

United Nations Volunteers inputs for 2020 HLPF – March 2020

1. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

Never has the mandate of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme been closer to the priorities of a global development framework than with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The world is realizing what UNV has always been advocating for: that sustainable development is only possible when development gains ‘leave no one behind’.

For the Decade of Action, UNV has pledged to lead in including everyone, everywhere to take action, through volunteering, for the SDGs.

UNV is a common service of the United Nations system which mobilizes UN Volunteers and promotes volunteerism worldwide for the achievement of the SDGs. Volunteerism enables people to participate in their own development, strengthening social cohesion and trust by promoting individual and collective action, leading to sustainable development for people by people.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly recognises volunteer groups as stakeholders to achieve the 17 SDGs.

The UN Resolution *“Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond”* ([A/RES/70/129](#)), adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly in 2015, acknowledges volunteering as a powerful means of implementation for the SDGs. The Resolution presents the *Plan of Action for the next decade and beyond* (2016-2030), which aims at integrating volunteering in peace and development under the 2030 Agenda. The General Assembly called upon Member States, the UN system and a wide range of stakeholders to support and resource the Plan, and recognised UNV as the appropriate UN entity to support its implementation. The Plan of Action aims to:

- Strengthen people’s ownership of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through enhanced civic engagement and enabling environments for citizen action;
- Integrate volunteerism into national and global implementation strategies for the post-2015 development agenda; and
- Measure volunteerism to contribute to a holistic understanding of the engagement of people and their well-being and be part of the monitoring of the SDGs.

In December 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution *“Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”* ([A/RES/73/140](#)), encouraging the participation and integration of all people – including youth, older persons, women, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, minorities and other marginalized groups – in volunteer activities. It also encouraged Governments, in partnership with the United Nations, the private sector, civil society and others to integrate volunteerism into national development strategies.

As UNV's first strategic framework since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the **Strategic Framework 2018-2021** seeks to leverage the power of volunteerism and volunteers as a means of implementation and people engagement for attainment of the SDGs. To this end, the Strategic Framework focuses on two main outcomes and on institutional effectiveness:

Outcome 1: The efforts of Member States to deliver on the 2030 Agenda are supported through volunteerism as an effective means of implementation and people engagement.

Outcome 2: The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of UN-Volunteers and the integration of volunteerism.

Institutional effectiveness: making UNV fit for purpose.

a. Critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda within the area of responsibility of the intergovernmental body (bearing in mind interrelations with other goals and targets)

Sustainable development cannot be achieved through institutional action only. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that traditional means of implementation need to be complemented by participatory mechanisms that facilitate people's engagement and capacity to benefit other people and the planet. The SDGs cannot be achieved without people's engagement at all stages, and without new partnerships, including with volunteer groups. Volunteer groups can be brokers of and provide spaces for engagement, connecting institutional initiatives with volunteer action at community level. It is crucial that they are involved from the planning stage when governments and institutions align their plans to the SDGs. Volunteering transforms the volunteers as well as the people they work with. By mobilizing capacities and extending the reach of action, volunteers can facilitate and support people's engagement in planning, implementing and monitoring the SDGs, bridging social capital and strengthening social cohesion.

b. Priority measures to:

i. accelerate action, and

ii. ensure transformative pathways

to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda

UNV SF 2018-2021 – OUTCOME 1

UNV and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are jointly organizing a global technical meeting in July 2020 (GTM2020) to further strengthen the engagement and contributions of volunteers for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The GTM2020 will be the culmination of the Plan of Action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda, proposed by the UN Secretary-General in 2015. On the path to 2030, UNV and partners

will continue with the promotion of volunteering in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, building on the key findings of the GTM2020. One billion active volunteers worldwide are already making important contributions across all SDGs.

At the GTM2020 on Reimagining Volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda, governments and their partners will come together to discuss about the transformative potential of volunteering, and to reflect on how to maximize the impact of volunteering under the 2030 Agenda. The momentum is being created for volunteering – be it its discourse or its understanding or the terms of volunteer engagement – to be ‘reimagined’ through the build-up to the meeting. The main expected outcome of the GTM2020 is a call to action by the global volunteering community to strengthen its positioning and narrative of volunteering in the global discourse on the SDGs through innovative models and approaches – making the ten years to follow the decade of action on volunteering.

The GTM2020 will showcase evidence, data and innovation around four thematic areas.

1. Mapping trends and evidence on volunteering for the SDGs
2. Volunteering as SDG accelerator
3. Next generation volunteering support
4. Measuring volunteering for the SDGs

UNV SF 2018-2021 – OUTCOME 2 (with a focus on Gender Parity; Inclusion; Diversification of UNV’s offer)

UNV strives to mobilize and integrate qualified, highly motivated and well-supported UN Volunteers, while also promoting the global recognition of volunteerism and its unique benefits to individuals and communities.

For the first time in history, UNV reached full gender parity among the UN Volunteers deployed in 2019. This is due to the concentrated efforts from all involved in the volunteer management cycle (from talent pool marketing, to recruitment, to managing the deployed UN Volunteers). Since 2019, UNV established key performance indicators (KPIs) to systematically track volunteer recruitment and volunteer management. With this, UNV internally aimed to achieve 50-50 gender parity in the shortlisting and submission of UN Volunteer candidates to host entities, as well as conduct targeted outreach campaigns to women professionals and gender non-conforming persons for the UNV Talent Pool. In 2019, a total of 50.8% (or 7,670) of the candidates submitted in the shortlisting to host entities were female, while of those submissions, 51% (or 4,227) female candidates were selected for UN Volunteer assignment. Furthermore, there was a 156 per cent increase in new female registrations in the UNV Talent Pool, from 22,717 in 2018 to 58,254 in 2019.

Likewise, UNV and UNDP jointly established the award-winning Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities to offer volunteering opportunities in the UN system to people with disabilities. In 2019, 45 UN Volunteers with disabilities were deployed; including 31 with UNDP and 14 with eight other UN entities¹. The number of candidates with disabilities registered in the UNV Talent Pool has grown to 3,315.

2. Contribution of UNV to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility (including its cooperation with ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies)

UNV continuously works to:

- increase UNV's unique ability to help the UN system to tap into an expanded global talent;
- innovate to engage people all around the world through volunteering; and
- promote volunteerism, with our partners and civil society, as a solution for the 2030 Agenda.

UNV has a unique vantage point to provide people, especially those who are often excluded, with opportunities to be part of solutions for the SDGs, through volunteerism.

Our UN Volunteers come from over 160 countries, and eighty per cent come from the Global South. We must continue to reach for more inclusion and diversity, not only among UN Volunteers, but among the over one billion volunteers worldwide.

Volunteering allows all people – including those furthest behind – to engage as agents of change for the SDGs. UNV has been providing spaces and opportunities for people to do just that – act for the 2030 Agenda. For example, in 2019, refugee UN Volunteers were speakers at the World Economic Forum in Davos and the first World Refugee Forum in Geneva. In the coming decade, UNV will bring youth and other voices even more to the forefront.

UNV and ILO, support Member States on the statistical measurement of the contribution of volunteering. Support includes advice on integrating volunteer measurement into population census and labour force surveys, as well as testing of new tools and volunteer surveys to capture the diversity of volunteer work across contexts. UNV and ILO have also published guidance on volunteer measurement in population census surveys; compilation and processing of labour force survey volunteer data from 60 countries; and providing gender analysis and insights on women's unpaid work using volunteering data.

¹ UN Missions, OHCHR, UN Environment, UNDMSPC, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNODC.

The Plan of Action for Integrating Volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda² calls upon Member States, UN entities, civil society, academia and the private sector to enhance the recognition and integration of volunteerism as a powerful means of implementation and to build evidence for the Global Technical Meeting on Volunteerism in 2020 (GTM2020). To this end, in partnership with the UN Regional Economic Commissions, UNV convened five regional consultations in 2019 concurrently with the annual Regional Fora on Sustainable Development.

Across the regions, the stakeholders confirmed that volunteerism is relevant to solving a wide range of development issues, ranging from planning to implementation. At the same time, the enabling environment for volunteering, gaps and challenges varied by regional context.

- In the UNECE region, evidence on the contribution of volunteerism to youth development, civic engagement, and emergency response, is well documented; there are fewer visible barriers to volunteer action for a defined cause.
- In the ESCWA region, there is a need to strengthen relevant legal frameworks and harness volunteering to build the skills of youth as a key priority.
- In the UNECA region, the most pressing need is to position volunteering as an integral resource to address gaps and inequalities in access to services, through partnerships with civil society and private sector.
- In the ESCAP region stakeholders emphasized the need to integrate volunteering in national sector development strategies.
- In the ECLAC region, the consultations called for the private sector, academia, civil society and volunteer involving organizations to work together on research and prioritization of volunteering for sustainable development.

As a result of the consultations, the contribution of volunteerism under the 2030 Agenda was included for the first time in the outcome documents of the regional fora, including a call to mainstream volunteerism into international development strategies and national road maps for the achievement of the SDGs.

UNV continues to spearhead research of the contributions of volunteerism to sustainable development. In 2019, UNV published a research paper on the role of gender in volunteerism for community resilience, which recommended that Member States establish volunteering legislations, policies and programmes that promote gender equality, inclusion and empowerment. In India, UNV and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sport organized a Volunteering Research Conclave, focusing on data and measuring the economic value of volunteer work, social impact of volunteering, accreditation framework for volunteers, and innovative practices in volunteering. UNV also collaborated with the African Union to convene a stakeholder event in Rwanda examining regional evidence and gaps in volunteerism.

² A/RES/70/129 and A/70/118.

3. Selected recommendations for accelerating progress and moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action, for possible use in drafting the HLPF declaration. (4-5 Action Points)

At the Global Technical Meeting 2020 (GTM2020) on ‘Reimagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda’ a call to action will be tabled. The call to action will be a collective commitment to position volunteering as one of the people-driven development solutions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It will seek to unite the global community through renewed partnerships in support of the next-generation volunteering and create a sense of urgency to integrate volunteering in the Decade of Action for the SDGs.

UNV proposes that the HLPF declaration mentions the Global Call to Action on positioning volunteering as one of the people-driven solutions to achieving the SDGs.