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Social development

Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution [76/131](#) and provides an update on the progress made in integrating volunteering as a cross-cutting means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The report sets out progress made by Member States and other stakeholders in creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to participate in development processes through volunteering and working in partnership with volunteers to address challenges arising from conflicts, disasters and climate change. It highlights efforts of Member States and other stakeholders to integrate volunteering into voluntary national reviews, General Assembly resolutions, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and United Nations entity country programme documents. Progress is noted in the statistical measurement of volunteer work, as well as in research, evidence generation and knowledge-sharing activities.

At the midpoint of the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, areas are identified that can benefit from enhanced efforts by Member States and other stakeholders to maximize the contribution and impact of volunteering in accelerating progress under the 2030 Agenda. These include: (a) strategically integrate volunteering into national development plans and policies to address national development priorities; (b) forge deliberate partnerships with volunteers at the community level, including from vulnerable and marginalized groups, to address specific development concerns and needs within communities; and (c) increase investments in the measurement of volunteer work, including impact measurement, in particular in low- and middle-income contexts where data gaps persist.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



I. Introduction

1. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the General Assembly in 2015 (resolution [70/1](#)), volunteering has increasingly been acknowledged around the world as a driving force for tackling development challenges.

2. In its 2015 resolution [70/129](#), the General Assembly recognized that volunteerism can be a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and that it can help to expand and mobilize constituencies and engage people. In the resolution, the Assembly encouraged Governments, in partnership with United Nations entities and other stakeholders, to integrate volunteerism into national development strategies, plans and policies.

3. The General Assembly, in resolution [73/140](#) of 2018 outlined in more detail the institutional arrangements and processes related to the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda and highlighted its objectives, namely to ensure that good practices and lessons learned are disseminated, successful volunteer actions are promoted and the contributions of volunteers to the 2030 Agenda are recognized as part of national policy processes.

4. The General Assembly, in resolution [75/233](#) in 2020, encouraged Member States and United Nations entities to scale up the integration of volunteerism into development frameworks as a strategy to advance progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. In 2021, the General Assembly, in resolution [76/131](#), recalled the importance of integrating volunteerism into planning for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and encouraged the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector, in partnership with Member States, to support such efforts and promote a conducive environment for volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results. In the resolution, the Assembly recognized the critical role of volunteer action during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

6. In his 2021 report on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([A/76/137](#)), the Secretary-General highlighted progress made in implementing the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda, which culminated in a global technical meeting, co-chaired by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in coordination with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. He reported progress in integrating volunteering into national and global development strategies, measuring volunteering and its contribution and increasing ownership of the development agenda through volunteering.

7. As a testament to the crucial role that volunteers play in driving meaningful progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, advocating for positive change and actively shaping a sustainable future, the General Assembly, in resolution [78/127](#) of December 2023, proclaimed 2026 the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development. In the resolution, the Assembly encouraged Member States to support volunteer action for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the integration of volunteerism into sector priorities and national development strategies, plans and policies.

8. In the present report, the Secretary-General takes stock of progress made since his 2021 report, with reference to the implementation of General Assembly resolution [76/131](#). It has been prepared near the midpoint of the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, at a time when Member States and other stakeholders are increasingly focused on developing effective responses to the complex and interrelated challenges of conflicts, disasters and climate change, and

when many countries are still struggling to rebuild and recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. The report contains information drawn from various sources, including Member State voluntary national reviews on progress, lessons learned and challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda (2021–2023), United Nations development cooperation frameworks, United Nations entity country programme documents, national situation analyses on the state of volunteerism prepared by UNV from 2021 to 2023, the findings of the *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies*¹ and data from the UNV Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism.²

II. State of volunteerism

10. In its *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report*, UNV presented new data that shed light on the scale and scope of volunteer engagement worldwide. The report showed that 862.4 million people aged 15 years and above volunteer monthly worldwide, representing almost 15 per cent of the working-age population. The Asia and Pacific region contributes nearly 564 million volunteers, or 65 per cent of the total. Considering the size of populations, each region has a volunteer rate of at least 9 per cent, with Africa having the highest rate at 17.5 per cent, which demonstrates both the scale and potential of volunteerism in development worldwide.

11. Most volunteer work continues to take place informally between individuals. While 6.5 per cent of working-age people engage in formal volunteering, 14.3 per cent are estimated to volunteer informally. This means that, worldwide, more than twice as many people volunteer informally than formally, with the caveat that the informal volunteering rate is most probably underestimated owing to the difficulties in capturing it.

12. In terms of gender-based differences, women tend to be more active in informal volunteering, whereas formal volunteers are more often men. This has important implications for the ways in which volunteering can reinforce or challenge gender norms. Informal volunteering tends to have lower status, attract less recognition and receive less practical support, such as training, insurance and administrative support, than formal volunteering.

13. The role of volunteers was widely recognized during the COVID-19 pandemic. Globally, volunteers acted as front-line responders, providing psychosocial support in their communities, combating the spread of misinformation and reaching out to vulnerable and marginalized groups. The pandemic highlighted how volunteerism creates synergies among stakeholders, such as Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector, when tackling development and humanitarian challenges. At the height of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, volunteer-involving organizations confirmed a rise in numbers of new volunteers throughout the world, many of whom continued volunteering in the aftermath of the pandemic.

14. While COVID-19 created challenges for people's meaningful participation, it also opened new avenues for people to engage, most prominently through digital volunteering. Lockdown restrictions meant a reduction in on-site volunteering and, by necessity, an enhanced application of remote and online volunteering, often through formal online platforms that matched volunteers with different organizations, as well as through informal channels and self-organization.

15. The COVID-19 pandemic drew attention to the crucial roles that community volunteers play and the changing roles of national and international volunteers.

¹ United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies* (Bonn, 2021).

² <https://knowledge.unv.org/>.

Member States and other stakeholders are starting to explore blended volunteer interventions, bringing together international volunteers with volunteers from local communities so that their collective experiences are synergized to maximize impact.³

16. New technological advancements continue to shape volunteer actions and have expanded the ways in which volunteer groups emerge, organize and function. Social media platforms have become vital for communication among individuals and between people and government agencies. During disasters, for example, people share information, ask for help and coordinate actions through web pages, social media groups, hashtags and crowdsourcing tools, creating a rich tapestry of digital volunteerism. Citizen reporting can raise awareness among the public during and after disasters, especially with the help of new smartphone applications and faster and more widespread Internet connections.

17. Novel forms of communication, on the other hand, accelerate disinformation and “fake news”, affecting the way in which individuals interpret daily developments. Volunteers are instrumental in combating disinformation, for example through volunteer initiatives that enhance digital literacy, disseminate fact-based information and educate the public on how to detect fake news and through volunteer- and citizen-led fact-checking.

18. Artificial intelligence is a technological advancement that is developing rapidly, with consequences for volunteering that are not yet clearly understood. Over the coming years it may, for example, have a direct impact on online volunteering, whereby specific volunteer assignments, such as data trends analysis or communications-related activities, could potentially be absorbed by artificial intelligence. Further research and future trends analysis may be worthwhile to better understand the challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence for volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations, and to foresee and implement necessary adjustments. To this effect, the General Assembly, in resolution [78/265](#) encouraged continued efforts by the international community to promote inclusive research, mapping and analysis of the potential impacts and applications of artificial intelligence systems and rapid technological change on sustainable development.

19. Demographic changes are bringing about additional implications for volunteering. With a longer life expectancy in many countries and an increasingly nonlinear transition from education to employment and to retirement, a holistic life cycle approach to volunteering can benefit all generations. While maintaining a continuous focus on promoting volunteering among youth, Member States and other stakeholders have in recent years also focused on healthy and active ageing, combined with lifelong learning. Volunteering may help individuals navigate transitions between different life stages by encouraging them to become more involved in their communities, thereby building new social connections and improving networks of social support.

20. Against this background, the importance of stakeholder collaboration and partnerships, especially those between people and States, are increasingly recognized. Volunteers play diverse roles in decision-making, delivering services and developing innovative solutions in partnership with government institutions at the local and national levels. By tapping into the experiences, knowledge and aspirations of marginalized groups, volunteer-State partnerships are addressing development concerns and responding to the needs of communities, thus helping build more equal and inclusive societies. Findings from the *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report* suggest that relationships based on equal partnerships can create new social contracts and contribute to reorienting development.

³ Baillie Smith, Matt, and others, *Volunteering Together: Blending Knowledge and Skills for Development* (Northumbria University, Voluntary Service Overseas, 2022).

III. Progress on integrating volunteering into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Strengthening participation, inclusion and ownership of the development agenda through volunteering

21. The General Assembly, in resolution [76/131](#), encouraged Member States to support volunteer action for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to invest in volunteers and volunteering as part of national capacities to promote inclusion and strengthen participation. It encouraged the meaningful participation and integration of all people, including youth, older persons, women, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, minorities and other marginalized groups, into volunteer-involving programmes and projects. To this end, the present section highlights evidence of how Member States and other stakeholders enabled inclusion and participation, including through engaging volunteers, and worked with volunteers to address challenges arising from conflicts, disasters and climate change.

Social inclusion through volunteering

22. Member States and other stakeholders implemented strategies to enhance the participation of volunteers with disabilities and reach persons with disabilities in volunteering efforts. The DX4Resilience project in Indonesia, led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and supported by the Government of Japan, collaborates with persons with disabilities to develop accessible digital platforms for disaster risk assessment. The Ministry of Social Affairs of Indonesia activated disability inclusion services units that enable persons with disabilities to volunteer as part of a disaster management corps.

23. Volunteerism can be an avenue for young people to participate, enhance their skills and engage in issues that affect them. In Cambodia, youth organizations provided capacity-building to youth volunteers in rural and urban areas, enabling them to connect with local authorities and initiate their own projects to be implemented in local communities.

24. Volunteering creates opportunities for social interaction and meaningful activity for older people, and the community engagement that it facilitates can be a valuable contribution to healthy ageing. In Singapore, more than 3,000 Silver Generation Ambassadors volunteer their time by going door-to-door to explain government policies to elderly residents, understand their problems and connect them with relevant health and social support schemes. The Russian Federation introduced a Silver Volunteering programme to support and encourage senior citizens to participate in society, including through volunteering, thus helping them to lead a healthy lifestyle and counter loneliness, among other benefits.

25. Volunteering helps increase leadership and participation opportunities for women. To enhance their empowerment and ensure that women and girls increasingly participate in and lead decision-making, volunteer networks are opening spaces for women and girls in public participation. The Aurat Foundation in Pakistan, a national non-governmental organization, coordinates district-level networks of voluntary citizen groups and organizations to enrich women's leadership experiences and enable their empowerment.

26. Accelerating women's economic inclusion requires investing in women-owned businesses and reducing the unpaid care and domestic burden of women and girls. In the United Republic of Tanzania, volunteers supported the Pastoral Women's Council to enable 100 out-of-school adolescent girls to access second-chance education,

receive information on sexual reproductive health rights and gain skills to engage in green livelihood businesses. World Vision International worked with 100 community volunteers to train 7,000 female refugees from South Sudan in subsistence and income-generation skills.

27. To counter gender-based violence, members of volunteer-involving organizations in Tuvalu complemented the work of the Government by serving as first responders, case workers and counsellors. In Uganda, 78 volunteers, including local paralegals and advocates, supported the National Union of Women with Disabilities in strengthening structures for addressing gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities in northern Uganda.

Responding to challenges arising from conflicts, disasters and climate change

28. Volunteers play important roles in conflict prevention and by providing humanitarian support during conflict situations. In Ukraine, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies reported that more than 120,000 volunteers provided emergency aid, such as delivery of food, medical aid and sociopsychological support. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Red Cross mobilized thousands of volunteers to provide services and respond to emergency situations in the areas of health, sanitation and environmental protection.

29. In disaster preparedness and response, partnerships among different stakeholders, including volunteers, are critical. In Mexico, the National Civil Protection Coordination Office encouraged volunteers to register to support disaster and emergency relief efforts, especially in the dissemination of essential information on preparedness and on where and how to get humanitarian support. The Volunteer Corps in Guyana enhanced local capacities for disaster risk reduction at the community level, with its growing resource pool of more than 200 registered volunteers.

30. In the aftermath of disasters, volunteers often support immediate needs, assist public institutions to deliver services and aid survivors who require care and support. In Bangladesh, nearly 3,300 volunteers were trained as first responders to address emergencies in the refugee camps of those displaced from Rakhine, Myanmar. The Tanzania Red Cross Society deployed 202 health volunteers to join the national task force to contain a Marburg virus disease outbreak in Kagera Region. In the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, at least 200,000 Red Crescent volunteers provided support to survivors of the 2023 earthquake and assisted public institutions in the disaster areas.

31. The contribution of volunteers has been evident in response to situations of forced displacement. In Germany, volunteers often served as the first point of contact for Ukrainian refugees at reception centres, providing information, translation services and food and coordinating accommodation. Sudanese youth and refugee volunteers came together to help people fleeing Khartoum, converting a former primary school into a shelter.

32. As climate change increasingly impacts people's lives and transforms ecosystems, all sectors and stakeholders are called upon to respond with collective action and systemic change. Volunteer interventions at the local, national and global levels continue to drive climate action and environmental outcomes, including community-based adaptation measures. Through a Hellenic Marine Environment Protection Association initiative, the Government of Greece mobilized 250,000 volunteers, resulting in more than 4,000 clean-ups of beaches, seabed, lakes, forests and other coastal and land areas. The volunteer efforts covered a total length of 1,900 km of shoreline and contributed to the removal of 820 tonnes of waste. The Cabo Verde Civil Society Forum strengthened civic climate action and promoted volunteer involvement by sharing knowledge and information about climate change and analytical tools for the development of mitigation, adaptation and resilience policies.

33. Expanding opportunities for all types of people to participate in development processes requires addressing the risks that volunteers face. In resolution 76/131, the General Assembly requested Member States and other stakeholders to enhance the protection, security and well-being of volunteers. To this end, policies and protocols that concern the safety and security of volunteers are supported by a new guide⁴ produced by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 2023. The guide sets out the minimum standards for volunteer management to keep volunteers safe, secure and well and how to implement these standards at the local and national level. In its Unified Conditions of Service of 2022, UNV set out provisions for the duty of care for United Nations Volunteers, including provisions for medical and life insurance. Guidelines on the duty of care and well-being of volunteers are included in the Global Volunteering Standard,⁵ a collaborative effort led by the International Forum for Volunteering in Development and funded by the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to promote good practices of volunteerism.

Outlook for strengthened participation, inclusion and ownership

34. The evidence highlighted in this section has demonstrated that Member States and other stakeholders continue to create opportunities for people to participate in development processes through volunteering and to include people from diverse backgrounds and contexts. Member States and other stakeholders can establish even more deliberate partnerships with volunteers at the community level, including from vulnerable and marginalized groups, to address specific and pressing development concerns and needs within communities. Initiatives to make volunteer opportunities more accessible for persons with disabilities can be expanded. Stronger emphasis can be placed on women's empowerment through creating opportunities for women to enter political and economic spaces and by supporting national gender equality priorities through volunteering. Member States and other stakeholders can more actively promote an intergenerational and life cycle approach to volunteering to mobilize and support volunteers in all phases of life, including senior volunteers. Enhanced support to volunteers providing vital services during and after conflicts and disasters can be extended.

B. Integrating volunteering into national and global development strategies

35. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General, Member States and the United Nations system have increasingly recognized the contribution of volunteering to the 2030 Agenda, evident through a wider integration of volunteering in national and global development strategies, in reports on progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and in intergovernmental processes. The following section provides a stocktake based on that evidence.

Integration of volunteering in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

36. From 2021 to 2023, the General Assembly referred to volunteerism in at least 29 of its resolutions. These include resolution 76/13 on building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal, resolution 76/128 on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to

⁴ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Implementation guide: standards to facilitate the safety, security and well-being of volunteers" (Geneva, 2023).

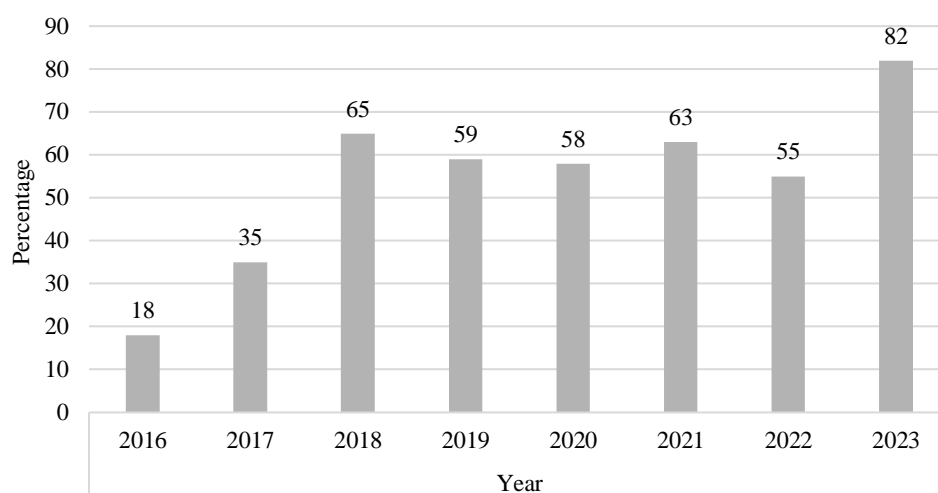
⁵ International Forum for Volunteering in Development, "The global volunteering standard" (October 2021).

development, resolution [76/137](#) on policies and programmes involving youth, resolution [77/189](#) on inclusive development for and with persons with disabilities and resolution [77/300](#) on mental health and psychosocial support.

37. In resolution [76/131](#), the General Assembly encouraged Member States to include information on the scale, contribution and impact of volunteerism in voluntary national reviews. In 2021, 63 per cent of the reviews mentioned the positive contributions of volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals; this figure rose to 82 per cent in 2023 (see figure I). The number of voluntary national reviews that strongly substantiated the positive contribution of volunteering increased from less than 22 per cent in 2021 to more than 61 per cent in 2023. UNV support in Member State voluntary review processes increased on a year-by-year basis. In 2023, UNV supported 15 Member States, a 50 per cent increase from 2022. This is associated with higher levels of volunteerism references in the reviews. UNV prepared guidance notes⁶ for Member States to reflect volunteer contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals in voluntary national reviews.

Figure I

Percentage of voluntary national reviews mentioning positive contributions of volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals



Source: UNV; based on its review of voluntary national reviews.

38. The voluntary national reviews contain recognition of volunteer efforts across most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In 2023, the contribution of volunteers was highlighted especially in relation to the Goals on health, education, climate change, inequality and partnerships. The number of voluntary national reviews that link volunteering to the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups increased from under 32 per cent in 2021 to nearly 60 per cent in 2023, and to gender equality and women's empowerment from 7 per cent in 2021 to 33 per cent in 2023.

Integration of volunteering in national development policies and strategies

39. Reflecting positive changes in a conducive environment for voluntary action, data from the UNV Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism shows that at least 140 countries now have laws, policies or strategies on volunteering. Since the previous report to the General Assembly, at least 11 Member States have drafted new legal

⁶ <https://knowledge.unv.org/evidence-library/reflecting-volunteer-contributions-to-the-sustainable-development-goals-in-voluntary-national-reviews-guidance-note-for-member-states>.

instruments, volunteering policies or strategies on volunteering: Angola, Australia, Benin, Cameroon, China, Congo, Ecuador, Guinea-Bissau, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan and Zambia. Kazakhstan amended the Law on Volunteering in 2022, in view of the experience gained in joint work between the State and volunteer sectors.

40. At the same time, progress on linking volunteering policies and investments to development strategies continues to be uneven. The UNV Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism currently lists 58 countries with national sectoral and cross-sectoral policies or strategies that include volunteering. The strongest area of policy alignment appears to be between volunteering and youth empowerment. Chile, for example, includes volunteerism in its Strategy for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to nurture the skills development of youth for their entry into the job market and to promote peace and human rights. The Zambia National Development Plan 2022–2026 includes a youth volunteer scheme for economic diversification and job creation. The Türkiye national Development Plan 2024–2028 includes volunteerism to increase youth participation and awareness of social assistance for poverty eradication. The India National Youth Policy 2021 includes volunteerism to build leadership and employability skills.

41. In the period from 2021 to 2023, the number of voluntary national reviews that contained specific reference to the integration of volunteering into development plans, policies and strategies increased from 15 per cent to 28 per cent. Incorporating information about the integration of volunteering in national development plans, policies and strategies into voluntary national reviews ensures that the contribution of volunteers to achieving the 2030 Agenda is recognized and capitalized upon. Member States can then determine the best means for implementing national development plans, including through engagement at the local level, and highlight gaps and opportunities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Regional cooperation and directionality of volunteering

42. Member States and other stakeholders recognized the importance of regional cooperation in various ways. In 2022, the Central Asian Volunteer Forum was held in Kazakhstan, creating a working platform for discussing joint regional actions to develop volunteerism and improve the social environment. Latvia participated in the European Union–Central Asia Education Platform, which supported dialogue on volunteering to build young people’s skills.

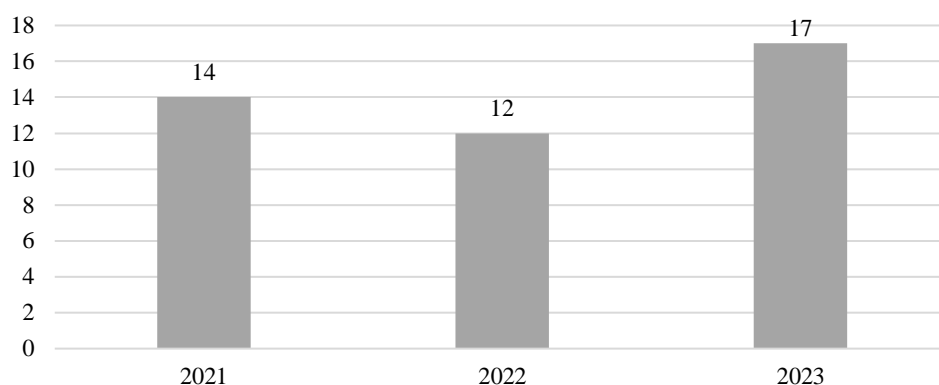
43. Member States and other stakeholders continued to expand opportunities for South-South volunteering and triangular cooperation. Under the Fiji Volunteer Service Scheme, medical and education expert volunteers supported countries in the region, contributing to institutional- and nation-building. Volunteers from Fiji assisted Vanuatu when Tropical Cyclone Lola hit the island in October 2023, demonstrating practical and effective South-South cooperation between the two countries. France-Volontaires developed exchange programmes, bringing young people from some 60 countries across five continents to volunteer in France. The number of international volunteers hosted in France from 2017 to 2022 was equivalent to 22 per cent of the number of volunteers sent abroad in 2021. In collaboration with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation facilitated an exchange programme among several African Member States. Under the project the Youth Exchange South to South Girls’ Movement, 266 Girl Guides and Girl Scouts had the opportunity to volunteer through an exchange programme among and between Bangladesh, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Integration of volunteering in the work of the United Nations system

44. In resolution [76/131](#), the General Assembly requested United Nations entities and United Nations country teams to reflect the distinct contributions of volunteering in Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and country programme documents, in line with General Assembly resolution [75/233](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

45. At least 43 (48 per cent) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks that began to be implemented in 2021, 2022 and 2023 contained references to volunteerism for the achievement of national development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (see figure II).⁷ References were predominantly in relation to supporting health systems (Goal 3), gender equality and women's empowerment (Goal 5), economic empowerment, especially of youth (Goal 8), climate action and resilience (Goal 13), increasing access and reach, especially to youth and marginalized groups (Goal 16) and enhanced participation and partnerships (Goal 17).⁸

Figure II
Number of United Nations Development Cooperation Frameworks that integrate volunteering



Source: UNV.

46. In addition, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs continues to facilitate the participation of volunteer groups at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

47. To support national development priorities, United Nations entities continue to include volunteerism in their organizational strategies. The International Labour Organization (ILO) places a strategic focus on volunteer work, predominantly through its Department of Statistics. In the strategic plans 2022–2025 of UNDP, the

⁷ The 43 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks that have integrated volunteering in the 2021, 2022, and 2023 implementation cycles are as follows: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Burundi, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (reference shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#)), Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Zambia.

⁸ Based on the results of a review that UNV undertook of 90 United Nations Development Cooperation Frameworks that began to be implemented in 2021, 2022 or 2023 and that were available to UNV by March 2024. In determining whether a Framework references volunteerism, UNV employed the following criteria (either): (a) volunteerism being integrated in various sections of the document; or (b) volunteerism being implemented into the results and resources framework.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), volunteerism is specifically mentioned either as a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda or through outlining plans for supporting or scaling up volunteerism. From 2021 to 2023, volunteers and/or volunteerism was integrated in 31 country programme documents of UNDP, 26 of UNFPA and 16 of UNICEF. From 2021 to 2023, UNV provided technical support to 34 United Nations country teams and United Nations entities and analysed country-specific data and evidence for integration of volunteerism into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and country programme documents.

48. The integration of volunteerism into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and country programme documents enabled the participation of volunteers to support United Nations entities in their contributions to national development priorities. In Azerbaijan, in 10 conflict-affected districts, more than 500 community leaders and volunteers trained by the United Nations system facilitated community and school-based activities that reached more than 40,000 children (42 per cent girls) as part of the post-conflict recovery response. In Jordan, United Nations entities matched volunteering opportunities to 25,239 adolescents and youth (68 per cent female) through the National Youth Engagement and Volunteering Movement Platform. Subsequently, the Ministry of Youth adopted this as the national volunteering platform, to be rolled out in youth centres, public schools and universities.

49. UNV continues to support the United Nations system through the mobilization of volunteers, enabling talented and dedicated individuals to help United Nations entities deliver on the 2030 Agenda. For the period from 2021 to 2023, 20,572 United Nations Volunteers, both national and international, served in the United Nations system in diverse contexts; 56 per cent were women and 88 per cent were from the global South.

50. United Nations entities created strategic ways to embed United Nations Volunteers who can bring their experience to bear on critical issues while strengthening national and regional systems and capacities. In Ecuador, UNDP worked with 45 United Nations Volunteers from the largest Indigenous confederation in the Amazon region. These volunteers contributed to the ProAmazonía programme, conserving 789,099 hectares of forests and water basins, including restoring 15,023 hectares of the Amazon region in the country. In Mexico, United Nations Volunteers, with UNICEF, including psychologists, social workers and lawyers, supported attorney offices in handling 31,875 cases of children's rights violations. In Mozambique, the World Food Programme engaged national United Nations Volunteers to provide medical assistance, water purification and sanitation services to more than 15,000 affected people in the aftermath of Cyclone Freddy.

51. Reflecting how new technological achievements shape volunteer actions, as discussed in section II, United Nations entities, Member States and civil society partners posted requests for 23,512 Online Volunteers from 2021 to 2023. The United Nations Environment Programme worked with Online Volunteers who contributed to research on climate, nature and pollution. Through the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 56 Online Volunteers assisted with an artificial intelligence-generated platform on gender equality.

Special Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Volunteers

52. In resolution [76/131](#), the General Assembly encouraged Member States to enhance their contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Volunteers. This Fund is an essential resource allowing UNV to strategically allocate resources to

promote volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda, deploy volunteers to support the United Nations, develop innovative volunteer-based solutions and undertake research and knowledge-sharing activities. From 2021 to 2023, the Governments of Bangladesh, China, Czechia, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and Türkiye contributed to the Fund, enabling UNV to conduct volunteer research, promote volunteerism, drive innovation for development, advance gender parity, diversity and inclusion and provide immediate emergency response.

Outlook for the integration of volunteering into development strategies

53. Progress was made since the previous report of the Secretary-General in integrating volunteering into planning and review processes at the intergovernmental level in Member State voluntary national reviews and in global and country-level frameworks of the United Nations development system. Nonetheless, further efforts are needed to more strategically integrate volunteering into wider national plans, policies and strategies, including into a greater number of United Nations entity country programme documents, as a mechanism to address national development priorities during the second half of the decade of action.

C. Enhancing data, research, evidence and knowledge on volunteer contributions to sustainable development

54. The present section highlights the progress made in measuring volunteer work – both statistically and in terms of its economic and social value – and data collection efforts, including by volunteers themselves. The section reflects research, evidence-generation and knowledge-sharing efforts made by Member States and other stakeholders on volunteering and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

National statistical measurement of volunteering

55. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General, the statistical measurement of volunteer work has received attention by Member States and other stakeholders, with an increasing number of Member States measuring volunteer work, including through using tools developed by ILO and UNV. A survey conducted by the ILO Statistics Department in 2023 confirmed that 36 Member States collected data on volunteer work from 2021 to 2023 in household surveys and population censuses. Thirty-seven Member States indicated plans to collect such data from 2024 to 2030. Fifty-three Member States reported not currently having plans to produce volunteer work statistics. Reasons include more pressing national priorities or the lack of financial resources and/or capacities, such as, for example, a well-established survey infrastructure.

56. Geographical and methodological differences in measuring volunteering continue to persist. Volunteer work measurement is most consistently carried out in the global North, while statistical coverage in the global South remains patchy. The use of different approaches and methodologies to measure volunteering presents challenges for data comparability and reliability. Volunteer measurement, if undertaken, is mainly limited to the scale and scope in terms of the numbers of people engaged in volunteer work. These numbers mostly capture formal volunteering through organizations, with only scarce data on informal volunteering, which, as noted in section II, represents the largest share of overall volunteer work.

57. At the twenty-first International Conference of Labour Statisticians, held in October 2023, ILO highlighted the importance of using volunteer work statistics when designing sustainable development policies and reaffirmed its availability to support Member States with the production of such statistical data, in collaboration with UNV.

Measuring the economic and social value of volunteering

58. To improve the use of statistical data, stakeholders continued to collaborate on tools and methods to demonstrate the economic and social value of volunteering. However, an overall measurement framework encompassing uniform approaches and methodologies through official statistical sources is largely absent. As a follow-up to the UNV 2020 measurement innovation challenge, which brought together research teams from various countries to develop analytical approaches for measuring volunteering and its contribution, further studies were produced by the two winners of the challenge. In 2021, the National Volunteering Agency of Togo published the findings of a study on the contribution of volunteers to strengthening the national health system by cross-referencing volunteer performance data with national indicators in this area.⁹ Afrobarometer, a continental research network, published the findings of a survey on voluntary civic engagement that was undertaken in Benin.¹⁰ Thailand produced data on the economic value of village health volunteers; based on statistics produced by the Ministry of Public Health, the economic value of village health volunteers in Thailand was calculated to be 0.2 per cent of gross domestic product.

59. Other notable research and measurement activities include research published by the Government of New Zealand in 2021¹¹ in which it was found that unpaid work and volunteering enhance well-being and economic prosperity in the Pacific region. In 2022, ILO and UNV produced a study highlighting how participating in volunteer work can have a measurable impact on several characteristics that are directly or indirectly related to young people's successful transition to employment.¹²

Volunteer-led data

60. Volunteers themselves play important roles in addressing gaps in data and analysis. Opportunities for volunteers to participate in data generation vary from basic crowdsourcing to fully collaborative citizen science initiatives and extend to critical work in areas such as social inclusion and climate change. In Cambodia, the Korea International Cooperation Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand and Australian Aid through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, co-funded an initiative that placed 25 volunteers in three provinces in support of a new volunteer network. The volunteers received training to undertake a quality-of-life survey that collected data for emergency response for victims of landmine explosions and persons with disabilities, including their well-being conditions. As part of the CoAdapta project in Brazil, school students and community groups contributed to participatory vulnerability assessments to identify climate risks and impacts affecting their communities. After receiving training to become community researchers, they identified specific risks such as flooding and droughts in their localities and the wider watershed. This information was used to generate risk maps based on the experience and perceptions of the communities. In Chad, volunteers with the National Meteorological Agency promote the dissemination of climate change-related information.

⁹ Agence National du Volontariat au Togo, "Etude approfondie de la contribution du Volontariat au renforcement du secteur de la santé au Togo" (2021).

¹⁰ Afrobarometer. "Deepening understanding of voluntary civic engagement: findings from an Afrobarometer supplemental survey in Benin" (2021).

¹¹ Government of New Zealand, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, *Pacific Economy Research Report on Unpaid Work and Volunteering in Aotearoa* (2021).

¹² International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, "On the design of volunteer programmes to facilitate the entry and re-entry of young people into work" (2022).

Research, evidence and knowledge-sharing on volunteering

61. In resolution 76/131, the General Assembly encouraged Member States and other stakeholders to share their continued efforts to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda through the UNV Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism. Since its launch in 2020, the Portal has continued to expand. New data sets on the integration of volunteering into voluntary national reviews and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks were added; these are updated regularly to enable Member States and other stakeholders to track data over time and to identify trends in volunteer integration. The Portal's evidence library grew, with more than 120 knowledge products on volunteerism added from 2021 to 2023. A new thematic area on South-South cooperation and volunteering was added. Through the Portal's knowledge exchange section, UNV facilitated several webinars and online discussions to share new research, evidence and good practices among stakeholders, including Member States, on diverse topics such as youth employability and skills development, volunteer-State partnerships and the measurement of volunteer work.

62. Throughout the reporting period, Member States and other stakeholders shared research, evidence and good practices related to volunteering in various other forums and platforms. At a side event organized by UNV and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs during the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, Kazakhstan and Zambia shared their experiences with integrating volunteering into their national plans and voluntary national reviews. The 2023 International Volunteers Cooperation Organisations conference, hosted by Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa Student Volunteers Foundation and the International Forum for Volunteering in Development, with support from the Government of Malaysia, brought together volunteer-involving organizations, Member States and other partners. Participants engaged in a conversation on how to create or recreate opportunities to harness the potential of young people as agents of change at the local, national and global levels. During the twenty-sixth World Volunteer Conference in the United Arab Emirates in 2022, hosted by the Emirates Foundation and the International Association for Volunteer Effort, participants shared studies and experiences to highlight key practices in relation to topics such as youth volunteering, volunteering impact measurement, corporate social responsibility, technological transformation and resilient societies.

Outlook for data, research, evidence and knowledge-sharing on volunteering

63. Member States and partners made progress in measuring volunteer work and producing and making available new data, research and evidence through the UNV Knowledge Portal, during events and through other means with a primary focus on knowledge exchange in relation to volunteering. Nonetheless, significant scope exists for scaling up measurement and evidence-generation efforts on volunteerism to address data gaps and methodological and geographical imbalances. Investments in national statistical capacities can be enhanced and the measurement tools developed by ILO and UNV can be applied more widely to arrive at a uniform measurement approach across countries, as well as more comparable and standardized data. Efforts to measure the scale of informal volunteering and, importantly, the impact of volunteering on sustainable development can be strengthened.

IV. The way forward

64. The present report sets out efforts and progress made by Member States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders to engage volunteers as important actors in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to integrate

volunteering into national and global development strategies and to prioritize research, data collection and knowledge exchange on volunteering. At the same time, several areas for further support and investment are identified.

65. To promote and facilitate the inclusion of all peoples and reduce inequalities, Member States, along with United Nations entities, volunteer-involving organizations and other stakeholders, should widen opportunities for people's engagement through volunteering, especially for those groups left furthest behind. For example, initiatives to make volunteer opportunities more accessible for persons with disabilities should be expanded. National gender equality priorities can also be more effectively supported through volunteering.

66. In recognition of the diverse roles that volunteers play at the local level in decision-making, delivering services and developing innovative solutions, more deliberate partnerships between local government institutions and volunteers at the community level should be established to address specific development concerns and needs within communities.

67. Member States and other stakeholders can more actively promote an intergenerational and life cycle approach to volunteering to mobilize and support volunteers in all phases of life. While maintaining a focus on creating opportunities for young people to volunteer, similar opportunities should be established for older volunteers in later life phases or during retirement to support active ageing combined with lifelong learning.

68. The protection, security and well-being of volunteers, especially those working in conflict and disaster areas, must continue to be a high priority. Member States and other stakeholders need to continue working with volunteer-involving organizations to ensure that relevant policies and guidelines for safeguarding volunteers are in place and/or are updated regularly and that mechanisms for monitoring their implementation exist.

69. To ensure that the contribution of volunteers to the 2030 Agenda is maximized, Member States should make further efforts to integrate volunteering in national plans, policies and strategies, including in sectoral policies in areas such as health, education, environment, disaster response and youth. These efforts, alongside overall documentation on volunteers' contributions, should be systematically reflected in Member State voluntary national reviews and other relevant reporting mechanisms under the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–30 and the Paris Agreement, adopted at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

70. Similarly, volunteers as key partners and volunteering as a mechanism to address national development priorities should be integrated more strategically into the country programme documents of individual United Nations entities and into United Nations Sustainable Development Frameworks. This can be done by including, for example, specific volunteer-related goals, targets and indicators, in close collaboration with United Nations country teams.

71. Member States and United Nations entities can establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of integrating volunteerism into national plans, policies and strategies, as well as in United Nations entity programmatic efforts. This can enhance the data and evidence base of the contribution that volunteers make to the 2030 Agenda, inspire others and mobilize participation.

72. The present report highlights that investments in measuring data related to volunteerism remain important and should be scaled up. To arrive at a uniform measurement approach and more comparable and standardized data on the scale and scope of volunteer work, Member States should make greater use of the volunteer work measurement tools created by ILO and UNV for incorporation into national

statistical surveys, including labour force surveys and population censuses. When required, Member States may consider investing in national statistical offices to enhance capacity and liaising with ILO and UNV for technical support with the production of volunteer data.

73. Increased efforts should be made to develop approaches and models for measuring the economic and social contribution of volunteers and their impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. Improved data and a better understanding of the linkage between volunteering and development outcomes is relevant for Member States and their partners as it provides a basis for planning and investments related to volunteering and for maximizing development results.

74. Spaces should be broadened for Member States and other stakeholders to share good practices and lessons learned on volunteering and volunteering integration and to collaborate on wider research and knowledge-exchange initiatives. The UNV Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism can be utilized as an important resource for sharing and showcasing data and evidence on volunteering and a tool for engaging a wide stakeholder base in knowledge-sharing events and discussions.

75. UNV remains the centrepiece United Nations entity for mobilizing volunteers in support of the United Nations development system, including to promote South-South cooperation and to leave no one behind. The role of UNV includes coordinating the sharing of good practices, evidence and lessons learned on integrating volunteering into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the country, regional and global levels.

76. The General Assembly, in resolution [78/127](#), designates 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, which provides a renewed opportunity to raise awareness of volunteers and their contributions to the 2030 Agenda. In preparation for and during the International Year, Member States are encouraged to unite all relevant stakeholders to integrate volunteering into the development agenda more effectively and to give full recognition to the central role of volunteers in accelerating progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals at the community and country levels and around the globe.