



Volunteer Groups' thematic position paper to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2021

*Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic **through volunteering** that promotes the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development*

Volunteers are building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the Decade of Action and delivery for sustainable development.

Volunteers, and support for their efforts, are essential to not only the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but also the sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and volunteer groups are heartened by the **growing acknowledgement of the role of the volunteers in the implementation of the Goals**.

According to the *State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018* produced by United Nations Volunteers, an estimated one billion volunteers make a difference on the issues that affect them and their communities, often in the most difficult of circumstances. As recognised by the synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be realised without the 'contributions of millions of properly supported and enabled volunteers' and volunteer-driven organisations in both developing and developed countries. The transformative power of volunteering particularly contributes to the Decade of Action where properly championed.

Although a universal phenomenon, volunteering does not occur at uniform rates and effectiveness, but volunteering is strongest when it is recognised and supported. As was highlighted at the Global Technical Meeting (GTM) 2020, Member States and society have an opportunity to change their mindset to recognize the great diversity of volunteering practices around the globe and improve their recognition, support, and integration of volunteers' contributions in wider development efforts, as volunteers make a true contribution to development on the community level. Volunteering can be a game-changer in the SDG Decade of Action.

Volunteers are helping **build back better**.

A 2020 survey by the Plan of Action Secretariat showed that more than 90% of respondents believe that volunteers contribute significantly to the SDGs, particularly in health and education. In terms of innovative visions and models of volunteering support, it is important to

- promote integrated rather than siloed approaches,
- collaborate across different sectors and levels, and
- effectively engage the public and private sector.

There is also a great need for digital infrastructure that enables people to collaborate and share knowledge, especially in times like these where they cannot meet easily or safely in person.

The main outcome of the GTM2020 -- the Call to Action 'Volunteering in the Decade of Action' -- is the contribution by the global volunteering community to realizing the Decade of Action to accelerate progress on the SDGs. The Call to Action is a chance to think about what Member States and local communities can individually and collectively change to enable volunteering to be a transformative force for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs by going further, going faster, and going together.

Thus, national and local governments, the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society, volunteer groups, and volunteers themselves have a role to play in **creating and sustaining an enabling environment for volunteering**. When these actions succeed, we unlock the power of volunteering and enable volunteers to help eradicate poverty and promote prosperity.

Recommendations

The Stakeholder group representing volunteers offers the following recommendations to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) for 2021, and beyond:

1. **Recognise the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the SDGs in Member States' Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the HLPF 2021.**

We encourage all Member States to include the contribution of volunteers in their VNRs. In 2020, countries around the world as diverse as **Benin, Brunei Darussalam, India, Kenya, Malawi, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Samoa, and Slovenia** all strongly substantiated positive contribution of volunteering to SDGs in their VNRs.

2. **Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognised and supported in national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda.**

We encourage every country to build volunteering into their plans, strategies, and policies. Several Member States have already passed legislation that supports and promotes volunteering.

Currently, nearly **100 countries** throughout the world now have policies or legislation on volunteering.

3. Follow the lead of Member States by affirming their full support for the implementation of A/RES/67/290, which supports the participation of non-governmental actors.

We encourage all governments to continue to engage all stakeholders as contributors to and beneficiaries of policies that will allow us all to work towards the 2030 Agenda. In 2018, resolution A/RES/73/140 – which was co-facilitated through the Third Committee of the General Assembly by the Permanent Missions of **Brazil, Chile, Japan, and Russia**, and co-sponsored by **124 Member States** – commends volunteers and calls on Member States to increasingly cooperate with volunteer involving and civil society organisations. This resolution also calls on Member States to include information on the scale, contribution, and impact of volunteering in future VNRs, and to engage volunteers for the monitoring of progress towards achieving the SDGs at the national and subnational levels and as part of wider citizen engagement.

4. Ensure that the accountability, transparency, and review framework for the SDGs involves community consultation at all levels, including representation of the most marginalised voices, as well as the volunteers who work most closely with them.

We encourage all Member States to consult with volunteer groups and include volunteers and especially the most marginalised individuals as part of the mechanism to review the SDGs at regional, national, and local levels. France Volontaires has demonstrated in a study on the contribution of international volunteering for exchange and solidarity to the 2030 Agenda that volunteers bring a significant added value to the achievement of the SDGs by being close to communities and able to interact in formal and informal moments, while being the interface between different scales of action and actors. The study reinforces that this contribution can only be effective if there is a favorable environment for volunteering in the countries.

5. Recognize the role of volunteering in crisis prevention, management, and resolution.

We encourage all Member States to acknowledge and honor volunteers, and groups organising volunteers, who are working daily to meet the SDGs in their local communities and are at the front lines of COVID-19 relief, climate change action, and other extraordinary situations. We also encourage all Member States to recognize the role of volunteers in promoting resilient communities through complementary education efforts (e.g. on applied philosophy and others) which help citizens not only cope with hardships but also flourish amidst difficult times.

Volunteering and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

Countries' VNR processes need to recognize the valuable contributions made by communities and volunteers for the implementation of the SDGs. For example, in an APFSD side event, **Thailand, Fiji, China, Republic of Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, India**, and others made specific commitments on volunteering. They committed to

- developing policy frameworks for promoting volunteering as a transformative strategy for the Decade of Action
- mobilizing volunteering to drive SDGs
- promoting youth and other volunteers for inclusion, equality, and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda
- volunteering for responding to the context created by COVID-19 as volunteers have always been the first respondents to humanitarian crises and are effective mechanisms for recovery and reduction in any disasters

The Member States also committed to develop systems, mechanisms, and partnerships with CSOs and the UN to support volunteering and sustain volunteering as it is an effective partnership to achieve SDGs, specifically the LNOB agenda.

Volunteers and partners are **key catalysts** in VNR processes.

As an example, VSO has been actively engaged in the SDGs review processes at global, regional, and national levels. At the national level, VSO has provided support to governments and CSO partners in monitoring progress towards the SDGs, especially in **Pakistan, Thailand, Sierra Leone**, and **Zimbabwe** in 2021 through a variety of means:

- Improving the capacities of marginalised groups (specifically persons with disabilities, women, young people, refugees, and those discriminated against on grounds of caste and ethnicity) and grassroot CSOs to meaningfully engage in evidence-driven SDG monitoring, review, and implementation
- Promoting community-driven data generation on drivers and level of marginalisation and its ownership among marginalized communities in the development process
- Improving policy and regulatory environments through the reform of practices, systems, and policies which respond to the specific needs of marginalised groups

VSO uses a citizen-led monitoring approach that offers opportunities not only to collect data at a level that is closer to poor and marginalised people but also, when combined with participatory processes, has the potential to empower people in realising their rights as citizens. Examples of this work includes:

- In **Pakistan**, VSO conducted consultations with marginalized communities to understand their priorities to help align the priorities within provincial SDGs frameworks with the priorities of local citizens.
- In **Sierra Leone**, VSO worked with the government and with CSOs to promote the VNR process and the inclusion of minority and marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities. VSO has worked in collaboration with UNDP to engage with other NSAs to gather data and develop an evidence-based report, which will be shared with the government to ensure its VNR reporting reflects the voices and experiences of ordinary citizens.

Emphasizing volunteering in the delivery and accountability of SDGs, VSO has also empowered marginalized communities and CSOs to monitor SDGs and influenced governments to develop frameworks and systems to hold them accountable for fulfilling their commitment to the SDGs. In order to do this, VSO has adopted participatory policy processes, as well as social accountability approaches, to influence and monitor quality of service delivery, policy formulation, and review and implementation of the SDGs. Examples of this include:

- VSO was involved in the development of provincial SDGs frameworks, including tools for consultation in **Pakistan**, which worked to incorporate the priorities of marginalized communities into provincial SDGs frameworks.
- VSO Thailand is working with UNV to influence and strengthen the government VNR report through a baseline survey, known as the Voice of Youth project, which will work to understand how primary actors in **Thailand** understand the SDGs.
- VSO Sierra Leone is working in collaboration with the UNDP to engage with other NSAs in **Sierra Leone** to gather data and develop an evidence-based report which will be shared with the government to strengthen and enrich the reporting process and include the voices of marginalized people.
- VSO Zimbabwe is working with other CSOs to influence the government to include marginalized voices into the **Zimbabwe** VNR report.

In integrating volunteering into policy and planning to achieve the SDGs, VSO has been influencing Member States to develop volunteering policies and integrating volunteering into other policies and plans to harness the power of volunteering as a means of achieving the SDGs. Examples of this include

- supporting the government to finalize a national volunteering policy in **Nigeria**, which will be a vital tool for SDG delivery
- contributing to discussions and consultations around the development of national volunteering policies in **Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi, and Nepal** for SDG delivery
- supporting the establishment of national volunteering mechanisms, including a National Volunteer Platform and National Volunteer Database, in **Pakistan**, including the establishment of the 'Rescue 1122' service, which is a government and community-led emergency response service
- Supporting the development of continental volunteering policy with the **African Union**

Volunteers address systemic barriers and improve resilient recovery from the **COVID-19 pandemic**

For example, VSO's blended volunteering model has been paramount during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the support of e-volunteers to build the capacity of CSOs and governments to youth volunteers conducting participatory action research to understand contextual and specific marginalized groups needs as well as the impact of COVID-19 to inform programming and policy actions, national and community volunteers have supported community actions to effectively address the systemic barriers and improve resilient recovery:

- Promoting youth volunteering and active citizenship as a mechanism for reaching out to the most marginalized populations, responding to COVID-19, monitoring, and implementing SDGs
- Recognizing the contribution of volunteers and youth in the realization of the SDGs as they support building community resilience in times of crisis and are potential leaders for future recovery
- Supporting the VSO countries to develop a clear Standard Operating Procedures for mobilizing volunteers (national, International, and community volunteers) during a time of crisis or emergencies
- Implementing unique and innovative approaches led by young people in both responding to COVID-19 as well as recovery
- Supporting communities to track disruptions to essential services and community action to promote continuation of the services, especially for the vulnerable and marginalized

Volunteering and the Focus for HLPF 2021

As the 2020 Human Development Report notes, people have the ability to make choices to avoid future pandemics and potentially catastrophic paths, and volunteering has become more visible during the pandemic. Also, the Fifth Edition of Progressing National SDGs Implementation report by Cooperation Canada recommends: "Support and develop partnerships with a variety of non-state actors, including academia, the private sector, children and youth, **volunteers**, trade unions, and the media." (reference p. 67 -

https://cooperation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Progressing_SDGs_2020_Main-Report-without-annexes.pdf).

UNV's 2021 State of the World's Volunteerism Report will use original research to understand new and emerging volunteering models around deliberative governance mechanisms, co-creation of social protection and services, and social innovation models in Asia, Africa, Arab States, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin America. Following are examples of **how volunteers contribute to each of the nine SDGs** under review in 2021. We share these examples with two goals in mind: 1) to highlight the varied and impactful work of volunteers around the world, and 2) to educate Member States on the power of volunteering.

GOAL 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Madagascar | Supporting Families

In **Madagascar**, ATD Quart Monde, France Volontaires' member, works with volunteers to support 24 priority families from precarious neighborhoods in the capital. By choosing these families, the objective is to show a deliberate choice to leave no one behind and to allow these families, at the end of long-term support that can last several years (around two to three years), to move forward on the road to emancipation and to observe significant and lasting changes in the quality of their lives. The support concerns all the rights (access to health care, education, vocational training, decent work, decent housing, exercise of citizenship, etc.) of all the members of the household, with a particular emphasis on women and girls. It is essential to have a global approach in the fight against extreme poverty: global at the level of rights and global at the level of the members of the family household. The essential volunteer activities include

- making regular visits, by the pair of volunteers in charge of the family, aiming at creating a long term relationship of trust
- supporting the realization of administrative procedures, such as civil status, links with the fokontany (traditional Malagasy village), etc.
- helping with schooling and vocational training, searching for solutions adapted to the particular situations of children and young people
- working on the quality of intra-family and neighborhood relations
- facilitating the creation of links between the family and partner NGOs (domestic violence, sexual abuse, access to health care, etc.)
- providing the support and training necessary for the creation of one or more goals of training in budget management, savings, know-how, literacy, etc.
- encouraging participation in collective actions at the neighborhood level

In the current stage, the most visible changes include:

- women clearly showing their will to emancipate themselves
- children and young people who have given up all ambition to learn returning to school, to a vocational training center, or to a boarding school
- parents gaining confidence in themselves and in others, showing that they want their lives to change

For more information, visit <https://www.atd-quartmonde.org/ou-somme-nous/ocean-indien/madagascar/>

China | Helping the Homeless

Thousands of residents experiencing homelessness or living in poor areas around Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, **China**, struggle to adjust to the new reality of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with Impact HK, a local organisation helping residents who are homeless, volunteers organise the donation of three daily meals for hundreds of people and provide educational projects that reach hundreds of people.

Hungary | Collecting Food for Families

Caritas, with the Salesian Parish in Kazincbarcika, **Hungary**, recently participated in a food collection drive to help poor families. In the lead up to Christmas, the Hungarian Food Bank held a national food collection program that brought together 6,000 volunteers who reached out to families, mostly those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Bank notes that the number of people living in poverty in Hungary is at an all-time low, but the country still has one of the highest poverty rates in the European Union at 12.3 percent in 2019. Even with the falling poverty rates, many youth feel like they have no future in the country.

USA | Advocates Seeking to End Poverty

Results is a nonprofit movement of passionate, committed everyday people that volunteer their voices to influence political decisions that will bring an end to poverty. Since 1980, Results volunteers have secured billions of dollars in new funding for health, education, and economic opportunity programs worldwide.

Volunteers have helped pass groundbreaking legislation that helps kids in low-income countries attend school and access life-saving medical treatment. They have mobilized against cuts to vital anti-poverty programs that help millions in the **USA** put food on the table and get health insurance. About half their grassroots groups work on USA poverty campaigns and half work on our global poverty campaigns.

GOAL 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

India | Distributing Food

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the lack of food and exacerbated health and hygiene issues faced for many communities. In **India**, Field Services and Inter-cultural Learning - India (FSL India), one of the largest volunteer-hosting organizations in the country, mobilized international volunteers and 100+ national volunteers and youth groups from target villages to distribute food and hygiene kits and conduct health awareness campaigns to tribal, poor, and migrant communities. FSL India surveyed the needs of the communities and networked with local and district authorities and all stakeholders to coordinate all activities.

As a result, the target communities have become conscious in keeping their body immune to COVID-19 by consuming energy food, wearing masks, repeated hand washing, and maintaining distance in gatherings and congregations. There has been an increase in empathy, humility, and the spirit of volunteering and goodwill towards others, and the disease prevalence has been reduced.

FSL India has also developed a project called E- Saathi – An e-learning and digital literacy program carried out through a mobile van to reach villages where children from poor communities can attend computer literacy and health and hygiene awareness classes and study academic subjects. This is also educating youth, women, and adults on various social, health, and environmental issues which affect the community. For more information, visit <http://fsl-india.org/blog/>.

Venezuela | Ending Hunger

UN Volunteer Saúl Velasco contributes expertise in applied social research and data analysis to help the Resilience and Emergency Team within the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in **Venezuela** achieve zero hunger.

Tanzania | Combating Hunger in Rural Ukwega Ward

Global Volunteer's Reaching Children's Potential program offers interventions to eradicate hunger, improve health, and enhance cognition through volunteers that host parent education workshops, make home visits, and provide other services that improve access to nutritious food.

USA | Helping Food-Insecure Youth in Houston

Wallis Bank, a full-service community bank, dedicates time to help fight childhood hunger throughout Houston, Texas communities. In just over two days, employees of the Bank volunteered at Kids' Meals, Inc., an organization committed to ending childhood hunger, and packed nearly 3,000 bags with nutritious snacks, which were included in lunch bags for food-insecure children without access to free school-based meal programs.

Without the help of volunteers like those from Wallis Bank, Kids' Meals could not deliver healthy meals to food-insecure children. With a mission to provide essential resources for families and end the cycle of poverty, the organization delivered more than eight million healthy meals across 42 Houston-area zip codes.

GOAL 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Togo, Guinea, Senegal | Working Toward Resilience

AVENIR, a two-year project funded by the European Commission through its EU Aid Volunteers facility, has allowed France Volontaires and partners in **Togo, Guinea and Senegal** to deploy about 30 couples of volunteers (each made of 1 international and 1 national volunteer). In these three countries, France Volontaires has coordinated about 20 local CSOs hosting volunteers and helped them to implement activities related to food security, health and nutrition, land reclamation, anti-erosion interventions, protection of the environment, etc. AVENIR, in French stands for “Action of European and National Volunteers Working Toward Resilience.”

In addition, the AVENIR project links national resilience policies in West Africa with volunteering. During the two years, studies and capitalization have been conducted to illustrate the added-value of volunteering in mitigating, preparing, and responding to humanitarian crises and hence influencing local decision makers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the project, and together, volunteers, partner CSOs, France Volontaires, and donors have reshaped activities to actively address new urgent needs. Deployed volunteers have organized awareness campaigns using all types of media (wall painting, radio, TV broadcasts, street communication, etc.) and targeted particularly vulnerable groups (townships, isolated neighborhoods, homeless children) to promote good hygiene practices and spread simple but robust information on protection measures.

In **Togo**, training sessions with a variety of CSOs have targeted all types of volunteers and public servants to reinforce the use of modern project management tools (mapping, communication, social media, mentoring). With Hälsa International, volunteers have particularly targeted children of vulnerable communities to ensure diffusion of adapted prevention messages. With CAFE, volunteers have particularly targeted women living in vulnerable communities to ensure diffusion of adapted and specific prevention messages. With GRET, volunteers have addressed the problems of long term solid waste management in dense human environments trying to mitigate the occurrence of future threats to public health.

In **Senegal**, France Volontaires has worked closely with other humanitarian actors to contribute to various types of awareness and protection measures in the Keur Massar district. The volunteers have also coordinated activities with the Ministry of Health. A campaign was organized aiming at increasing the number of blood donors and hence the replenishment of local blood banks. Hygiene kits have also been donated to vulnerable households. These activities serve to promote volunteering in France Volontaires’s advocacy towards local decision makers.

In **Guinea**, France Volontaires and partners have mobilized volunteers to reach 1,000 households in 7 districts in Kankan with awareness campaigns at local market places and hygiene kits distributions to vulnerable households. Surveillance committees have been set up thanks to local

volunteers. With the AJP, volunteers have particularly targeted workers as the main users of public transportation and hence particularly exposed to contamination. Again, mass media such as radio broadcasts have efficiently been used to spread simple but robust information on good practices and protection.

The COVID-19 crisis, despite all the negative consequences, has been an interesting context for volunteers interested in the preparation, mitigation, and response to humanitarian crisis, creating a spontaneous and unexpected case-study. This has not only sustainably impacted their future careers but also has allowed them to be part of the design of an emergency response to a rapid onset crisis in rapidly delivering aid to the most vulnerable persons. For more information, visit <https://www.france-volontaires.org/nos-actions/avenir/> or <https://www.france-volontaires.org/?s=Projet+AVENIR> or watch <https://fb.watch/1OrV4bAHaM/>

Myanmar | Volunteer Education Specialists

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education in **Myanmar**, national and international volunteers, and the British Council on the 'Towards Results in Education and English' (TREE) programme, VSO harnesses a volunteer-led effort to improve Myanmar's health and education systems. In 2019, VSO trained volunteers and education specialists, improved teacher training, and continued professional development in Education Colleges that strengthened the capacity of principals, educators, and student teachers across Myanmar. Increased competence of educators and school leadership, improved learning outcomes for student teachers (particularly in English Language Teaching), greater use of evidence to inform teaching practices, and an overall stronger, more effective and more inclusive education system to support reforms to teacher education are among TREE's many outcomes.

To strengthen Myanmar's education system, VSO places expert volunteers at 25 education degree colleges throughout the country who provide specialist training, support, and professional development for teacher educators and student teachers. These volunteer education specialists reach over 1,700 teacher educators, in turn ensuring that thousands more student teachers complete their training equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to respond to the diverse learning needs they will encounter in the classroom.

Volunteers also support national reforms to pre-service curriculum and developing the knowledge and skills of teacher educators in inclusive practice and pedagogy.

Brazil | Delivering Good Health and Well Being

The past year has brought unprecedented pressure on global efforts to not only prevent the spread of disease but also to provide adequate sanitation for people's health, privacy, and safety. New Acropolis in **Brazil** works to help communities face the sanitation crisis with resilience and dignity, engage volunteers to serve economically disadvantaged individuals and families, and

create a network of health professionals who can assist in severe contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic in 2020, New Acropolis volunteers helped with many activities. Highlights include:

- Hosted more than 300 live events on Instagram and reached more than 343,000 people on YouTube by providing them with free, online lectures on Applied Philosophy focused on the teachings of great philosophers and sages throughout history and representative of distinct cultures
- Promoted courses on Applied Philosophy for over 5,000 children, young people, and adults that emphasized ethical values indispensable to improving peoples' relationships with others and that reinforce relationships that are respectful and mutually beneficial in the context of the pandemic
- Distributed more than 4,000 food baskets for the most disadvantage and provided more than 180 children with regular online tutoring after their school classes
- Raised financial contributions to purchase medical equipment and health and hygiene supplies for people infected with COVID-19
- Created a network of health professionals committed to advancing alternative approaches to medicine that are humanistic and integrative and do not compete with commercial interests (For more information, visit <http://www.acropole.org.br>)

Solomon Islands | Building the Skills of Doctors

Despite the challenges facing health care workers around the world in 2020, the **Solomon Islands'** National Referral Hospital (NRH) celebrated the graduation of eleven doctors from its volunteer supported Bridging Internship Program.

These doctors will now move forward in their two-year internship program at NRH and, once registered with the Solomon Islands Medical and Dental Board, will be qualified to work in the health facilities across the Solomon Islands.

Botswana | An African Woman Health Champion

Violet Mathenge is a medical doctor and epidemiologist, with more than seven years of experience in the clinical field, as well as in disease surveillance. While a Kenyan national, Violet serves as a UN Volunteer Surveillance and Emergency Risk Management Officer with the World Health Organization (WHO) in **Botswana** as part of Africa Women Health Champions, an effort to strengthen people's health and well-being in a region with some of the highest rates of disease in the world.

Kenya | On the Frontline of the Pandemic

Fifty UN Volunteer health experts were deployed in response to the coronavirus pandemic through a UN joint programme, implemented by UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF to support county healthcare systems and guarantee business continuity and services for poor and marginalized communities in **Kenya**.

The collaboration between citizens, governments, and volunteers improved awareness of the local context, ensured interventions address context-specific needs, and built lasting relationships expected to last beyond the crisis.

GOAL 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Germany | Helping Youth Secure Employment and Vocational Training

Research by **Germany's** Federal Ministry of Education and Research shows education opportunities continue to be unevenly distributed with youth from immigrant backgrounds, low-income families, and rural areas less likely to move up the education ladder. In 2020, PHINEO gAG and its partners, with support from John Deere Foundation, strived to boost educational outcomes by improving access to food and directing twenty-six volunteers in Germany to mentor youth through virtual and in-person online engagement activities and identify, collect, and distribute computer hardware to mentees in need.

Through these and other efforts, 88% of all mentees found a job or vocational training following completion of the mentoring program. Volunteer testimonials and internal impact reports show the experience was positive for everyone involved. Employees that volunteered tended to be more aware of their company's support and strategy toward crisis response, and increase their support for student success.

India | Mentoring Students About Decent Work

United Way of Baroda along with Koch Engineered Solutions India Pvt Ltd and other corporate partners host regular virtual mentorship, tutoring, and wellness sessions on Zoom for older adults and students pursuing higher education and fulfilling careers in **India**.

Brazil | Working with Youth to Build a Life Plan

In collaboration with employee volunteers, United Way Brazil helps develop lifelong skills among dozens of young people aged 16-25 in **Brazil**. Mentors with United Way's two-month long Skills

for Life program work with students to increase participants' ability to chart a course to meet their personal and professional aspirations. Volunteer employees undergo training provided by United Way Brazil and a local partner organization and are provided resources to guide their conversations with participants to keep students motivated and focused to complete school and transition to work or higher education. While the coronavirus limits face-to-face interactions, the program connects mentors and mentees using virtual platforms.

Global | Mentoring Women Entrepreneurs

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's flagship Mentoring Women in Business programme leverages the caring power of volunteers and technology to connect mentors to women entrepreneurs around the world over the course of a year. Since the programme's launch in 2010, almost 10,000 women entrepreneurs from more than 100 countries have participated as mentees, with over 8,000 business professionals generously donating their time and sharing their experience as mentors.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Pakistan | Advocating for People with Disabilities

VSO Pakistan identified the rights of people with disabilities as a policy focus and helped to draft a Disability Act, known as the 'Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Rights of Person with Disability Act,' which would ensure the rights of people with disabilities through democratic, rights-based and inclusive legislation. This was the first law in the history of **Pakistan** to specifically protect the rights of people with disabilities, and its implementation has improved the lives of people with disabilities and allowed for their greater participation at all levels of society.

Volunteers and local partners are the key catalysts. VSO worked with Potohar Mental Health Association (PMHA), a disability rights-based organisation and its network members to lead coordination with other disability rights organisations and to mobilise national media on disability issues and needs in the country. The PMHA worked to coordinate national events involving the presence of representatives from government, political parties, civil society and primary actors. It also translated the draft disability bill into Urdu, so that primary actors were able to effectively participate and contribute during consultation meetings.

During five consultation meetings, each involving around 40 participants, primary actors -- including marginalised women, youth, members of the transgender community, and people with disabilities -- shared the issues, challenges, and stigma that they have faced in their communities, helping to form recommendations which would feed into the draft bill. To carry out the community consultations, VSO recruited two national volunteers and five community volunteers, who facilitated dialogues and worked to generate evidence and recommendations based on the

perspectives and voices of primary actors. The national volunteers trained the community volunteers, and the engagement of community volunteers, with their links to local communities and shared cultural context, meant that the discussions were open and smooth, with local people feeling comfortable to share their issues and problems in the form of open dialogue.

Through various consultations, VSO Pakistan and its partners developed 23 policy recommendations, related to the political participation of persons living with disabilities, including equity in education, equality before law, ease of access and mobility, and protection from violence and discriminatory behaviour. Through lobbying and media mobilisation aimed at Parliamentarians, government actors, and political parties, VSO succeeded in getting 13 of these recommendations incorporated into the Act, via the mechanism of the Standing Committee on Human Rights National Assembly of Pakistan.

VSO Pakistan used evidence from its programmes, as well as recommendations from a series of community dialogues, to influence the development of a disability rights bill. In order to do this, VSO worked with PMHA and its network members to develop key messages and policy recommendations to influence the Disability Act.

VSO worked closely with PMHA to translate the draft Disability Bill into Urdu and facilitated community dialogues in different communities across Pakistan to incorporate the views of groups including marginalised women, young people, transgender individuals and those with disabilities. These key policy recommendations were then submitted to the National Assembly of Pakistan for their inclusion in the Disability Act, and VSO facilitated a series of lobbying meetings and dialogues with representatives from political parties, Parliament, and government, and organised media coverage to put pressure on politicians to include civil society recommendations in the Act.

Jordan | Empowering Young People

Despite the stress and uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis, young people in **Jordan** have stepped up to create positive change in their communities. From combating the spread of misinformation to ensuring the most vulnerable community members have food during lockdowns, their collective dedication has demonstrated the power of volunteering. UNICEF supports young people as they transition to adulthood to help them engage, build skills, and prepare for meaningful employment, including through the Nahno programme. Nahno aims to instil a proud tradition of volunteering in young people, while also offering them valuable opportunities to build their skills and work experience. To date, Nahno has engaged 47,000 young volunteers in over 1.2 million hours of volunteering work benefiting local communities, government, civil society, and the private sector across Jordan.

The theme of International Volunteer Day 2020 was “*Together we can through volunteering.*” UNICEF continues to provide youth in Jordan with the tools and opportunities they need to become active citizens and to contribute to positive change in their communities through Nahno and the network of Makani centres. Nahno, Jordan’s National Platform for Volunteering and

Engagement, is a programme implemented by Nauaand supported by UNICEF in partnership with the Crown Prince Foundation and in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth. It is generously supported by the Prospects partnership from the Government of the Netherlands. For more information, visit <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/stories/young-volunteers-step-show-leadership-covid-19-response>

Canada | Education and Activism for Women

This year, faced with the impossibility of holding an in-person march, the volunteer-run organization Women's March Ottawa in **Canada** took on a completely new format to champion the inclusion of all women into its movement. From May 1 to May 8, Women's March Ottawa offered online programmes that presented a variety of events, from panel discussions and conversations to an art and community care workshop and a trivia night.

Zimbabwe | Improving the Health of Prisoners

Prison populations across **Zimbabwe** face prejudice, overcrowding, poor nutrition, and lack of essential medication, all barriers to prisoners fully realising their health rights. Substandard conditions contribute to widespread general ill-health, as well as the spread of communicable diseases, including hepatitis, Tuberculous, and HIV, with prisoners in Zimbabwe twice as likely to have HIV and AIDS than the general population

For those living with HIV in particular, stigma and limited support structures prevent many from managing their condition effectively. Since 1982, VSO has worked to improve prisoner access to healthcare and services, and to help prisoners transition to life after incarceration through the provision of livelihood and skills training.

In collaboration with the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service, local government departments, and partner NGOs, VSO supports prisoner wellbeing and access to health services, with a particular focus on responding to high rates of HIV infection and AIDS amongst prison populations. To do this, they train inmates as volunteer peer educators, who provide essential information, advice, and psychosocial support to fellow prisoners and encourage them to get tested and manage their condition effectively.

Volunteer peer educators also work within prisons to raise awareness of communicable diseases and provide essential advice on how to stop them spreading, teaching their peers about the importance of good hygiene and nutrition. They share information on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), encouraging their peers to get tested and explaining the importance of adhering to antiretroviral therapy (ART) for those with HIV. For those who are ill but have been discharged from the prison hospital, volunteers provide cell-based care, including giving bed baths, feeding, collecting rations, administering medication, and counselling.

Through decades of experience, VSO found that inmates more readily embrace SRH information when it comes from volunteer peer educators, because these are their fellow

inmates and peers. To give one example, in Chikurubi Maximum Prison, ART adherence rates doubled from 50% to 100% after the introduction of the peer support scheme. Across VSO's prisons work, over 10,000 inmates now have access to health services, and in one prison, deaths reduced by 84% because of interventions.

Equally important as the advice shared by volunteers is the emotional and psychosocial support they provide. In lieu of the family-, friend- and community-based structures that prisoners may have had on the outside, groups provide a much-needed source of comfort and help during challenging times for those living with HIV. Volunteer peer educators help people to come to terms with having the disease, encouraging them to speak out and helping them to understand that they can manage their condition.

VSO volunteers' work with prisoners does not stop when they leave prison. Volunteers help inmates develop essential livelihood skills and provide training in vocational trades, such as welding, panel beating, tailoring, and hairdressing. There is also ongoing peer support for ex-offenders, with voluntary community-based groups of ex-offenders providing a space for ongoing peer support, helping people to access available health services and supporting people with HIV to live positive and full lives.

GOAL 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Mexico | Changing Attitudes

Use Intelligent's Smart Use educational content generates awareness, improvement, and balance in attitudes in **Mexico** regarding the use / non-use of resources and tools. The key projects of Smart Use are those with positive impacts on stakeholders, society, and ecosystems and that directly or indirectly promote one or more objectives of Smart Use and the 17 UN SDGs. For more information, visit www.usomx.com.

Netherlands | Global Recycling Foundation #RecyclingHeroes

Rien Voets is a symbol of the many people who voluntarily work to reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse every day. After retiring as a Teacher, Rien joined a local municipality in the **Netherlands** to work as a volunteer litter picker. He goes out every day on his bike, which has a trailer hooked up to it, to collect litter all around his township.

GOAL 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Mexico | Changing Attitudes

MY World Mexico has been able to mobilize more than 100,000 volunteer actions in **Mexico** as a result of their annual campaigns focused on raising awareness on the SDGs. At least 90% of these actions during the last five years have included issues focused on climate action. From in-site and virtual workshops, lectures, courses, and policy advocacy in favor of environmental regulations, to massive campaigns such as [Earth Day](#), [World Environment Day](#), [World Oceans Day](#), [Global Week to #Act4SDGs](#) and many others, the organization has been able to mobilize at least 20,000 volunteers on key actions to highlight urgently needed climate action.

Other examples of volunteer action in favor of SDG 13 include MY World Mexico Kids Programme which along with [The World's Largest Lesson](#) engages with teachers and students to learn and discuss climate-related issues and the ways in which children and youth can get involved in advocating for environmental rights. The Accelerators Programme, which includes Ambassadors and Member Organizations across the country, have relentlessly involved volunteers in trash free seas projects in Veracruz, Tlaxcala, Tijuana, Quintana Roo and Oaxaca. These projects have included key partners, such as The Climate Reality Project, Somos Más Decididos, A.C., the UN Environment Programme, the UN SDG Action Campaign, UNODC, UNCT, and many others.

In making sure MY World Mexico pushes forward the discussion on SDG 13, volunteer advocacy has undertaken dialogues with the Mexican Senate for the ratification of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu Agreement), capacity-building, training on reforestation, waste management, capture of GHG, and consumption patterns.

MY World Mexico is also part of the CSOs convened by the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs following-up with the SBSTTA-24 and SBI-3 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as leading projects on Transfer Development on Climate Change for improvement of air quality, water management, and solving issues on environmental matters in partnership with the private sector in states like Puebla.

In addition, MY World Mexico's volunteers have carried out activities related to the circular economy, by promoting responsible consumption and encouraging local private sector companies to generate less waste, reuse or recycle and a significant decrease in greenhouse emissions. Volunteers have also led expert dialogues with experts to discuss climate change with local authorities. For more information, visit: <http://myworldmexico.org/>

Iran | Making Climate Information Accessible

On visiting family in **Iran**, volunteer Sophia Kianni was surprised to learn about the lack of information about climate change in Farsi. Kianni, who is bilingual, began translating English-language articles on climate change into Farsi and sharing them with family. Since she started,

she and a global army of volunteers have translated thousands of pages of critical information about the climate into Farsi and other languages. Her group, the Climate Cardinals, is now an international nonprofit, made up of 8,000 translators all helping to make climate information more accessible.

GOAL 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Uganda | Supporting Street-Connected Children and Youths

When COVID-19 hit **Uganda**, the government implemented a complete lockdown as well as a strict curfew, which put street-connected children and youths (SCCY) at a very high risk, considering that they solely depend on the streets to survive and that they are among the most vulnerable and stigmatized people in Gulu City in Northern Uganda. The measures put in place by the government did not include the protection of such vulnerable people, who were therefore at risk of falling into criminality, exploitation, and potentially death.

Eirene Suisse's volunteer Gaetan Bidaud worked with local partner Hashtag Gulu, an organization aiming at supporting SCCY in Gulu and restoring their dignity and hopes. Together, they opened a temporary shelter for 3 months where 70 SCCY stayed. Besides a bed for the night, SCCY received nutritious meals, medical and psychological support, vocational training, as well as various activities such as sports and arts. Volunteers also seized the opportunity to undertake a research study on SCCY in Gulu in order to shed light on this generally disregarded and forgotten population. This was all possible thanks to the support of volunteers and the involvement of the community and local authorities.

The most obvious impact was that SCCY were safe and secure during this highly dangerous time, and 10 SCCY were reintegrated with their family when that was possible and safe. This was also the occasion to make the problems of SCCY visible, which has worked well considering that it has since become a priority of the local government. Their local partner seized the opportunity to position themselves as a leading organization in the matter.

The management of the shelter allowed the partner CSO to continue its program with SCCY and, more importantly, to strengthen their relationship with their beneficiaries. It is indeed worth mentioning that SCCY have significant trust issues with the population as a whole and NGOs in particular, as they have been deceived many times in the past. Thanks to their commitment and the support of volunteers, the CSO has now gained this trust and will surely be able to strengthen its actions in the future. For more information, visit <https://hashtagulu.org/>.

GOAL 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Tunisia | Providing Face Shields

Hospitals in **Tunisia** did not have a large supply of face shields prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, which became a great problem at the onset of the pandemic. The Social Innovation Hub, EL SPACE, recognized that while the tech field does not have the capability to treat those who are sick, they could support the medical staff by helping them stay healthy to help those who are not. EL SPACE called together locals and makers with 3D printers to provide needed face shields for hospitals and medical staff, using a 3D printed face shield design approved by the ministry of health to ensure they are providing something that can be used in hospitals.

Atlas Corps Alumnus Nino (Class 26, Tunisia) returned home after his Fellowship and started to work as the Executive Director of EL SPACE Social Innovation Hub, which he co-founded in 2015. In 2019, EL SPACE Social Innovation Hub became an affiliate hub of Open Gov Hub, Atlas Corps Host Organization. EL SPACE Social Innovation Hub is a social entrepreneurship and innovation organization that is creating sustainable community practices for a better Tunisia and a better world – such as providing essential protective equipment through this difficult time. EL SPACE does this by supporting innovators in training, networking, and design for their social impact projects.

The shield is made from recycled vegetable plastic. Additionally, while the mask is only sanitary for about 4 hours, it can be disinfected for longer use. It is designed by one of EL SPACE's community members and is printed by people and makers all across Tunisia. There is lots of engagement with anyone with a 3D printer, and many are working day and night to print these and deliver them to the nearest hospital. Right now, there are more than 40 3D printers all working all across Tunisia, and more and more people are engaging every day.

This sustained initiative is called Makers Against Corona, and the organization is taking donations of 3D printer material and 3D printers that are not in use at this time. The ELSPACE lab is using various materials for this initiative and believe that together we can all do our part to support each other in these difficult times. For more information, visit <https://atlascorps.org/alumnus-gathers-makers-to-provide-face-shields-for-hospitals/>.

China | Volunteer Service for the Winter Olympics

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and UN Development Programme (UNDP) launched an innovative project promoting sustainable urban development through volunteer service for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. This project is in partnership with the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF) and China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE).

Contributors: Members of the Volunteer Groups Alliance - <https://forum-ids.org/about/vga/>