have already been attended to and, in fact, no longer require the need for an external party to intervene and 'volunteer'. In many of these scenarios, voluntourists often end up damaging the target group to a larger extent, as compared to alleviating their lifestyle.

<sup>5</sup>"Volunteer travel: experts raise concerns over unregulated industry ...."  
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/jan/13/concerns-unregulated-volunteer-tourism-industry>  
Accessed Mar 1, 2019

By commercialising charity, voluntourists organisations shift the mission from serving the community to maximising corporational profits. With resources diverted from the actual problems and the local communities not prioritized, voluntourism is justifiably criticised to be comprised of quick fixes to complicated and systemic problems. Rather than addressing the root causes of poverty, voluntourism organisations often bring about momentous reliefs. Take for example building projects that could be better completed by local skilled workers and toys for orphans or; children that have no sustainable plans for education or reform; these short-term solutions creates a dependency on voluntourism for aid, instead of establishing self sufficiency. Voluntourism - with this dependency - further sustains this very cyclical poverty it is trying to remedy. The failings of voluntourism today are unfortunately rooted in the industry's motivations.

### 3. Intentions and Outcomes of Voluntourism

#### 3.1 Intentions

The main reason behind the controversy of voluntourism is the big difference between the intended intention and resulting outcomes of this, on a fundamental level. Voluntourism was originally created with the intention to provide gratification for the volunteers and leave them with a sense of fulfillment. Often, voluntourists prefer instant results that they are able to witness as a sign of their efforts. Consequently, this implies that voluntourists often volunteer with the primary goal being self-growth and fulfillment, rather than any tangible, long term, positive impact on the target recipients and area.

This has led thousands of socially-conscious holiday planners to spend great sums of money, volunteering up to a year in poorer societies across South America, Asia and Africa. The second intention is for voluntourists to leave a 'social impact' on the residents and to ensure the lives of the receiving party is improved.

#### 3.2 Outcomes

Yet, among the various results, the outcomes can be categorised into two separate categories; effects on the voluntourists, and effects incurred by the receiving party. These include the propagation of superficial understanding and gross assumptions about culture and heritage made by voluntourists, despite leaving with a light heart, as well as rationalisations of poverty. Those incurred by the receiving end include a disruption in economy, creation of unrealistic expectations by children, as well as many cultural changes and social, political, economic and environmental consequences.

## 4. Effects on Voluntourists

### 4.1 Superficial Understandings of Poverty and Culture

In the case of various voluntourism tours and packages, companies seek to give their customers the most fulfilling and satisfactory experience, rather than one that showcases the actual state of the target area. Understandably, this is to ensure that these corporations and companies are able to maintain their brand reputation, as well as help acquire more customers.

However, the implications of this is that voluntourists are only exposed to target groups in the most dire situations, or target groups in situations that are the most visually shocking. This misrepresentation of the population causes voluntourists to make false assumptions and creates superficial understandings about the nature of the beneficiary. This is primarily because they are not given the opportunity to be exposed to other parts of the beneficiary's culture, nor interact with the upper classes, to truly understand the big picture regarding the target country.

As such, voluntourists often end up making false conclusions and assumptions that the sample they are exposed to is representative of the entire population, which in turn propagates false stereotypes as well.

Similar to this, partial exposure to beneficiaries without any prior context or knowledge means that voluntourists make harsh conclusions based primarily on what they experience during their trip. This results in scenarios where voluntourists rationalise the state of the beneficiaries by justifying their actions as appropriate and sufficient to alleviate the standard of living of the target group. In other words, assuming that as volunteers like them are always present, they assume that the lifestyle of the beneficiary constantly improves, and hence using this false assumption as a way to justify poverty and consequently misinterpreting the true consequences poverty has on their lifestyle.

## 5. Effects on Receiving Party

### 5.1 No Lasting Impact Made on Beneficiary

In addition to the points stated previously, voluntourists are largely exposed to target groups that require superficial help, such that the impacts of the voluntourists hard work can be witnessed at the end of their journey, regardless of what help the target group actually requires.

For example, voluntourists in Haiti were introduced to orphans who resided in orphanages with little to no facilities, and given the job to paint the walls and even the ground. However, this does not tackle the actual problem, which was that the orphanages were at their maximum capacity, and more needed to be done to ensure the welfare of the children, rather than the physical upkeep of the facility. However, factors such as welfare and standard of living cannot be quantitatively measured, making it less likely for voluntourists to partake in activities that would aid in the long term. As such, there is little to no impact made on the beneficiary in the long run.

### 5.2 Instigation of Cultural Changes and Disruption of Local Economies

The sudden influx of foreigners into largely rural and underdeveloped societies has a significant impact on the culture of these societies as well. This is largely due to the fact that these societies are very impressionable. Hence, any action carried out by a voluntourist holds the capability to have a series of consequences in the community. This includes a large variety of actions, from behavioural actions such as the use of certain slang and language to even the introduction of material goods such as alcohol and cigarettes.

To make matters worse, such actions are often taken lightly by voluntourists, which only increases the chances of such an activity occurring that results in the possibility of a negative impact on the society.

### 5.3 Commercialisation of Poverty

Another disadvantage of voluntourism is the impact it has on how the beneficiary views its current situation. While it is indeed true that in some cases, beneficiaries may truly appreciate the help given by voluntourists and experience the benefits of their actions, it is increasingly common to witness figures in such societies capitalize on these voluntourists as a source of income.

In other words, these figures choose to exacerbate the current situation, whether it is poverty, or orphans, etc. In order to lure more voluntourists in. However, instead of directing donations and funds raised by these voluntourists to the welfare of the beneficiary, this money is taken in as income instead. In fact, as voluntourism gains traction and becomes increasingly popular, these figures often choose to increase the supply of beneficiaries as well. This, in turn, leads to the propagation of a threat to the livelihood of the beneficiaries. This has been witnessed several times but perhaps, most noticeably in Haiti, where street gangs and drug dealers decided to capitalise on funds given to orphanages by setting up fake orphanages. Children, in turn, were acquired by kidnapping, child-trafficking, or murder of the parental figures.

Consequently, the impact voluntourism has on these beneficiaries is seems largely negative in the long run, sometimes with life-threatening implications on beneficiaries.. Delegates are hence encouraged to not only look at future measures to prevent the propagation of such threats, but also ways to crack down on such illegal operations such as in the case of fake orphanages.

### 5.4 Corrupt Practices in Voluntourism Industries

According to the UN, there is no comprehensive, universally accepted definition of corruption. Due to the issues in defining corruption as a concept, there is currently no definition in the UN Convention against corruption, instead using many examples of what would constitute as corruption. Transparency International defines corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain."<sup>6</sup>. The World Bank defines it as "the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another party".

<sup>6</sup>"Transparency International - What is Corruption?." <https://www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption>. Accessed May 21, 2019.

Voluntourism Companies often generate large profits from the services they offer to voluntourists, with the industry being worth an estimated \$2.6 Billion USD. They often working with partner organizations like travel agents, NGOs and in some cases, corrupt, unregistered organizations. Some partner organizations often define themselves as 'non-profit' because they serve the public, but sell exactly the same voluntourism product as other companies defined as 'commercial'. This makes many of these organizations difficult to manage legally<sup>7</sup>. For instance, should the UNWTO Global Code for Ethics in Tourism apply in to these organizations?

Due to its nature, voluntourism is inevitably linked to a high degree of corruption, making developing countries more susceptible to this occurring. This gives rise to unethical practices in both the voluntourism industry and linked organizations – for example, due to competition in a corrupt environment, companies may resort to bribery in the fear that if they do not pay bribes, companies willing to pay may outcompete them. Poor management and unfair business practices have given such companies a bad reputation.

### 5.5 Untrue Information on the Distribution of Money

The misappropriation of funds and payments made by voluntourism companies which are difficult to trace contribute to unfair distribution of fees in the voluntourism industry. Often, organizations use the false pretense that cash payments are an effective method of transparent distribution of fees<sup>8</sup>. However, cash payments are difficult to trace and document once left in the hands of the companies, and such misappropriation is reduced when the payment is documentable, for example using bank transfers. However, due to many of these organizations bring private, it is difficult for governments to set restrictions on the transfer of funds in these companies.

Misuse of funds from the large amounts of volunteers pay for voluntourism is indeed a key factor that contributes to corruption. These organizations have a key responsibility to ensure that their programmes maximize positive implications and should offer financial transparency<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, responsible use of available funds and tracking of payments must be carried out by these organizations and enforced by the government. Importantly, funds need to be channeled to areas which enable a greater positive impact to beneficiaries, such as volunteer training and relief-area logistics funds.

<sup>7</sup>"The Cost of Volunteering: Consequences of ... - ScholarlyCommons."  
[https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=anthro\\_seniortheses](https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=anthro_seniortheses).  
Accessed May 21, 2019.

<sup>8</sup>"Is 'Voluntourism' Itself Being Exploited? | HuffPost."  
[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/is-voluntourism-itself-be\\_b\\_5197390](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/is-voluntourism-itself-be_b_5197390).  
Accessed May 21, 2019.

<sup>9</sup>"The Cost of Volunteering: Consequences of ... - ScholarlyCommons."  
[https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=anthro\\_seniortheses](https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=anthro_seniortheses).  
Accessed May 21, 2019.

## **5.6 Creation of Unethical or Poorly Thought Through Programmes to Satisfy Demand**

Due to the high demands of volunteer trips, the quality of these programs has declined, and as a result, corruption is prevalent to satisfy the demand experienced in the industry. When the demand is available, companies want to leverage this as much as possible by making their programmes seem more attractive when compared to the competition. For example, this may lead to corrupt practices in orphanage voluntourism<sup>10</sup>, where companies bring in non-orphans by falsely promising their parents with a better life and education to deliberately house them in squalid conditions to attract voluntourists for financial gain. Parents and children then become victims of these elaborate scams. In other cases, parents may 'sell' their kids into orphanages for financial gain. In these cases, voluntourism becomes an industry which turns the good motives of tourists into tools for financial gain through unethical means.

For example, disaster relief projects are usually conducted to relieve large-scale damage from natural disasters like cyclones and earthquakes, attracting many voluntourists who want to have an impact on the ground rather than providing monetary aid. Usually, these projects receive large amounts of media attention, fueling demand for voluntourism in these disaster hotspots<sup>11</sup>. Companies often hastily create products to satisfy this demand, resulting in many key issues. Due to the time-limited nature of the work, companies seldom analyze issues and risks before sending voluntourists abroad. As a result, many well-meaning tourists get tangled in corruption and human rights violations due to their company's failure to analyze the potential of such issues occurring beforehand.

<sup>10</sup> "Boom in 'voluntourism' sparks concerns over whether the industry is ...."  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-travel-volunteers-charities/boom-in-voluntourism-sparks-concerns-over-whether-the-industry-is-doing-good-idUSKCN0P91AX20150629>.  
Accessed May 21, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> "Why Are Natural Disasters Breeding Grounds For ... - Northwestern Now."  
<https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2014/03/opinion-tpm-sorensen-natural-disasters/>.  
Accessed 21 May. 2019.



## 5.7 An Industry Which Manipulates Altruistic Intent?

Voluntourism has increasingly become a business which trades on guilt. Exaggerated marketing techniques often featuring images of impoverished women and children are often used to induce sympathy and instill a sense of responsibility in tourists. While a sense of responsibility is usually beneficial, it is often misused in the voluntourism industry as fuel for unethical and poorly-thought through projects to line the pockets of businessmen. Unknowingly, altruistic volunteers may even support environments that are abusive to children.

In Cambodia, UNICEF has encountered multiple unregistered childcare institutions<sup>12</sup> and orphanages which were sustained only for the steady influx of funds from the voluntourism industry, finding that a majority of children were in fact not orphans, brought in for the sole purpose of profit.

Council needs to ensure that voluntourism is carried out properly with focus on aiding the genuinely needy, to prevent the creation of a grotesque economy that capitalizes on the concerns of the developed world for business profit.

## 5.8 Lack of Cooperation with Governments and Classification of NGOs

Through voluntourism, an ordinary hospital or disaster-recovery area may become a key space where voluntourists, NGOs and governments connect. However, these non-profit organizations are unaffiliated with public programmes run by the state<sup>13</sup>, and as a result the funds channeled does not aid the state on two levels – Firstly, a lack of financial support for the government will hinder state-driven programmes, which are often more long-term in nature and have more experience assisting the local population. State-run programmes then become more beneficial in the long-run than short-term projects conducted by voluntourists, however, due to the large demand for voluntourism projects, state-run projects often get sidelined. Further, due to the lack of skill in volunteers as compared to skilled locals, short term voluntourism projects tend to be less effective as a whole.

This lack of cooperation with governments coupled with a high demand for voluntourist projects encourages corrupt behavior by voluntourism companies. For example, companies may offer harmful or unvetted placements in direct, inexperienced work with vulnerable populations like children and the injured.

<sup>12</sup>“The truth about volunteering in Cambodia - Move to Cambodia.”  
<https://www.movetocambodia.com/working-in-cambodia/volunteering-in-cambodia/>.  
Accessed 21 May. 2019.

<sup>13</sup>“Voluntourism: A messy industry & a dubious US-Nepali volunteer ....”  
<https://www.responsible-volunteering.com/2018/08/voluntourism-messy-industry/>.  
Accessed 21 May. 2019.

Cooperation with governments needs to be coupled with accurate characterization of the goals and roles of various NGOs in the voluntourism industry. This includes better defining the class these companies fall under (for example, non-profit organizations) so as to ensure that UNWTO Ethical Guidelines are applicable to organizations, especially if they have a prominent role to play in the industry.

These issues stress the need to characterize these incidents of corruption and for a detailed framework to combat incidences of corruption in the voluntourism industry. Council needs to consider the key issue, of how can we prevent the exploitation of many tourists' good intentions through corrupt practices so as to decrease the negative implications suffered by the host country and its citizens?

Ultimately, this worrying trend of corruption in voluntourism must be resolved without hindering the industry as a whole. Possible ways to go about doing this is by fostering camaraderie between voluntourism organizations and governments and creating frameworks to ensure such activities are well planned with transparency in how the finances are used and the risks, including corruption, measured and dealt with. Additionally, it is necessary for beneficiaries in disaster-relief areas to be genuinely in need of support, and not simply present to satisfy voluntourism demand and take advantage of their concerns. Finally, greater clarity in the various organizations involved in such efforts and understanding their roles are crucial for the creation of better guidelines for the ethicality of their actions.

## PAST INITIATIVES

Taleb Rifai of Jordan became UNWTO Secretary-General in 2010. Under his mandate the Organization introduced Hotel Energy Solutions (HES), a web-based tool to help hotels reduce their carbon footprint whilst increasing profits, worked with Members on research on benefits of easing visa facilitation, and forecast that in 2030 the number of international tourists will reach 1.8 billion. It reached 1 billion in 2012.

Taleb Rifai's mandate has seen focus placed on the people involved in the tourism experience. Two publications under the title "Tourism Stories" were released compiling research and interviews with individuals working in tourism from around the world.

In 2014 the 69th session of the UNGA adopted by consensus the resolution entitled 'Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection'. This was followed in 2015 by the adoption of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

## LINK TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The appeal to having service and sightseeing all rolled into one underlies the travel trend of millions of voluntourists today. However, this 'new' trend of voluntourism has a distinct implication from many of its kind. Two fundamental questions of voluntourism are, however - why voluntourism and who is it really helping? It appears on first sight to be a wonderful win-win for both the beneficiary and the volunteers. However, the lack of accountability and foresight, and unintentional impacts of volunteering can potentially have many long term ramifications for the industry and the local community's economy, educational system and more.

Altruism is a universally lauded ideal, and there is nothing inherently wrong with serving and seeing the world. Perhaps navigating its pitfalls would be the realisation to take the urge of altruism and service civic-mindedly. Achieving a healthy relationship in voluntourism between voluntourists and the local community is a process, not a destination. The ultimate aim is to create and recreate sustainable methods that will continue to explore and improve upon current frameworks in the voluntourism scene.

Under the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations aims to achieve a "Future in which cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation and more." It also aims to "(provide) a quality education (which) is the foundation to creating sustainable development." As such, it is vital that the UNWTO works towards developing a framework for voluntourism that can equip locals with the skills to allow them to improve their quality of life and access to an inclusive education in the long run.

# QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

- 1. How can we balance voluntourists' personal need for gratification?**
- 2. How do we maximise the benefits of voluntourism and minimise its negative implications incurred to countries?**
- 3. How can we ensure that in this process, we still create an environment which promotes socio-economic development and respects the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities?**