



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Development
Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the
United Nations Office for
Project Services**

Distr.: General
21 March 2022

Original: English

Annual session 2022

6-10 June 2022, New York

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

United Nations Volunteers

United Nations Volunteers

Report of the Administrator

Summary

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme provides global citizens with an opportunity to volunteer across the three pillars of the United Nations system: development; peace and security; and human rights. This annual report presents UNV performance in delivering on its system-wide mandate during 2021. In recognition of the 50th anniversary of UNV in 2021, the report captures reflections on key achievements since the first United Nations Volunteers were deployed, in 1971.

The present report is complemented by the following annexes: (a) List of United Nations system entities hosting United Nations Volunteers; (b) Statistical overview; (c) Financial overview; (d) Annual performance indicators; and (e) Strategic Framework (2022-2025) results matrix with defined baselines and targets.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) reaffirm General Assembly resolution 76/131 of 16 December 2021 on the fiftieth anniversary of UNV and twentieth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, in which the Assembly recalled the importance of integrating volunteerism, as appropriate, into the planning for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) take note of the results achieved by UNV in 2021 as reflected in the report of the Administrator (DP/2022/24); (c) take note of the results matrix, including baselines and targets, of the Strategic Framework, 2022-2025 (DP/2022/11), in line with the strategic guidance of 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 and based on the findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the previous Strategic Framework; (d) reaffirm the continued crucial role of the Special Voluntary Fund in delivering the UNV Strategic Framework, 2022-2025, and call upon all development partners in a position to do so to contribute to the Fund; and (e) express appreciation to all United Nations Volunteers for their outstanding contributions to the pandemic response and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during 2021.



<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
II. Highlights of results, 2021	3
A. 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 ...	3
B. Outcome 2. The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of United Nations Volunteers and integration of volunteerism ...	6
C. Institutional effectiveness: UNV is a more effective and efficient organization, with improved systems and business practices and processes, well-managed resources and engaged personnel	11
III. UNV at 50: Development and key achievements, 1971-2021	12
IV. UNV going forward	13

Annexes (available on the Executive Board website)

1. List of United Nations entities hosting United Nations Volunteers, 2021
2. Statistical overview, 2021
3. Financial overview, 2021
4. Annual performance indicators, 2021
5. Strategic Framework, 2022-2025: Results matrix




I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2018/8, this report covers the organizational performance of UNV in 2021. Chapter II presents the annual results against the results matrix of the Strategic Framework of UNV for 2018-2021, while chapter III reflects on the achievements of UNV at the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. Chapter IV outlines the way forward as UNV embarks on its new Strategic Framework, 2022-2025.



II. Highlights of results, 2021

2. Based on Executive Board decision 2014/13, this report and its annexes summarize the annual results of UNV pursuant to the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021.

3. The achievement of performance indicators (total 14) for 2021 was as follows:

- (a) Met or exceeded expectations,  green (performance at 100 per cent, or above, of the strategic framework milestone): eleven indicators;
- (b) Achieved below expectations,  amber (performance between 60 per cent and 99 per cent of the strategic framework milestone): two indicators; and
- (c) Did not meet expectations,  red (performance below 60 per cent of the strategic framework milestone): one indicator.

A. 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 indicator	2021 targets	2021 results	Score (%)	Performance
1.1 Percentage of countries reporting a positive contribution of volunteerism to the Sustainable Development Goals in voluntary national reports on progress towards the Goals	47%	63%	126%	
1.2 Cumulative number of other volunteers mobilized through regional and national volunteer schemes supported by UNV since the start of its Strategic Framework	1,000,000	1,663,729	139%	

4. UNV supports Member States in capturing the contributions of volunteers to the Sustainable Development Goals through their Voluntary National Reviews. Forty-two reviews were presented at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 2021. Of those, 61 per cent recognized the positive contributions to the Goals of volunteering, compared to 58 per cent in 2020.¹ UNV provided technical assistance for data collection and analysis to 22 Member States.

5. Drawing from the voluntary national reviews, local volunteers contributed to the achievement of the Goals in three areas:

- (a) *Volunteerism ensures no one is left behind.* Half of the reviews documenting the positive contribution of volunteerism emphasized its contribution to the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Through the Village Health Volunteer System in Thailand, volunteers implemented a nutrition programme for children and promoted women's empowerment through data collection on and analysis of the root causes of inequality. In Peru, United Nations Volunteers coordinated the work of 1,635 civil society volunteers to share social protection and nutrition information, which involved sending 149,000 text messages and making 47,000 phone calls to the targeted population of refugees and internally displaced persons.

¹ The following countries recognized volunteerism in their voluntary national reviews: Bhutan, Colombia, Cuba, **Cyprus**, Czech Republic, **Denmark**, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Guatemala, **Indonesia**, **Iraq**, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, **Madagascar**, Malaysia, Mexico, **Namibia**, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Paraguay, San Marino, **Spain**, **Thailand**, **Tunisia** and Uruguay (countries in bold reported a distinct positive contribution of volunteerism to the Goals).

(b) *Volunteers raise awareness.* In Madagascar, volunteers reached communities in 22 regions, spreading information on the causes of environmental degradation and climate change. Cyprus highlighted that its long-term integrated policy framework for civil society, active citizenship, volunteerism and non-governmental organizations was key in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Norway reported on the creation of the new municipality of Asker, guided by the Goals to ensure their relevance in the local context. The new authority will engage residents, businesses and voluntary organizations in finding solutions and taking action at the municipal level to address issues of global relevance.

(c) *Volunteering bolsters the national response to COVID-19.* Member States reported that volunteers played an integral role in the effective management of the COVID-19 crisis, through prevention, mitigation and delivery of basic social services. The national health policy in Iraq emphasizes community and volunteer participation for emergency preparedness. In 2021, United Nations Volunteers distributed COVID-19 informative materials and personal protective equipment to five million people across five provinces. In Tunisia, Volunteers raised pandemic awareness of over 2 million people. In Guatemala, Volunteers distributed food boxes to families, while in Namibia, Volunteers were involved in sensitization efforts as part of the National Response Mechanism.

6. In 2021, UNV and its United Nations partners mobilized almost 420,000 local non-United Nations volunteers in Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and Venezuela, bringing the cumulative number of local non-United Nations volunteers mobilized during this Strategic Framework period to 1,663,729. Examples of partnerships between local volunteer groups and United Nations entities facilitated by UNV during the year under review, include:

(a) In India, 371,025 volunteers were mobilized in 58 districts under a project to strengthen Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and the National Service Scheme, implemented by UNV in collaboration with UNDP. These volunteers organized onsite and online events to raise awareness around COVID-19, youth, women, environment and other themes, engaging over one million young people.

(b) In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, partners relied on volunteers deployed through national volunteer infrastructures established with UNV support. The National Volunteer Programme in Mali, established with a contribution from UNDP, mobilized 1,210 national volunteers, 60 per cent of them women, for COVID-19 response.

(c) In Kazakhstan, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) collaborated with the Government on a volunteer scheme, coordinated with UNV support, that targeted the involvement and training of young people. The scheme mobilized 1,803 online civil society volunteers for prevention of bullying in schools, raising awareness of children's rights and environmental issues, and reducing disaster risk.

Output 1.1. Member States are supported in developing programmes, policies and legislation that promote volunteerism and volunteer action.

Output indicator	2021 targets	2021 results	Score (%)	Performance
1.1.1 Cumulative number of volunteer schemes (online, on-site, regional, national, subregional, youth) supported by UNV since the start of the Strategic Framework	15	20	133%	
1.1.2 Cumulative number of Member States partnering with UNV to develop their policies and legislation on volunteerism since the start of the Strategic Framework	10	24	240%	



7. In 2021, UNV extended technical and knowledge support to develop policies and legislation on volunteerism and its integration into the 2030 Agenda in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

8. As part of institutional strengthening of volunteerism at the country level, UNV provided Malawi with technical and financial support to develop its national volunteer and internship framework and implementation plan. The framework sets out parameters, enhances awareness and reiterates the benefits of volunteering and internship programmes and what they contribute to socio-economic development at national and community levels.

9. With a view to supporting South-South exchange of knowledge and experiences in the area of volunteerism, internationally and among countries of the global South, UNV continued to share good practices with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and expanded the knowledge portal on volunteerism with a dedicated section capturing evidence and good practices submitted by partners.

10. Finally, UNV sustained efforts to equip Member States with tools and means to measure and better understand the scale, scope, and social and economic contribution of volunteering to development. To this end, building upon field work conducted in Senegal and Ukraine in 2019 and 2020, UNV and the International Labour Organization published a new volunteer work measurement guide and developed a course on measuring volunteer work for national statistical offices. The first cohort of 30 statisticians, largely from the global South, were trained in 2021.

Output 1.2. Promotion of volunteerism and its value is advanced through engagement with Member States, civil society and academia in research, public dialogue, documentation and dissemination.



Output indicator	2021 targets	2021 results	Score (%)	Performance
1.2.1 Cumulative quadrennial number of Member States contributing research and knowledge products to the plan of action	64	54	85%	
1.2.2 Number of plan of action partners engaged in technical meetings and consultations at global and national levels	120	59	49%	

11. Building on the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda and the call to action on volunteering in the Decade of Action, UNV continued to strengthen the evidence base on volunteering for the Sustainable Development Goals and engage on this evidence with Member States and civil society. Since the plan of action process was concluded in 2020, no further technical meetings and consultations took place with partners. Therefore, less research and fewer knowledge products were pursued for the plan of action process than originally anticipated. Instead, in 2021 UNV engaged partners in technical consultations around the preparation of the State of the World's Volunteerism Report.

12. UNV launched the fourth edition of the State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies, in December 2021, drawing on research from case studies in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as a multi-country study on volunteering before, during and beyond COVID-19. The report examines how volunteering can advance inclusion by reducing barriers encountered by marginalized groups seeking volunteering opportunities, including limited mobility or accessibility of information, and adopting gender-sensitive measures to overcome barriers faced particularly by women. It also advocates for continued investment in quantitative and qualitative data on volunteering.

13. During 2021, UNV organized 16 webinars and online discussions, hosted on the knowledge portal on volunteerism, on various topics related to the voluntary national reviews. The most-viewed section of the portal is the volunteering database – in particular the section on measurement – followed by the evidence library.

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

Outcome indicator	2021 targets	2021 results	Score (%)	Performance
2.1 Percentage of United Nations partners reporting a positive contribution of United Nations Volunteers to their mandate	95%	99% ²	104%	
2.2 Number of United Nations partners engaging United Nations Volunteers	55	55	100%	

14. In 2021, as a common service to the United Nations, UNV deployed 10,921 United Nations Volunteers, a 15 per cent increase over 2020. Volunteers supported 56 United Nations entities³ in 160 countries and territories.⁴ The largest number of United Nations Volunteers served in Africa (a 9 per cent increase over 2020), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (up 36 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (up 16 per cent), the Arab States (up 18 per cent), and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (up 9 per cent).⁵

15. Based on data from 7,590 volunteer reports,⁶ in 2021, United Nations Volunteers contributed to:

- (a) Sustainable Development Goal 16, peace, justice and strong institutions: 37 per cent;
- (b) Goal 3, good health and well-being: 22 per cent;
- (c) Goal 5, gender equality: 21 per cent;
- (d) Goal 17, partnerships for the goals: 18 per cent; and
- (e) Goal 10, reduced inequalities: 15 per cent.

16. Among individual United Nations entities, the largest number of United Nations Volunteers (3,173) in 2021 served with UNDP, a 2 per cent increase over 2020. In Bangladesh and Kenya, Volunteers provided food baskets, hand-washing advice, sanitizer and masks through door-to-door deliveries, and served as nurses, doctors and lab technicians on the front lines of the UNDP COVID-19 response. In the UNDP Accelerator Lab in Argentina, United Nations Volunteers prototyped an innovative model to encourage financial inclusion and socioeconomic recovery in the Latin America region. In Zimbabwe, Volunteers supported the UNDP Solar4Health programme installing solar energy photovoltaic systems in health facilities, resulting in increased community access to quality health services by rural women. UNV and UNDP partnered on the Tandem Teams initiative to strengthen national capacities in information management and data visualization. Through the initiative, national United Nations Volunteers were paired with expert consultants, technical staff and ‘SURGE’ advisors to work together on strengthening UNDP/United Nations situational awareness and risk-informed programming in Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Liberia, Tanzania and Zambia.

17. In 2021, 3,462 United Nations Volunteers were placed in United Nations Secretariat entities and missions, an increase of 19 per cent over 2020. Of these, the largest number – 1,687 – served in United Nations peacekeeping operations, where they supported civil affairs, human rights, health, public information, air operations and transportation. The top three missions hosting Volunteers in 2021 were the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

² The figure is based on a partner survey conducted in 2021 as part of the evaluation of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021. The survey had 194 respondents, representing 139 United Nations entities, 28 civil society organizations, nine governments, six intergovernmental organizations, four academic institutions and six other partners.

³ Refer to annex 1 for the list of United Nations partners who hosted United Nations Volunteers in 2021, including one returning partner, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

⁴ New and returning countries of assignment in 2021 were Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Nicaragua, Palau and the Republic of Korea.

⁵ This figure includes United Nations Volunteers serving at headquarters duty stations in Europe.

⁶ In 2021, 7,590 volunteer reports (70 per cent of all volunteers who served) were provided through the UNV volunteer reporting application VRA.

(UNMISS), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). In addition, 310 Volunteers served as civilian personnel in United Nations special political missions. The top three host entities in 2021 were the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia.

18. In 2021, 1,198 United Nations Volunteers served with UNICEF (a 39 per cent increase over 2020). In Panama, Volunteers provided water and sanitation services; psycho-social assistance and child protection; promotion and technical support on disaster risk reduction; climate actions and resilience, inclusion of children with disabilities; and intercultural bilingual education. In Kenya, Volunteers helped the UNICEF country office to organize procurement, freight, logistics and storage for 880,000 Moderna vaccines.

19. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) hosted 981 United Nations Volunteers as part of refugee protection, status determination and other critical functions. In Colombia, Volunteers contributed to UNHCR work in the protection and humanitarian support of Venezuelan migrants. During 2021, 27 Refugee Volunteers served with UNHCR. In Jordan, 10 Refugee Volunteers served, including eight medical specialists engaged in the national COVID-19 response.

20. In 2021, UNFPA engaged 541 United Nations Volunteers, an annual increase of 29 per cent. In Ukraine, Volunteers helped UNFPA to lead youth engagement and the prevention of gender-based violence. In Malawi, Volunteers supported the UNFPA Safe Spaces mentorship programme through which vulnerable girls found support for sexual, reproductive health and gender-based violence services. Under a global UNFPA-UNV population data fellowship programme, Volunteers served in Benin, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Panama, Senegal and Tunisia, as well as at UNFPA headquarters in New York.

21. In the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of United Nations Volunteers with the World Health Organization (WHO) increased by 34 per cent, to 368. In Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Guinea, Madagascar, Malawi and other countries, Volunteers served as Africa Women Health Champions and helped to promulgate critical health messages about COVID-19, Ebola fever, cholera and Lassa fever, and to strengthen national emergency preparedness systems. In Egypt, United Nations Volunteers with the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office provided technical expertise on mental health and psychosocial support, increased surge capacity, supported community engagement and helped to manage consignments of COVID-19 vaccines.

22. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) hosted 355 United Nations Volunteers in 2021, an increase of 122 per cent over 2020. Volunteers supported on-site and online data collection for the border survey in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, and collected first-hand information on the root causes, implications and possible solutions to illicit trafficking in vulnerable border locations. Volunteers also supported the ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Egypt in December 2021. They were engaged in background research, supporting logistics, reporting, and organizing 74 side events.

23. In 2021, 346 United Nations Volunteers (a 23 per cent increase) supported the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). UN-Women and UNV partnered on a young women leaders programme that deployed 12 international United Nations Youth Volunteers to the headquarters of UN-Women. Hailing from Africa and the Arab States, the volunteers were able to develop their competencies and networks within the United Nations system. In Bolivia, United Nations Volunteers monitored conflict situations and human rights violations – with a special emphasis on women's civil and political rights – while in Nigeria they facilitated information and sensitization sessions to empower internally displaced women and girls.

24. The World Food Programme (WFP) hosted 241 United Nations Volunteers during 2021. In Mozambique, 51 Volunteers served in three regions of the country, underpinning WFP programmes

on nutrition, climate change and resilience. In Venezuela, Volunteers enabled WFP to provide school meals to children under the age of six in states most affected by food insecurity.

25. In the third full year since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning the United Nations development system, UNV has witnessed and contributed to critical joint United Nations action in the following areas:

(a) *Development coordination*: 245 United Nations Volunteers (a 21 per cent increase over 2021) served in 89 United Nations resident coordinator offices. Volunteers engaged in inter-agency coordination and supported strategic dialogues on the United Nations Socioeconomic and Peacebuilding Framework for COVID-19 Recovery in the Philippines. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, UNV bolstered coordination of the COVID-19 response and vaccination programme and the drafting of model prophylactic policies.





(b) *Humanitarian coordination*: 132 United Nations Volunteers (an increase of 2 per cent) served in 39 United Nations Offices for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In Venezuela, Volunteers deployed nationwide in support of the humanitarian response plan, tracking humanitarian needs, response implementation and feedback in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Turkey, Volunteers serviced the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for Syria, facilitating cross-border operations at the border between Turkey and Syria, ensuring that assistance reached people in need through the most direct routes.

(c) *Peacebuilding activities*: 181 United Nations Volunteers (an increase of 16 per cent) were engaged with 14 different United Nations entities in projects financed through the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, administered by the Peacebuilding Support Office. In Kosovo,⁷ 27 United Nations Community Volunteers served with UNDP in a Peacebuilding Fund project, assisting municipal employment offices in delivering public services and building confidence in those seeking employment. Through a new partnership between the Peacebuilding Support Office, UNV and the PeaceNexus Foundation, Volunteers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Kosovo and Kyrgyzstan collected local data for a global thematic review of local peacebuilding, documenting results and distilling best practices and lessons learned to guide future investments of the Peacebuilding Fund and the United Nations system.

(d) *System-wide electoral support*: 255 United Nations Volunteers provided electoral support to United Nations system activities. In Burkina Faso, 110 Volunteers supported elections in 45 provinces in late 2020 and early 2021. In Niger, 56 national Volunteers provided technical support to the National Independent Electoral Commission in logistics and coordination. In Iraq, 13 of 23 Volunteers with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq supported parliamentary elections, providing advisory support, assessing logistical and security readiness, and observing and documenting participation, including that of women.

⁷ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Output 2.1. Expand opportunities for more people to contribute to United Nations development, peace and humanitarian efforts.

Output indicator	2021 targets	2021 results	Score (%)	Performance
2.1.1a Number of months volunteered per year through UNV	65,000	88,338	136%	
2.1.1b Number of online volunteering opportunities per year through UNV	2,357	2,551	108%	
2.1.2a Number of people volunteering per year through UNV	8,500	10,921	128%	
2.1.2b Number of online volunteers requested per year through UNV	9,101	9,484	104%	

26. The number of national United Nations Volunteers continues to exceed the number of international volunteers (59:41 per cent). This testifies to the increased focus of UNV on supporting national capacities, as well as to the impact of pandemic-related travel restrictions.

27. Among international United Nations Volunteers in 2021, 66 per cent were from the global South, reflecting the increased representation of nationals of those countries in the United Nations.

28. The average age of United Nations Volunteers in 2021 was 34, with 33 per cent under the age of 30 and one per cent over 60 years of age. UNV deployed 1,348 United Nations Youth Volunteers, including 205 United Nations University Volunteers.⁸

29. UNV engaged 157 United Nations Volunteers with disabilities in the United Nations system, including 65 with UNDP and 92 with 19 other United Nations entities.⁹ In the UNV talent pool, 4,384 candidates who self-reported disabilities were available for online and on-site volunteer assignments in 2021.

30. While during the year the total number of United Nations Volunteers increased by 15 per cent, the total number of months volunteered per year increased slightly less, at 13 per cent. The difference indicates a trend to more agile and shorter assignments required by the United Nations system and enabled by UNV.

31. UNV continued to nurture and scale volunteer categories introduced in recent years. In 2021, 15 partners hosted 990 United Nations Community Volunteers, half of them women, in 47 countries, with the highest number deployed in Bangladesh. The number of United Nations Expert Volunteers increased by 58 per cent to 444, highlighting significant demand for high-calibre specialized expertise. The Expert Volunteers served in 82 countries with 30 host United Nations entities. The largest number were deployed in Colombia, where 87 United Nations Expert Volunteers supported eight United Nations host entities. Meanwhile, UNHCR increased its deployment of Refugee United Nations Volunteers to 27.

Gender diversity

32. After reaching gender parity among United Nations Volunteers in 2019, the proportion of female Volunteers increased to 53 per cent in 2021. This global average conceals regional disparities: the ratio of women exceeded 50 per cent in all regions except Africa. On the African continent, 46 per cent of Volunteers were women – a marked increase from 40 per cent in 2018 – owing to a concerted effort by UNV and regional United Nations partners to move towards gender parity. In contrast, 69 per cent of Volunteers serving in Europe and the Commonwealth of

⁸ UNV collaborated with UNDP to engage youth in the response to the pandemic, also producing a joint [guidance note on youth volunteerism in the COVID-19 context](#).

⁹ United Nations entities hosting United Nations Volunteers with disabilities: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Women, resident coordinators' offices, UNHCR, UNV, WHO; United Nations Missions: MONUSCO, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), MINUSCA, UNMISS, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNODC, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Pan-American Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, WFP, Food and Agriculture Organization, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Independent States were women, and 67 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. UNV will sharpen its targeted approach to achieving gender parity across all regions, volunteer categories and United Nations partners.

33. UNV increased its performance against the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women from 69 per cent in 2020 to 88 per cent in 2021. For the first time, UNV is meeting or exceeding requirements for all indicators it is reporting on (15 out of 17). Building on strong performance in leadership and communications for gender equality and women's empowerment, improvements were made in gender-sensitive evaluation and equal representation among staff.

Online volunteers

34. The effects of COVID-19 in 2021, coupled with strong demand for digital solutions to compensate for travel restrictions and lockdowns, led to increased requests for online volunteer opportunities. This was reflected within the United Nations system, where demand for online volunteering solutions increased by 24 per cent, from 2,048 in 2020 to 2,546 in 2021. Examples of how United Nations system partners utilize online volunteer support include:

(a) The UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programme Support requested 615 online volunteers for data analysis and research relevant to the UNDP/UN-Women COVID-19 global gender response tracker through 39 assignments. The volunteers monitored government responses to the pandemic and provided guidance for policymakers and evidence for advocates to ensure gender-sensitive COVID-19 policy response.

(b) The United Nations Development Cooperation Office engaged 35 online volunteers to organize and tag more than 30,000 pages of reports using deep technology. Their efforts supported three United Nations country teams in developing common country analyses for the Central African Republic, Ghana, and Somalia.



(c) During 2021, 61 online volunteers were requested to bolster the iDiaspora digital platform of IOM through 11 assignments. They created original content and updated resources, developed outreach strategies, and provided translations, all of which contributed to visibility, partnerships, capacity-building and accessibility.

Partnerships with Member States for volunteer mobilization

35. UNV continued to partner with Member States on the mobilization of United Nations Volunteers through full funding of assignments. To that end, in 2021, UNV deployed 655 fully funded Volunteers in partnership with the governments of Australia, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Of these, 88 per cent were international Volunteers, 42 per cent were United Nations Youth Volunteers, 72 per cent were women and 9 per cent were persons with disabilities. In addition to Member States, UNV partnered with volunteer organizations – such as Cisco corporate philanthropy, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi in Thailand, and the PeaceNexus Foundation – the private sector, academia and foundations to fully fund volunteer assignments.

36. In 2021, Germany and Sweden provided additional contributions to fully fund national United Nations Volunteer assignments earmarked for persons with disabilities from programme countries. In 2021, this resulted in 38 new deployments of national Volunteers.

Output 2.2. Motivated, well-equipped volunteers mobilized to contribute to United Nations peace, humanitarian and development efforts.

Output indicator	2021 targets	2021 results	Score (%)	Performance
2.2.1 Percentage of United Nations Volunteers reporting that their assignment enhanced their personal and professional development	95%	93%	98%	
2.2.2 Percentage of Volunteers satisfied with their volunteering experience	95%	97%	102%	

37. In 2021, UNV focused on improving the well-being, professional development and motivation of United Nations Volunteers. Despite the continued challenges posed by COVID-19, UNV provided a larger range and volume of learning and professional development opportunities to Volunteers. This included:

- (a) Engaging 3,300 United Nations Volunteers in 100 workshops and providing targeted training for volunteers serving with UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNMISS, MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNAMA;
- (b) Providing career advice, coaching, 360-degree feedback and stress counselling sessions to 2,200 United Nations Volunteers, in response to their professional and mental health needs;
- (c) Contributing to United Nations system-wide efforts for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by training 900 United Nations Volunteers in monthly workshops;
- (d) Formalizing access for all United Nations Volunteers to the United Nations language proficiency examination, enabling 250 candidates to gain certification;
- (e) Revamping the on-boarding portal and launching an online programme for newly recruited United Nations Volunteers to kick-start their assignments;
- (f) Providing new virtual courses and resources for Volunteers on the new unified conditions of service; rights and obligations; guidelines for reporting misconduct; and volunteering for the Sustainable Development Goals; and
- (g) Increasing accessibility of learning programmes and offerings for volunteers with disabilities.

38. The percentage of United Nations Volunteers reporting that their assignments enhanced their personal and professional development increased slightly, from 92 per cent in 2020 to 93 per cent in 2021, though still falling slightly below the ambitious target of 95 per cent. The ratio of Volunteers reporting satisfaction with their volunteering experience exceeded the target, reaching 97 per cent (up one point from 2020).

C. Institutional effectiveness: UNV is a more effective and efficient organization, with improved systems and business practices and processes, well-managed resources and engaged personnel.

Organizational performance and sustainability

39. In 2021, the financial value of UNV activities totalled \$270.0 million, an increase of \$32.6 million, or 13.7 per cent, from \$237.4 million in 2020.

40. UNV continued to monitor its costs and align them with financial resources and future projections. Correspondingly, the total cost from core, extrabudgetary, cost-recovery funds and the Special Voluntary Fund increased by only 5 per cent in 2021.

41. Un-earmarked contributions from Member States form the bedrock of the UNV institutional budget. In 2021, Member States contributed regular resources to UNV through UNDP amounting to \$8.6 million. This was consistent with the annual average in the Strategic Framework period, 2018-2021, of \$8.67 million, and a 15 per cent decrease compared to the annual average of the previous Strategic Framework period, 2014-2017.

42. UNV continues to rely on the Special Voluntary Fund for research on and promotion of volunteerism, emergency and crisis response, and innovative solutions. In 2021, contributions to the fund came from nine donors – Bangladesh, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany,

Ireland, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, and Thailand – as well as from individual donations through the Digital Giving platform. Contributions totalled \$4.8 million, inclusive of interest, of which over 97 per cent of Voluntary Fund contributions came from three donors – Germany, Switzerland, and France, in order of magnitude. Funding examples in 2021 include:

- (a) Research and production of the triennial State of the World’s Volunteerism Report, 2022.
- (b) Final year of the UNV digital transformation project
- (c) COVID-19 response mechanism, deploying over 100 Special Voluntary Fund-funded national volunteers to support inter-agency coordination, information management, joint United Nations programmes and public health work
- (d) Support to re-deploy 11 national United Nations Volunteers from Afghanistan to international Volunteer positions in UNV regional offices and with UN-Women.

43. Contributions to the UNV full funding programme, outlined in paragraph 35 of this report, amounted to \$25.1 million in 2021 (an increase of 21 per cent over 2020).

44. UNV continued to strive for organizational efficiencies through streamlined recruitment processes and shorter deployment times. Compared to 2020, these remained stable for national Volunteers at 44 business days, with a minor decrease for international Volunteers from 76 business days to 74. While the global pandemic, associated international travel restrictions and domestic lockdowns, and adjustments in United Nations and UNV administrative policies hampered the speed of recruitment in many countries, the launch of the new unified volunteering platform in October 2021 is expected to contribute to high-quality and expedited deployment in the coming years.

Digital transformation

45. In 2021, UNV completed its digital transformation project, 2019-2021, implemented with financial support from Germany and the Special Voluntary Fund. The project culminated in the launch of the unified volunteering platform, which combines on-site and online volunteer service platforms and allows UNV to improve business continuity, facilitate greater transparency and strengthen internal accountabilities.

46. Given the extensive scope of work and technical complexities, the launch of the platform was delayed from 1 May 2021 to 1 October 2021. Following the release of the platform, it has been in a stabilization and bug-fixing phase while additional functionalities are being introduced. In the meantime, UNV is providing dedicated support to users of the platform, while pursuing improvements necessary to reach the envisioned efficiency gains in cost and speed of operations, as well as in the overall satisfaction of clients with their digital UNV experience.

47. UNV continued to utilize robotic process automation and transitioned previously automated processes into the new system. Over 30,000 manual runs were thus eliminated in 2021, reducing transactional workload and enabling staff to concentrate on tasks of higher value.

48. The UNV corporate service desk is supported by ‘chatbots’ and other case resolution tools and self-service knowledge items, resulting in strong efficiency gains. In 2021, artificial intelligence-powered chatbots handled over 250,000 enquiries around the clock – an average of 680 per day – most of them from potential or serving UN Volunteers. This represents an increase in enquiries of 60 per cent compared to 2020.

III. UNV at 50: Development and key achievements (1971-2021)

49. On 2 December 2021, a special commemorative session of the United Nations General Assembly marked the fiftieth anniversary of UNV. Over the past 50 years, UNV has deployed over 70,000 UN Volunteers to serve in humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peacebuilding.

50. UNV was formally created on 7 December 1970, through United Nations General Assembly resolution 2659.¹⁰ The resolution noted that volunteering “constitutes an important factor in ensuring the increased effectiveness of collective efforts necessary for a better society”.

¹⁰ A/RES/2659(XXV)

51. The following year, UNV began sending United Nations Volunteers into the field to assist with United Nations activities focused on engineering, agriculture, and health services. A small team of technicians and engineers were the first Volunteers to be dispatched, building drinking-water wells in the Yemen Arab Republic (now the Republic of Yemen) – vital infrastructure for a country emerging from eight years of civil war. Other Volunteers soon followed to assist in Chad and East Pakistan (today Bangladesh).

52. That initial cadre of a few dozen grew steadily to an annual count of more than 600 Volunteers by the end of the first decade, about 1,800 by the end of the first quarter of a century, and close to 11,000 at the half-century milestone.

53. In the 1990s, UNV expanded its work in disaster risk reduction and post-disaster recovery. In response to global and regional pandemics – including HIV/Aids, Ebola fever and, most recently, COVID-19 – UNV has intensified its work in health care and disease prevention.

54. Beginning in the early 1990s, UNV involvement in electoral support marked a major shift. Since then, UNV has been a significant part of almost every peacekeeping operation of the United Nations.

55. UNV has always nurtured a diverse and inclusive volunteer community.

(a) The ranks of women, thin in the beginning, are now at parity with men at the global level. Women have increasingly assumed a wider array of assignments across different countries and settings.

(b) UNV has diversified its volunteer base through special initiatives such as disability inclusion. Over the past decade, UNV has been intentional in providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to contribute to the work of the United Nations through volunteerism.

(c) The first refugee volunteers served in 1974, and their participation has steadily increased. In 2018, UNV introduced a Refugee United Nations Volunteer category as a pilot initiative with UNHCR.

(d) Since the inception of UNV, youth – those 18-26 years of age – have comprised a steadily growing segment among United Nations Volunteers.

56. Today, more than 80 per cent of United Nations Volunteers come from the global South, there are more national than international volunteers, and growing numbers of global citizens contribute to peace and development as online volunteers – three significant changes that demonstrate UNV adaptability.

IV. UNV going forward

57. With the new Strategic Framework, 2022-2025, the strategic direction for UNV is clear: support the people-centred United Nations system through the engagement of empowered United Nations Volunteers; ensure that UNV is fit for purpose and contributes to system-wide efficiency; and support the efforts of Member States and the United Nations system to integrate volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda.

58. The ambition for 2025 can be seen in the results framework provided in annex 5, where baselines and targets are defined for all indicators. In summary:

(a) UNV proposes expanding the United Nations partnership base; deploying 50 per cent more United Nations Volunteers; aiming for the full representation of all United Nations Member States; and ensuring that the majority of Volunteers continue to be satisfied with their volunteering experience.

(b) UNV commits to reducing the time it takes to deploy United Nations Volunteers; making it more cost effective for United Nations partners to engage Volunteers; expanding the funding partnership base; and striving for gender parity and diversity among staff.

(c) Finally, UNV proposes to ensure that 45 per cent of all Voluntary National Reviews report on the integration of volunteering into national plans, policies and strategies, and that one third of all United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks integrate volunteers and/or volunteerism as a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

59. Based on the results achieved and lessons learned during the previous Strategic Framework cycle, in the first year of the Strategic Framework, 2022-2025, UNV will focus on the following key priorities:

(a) Maintaining the momentum in mobilizing both on-site and online volunteers, diversifying the United Nations partner base, and increasing the integration of knowledge and evidence on volunteerism and volunteering into United Nations Development Cooperation Frameworks and country programme documents of United Nations entities.

(b) Optimizing the new unified volunteering platform and the new enterprise resource planning system (Quantum) being developed by UNDP. The ambition is to upgrade service delivery while ensuring efficiency gains and positive volunteer and United Nations partner experiences, in line with the Strategic Framework, 2022-2025.

(c) Continuing to invest in UNV staff and talent development. The goal for 2022 is to further strengthen and re-galvanize the global team and the United Nations community of practice on volunteerism.

