



**HLPF 2023: Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels**

**Concept Note: VNR Lab**  
**“Recovery, Transformation, Acceleration and  
Implementation of the 2030 Agenda:  
Why and how to integrate volunteers into national plans and policy  
responses?”**

**Lead organizer:** UN Volunteers in collaboration with UNDESA

**Date:** 11 July 2023, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

**Venue:** Conference room 11

### **Introduction**

Volunteers from all walks of life, are at the vanguard of global and local efforts to respond and mitigate the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic. Their actions, their solidarity, and their resilience, bring to the forefront of all our minds, the enormous contribution that volunteers can and do make when people and planet are under stress.

As we move into the post-pandemic era, and grapple with the enormous challenges of both recovering from the long-lasting effects of COVID 19 and transforming the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, this Voluntary National Review Lab will focus on why and how volunteers should be at the heart of policy integration and efforts, to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals. Emphasis will be placed on the added value of the policy integration of volunteerism into Member State national and sector plans and policies, and their reporting in Voluntary National Reviews.

### **Background**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup> recognizes the pivotal role of different stakeholder groups, including volunteers as part of a whole of society approaches to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The role of volunteers and volunteerism is recognised and reflected in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of Member States. Between 2016 and 2018, the proportion of VNRs reporting the positive contribution of volunteers and volunteerism to the SDGs increased from 18% in 2016, to a peak of 65% in 2018. Despite the increasing recognition of the roles and contributions of volunteers during the COVID 19 pandemic, the proportion of Voluntary National Reviews reflecting the positive contribution of volunteers, has been decreasing from 60% in 2019 to 55% in 2022.

Many Voluntary National Reviews describe stand-alone civil society initiatives describing the role of volunteers in either awareness raising consultations or actions contributing to poverty reduction, health, and education. These are important contributions for the 2030 Agenda, however for the true power of volunteers and volunteerism to be scaled up and leveraged as an accelerative and transformative action for the SDGs, volunteerism needs to be integrated into national policy responses such as national plans and cross-sector policy frameworks.

In 2022, only 9% of the 44 VNRs presented at the High-Level Political Forum reflected the integration of volunteerism into national plans and plans to achieve the SDGs. This was a decrease from 15% in 2021. The most common policy area where volunteerism was integrated were youth strategies, health strategies and disaster management / emergency response.

The 2020 Secretary General's report on volunteering<sup>2</sup> recognized significant progress made in increasing ownership of the development agenda through volunteering, but also identified the need for further efforts to integrate volunteering into national development strategies, plans and policies, to engage people in national planning and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/140 on *Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*<sup>3</sup> endorsed by 124 Member States encourages Governments, in partnership with United Nations entities, volunteer-involving organizations, and other stakeholders, to integrate volunteerism into national development strategies, plans and policies to achieve SDGs.

Increasingly the countries are noting that the 2030 Agenda has been mainstreamed or aligned into their national development plans and frameworks<sup>4</sup>, more countries that are identifying a direct connection from the VNR recommendations into the national development plans, thereby enabling clear implementation of the priorities established in the VNR<sup>5</sup> to achieve Agenda 2030. With volunteerism having a pivotal role in achieving Agenda 2030, it is important to discuss the integration of volunteering into the national development plans and respective VNRs.

The next generation of national policies and plans could consider how all types of volunteers – particularly at the local level - can contribute as innovators, entrepreneurs, leaders, local experts and valued partners who are driving their own development, especially in areas where there is the largest participation of volunteers such as migration, disaster risk reduction, urbanization and, more recently, COVID-19 response or into the policy responses that people and planet face today such as the climate crisis.

## Objective

This VNR Lab will provide an opportunity for Member States and interested stakeholders to learn from concrete examples of integrating volunteering into the national and sector development plans and on how these have been reported in VNRs.

Member States, Volunteer Involving Organisations, and members of the UN system will share both best practices and challenges in integrating volunteering into the national development plans and policies, and how this is ultimately reflected in the VNRs. The lab will also provide forward-looking guidance for the integration of volunteerism into national development plans and future VNRs.

## Guiding Questions

- How can volunteering help in whole of society approach to mobilize different segments of its society to mitigate the fallout of COVID 19 and achieving Agenda 2030? How can national development plans and policies reflect an integrated civil society- state response to help mobilization of volunteers when needed?
- How is volunteerism being integrated into national plans and policies for the realization of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda? Why do so few national plans and policies integrate volunteerism?
- What are the key measures that must be taken to integrate volunteering into national plans and policies to help achieve SDGs? What measures must be taken to ensure that VNRs reflect the integration of volunteering in national plans and policies? What support is needed for such integration?

## Who should attend this VNR Lab?

- All organisations and individuals with an interest and active role in strengthening the evidence-base for the VNRs
- Representatives from government reporting on progress on implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs through national plans and policy frameworks
- Volunteer involving organizations involved in coordinating and monitoring SDG progress recognizing whole of society approach for that the 2030 Agenda

#### What would participants gain?

- Insights into why mainstreaming / integrating volunteering into national plans and policies is important in delivering Agenda 2030 and the complementarity between such integration and SDG reporting through VNRs
- Insights and practical lessons from Member States that have integrated volunteering in their national plans or policies and VNRs
- Practical guidance on how UN agencies can support countries to integrate volunteering into national plans or policies and SDG reporting through their VNRs

### Agenda

- 14:00 -14:05: **Welcome remarks: Mr. Neil Pierre**, Acting Director, Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
- 14:05 – 14:08: **Video on Volunteering for SDGs acceleration**
- 14:08 – 14:11: **Presentation on Volunteering in VNRs and moderator: Mr. Narendra Mishra**, Team Leader and Policy Specialist, Integration, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme
- 14:11 – 14:15: **Presentation on National plans and SDG reporting through VNRs: Mr. Joop Theunissen**, Deputy Chief, Intergovernmental Policy and Review Branch, Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination, DESA
- 14:15 – 14:40: **Champions of integration:** Opportunities and challenges on integration of volunteering in national plans and policies – reflections from member states and other stakeholders [3-5 mins per intervention]
- **Ms. Anel Bakytbekkyzy**, Deputy Permanent Representative (chargé d'affaires) of Kazakhstan to the United Nations
  - **Ms. Prudence Kaoma**, Director - Monitoring and Evaluation, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Government of Zambia
  - **Mr. Viliame Raduva** – Statistician, **Mr. Andrew Coriakula** – SDG Specialist, Government of Fiji
  - Government representative, Germany
  - Government representative Iraq
  - VSO / France Volontaires / Volunteer
- 14:40-14:55: **Q&A**
- 14:55-15:00: **Concluding remarks: Joop Theunissen**, Deputy Chief, Intergovernmental Policy and Review Branch, Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination, DESA