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United Nations Volunteers

United Nations Volunteers programme

Strategic Framework, 2022-2025

Summary

The Strategic Framework of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, 2022-2025, builds on the previous framework for 2018-2021. The proposed Strategic Framework seeks to promote volunteerism as a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and as a tool to engage the United Nations development system, Member States, civil society and the private sector to promote an environment conducive to volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results.

To this end, the Strategic Framework focuses on three main outcomes:

1. Contributing to a people-centred United Nations: The functioning of the United Nations system is supported through the engagement of empowered UN Volunteers;
2. Serving the United Nations system: UNV is a fit-for-purpose organization contributing to the efficiency gains of the United Nations system; and
3. Promote volunteerism: Efforts by Member States and the United Nations system to integrate volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda as a cross-cutting means of implementation are supported.

The UNV Strategic Framework, 2022-2025 is closely aligned with General Assembly resolution 75/233 of 21 December 2020 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. It is guided by General Assembly resolutions 70/129 of 15 December 2015 on “integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond” and 73/140 of 17 December 2018 on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The framework consists of a narrative that outlines the UNV strategic intent and offer to partners and a results matrix that articulates specific, measurable outcomes, outputs and indicators

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the UNV Strategic Framework, 2022-2025.



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I. Strategic setting: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and UNV

1. Volunteerism has become a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹ The contributions of millions of volunteers throughout the world to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals have been enabled by the commitment of Member States – as consistently documented in voluntary national reviews of progress towards the Goals since 2016² – and supported with active advocacy by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. Most recently, volunteers played a pivotal role in the global response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences.

2. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR)³ gave new impetus and high-level guidance to the United Nations development system and its efforts to work effectively and impactfully across the spheres of development, peace, humanitarian affairs and human rights. Furthermore, the QCPR acknowledged the importance of volunteering and encouraged the United Nations development system, in partnership with Member States, civil society and the private sector, to support such efforts and promote an environment conducive to volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results.

3. Against this backdrop, as a system-wide service administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNV has endeavoured to unlock the potential of volunteerism within the United Nations system. To this end, UNV has reinforced its system-wide partnerships and advocacy and, through organizational transformation and strengthening the focus on country-level results, ensured a growing appreciation of the role of UN Volunteers and their contributions to the work of host United Nations entities. As a result, UNV is recognized as an effective and efficient provider of multi-faceted volunteer talent and an enabler of diversity, inclusion, innovation and community orientation through relevant United Nations volunteer solutions. The unprecedented numbers of volunteers mobilized in the United Nations system under the previous framework (2018-2021) is a testament to the enhanced role of UNV.⁴

4. Given the growing recognition of volunteering for the 2030 Agenda by Member States, their strategic guidance to the United Nations development system through the QCPR and the increasing appreciation of the role of UN Volunteers in the United Nations system, UNV is well positioned to further strengthen its results in the 2022-2025 strategic cycle. To this end, UNV will focus on system-wide partnerships, further strengthen its institutional agility and action orientation, build on the lessons learned as summarized in chapter II and seek to achieve strategic priorities as outlined in chapter III.

II. Lessons learned

5. The independent evaluation of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021⁵ confirmed that UNV contributes to the work of the United Nations system by providing flexible, timely and effective volunteer solutions through a broad range of volunteer modalities. Furthermore, it ascertained the main comparative advantage of UNV in bringing additional diversity and inclusivity to the United Nations, ensuring its proximity to the grass roots and enabling youth engagement.

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, 25 September 2015, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>.

² Knowledge portal on volunteerism: overview of voluntary national reviews, available at: <https://knowledge.unv.org/vnr-reporting>

³ General Assembly resolution 75/233, “Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system”, 30 December 2020, available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/233>

⁴ At the time of this writing, UNV has mobilized over 10,000 volunteers in 2021, serving 60 United Nations partners. In comparison, UNV mobilized 6,501 volunteers with 34 United Nations partners in 2017, the last year of the previous strategic framework period.

⁵ Evaluation report and management response: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/13096>

6. The evaluation acknowledged the organizational transformation which had brought UNV closer to its partners. It confirmed positive results reflected in operational efficiency and volunteer mobilization and suggested that the digital transformation of UNV could result in future efficiency gains. At the same time, it noted that the UNV human resources capacity, including at country level, requires additional strengthening to fully keep pace with the organization's shifting demands.

7. In relation to the UNV response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation found that UNV had responded robustly to the challenges caused by the pandemic. It had demonstrated agility and speed in mobilizing national and community-level volunteers as part of the United Nations system-wide response in more than 100 countries, while at the same time enabling the United Nations system to benefit from online volunteering services for the delivery of critical location-neutral tasks. The pandemic provided a timely reminder of the value of volunteerism and has generated valuable evidence of the importance of volunteer action in responding to and recovering from crisis and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

8. Key recommendations of the evaluation were to reinforce the UNV role as a system-wide service and to expand and diversify the partner base. The evaluation called on UNV to continue to act as a global advocate for volunteerism for sustainable development and ensure stronger complementarity between promoting volunteerism and volunteer mobilization. Finally, the evaluation requested UNV to continue to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

9. In addition, UNV ensured organizational learning through independent evaluations of various critical elements of its system-wide offer: the online volunteering service; the talent and capacity development programme for persons with disabilities; and the gender promotion initiative of the Peacebuilding Fund. Some key lessons relevant for this strategic framework period are:

(a) The online volunteering service should be mainstreamed into the UNV offer and capacity to deliver the service should be present at headquarters, regional and country levels. Sustainable financing of the service should be explored further;⁶

(b) Inclusion of persons with disabilities should: be scaled up to include more United Nations partners; ensure appropriate onboarding of UN Volunteers with disabilities; strengthen the capacities of host United Nations entities; and establish a reasonable accommodations fund. The initial focus should be on enabling national volunteer assignments for persons with disabilities;⁷

(c) Integration of female volunteers in peacebuilding contexts needs early and specific preparations and careful selection of candidates. Host entities often need to be sensitized to the value of volunteerism for development and volunteers must be recognized in their workplaces as equal members of the United Nations personnel on the ground.⁸

III. Strategic priorities in 2022-2025

10. The Strategic Framework focuses on the following three priority outcome areas.⁹

Contributing to a people-centred United Nations

11. Building and expanding on the success of the previous Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, UNV will support the functioning of the United Nations system through expanding the opportunities for more diverse, empowered and motivated global citizens to work with United Nations partners in supporting the United Nations system's efforts in development, peace, humanitarian affairs and human rights.

⁶ Evaluation report and management response: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12451>

⁷ Evaluation report and management response: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12616>

⁸ Evaluation report and management response: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9928>

⁹ Throughout this chapter, reference is made to relevant operative paragraphs (OPs) of [General Assembly resolution 75/233](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) to ensure the close alignment of this Strategic Framework with the high-level guidance from Member States.

12. To this end, UNV commits to respond effectively to the needs of the United Nations system through the deployment of qualified international, national and online volunteers. UNV will strive to enhance volunteer talent outreach while at the same time fine-tuning, diversifying, innovating and blending volunteer modalities. Together with its United Nations partners, UNV will focus as appropriate on system-wide or entity-specific priorities, including those reflected in the Secretary-General's report, "Our Common Agenda,"¹⁰ and in the strategic plans of United Nations funds and programmes. UNV can target substantive areas including but not limited to climate change action (OP29 and OP30) and digitalization (OP100), as well as specific volunteer demographics, regions, countries or unique occupational profiles (OP9) as requested by United Nations partners.

13. UNV will seek to ensure that UN Volunteers believe that the volunteering experience befits their personal and professional development and that they are fully integrated in the United Nations system. This will be achieved through a stronger and more comprehensive onboarding process, effective and enabling supervision and continuous learning opportunities for serving UN Volunteers, along with increased engagement of persons with disabilities (OP14), refugees and young people (OP15).

14. Additional focus will be on maintaining gender parity among serving volunteers (OP12) across all regions and United Nations entities. Additionally, UNV will fine-tune volunteer talent acquisition through targeted outreach and facilitate the engagement of UN Volunteers from programme countries, paying close attention to opportunities for volunteers from Africa, small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries (OP10).

15. Finally, UNV will work to further diversify the United Nations partner base, as recommended by the evaluation, and to pursue the yet untapped potential of volunteerism within the United Nations system.

Providing high-quality and efficient services

16. In response to the QCPR and following up on the reform of the United Nations development system, UNV will intensify efforts to contribute to system-wide efficiency gains (OP83 and OP107). This will be achieved through greater efficiency in volunteer talent acquisition and increasing speed of deployment, while containing UNV management costs (OP106) and maintaining high-quality services.

17. Central to achieving efficiency gains within UNV is a continuous digital transformation and business process reengineering (OP105). The new Unified Volunteer Platform integrates artificial intelligence, machine learning and robotics and will reduce labour- and time-intensive repetitive tasks. Freed-up human capacity will increasingly focus on innovation, developing new volunteer solutions, ensuring high-quality services and enriching the volunteer experience for the United Nations partners and volunteers themselves.

18. Increased process automation and streamlining of tasks, combined with organizational cost containment, should bring about further efficiencies of scale and yield cost savings. These savings will be assessed on a continuous basis, leading to a comprehensive cost-recovery review during this strategic framework period with the view to identifying and delivering efficiency gains for United Nations partners and/or the United Nations system as a whole (OP57).

19. On the institutional effectiveness side, the focus will be on strengthening the resource base through increased support and diversification of financial contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund. To achieve this, UNV will expand collaboration with both traditional and emerging development partners. The Special Voluntary Fund will continue to support institutional innovation and pioneering volunteer initiatives such as those aiming for a more inclusive United Nations and other critical system-wide priorities (OP46). In addition, UNV will continue to partner with Member States through the Full Funding Programme which allows earmarking of UN Volunteer assignments by nationality or category.

20. UNV will continue to prioritize the diversity of its own workforce, maintaining gender parity at all staff levels and working towards a geographically representative staff, further investing in and empowering a decentralized global UNV presence (OP111).

¹⁰ "Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General" <https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/>

Promoting volunteerism globally

21. UNV will continue to focus on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 70/129 on integrating volunteering into peace and development and the plan of action for the next decade and beyond.¹¹ In 2020, this work culminated in the global technical meeting on reimagining volunteering for the 2030 Agenda and its resulting call to action, *Volunteering in the Decade of Action*.¹²

22. Based on the QCPR, the call to action and the guidance from Member States for building back better in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (OP27), UNV will focus the global promotion of volunteerism on: (a) brokering of data, research, evidence and knowledge on volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals; and (b) integration of data and evidence on volunteerism for the Goals among Member States and United Nations partners.

23. Data, research, evidence and knowledge on volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals will be developed through diverse partnerships with Member States, United Nations partners, academia, volunteer organizations and other stakeholders (OP32). This engagement will drive the formulation and dissemination of the UNV flagship publication, *State of the World's Volunteerism Report* and further exploration of linkages between volunteerism and development results through robust research and evidence.

24. With regards to integration of data and evidence, UNV will focus on providing technical advice to Member States and United Nations country teams on how volunteerism can be addressed in development plans, policies and programmes (OP22, OP24, OP31 and OP32) and, as appropriate, foster collaboration between the United Nations development system and Member States on supporting national and local volunteer action in the context of relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs).

25. This work will support the implementation of the QCPR and provide data for the corresponding indicator in the QCPR monitoring framework¹³ which measures the percentage of UNSDCF results frameworks that reference volunteerism as a means of implementation of development results.

IV. Implementation arrangements

Partnerships

26. The 2030 Agenda calls for a revitalized global partnership that leverages the resources of all stakeholders to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In this Strategic Framework, UNV will continue to diversify and expand its partnership base with emerging development partners and further promote South-South and triangular cooperation (OP35), while at the same time strengthening relationships with traditional partners and exploring new avenues for collaboration.

27. To enable achievement of its strategic priorities for 2022-2025 as outlined in chapter III above, UNV will expand its outreach and grow its partnerships with the United Nations Secretariat, specialized agencies and funds and programmes. This will enable an even more diverse cadre of volunteers to support the efforts of the United Nations in building peace, providing humanitarian relief, upholding human rights and fostering sustainable development (OP23).

28. UNV is committed to promoting volunteerism and working with Member States to help them leverage voluntary action to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (OP45). This will include supporting the production of evidence on the value and contribution of volunteering.

¹¹ General Assembly resolution 70/129, "Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond", 8 February 2016, available at: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/129.

¹² Call to Action "Volunteering in the Decade of Action"; July 2020; available at https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20-%20Call%20to%20Action_Volunteering%20in%20Decade%20of%20Action%20FINAL.pdf

¹³ Page 7, Indicator 2.4.7: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/2021doc/QCPR-MonitoringFramework-FINAL-29July2021.pdf>

29. Volunteer-involving organizations – global, regional, national and local – are key partners for UNV and the strong historical collaboration will continue under this Strategic Framework. As a knowledge broker, UNV will use its convening role to enable multi-stakeholder partnerships involving Member States, the United Nations system, academia, volunteer-involving organizations, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to encourage knowledge exchange, cross-collaboration and learning and engage in dialogues, consultations and research partnerships, especially with institutions in the Global South (OP31).

Capacity to deliver

30. UNV will ensure that its operating structure remains fit for purpose and geared towards implementing the Strategic Framework through continuous assessment of required capacities and skills (OP6). UNV will develop a targeted, organization-wide learning plan to meet evolving needs.

31. UNV will work within the broader UNDP organizational context to facilitate smooth operational support from UNDP at global, regional and country levels, while following UNDP policies and procedures and contributing to its organizational results (OP83).

32. UNV will follow the new enterprise risk management policy of UNDP, which incentivizes innovation for development while strengthening oversight and accountability. As such, by 2025, a more proactive, dynamic approach to risk management will be embedded in UNV.

Annex. Results framework for the UNV Strategic Framework, 2022-2025

Outcome 1: Contributing to a people-centred United Nations The functioning of the United Nations system is supported through the engagement of empowered UN Volunteers	
Outcome indicators	
1.1 Number of United Nations partners engaging UN Volunteers disaggregated by: (a) Number of United Nations partner regional, country offices engaging UN Volunteers; (b) Number of duty stations engaging UN Volunteers	
1.2 Percentage of United Nations partners satisfied with UN Volunteers ¹⁴ Disaggregated by: (a) fully agree; (b) somewhat agree	
Outputs	Output indicators
1.1 Expand the opportunities with United Nations entities for more and diverse people to support United Nations peace, humanitarian and development efforts	1.1.1 Number of nationalities represented among UN Volunteers
	1.1.2 Number of people volunteered per year through UNV ¹⁵ Disaggregated by: (a) Sex (% women) (b) Disability (#) (c) Global South (#) (d) Africa (#) (e) Small island developing States (#) (f) Least developed countries (#) (g) Landlocked developing countries (#) (h) Refugees (#) (i) Youth (#)
	1.1.3 Number of people volunteered online per year through UNV (a) Sex (% women) (b) Disability (#) (c) Global South (#) (d) Africa (#) (e) Small island developing States (#) (f) Least developed countries (#) (g) Landlocked developing countries (#) (h) Refugees (#) (i) Youth (#)
1.2 Motivated, well-equipped volunteers mobilized to contribute to United Nations peace, humanitarian and development efforts	1.2.1 Percentage of UN Volunteers satisfied with their volunteering experience Disaggregated by: (a) Sex (women) (b) National UN Volunteers (c) International UN Volunteers (d) Youth UN Volunteers (e) Persons with disabilities
	1.2.2 Percentage of UN Volunteers reporting that their assignment enhanced their personal and professional development (a) Sex (women) (b) National UN Volunteers (c) International UN Volunteers

¹⁴ Source: United Nations partner survey question, 'UN Volunteers have always met my organization's expectations'

¹⁵ In line with General Assembly resolution 71/313, UNV will strive, where possible, to disaggregate its indicator data by sex, age, nationality and geographic location, modality (i.e., onsite and online) disability, and further disaggregation according to the QCPR: Africa, small island developing States, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries.

		(d) Youth UN Volunteers (e) PWD
Outcome 2: Serving the United Nations system UNV is a fit-for-purpose organization contributing to the efficiency gains of the United Nations system		
Outcome indicators		
2.1 Number of business days for national and international UN volunteer deployment lead time		
2.2 Percentage of United Nations partners reporting that UNV recruitment processes were conducted in an efficient and timely manner disaggregated by: (a) fully agree; (b) somewhat agree		
Outputs	Output indicators	
2.1 United Nations partners are provided with more efficient services	2.1.1	Management efficiency ratio
2.2 UNV institutional effectiveness is enhanced	2.2.1	Cumulative Special Voluntary Fund, Full Funding Programme revenue (in United States dollars) Disaggregated by (a) Special Voluntary Fund (b) Full Funding Programme (c) Number of donors to Special Voluntary Fund
	2.2.2	UNV workforce diversity as % of women in UNV staff Disaggregated by: (a) % of women among UNV staff in P4 or higher-level posts (b) % of staff from Global South
Outcome 3: Promote volunteerism 1. Efforts by Member States and the United Nations system to integrate volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda as a cross-cutting means of implementation are supported		
Outcome indicators		
3.1 Percentage of countries reporting the integration of volunteering into development plans, policies and strategies in voluntary national reviews on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.		
3.2 Percentage of UNSDCF results frameworks that reference volunteers and/ or volunteerism as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.		
Outputs	Output indicators	
3.1 Brokering of data, research, evidence and knowledge on volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals is enhanced	3.1.1	Cumulative number of new knowledge products on volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda published by UNV
	3.1.2	Cumulative number of Member States, United Nations entities, civil society organizations and private sector partners contributing knowledge products to the UNV knowledge portal
3.2 Integration of data and evidence on volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals is strengthened among Member States and United Nations entities	3.2.1	Cumulative number of United Nations country teams and United Nations entities provided with technical support to integrate evidence of volunteerism in Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF processes
	3.2.2	Cumulative number of Member States provided with technical support to integrate evidence of volunteerism in national policies and plans