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**United Nations Volunteers**

**United Nations Volunteers**

**Report of the Administrator**

*Summary*

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme provides devoted and skilled 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 this system-wide mandate during 2020, and the evaluation of its Strategic Framework, 2018-2021 (DP/2018/6). The report also summarizes UNV contributions to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response efforts of the United Nations system.

The present report is complemented by the following annexes (posted on the Executive Board website): 1. List of United Nations system entities hosting United Nations Volunteers; 2. Statistical overview; 3. Financial overview; 4. Annual performance indicators; and 5. Strategic Framework results matrix and proposed adjustments.

*Elements of a decision*

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) recall General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system encouraging a conducive environment for volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results; (b) in that regard, take note of the results achieved by UNV in 2020, including rapid and effective COVID-19 response, as reflected in the report of the Administrator; (c) reaffirm the crucial role of the Special Voluntary Fund in delivering the UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, and call upon all development partners in a position to do so to contribute to the Fund; (d) commend UNV for the results achieved through its Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, as highlighted in its independent evaluation, and further request UNV to develop its next Strategic Framework building on its organizational results and in full alignment with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review; 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 2020.



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Annexes (available on the [Executive Board](#) website)

1. List of United Nations entities hosting United Nations Volunteers, 2020
2. Statistical overview of United Nations Volunteers, 2020
3. Financial overview of United Nations Volunteers, 2020
4. Annual performance indicators, 2020
5. Strategic Framework results matrix – proposed adjustment





## I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2018/8, this report covers the organizational performance of the UNV programme in 2020 pursuant to its Strategic Framework, 2018-2021. Chapter II presents the annual results against the results matrix, while chapter III reflects on the UNV response to COVID-19. Chapter IV summarizes the findings of the evaluation of the Strategic Framework, and chapter V concludes with the way forward.



## II. Highlights of results, 2020

2. Based on Executive Board decision 2014/13, this chapter summarizes the annual results of UNV pursuant to the Strategic Framework results matrix; further details are provided in annex 4.

3. The achievement of performance indicators for 2020 was as follows:

- (a) Met or exceeded expectations,  green (performance at 100 per cent, or above, of the strategic framework milestone): 10 indicators;
- (b) Achieved below expectations,  amber (performance between 60 per cent and 99 per cent of the strategic framework milestone): 2 indicators;
- (c) Did not meet expectations,  red (performance below 60 per cent of the strategic framework milestone): no indicators; and
- (d) Data unavailable,  grey: 2 indicators.

### 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	2020 targets	2020 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%	58%	123%	
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	1,243,381	124%	

4. UNV supports Member States in capturing the contributions of volunteers to the Sustainable Development Goals through their Voluntary National Reviews. Forty-five reviews were presented at the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Of those, 58 per cent recognized the positive contributions of volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals, compared to 53 per cent in 2019.



5. Volunteers contribute to Sustainable Development Goals achievement in two ways:

- (a) *Volunteering strengthens ownership and participation.* In Argentina, the National Centre for Community Organizations strengthened public policies at the provincial level and promoted volunteerism as a means of citizen participation. In Finland, volunteers supported the national system for reporting on sustainable development, reviewing Sustainable Development Goals progress against indicators.
- (b) *Volunteerism ensures no one is left behind.* In North Macedonia, volunteers of the Everyone Fed network distributed 550,000 meals to vulnerable people. In

Samoa, volunteers helped avert a measles epidemic by facilitating a mass vaccination campaign that achieved 95 per cent immunity.

6. In 2020, UNV and its United Nations partners mobilized 493,649 local non-United Nations volunteers in Cameroon, China, Guinea-Bissau, India, Côte d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (Security Council resolution 1244), Peru, Sri Lanka and Turkey through various national volunteer schemes. This brings the cumulative number of local non-United Nations volunteers mobilized during this Strategic Framework period to 1,243,381.

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

Output indicator	2020 targets	2020 results	Score (%)	Performance
1.1.1 Cumulative number of volunteer schemes (online, onsite, regional, national, subregional, youth) supported by UNV since the start of the Strategic Framework	14	16	114%	
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	11	110%	

7. UNV continued to provide technical assistance to Member States on integrating volunteering into programmes, policies and legislation to achieve the 2030 Agenda.



8. In 2020, UNV extended technical and knowledge support to develop policies and legislation on volunteerism in Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, the League of Arab States, Sri Lanka, Paraguay, Zambia and Zimbabwe. UNV assisted Kenya, Guinea-Bissau, Zambia and Zimbabwe in preparing national volunteerism laws, policies and strategies, while in Cameroon and Paraguay draft legislations on volunteering await final approval.

9. UNV assisted institutional strengthening of volunteerism at the country level. In Benin, UNV provided technical assistance to develop a national volunteer programme and establish a coordination platform for volunteer-involving organizations. In Kazakhstan, UNV supported the creation of the Birgemiz Volunteer Office to facilitate collaboration among volunteer-involving organizations, nationally and across Central Asia. In Sri Lanka, United Nations Volunteers enabled setting up the National Volunteering Secretariat and developing an online volunteer management system. In the State of Palestine, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNV helped establish the National Volunteer Service programme to give youth opportunities to contribute to their communities while enhancing their employability.

10. UNV and the International Labour Organization (ILO) supported Colombia, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Ukraine in measuring the contribution made by volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals. An indicator on volunteer work was included in the 'ILOSTAT' online database, with data from 48 countries; and new global guidance was published on measuring volunteer work through national labour force surveys and rapid COVID-19 surveys. UNV and ILO co-published a technical paper on how volunteer work affects the labour market experience of youth.

11. Through these activities UNV strove to nurture knowledge-sharing among programme countries and to leverage South-South cooperation. To that end, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and UNV enabled global knowledge-sharing on the contribution of volunteerism in *Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development* and *South-South volunteering as a driving force for development: Experiences from Asia and the Pacific*. Those publications captured cutting-edge case studies from Cambodia, China, Thailand, and the Economic Community of West African States.

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

Output indicator	2020 targets	2020 results	Score (%)	Performance
1.2.1 Cumulative quadrennial number of Member States contributing research and knowledge products to the plan of action	51	50	98%	
1.2.2 Number of plan of action partners engaged in technical meetings and consultations at global and national levels	98	101	103%	

12. The plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda<sup>1</sup> called for a global technical meeting, to be convened by UNV and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on the margins of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 2020. The main outcomes of the plan of action, as reviewed and validated at the global technical meeting, were:

(a) *A stronger evidence base on volunteering for the Sustainable Development Goals.* During 2020, the following knowledge products were developed:

- (i) Global synthesis report: Plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda (reviews progress made against the objectives of the plan of action);<sup>2</sup>
- (ii) Updated framework of the dimensions and categories of volunteering practices in the 21st Century;<sup>3</sup>
- (iii) Anthology of papers measuring volunteering and its contributions to sustainable development;<sup>4</sup>
- (iv) Knowledge portal comprising a volunteering database of country profiles, laws, policies, measurement data and knowledge exchange.<sup>5</sup>

(b) *Broader and deeper multi-stakeholder engagement and contributions to evidence, discussions and debates on integrating volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda.* Due to COVID-19, UNV and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies convened the global technical meeting virtually in July 2020, with 70 speakers from 60 countries and 4,000 participants. Cameroon, China, Cyprus, Egypt, Guinea, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Peru and Togo contributed to knowledge and evidence generation through submission of good practices, research on innovation, and input on integrating volunteering into policy and planning and to the global synthesis report, in addition to 100 stakeholders engaged in technical meetings and consultations.

13. The plan of action process, culminating in a non-binding *call to action on volunteering in the Decade of Action*, encouraged stakeholders to:

- (a) Ensure that volunteering is supported beyond formal, organization-based opportunities;
- (b) Create new models for voluntary action to supercharge ideas to solutions;
- (c) Measure the impact on volunteer well-being and the 2030 Agenda; and
- (d) Strengthen the alignment of volunteer efforts with existing Sustainable Development Goals gaps and challenges.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed in the Secretary-General's report on the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/73/254) and the General Assembly resolution on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/73/140).

<sup>2</sup> [Global synthesis report: plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda](#)



<sup>3</sup> [Volunteering practices in the 21st Century](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Measuring the economic and social contributions of volunteering: anthology of papers from the plan of action innovation challenge](#)

<sup>5</sup> [UNV knowledge portal on volunteerism](#)

14. Promotion of volunteerism by UNV and the role that volunteers played in the response to COVID-19 increased awareness of volunteering as a powerful cross-cutting means of implementing the 2030 Agenda. For the first time, the quadrennial comprehensive policy review recognized that a conducive environment for volunteerism can enhance the sustainability of development results.

**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	2020 targets	2020 results	Score (%)	Performance
2.1 Percentage of United Nations partners reporting a positive contribution of United Nations Volunteers to their mandate	93%	99% <sup>6</sup>	106%	
2.2 Number of United Nations partners engaging United Nations Volunteers	53	60	113%	

15. The strategic and operational collaboration of UNV with partners expands opportunities for the engagement of United Nations Volunteers and the integration of volunteerism into the United Nations system.

16. An independent UNV partner survey conducted as part of the evaluation of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, confirmed the crucial role of volunteers in the United Nations system. All United Nations entity partners reported the positive contribution of United Nations Volunteers to their mandate; 96 per cent asserted that they contributed to programmatic implementation of the 2030 Agenda; 98 per cent affirmed their intention of continuing to recruit United Nations Volunteers; and 93 per cent confirmed that UNV recruitment processes were conducted in an efficient and timely manner.

17. In 2020, as a common service to the United Nations, UNV deployed 9,459 United Nations Volunteers, a 14 per cent increase over 2019. Volunteers supported 60 United Nations entities,<sup>7</sup> including seven new and returning partners<sup>8</sup> in 157 countries and territories.<sup>9</sup> The largest number of United Nations Volunteers were in Africa (15 per cent growth from 2019), followed by Asia and the Pacific (up 8 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (up 10 per cent), the Arab States (up 20 per cent), and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (up 21 per cent).

18. Based on data provided by 7,389 United Nations Volunteers,<sup>10</sup> most of them contributed to:

- (a) Goal 16, peace, justice and strong institutions: 39 per cent;
- (b) Goal 5, gender equality: 21 per cent;
- (c) Goal 3, good health and well-being: 21 per cent, up from 16 per cent (due to COVID-19);
- (d) Goal 17, partnerships for the goals: 18 per cent; and

<sup>6</sup> The figure is based on a partner survey conducted as part of the evaluation of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2022, with 194 respondents, representing 139 United Nations entities, 28 civil society organizations, nine governments, six intergovernmental organizations, four academic institutions, and six other partners.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to annex 1 for a full list of United Nations partners who hosted United Nations Volunteers in 2020.

<sup>8</sup> New and returning United Nations entities in 2020 were: United Nations Communications, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, Pan-American Health Organization, United Nations Department of Operational Support, United Nations International Computing Centre, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

<sup>9</sup> New and returning countries of assignment in 2020 were: Cuba, Cyprus, Grenada, Kuwait, Oman and the United Kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> In 2020, 7,389 United Nations Volunteers (76 per cent of all volunteers who served) reported on their assignments in the Volunteer Reporting Application.

(e) Goal 10, reduced inequalities: 14 per cent.

19. Among individual United Nations entities, in 2020 the largest number of United Nations Volunteers (3,232) served with UNDP, a 17 per cent increase over 2019. One-sixth of them supported UNDP COVID-19 response efforts, and more than half of all United Nations Volunteers with UNDP served in Africa. Volunteers in Cameroon, Chad and Niger supported cross-border cooperation on the Lake Chad Basin regional stabilization strategy. In Asia and the Pacific, UNDP hosted 763 United Nations Volunteers, or over half of those engaged in the region by the United Nations system, mainly in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India.

20. In 2020, 1,880 United Nations Volunteers were placed in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, a decrease of 9 per cent. In South Sudan, 463 United Nations Volunteers contributed to peacebuilding with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), supporting civil affairs, human rights, health, public information, air operations and transportation. The Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the second-largest United Nations mission, hosted 380 United Nations Volunteers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, compared to 327 with the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in the Central African Republic. Among the special political missions, the largest number of United Nations Volunteers (139) served in Colombia, where they helped monitor the peace process and promote a culture of peace.

21. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) hosted 882 United Nations Volunteers supporting refugee protection, status determination and other critical functions. In Colombia, 60 per cent of United Nations Volunteers were deployed along the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador at the UNHCR points of assistance and orientation, providing attention, orientation, protection and registration to the migrant population of close to 2.5 million people. In Liberia, 50 United Nations community volunteers served as contact tracers and case finders for a joint UNHCR, UNDP and International Organization for Migration (IOM) border surveillance COVID-19 response project.

22. In 2020, 861 United Nations Volunteers served with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a 33 per cent increase over 2019. UNV deployed 15 United Nations community volunteers with a joint UNICEF/UNDP project in Guinea that equipped women community leaders with conflict-prevention skills prior to the 2020 legislative and presidential elections. To counter gender-based violence caused by COVID-19, United Nations Volunteers in Bolivia supported the establishment of the *Familia Segura* (Safe Family) call centre, through which 50 volunteers redirected callers to psychologists, psychiatrists and the police.

23. In 2020, UNFPA engaged 419 United Nations Volunteers, an annual increase of 11 per cent. UNFPA and UNV launched a new initiative for Population Data Fellows on Female Genital Mutilation Data and Research, through which United Nations Volunteers are reducing evidence gaps in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal. UNFPA resumed deployment of United Nations Volunteers in Iraq and became a new partner in Jamaica, Libya, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu.

24. Last year, 282 United Nations Volunteers supported United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), contributing to women's empowerment and participation. In Afghanistan, a key focus of the partnership was on gender empowerment, and nine out of 10 serving United Nations Volunteers were women. In Kenya, 22 United Nations Volunteers supported efforts to enhance the political participation of women, and to mainstream youth engagement and gender equality.







25. In the year of the pandemic, the number of United Nations Volunteers with the World Health Organization (WHO) almost doubled, to 275, reflecting the broader scope of health interventions and COVID-19 response. Of these, 59 per cent were women and 59 per cent national volunteers. In Egypt, 12 United Nations Volunteers with the regional office of WHO supported data management, surveillance and communications in the COVID-19 context, and bolstered the emergency team with technical and administrative assistance. UNV and WHO launched the Africa Young Women Health Champions Initiative. By the end of 2020, 15 United Nations Volunteers had taken up their assignments.

26. The World Food Programme (WFP), hosted 243 United Nations Volunteers in 2020, an increase of 23 per cent over 2019. Of these, 54 per cent were women, 72 per cent were national volunteers, and 14 per cent were community volunteers. In Mozambique, 54 United Nations Volunteers supported food distribution, school feeding, nutrition, resilience and climate change. In Benin, 30 United Nations Community Volunteers and six specialists monitored school canteens, managed food stocks and promoted prevention measures.

27. In 2020, 200 United Nations Volunteers supported United Nations resident coordinator's offices in 57 countries, an increase of 25 per cent over the prior year. Of those, 56 were directly engaged in the COVID-19 response. Another 129 United Nations Volunteers served with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on humanitarian response coordination.

28. During the course of 2020, UNV signed memorandums of understanding with ILO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), UN-Women and WFP. These helped to further institutionalize system-wide collaboration for the deployment of United Nations Volunteers.

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

Output indicator	2020 targets	2020 results	Score (%)	Performance
2.1.1a Number of months volunteered per year through UNV (on-site)	65,000	78,260	120%	
2.1.1b Number of months volunteered per year through UNV (online)	2,553			
2.1.2a Number of people volunteered per year through UNV (on-site)	8,500	9,459	111%	
2.1.2b Number of people volunteered per year through UNV (online)	15,318			

29. In 2020, the number of on-site United Nations Volunteers deployed in the United Nations system increased by 14 per cent. At the same time, the total number of months volunteered per year increased by 20 per cent, from 65,014 in 2019 to 78,260 in 2020. This reflects an increase in the average length of assignment from 7.9 to 8.3 months, indicating United Nations host entity demand for United Nations Volunteers over a longer period.

30. For the first time in UNV history, in 2020 the number of national United Nations Volunteers exceeded the number of international volunteers (56:44 per cent). This testifies to the increased focus of UNV on supporting national capacities and talent outreach at the country level, as well as to the impact of pandemic-related travel restrictions.

31. Among international United Nations Volunteers in 2020, 66 per cent were from the global South, reflecting the increased representation of nationals of those countries in the United Nations.



32. The average age of United Nations Volunteers in 2020 was 34, with 35 per cent under the age of 30 and 1 per cent over 60 years of age.

33. UNV continued to mainstream new volunteer categories. In 2020, numbers reached 902 Community, 281 Expert and 12 Refugee volunteers, highlighting significant demand, particularly for community volunteers. Those efforts help to promote volunteerism in remote areas and with marginalized populations, reaching those left farthest behind.

34. UNV engaged 88 United Nations Volunteers with disabilities in the United Nations system, including 47 with UNDP and 41 with 14 other United Nations entities.<sup>11</sup> The number of candidates in the talent pool who self-reported disabilities increased by 38 per cent, to 4,590.

### ***Gender diversity***

35. After reaching gender parity among United Nations Volunteers in 2019, UNV increased the proportion of women to 52 per cent in 2020. This global average conceals a regional disparity: the ratio of women exceeded 50 per cent in all regions except Africa, where 45 per cent of United Nations Volunteers were women – an increase from 40 per cent in 2018 – owing to a concerted effort by UNV and the regional United Nations partners to move towards gender parity on the African continent.

36. UNV conducted targeted talent outreach for women professionals, achieving an increase of 29 per cent in registrations in its talent pool, from 58,254 in 2019 to 75,281 in 2020.

37. In 2020, an independent evaluation was conducted of UNV support to the Gender Promotion Initiative of the Peacebuilding Fund, funded by Germany. Some 70 per cent of United Nations host entities reported that United Nations Volunteers helped increase the number of women participating in peacebuilding dialogues and strengthened their capacity to do so, thus empowering local communities in the longer term.

### ***Online volunteers***

38. Travel restrictions and lockdowns emanating from COVID-19 during 2020 generated increased demand for remote volunteer services, as well as growth in the pool of prospective online volunteers. This was evident on the UNV online volunteering platform in 2020:

- (a) Online volunteering opportunities increased by 133 per cent, from 887 in 2019 to 2,068 in 2020;
- (b) Applications from prospective volunteers increased by an unprecedented 332 per cent, from 15,795 in 2019 to 68,173 in 2020.
- (c) Assignments with United Nations entities increased from 40 per cent of the total in 2019 to 60 per cent in 2020.

39. In Turkey, data scientists specializing in machine learning and artificial intelligence volunteered online with the UNDP Sustainable Development Goals Artificial Intelligence Lab, delivering social media analysis and software to enhance programme efficiency. In Sudan, OCHA utilized online volunteers to translate 20,000 names of schools, enabling effective planning of education programmes and efficient use of resources by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education.

40. The extraordinary increase in the number of online volunteering applications revealed technical limitations of the platform affecting the ability of UNV to report

<sup>11</sup> United Nations entities hosting United Nations Volunteers with disabilities: FAO, IOM, OHCHR, United Nations Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations missions (including MINUSCA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Resident Coordinator's Offices [please confirm meaning of UNRCO here], UNV, WFP, WHO, UN-Women

reliable data. Based on lessons learned, UNV proposes to change the indicators for online volunteers (see annex 5).



***Partnerships with Member States for volunteer mobilization***

41. UNV continued to partner with Member States on the mobilization of United Nations Volunteers through full funding of assignments for nationals of their own and other countries.

42. In 2020, UNV deployed 635 fully funded volunteers in partnership with the governments of Australia, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Japan, Kazakhstan, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sweden and Switzerland. Of these, 96 per cent were international United Nations Volunteers, 62 per cent were United Nations Youth Volunteers and 76 per cent were women. A new partnership agreement on full funding of United Nations Volunteer assignments was signed with Bangladesh, but implementation was delayed due to the pandemic. In addition to the above Member States, UNV worked on full funding of volunteer assignments with other partners, such as the Agency for Volunteer Service of Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of China, King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand, and Cisco Systems Inc.

43. The Government of Sweden fully funded three international and 12 national United Nations Volunteers with disabilities in 2020, while France and Finland each fully funded one international United Nations Volunteer with disabilities. These volunteers serve with UNDP, UN-Women and UNICEF, as well as within UNV itself, bringing to larger scale the promotion of inclusive volunteering in the United Nations system, which started with the UNV Talent and Capacity Development Programme for an Inclusive United Nations System for Persons with Disabilities, funded by the Government of Germany since 2017.

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

Output indicator	2020 targets	2020 results	Score (%)	Performance
2.2.1 Percentage of United Nations Volunteers reporting that their assignment enhanced their personal and professional development	94%	92%	98%	
2.2.2 Percentage of United Nations Volunteers satisfied with their volunteering experience	94%	96%	102%	

44. UNV continued to focus on improving the well-being and motivation of United Nations Volunteers. As part of the UNV duty of care, the United Nations Partner Toolkit for hosting entities, launched in 2020, enables United Nations host entities to empower volunteers to reach their full potential across the stages of the volunteer cycle.

45. In 2020, despite challenges posed by COVID-19, UNV ensured dedicated learning and professional development opportunities to United Nations Volunteers:

- (a) UNV engaged 700 United Nations Volunteers through 20 virtual workshops and organized nine tailored workshops for 220 United Nations Volunteers with UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNAMA and UNMISS;
- (b) UNV provided career advice and offered stress counselling sessions to over 1,000 United Nations Volunteers, responding to mental health challenges in the pandemic context;
- (c) UNV brokered access to the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination for United Nations Volunteers, enabling 418 candidates to gain certification.

46. United Nations Volunteers reporting that their assignments enhanced their personal and professional development remained high in 2020, at 92 per cent.<sup>12</sup> The ratio of United Nations Volunteers reporting satisfaction with their volunteering experience exceeded the target, reaching 96 per cent.

**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***

47. In 2020, the total financial value of UNV activities amounted to \$237.4 million, an increase of \$16.1 million, or 7 per cent, from \$221.3 million in 2019.

48. 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 8 per cent in 2020, reflecting annual inflation and additional human resource capacity in support of volunteer mobilization and management.

49. Un-earmarked contributions from Member States form the bedrock of the UNV institutional budget. In 2020, Member States contributed regular resources to UNV through UNDP amounting to \$8.6 million. That 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.<sup>13</sup>

50. UNV continues to rely on the Special Voluntary Fund for volunteerism research and promotion, rapid response, and innovative solutions. In 2020, contributions to the fund came from 11 donors: Bangladesh, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and Turkey. The total amount of contributions was \$6.2 million, inclusive of interest for 2020. Over 90 per cent came from the top four donors – Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and France – suggesting the need to further diversify the Special Voluntary Fund donor base.

51. Contributions to the UNV full funding programme mentioned in paragraph 42 of this report, amounted \$19.9 million in 2020.

52. UNV continued to strive for organizational efficiencies through streamlined recruitment processes and shorter deployment times, which remained stable from 2019, with a minor increase for national United Nations Volunteers. 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 Volunteer Platform in May 2021 is expected to contribute to high quality and fast deployments.

***Digital transformation***

53. In 2020, thanks to financial contributions from the Government of Germany, UNV made strong progress with its digital transformation, achieved new work process efficiencies and improved service provision to partners and clients:

- (a) UNV continued introducing robotic process automation to reduce the high volume of duplication and manual actions required in various systems. New automated processes resulted in the elimination of over 30,000 manual runs annually, thus reducing transactional workload and enabling staff to concentrate on tasks of higher value.

<sup>12</sup> In 2020, 7,389 United Nations Volunteers (76 per cent of all volunteers during the year) reported on their assignments in the volunteer reporting application.

<sup>13</sup> See annex 3 for a financial overview of UNV in 2020.

(b) UNV launched a corporate service desk, supported by artificial intelligence, chatbots and other case resolution tools, as well as self-service knowledge items. In 2020, artificial intelligence-powered chatbots responded to over 150,000 enquiries around the clock – an average of 400 a day – most of them from potential or serving United Nations Volunteers.

### III. Overview of COVID-19 response, 2020

54. In 2020, UNV supported its volunteers, United Nations host entity partners and Member States in responding to the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a system-wide service platform for the United Nations, and drawing from its experience in responding to medical and health emergencies,<sup>14</sup> UNV ensured:

(a) *Duty of care for United Nations Volunteers.* Throughout the year UNV responded to challenges faced by United Nations Volunteers requiring medical evacuation and stranded in airports, and promptly updated administrative guidelines to support volunteers, enable telecommuting and introduce special response measures.

(b) *Scaling COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts.* UNV mobilized over 1,000 United Nations Volunteers in 105 countries and 26 United Nations entities, 85 per cent of them national United Nations Volunteers and 54 per cent of them women. Half of them served with UNDP, the lead technical agency in socio-economic recovery efforts, supporting emergency mitigation and response measures. In Kenya, 50 UNV health experts helped 14 most vulnerable counties through the joint United Nations COVID-19 response programme. In India, UNV district youth coordinators conducted awareness campaigns in 58 districts and produced personal protective equipment, also training community volunteers to reduce the burden of frontline healthcare workers.

(c) *Access to pre-identified local expertise.* National volunteer schemes established with UNV support facilitated rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Burkina Faso, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF leveraged a UNV-supported national volunteer scheme, deploying 9,019 volunteers for COVID-19 sensitization. In Uzbekistan, 2,000 community health volunteers trained by UNV (through a United Nations joint programme promoting awareness of tuberculosis and other chronic respiratory diseases) helped 200,000 people in the Aral Sea region by improving hygiene awareness and providing psychological support.

(d) *Supporting and incentivizing system-wide action.* UNV supported system-wide action on COVID-19 by investing \$2 million from its Special Voluntary Fund in the mobilization of national volunteers in 79 countries and with 18 United Nations entities. Most of those volunteers were deployed in support of inter-agency coordination, joint programmes, and public health response.

(e) *Maximizing support to United Nations partners through online volunteering.* In 2020, UNV published 320 online assignments specific to COVID-19 response and received 10,528 applications. Online volunteers in Fiji supported the UNDP Accelerator Lab for the Pacific with visualizations of pandemic-related data to aid health system response and crisis management, scoping the impact of COVID-19 on small island developing States and identifying innovative solutions and interventions.

55. From the onset of the global pandemic, UNV approached its response in a systematic manner, addressing issues faced by all constituency groups: United Nations Volunteers, United Nations partner entities and Member States. Lessons learned throughout this period have been used to continually adapt and adjust the response and are being utilized in offering targeted support to United Nations entities involved in the global vaccination efforts, including the COVAX roll-out.

<sup>14</sup> See the [UNV guidance note on engaging volunteers and volunteer groups in health emergencies](#).

## IV. Evaluation of the UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021

56. The independent evaluation of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, provides accountability to internal and external stakeholders with respect to its planning, implementation and results, as well as learning opportunities for the preparation of the next Strategic Framework, 2022-2025.

57. The findings identified below, organized according to the 2018-2021 Evaluation Group and UNDP evaluation criteria, highlight achievements and gaps in implementation to date, alongside enabling factors and challenges encountered.

### *Relevance and coherence*

58. The comparative advantage of UNV is that it brings to the United Nations diversity, inclusivity and proximity to the grass roots, and enables youth engagement. UNV contributes directly to the work of United Nations entities by providing flexible, timely and cost-effective volunteer solutions through a comprehensive range of volunteer modalities. The global convening role of UNV allowed it, together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to lead an inclusive and participatory global technical meeting under the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 context. Under the present Strategic Framework, UNV produced high-quality knowledge products (such as the State of the World's Volunteerism report) and supported Member States in developing volunteer infrastructure, legal frameworks and policies, and in promoting South-South cooperation.

### *Efficiency*

59. The evaluation found that human and financial resources were used efficiently in contributing to the outcomes and results set out in the Strategic Framework. Systems and processes were improved to reduce and contain costs and increase alignment with financial resources and future projections. The UNV management efficiency ratio improved year-on-year, from 8 per cent in 2018 to 6 per cent in 2020 (from a baseline of 9.75 per cent in the Strategic Framework, 2014-2017). This can be attributed primarily to the increase in mobilization and associated cost recovery, coupled with cost reductions.

### *Effectiveness*

60. UNV is delivering the expected outcomes of the Strategic Framework through effective implementation mechanisms, with multiple key achievements and significant evidence demonstrating that progress is on track. Under outcome 1, UNV exceeded targets on supporting Member States in including volunteering data in voluntary national reports, and on the engagement of non-United Nations volunteers. At the output level, UNV exceeded most targets on the number of volunteer schemes supported, Member States supported with policies and legislation on volunteerism, and plan of action partners engaged.

61. As a result of its strong focus on mobilization during the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, UNV exceeded targets for both of the outcome 2 indicators on the percentage of United Nations partners reporting a positive contribution of United Nations Volunteers to their mandate and the number of United Nations partners engaging them. At the output level, UNV exceeded targets for two indicators, namely, the number of people who volunteered on site through UNV and for how many months. One indicator on the percentage of United Nations Volunteers reporting enhanced personal and professional development falls slightly short of the target of 94 per cent. UNV partners rated positively United Nations Volunteers' contribution to raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda (87 per cent), enabling citizen-driven monitoring (83 per cent) and contributing to programmatic implementation of the 2030 Agenda (96 per cent). With regard to institutional effectiveness, UNV increased the financial value of its activities under the present Strategic Framework. It received regular resources from UNDP, and both Special

Voluntary Fund and full-funding contributions grew year-on-year. The ambitious digital transformation process of UNV is expected to strengthen its overall effectiveness through the roll-out of new tools and systems in 2021.

#### *Sustainability*

62. The evaluation found that UNV contributions to the outcomes of the Strategic Framework were likely to be sustained in the future. The framework was developed in an institutional context marked by diminishing reserves, downward trends in core contributions, and a downward recovery forecast. Its implementation served to restore the financial health of the organization. Although the focus on mobilization was fundamental in achieving this, the focus on outcome 1 is likely to benefit the longer-term sustainability of UNV and ensure continued organizational relevance and comparative advantage in the present context. Knowledge, evidence and policy development on volunteerism are contributing to the sustainability of results. Under the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, high-quality UNV knowledge products have strengthened its credibility and positioning in research on volunteerism, bringing to the fore its potential to play a stronger role as knowledge broker on volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **V. UNV going forward**

63. Based on the results achieved and the lessons learned during 2020, the last year of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, UNV will focus on several key priorities:

- (a) As an immediate priority, continue to work with United Nations partners to provide skilled and devoted talent to address their evolving needs, including COVID-19 response and building back better after the global pandemic.
- (b) Promote volunteerism as a transformative accelerator for sustainable development and facilitate the generation of knowledge and evidence through United Nations partnership efforts, as well as the next triennial flagship publication, *The State of the World's Volunteerism Report*, in 2021.
- (c) Continue to champion United Nations reform through close collaboration with UNDP and other partners in the United Nations development system at the country level; pursuit of efficiencies; special support to multi-country offices; and active contributions to United Nations coordination mechanisms at country, regional and global levels.
- (d) Accelerate its digital transformation by launching the Unified Volunteer Platform, with concurrent strengthening of the online volunteering service; revision of the conditions of service for United Nations Volunteers; further streamlining of business processes; and gradual alignment of the UNV institutional setup.
- (e) Develop the UNV Strategic Framework, 2022-2025, based on the strategic guidance of United Nations Member States through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and lessons learned during the present Strategic Framework, which will reinforce the role of UNV as a system-wide United Nations service and the global advocate for volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda.
- (f) Continue to work with United Nations partners, especially in Africa, to increase the share of women volunteers so as to achieve gender parity among United Nations Volunteers in all regions.

64. As past evidence has shown, and as has become even clearer during the global pandemic, volunteer action is critical for responding to and recovering from crisis and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. On International Volunteer Day on 5 December 2020, the Secretary-General said, "As we gradually recover from the pandemic, volunteers will have a key role to play in accelerating the transition to green, inclusive and just economies". UNV is poised and ready to fulfil its role in COVID-19 recovery efforts and in the Decade of Action.