Structure for Volunteer Groups Alliance

1. **Background**

1.1 Following the achievements of the Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group between 2013-2016, including the recognition of **Volunteer Groups** by the UN HLPF, a strategy paper was developed by the Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group on its role for the future. This was presented to the Board of Forum, the founder of the group in 2012, and to IAVE, UNV and other member organisations.

1.2 It was agreed that the group should be more formally constituted, that the name should be changed following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that efforts would be made to increase the number and diversity of members, and a small group of representatives of member organisations would meet in Bonn on 1 March 2016 to develop an Annual Plan based on the Strategy paper, the Tokyo Call to Action, the General Assembly resolution 70/129, the Plan of Action for integrating volunteering in the next decade and beyond and other relevant documents.

2. Basic Principles
The Alliance is made up of organisations involved in volunteering in local, national and international contexts, including NGOs, Government Agencies and private sector companies - who among other things contribute to the development and specifically to the achievement of the SDGs. The work of the Alliance is to enable organisations, both cross border and non-cross border entities, who contribute to sustainable development through volunteering across the globe to collaborate, share and influence collectively at the national, regional and international levels. The work of the alliance is not meant for the benefit of any particular individual group. It is not a legally constituted entity but a collaborative group that seeks the majority of its funding from a number of primary/founding members, including the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum), International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) and Forum member organisations AVI, Centre for International Studies and Cooperation, Cuso International, FK Norway, France Volontaires, United Nations Volunteers programme, Volunteer Service Abroad, VSO and other close collaborators such as Impact 2030, whose representatives will play key roles on the Steering Group. If they wish, as one of the Co-chairs and Project or Activity leaders/convenors.

The alliance is an independent group, but reports or minutes of the meetings will be sent to the funding organisations depending on their preference. Members are expected to inform their organisations through regular reports on progress and decisions taken by the alliance.

3. Intended outcomes: See VGA Action Plan
The action plan of the Volunteer Groups Alliance will be updated on a regular basis by the steering group.
The actions of the VGA presently are:
  i. Engagement with the UN system
  ii. Engagement at the national level

iii. Engagement at the regional level

iv. Building a mandate and engaging other actors

v. Telling the story (Contribution to the SDGs)

vi. Resourcing

Please click on the above link for the detailed action plan.

4. Membership

4.1 Eligibility

Member organisations must be organisations with a demonstrable commitment to volunteering, nationally and/or internationally, through their mission, goals and activities. They are expected to support the principles, values and objectives of the Alliance.

4.2 Applications for membership will be made to the Volunteer Groups Alliance Coordinator and considered by the Steering Group.

5. Structure

5.1 The Alliance will consist of all its members, and will be supported by a Coordinator, based in New York unless during a transition period, and a smaller Steering Group which will carry out activities on behalf of the Alliance

All members of the Alliance will receive regular updates and information, and be consulted on significant decisions, within a reasonable time frame as much as possible. Members will be encouraged to send relevant data, information, ideas, examples of best practice and suggestions to the Steering Group. They will also be invited to participate in events and activities, although these will be at their own expense**.** Members will inform the Coordinator when they change their representative and changes in contact details**.** Where possible they will contribute in-kind resources such as technical expertise, time, networking, media assistance and funding.

5.2 Steering group

Members of the Steering Group will be nominated by those organisations which wish to be represented in regular monthly teleconferences and involved in a number of activities individually or collectively, including the drafting of documents, responses to surveys, planning, mapping, research and other evidence-based advocacy activities**.** Members of the steering group are expected to dedicate a minimum of 4 hours a month to the Steering Group/Alliance work.

5.3 Co-Chairs

To ensure balanced representation, one of the co-chairs will be from a key funding organisation and the other from an organisation which may not have the capacity to fund. Steps will be taken to offer a southern-based organisation the opportunity to act as co-chair. The co-chairs will be elected by the

steering group. To ensure continuity, one co-chair will stand down at the end of each year and replaced by another in the same category.

6.   Communication

The Alliance members will communicate primarily through email, and the Steering Group through emails, monthly teleconferences and smaller project groups. The costs of teleconferences will be met from the budget held by an organization who is willing to offer, in-kind, the group use the technology they already use in their organization. It is necessary to make sure that the technology is accessible to members located in all countries of the world.

7.   Decision making

When a significant decision is to be made, the members of the Alliance will be given the opportunity to comment within a specific time frame. A non reply will be taken to indicate support.

Members' names will not be added to specific documents without their approval.

Decisions by the Steering Group will be made as far as possible by consensus, but a vote will be taken if necessary.

8.   Coordinator

The key funders have provided resources for a Volunteer Groups Alliance Coordinator to be located in New York, and to contribute to the costs of teleconferences, and additional support from Forum's secretariat/coordinators.

The Coordinator reports to the Chair/co-chairs of the Steering Group, and Cuso International has agreed to be responsible for administration linked to this role.