

Volunteers in Colors

Benetton's new campaign in collaboration with UN Volunteers for the International Year of Volunteers.

PROFESSION: VOLUNTEER

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

Berlin, 25th September 2001. A former member of a street gang, who still bears the signs of his past life tattooed on his skin, now fights against violence; a young lawyer promotes and defends human rights; a transvestite distributes condoms amongst prostitutes; an elderly tap dancer entertains residents in old people's homes. They come from every nation around the world, they have diverse backgrounds, they are young or not-so-young but they have in common the same feeling of commitment to the weak and suffering. They are the endorsers for United Colors of Benetton's communication campaign for autumn 2001 produced in collaboration with United Nations Volunteers (the United Nations' programme that has been dealing with voluntary action around the world for the past thirty years) for the International Year of Volunteers, whose celebrations will culminate on 5th December 2001 with International Volunteer Day.

In this new press and billboard campaign, photographed by James Mollison, one of the young creative talents of Fabrica, Benetton deals with a subject that is typical of its communication strategy and, once again, talks about 'real people', touching on important issues for a civilised society. During the campaign's conception stage Fabrica (Benetton's Communication Research Centre) studied various ways of being a volunteer in today's world, focusing on the more unusual aspects and showing that devoting one's time and energy to others also leads the way to self-improvement and to achieving a better quality of life.

A special issue of *Colors* will be published for the campaign, devoted entirely to voluntary effort. On 5th December in Rome *Fabrica Musica* will perform music composed especially for International Volunteer Day.

"With our new campaign we have chosen to come out in favour of the voluntary effort", said Luciano Benetton, "and of all those who elect to work for the good of others, without prejudice. Our partnership with such a prestigious body as the United Nations has taught us that there are many ways of being a volunteer. Our aim is to give greater visibility to a multi-faceted reality which many people underestimate or of which they are often totally unaware. In actual fact the volunteer effort constitutes a real opportunity to give a deeper meaning to our life and is one of the most vital and positive examples to young people around the world."

According to United Nations Volunteers, whose headquarters are in Bonn, Germany, and which every year mobilizes 5,000 people from all over the world to serve the causes of peace and development, so far not enough attention has been given to the social and economic value of voluntary work, even though it is the most common form of human solidarity in developed as well as in developing countries. Suffice it to say that in the few countries where volunteerism has been measured, volunteer activities make up between 8 and 14 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). A study conducted in nine European countries estimates

an annual volunteer input which equals almost two million jobs. In particular, in Germany, 34 per cent of the population over 14 years (22 million people) are regularly involved in volunteer activities. In the United States, the volunteer workforce represents a value of \$225 billion every year.

"The International Year of Volunteers was declared to highlight this enormous force," explains, the UNV Executive Coordinator Sharon Capeling-Alakija. "The Benetton campaign makes an important contribution to getting volunteers off the sidelines and into the centre of public attention. It shows volunteers for what they are: the glue that holds society together."

Benetton and the United Nations started collaborating in 1996 with the first big communication campaign for the World Food Summit organised by the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) to discuss the problem of hunger in developing countries. In 1997 the United Nations and Benetton joined forces yet again with a worldwide campaign celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, and again in 1999 for the fundraising campaign for Kosovo with the collaboration of UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees).

The Benetton-UNV campaign will be seen throughout Europe, the United States, South America and the Far East, in newspapers, weekly magazines, women's and lifestyle magazines and on billboards located in the world's major capitals.

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www.benetton.com/UNV

www.unv.org

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