

22 June 2020



UNV townhall meeting on UN75 featuring Under-Secretary-General Fabrizio Hochschild, UNV Executive Coordinator Olivier Adam and UNV Regional Manager Hilda Paparoni with UN Volunteers serving in Latin America and the Caribbean.
© UNV, 2020

The UN at 75: How do we strengthen our mandate in the COVID-19 context?

At the beginning of 2020, no one could have imagined that in May we would be immersed in a global pandemic that would challenge the socioeconomic foundations of development. As the UN turns 75 years old this year, we grasp the opportunity to reflect on the role that multilateral agencies must play in the face of the trends that will mark our immediate future: the accelerated and unequal advancement of technology, increase of conflict and violence, rise in inequality, climate crisis and unprecedented demographic changes.

What role should international cooperation play in the context of interdependent challenges, which are inevitably impacted by COVID-19? How can volunteerism help ensure that these functions are fulfilled?

On 20 May 2020, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme hosted a discussion with Fabrizio Hochschild, UN Under-Secretary-General, Olivier Adam, UNV Executive Coordinator, and Lita Paparoni, UNV Regional Manager. In an online townhall meeting, the three speakers were able to exchange views with some 771 currently serving UN Volunteers in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The discussion touched on the following three issues:

The differentiated and sometimes incompatible profiles of decision-makers influence the

actions taken by the United Nations. How can a proper and timely dialogue be carried out? The capacity of the United Nations system to act as a mediator and bring these interests together will be decisive in ensuring that policies for recovering from the crisis, leaving no one behind.

The adverse effects of the pandemic will be most harmful to those population groups that were already disadvantaged or vulnerable. This scenario disproportionately affects girls, adolescents, and women, who experience, among other issues, higher levels of sexual and gender-based violence. In addition to this, there is an increasing burden of care work, which is compounded by its lack of formal recognition. Furthermore, we live in a region where environmental defenders are persecuted, criminalized and killed.

The United Nations system has been promoting actions to counteract the unfair and illogical situation that women are experiencing, not only from the human rights perspective, but also from the economic viewpoint. The countries of the region cannot afford to neglect the social capital that women contribute. Another aim is to make the critical role of environmental advocates in the protection of ecosystems visible.

The value of volunteerism. The significant contribution of volunteerism lies not only in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda, but, above all, including the most vulnerable people in this process. Volunteerism identifies existing development gaps and makes them visible, so that they can be reduced, thereby ensuring effective responses in crisis contexts. This unique value of volunteerism represents a strong basis for social cohesion and proves indispensable in placing people at the centre of post-pandemic measures.

This article was prepared with the kind support of [Online Volunteers](#) Gerardo Carballo and Kaylin Lang.

[Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)