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Volunteering in Bolivia and Guatemala boosts national COVID-19 response and recovery

Coordinated responses that do not duplicate, but rather complement, government efforts, and endeavours that induce civil society participation are fortifying the fight against the Novel Coronavirus. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in Bolivia and Guatemala has contributed to generate an enabling environment for volunteering to bolster the COVID-19 response, while simultaneously fulfilling the 2030 Agenda promise to leave no one behind. .

Bolivia: Voluntariado en Acción (V.A. - Volunteers in Action)

The platform Voluntariado en Acción, promoted by UNV in Bolivia, emerged in 2015 in response to copious inquiries from people regarding how they could get involved with the UN system. It mobilizes people of different ages, skills and education to achieve common goals.

“ These people can empower themselves. Many of the young people who participate in the platform are also leaders of youth and

“ volunteer organizations, and they replicate the knowledge and tools that they acquire from the platform [in their organizations]. --Caroline Oviedo, UN Volunteer Communications Officer, Bolivia

V.A. is contributing to the UN Coronavirus response efforts in the country. Volunteers are currently involved in the search for stories that are in alignment with the campaign [#HistoriasQueCuidan](#) (*Stories that save*).

This initiative of the UN showcases inspiring stories of people on the front lines making immense sacrifices, of households in which responsibilities are being shared and gender roles challenged, and of people showing solidarity with those in situations of vulnerability.

Volunteers are also supporting the transcription of the [Bolivia Debate: Un Futuro Sustentable](#) (*Bolivia Debate: A Sustainable Future*) roundtables launched by three national institutions: Instituto Socio Ambiental Bolivia, Universidad Católica Boliviana “San Pablo” and Fundación Jubileo.

The panels encourage the exchange of ideas regarding priority issues in Bolivia – which are inevitably exacerbated by the pandemic – by adopting a structural perspective that includes economic, environmental and social angles. The results of the debates are shared by the national press and through electronic reports.

Guatemala: [Centro de Voluntariado Guatemalteco](#) (CVG – Guatemalan Volunteer Centre)

The CVG, a strategic partner of UNV in Guatemala, focuses on the advancement of the national volunteer movement and the fostering of responsibility in national development by promoting, linking and strengthening organizations engaging volunteers.

In response to the National Youth Council’s call for support on information and prevention campaigns related to the virus, CVG is promoting and disseminating campaigns of various volunteer organizations via its social networks.

The National Youth Council, together with the Ministry of Health, asked for support for the call centre that would provide information to the public about the Coronavirus (e.g. symptoms, prevention measures).

CVG recruited professional volunteers such as doctors, final-year medical students, nurses, psychologists and social workers. In less than 24 hours, 428 volunteers registered – a result that underscores the eagerness of citizens to help.

CVG volunteers also proved vital in helping the government achieve its initial goal of providing 200,000 food packages to low-income families during the crisis. They supported with logistical coordination and packing, and facilitated the coordination and management

of donations through their network of food supply contacts.

UNV has strengthened the volunteer infrastructure and increased visibility within the government over the years. This has engendered the autonomy of the CVG, as well as its propitious position to support the government – specifically, the government’s authority for young people, the National Youth Council (Consejo Nacional de la Juventud, CONJUVE) – in the pandemic response.

UNV is sharing information through its networks about CVG and the response efforts. Esteban Villagrán, Programme Coordination Assistant for Guatemala and Honduras, is the UN Volunteer supporting this effort.

Enabling resilience

UNV contributes to the promotion of volunteer strategies and enhancement of national volunteer infrastructures. Communities with strong volunteerism are concomitantly societies with high social cohesion, and the resulting resilience is indispensable as they face immense global challenges such as this pandemic.

This article was prepared with the kind support of [Online Volunteer](#) Kaylin Lang.



• COVID-19 • Volunteerism

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 3: Good health and well-being](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)