Transforming decision making at UNV through data, statistics and business intelligence

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has introduced a complete Enterprise Business Intelligence (BI) solution, with the aim of transforming UNV into a data-driven decision-making organization. We are using Microsoft BI technologies (ranked #1 in 2020 by Gartner) for BI data to optimize our volunteer recruitment and management, finance, procurement, support and corporate planning.

2020 is the year when UNV moved towards strong financial BI capabilities, which has facilitated delivering an exhaustive, accessible and accurate financial picture of the organization and set the baseline for stronger financial monitoring and forecasting.

"We are proud that UNV has invested into BI and that through our digital transformation project we are transforming how UNV is using data and statistics for all critical domains. --Frederic Le Maistre, Chief, ICT Unit at UNV"
Many additional BI initiatives have taken place under UNV’s Digital Transformation project. We have trained UNV staff to generate their own self-service reports, by giving them access to corporate data and enabling them to enhance their reporting skills. We also developed a mobile version of the most critical reports, so they can be used anywhere and on any device.

“Statistics is a science that help us to better understand the world and our work and take decisions. In combination with business intelligence, it represents art for me. --Monija Frey, Programme Associate (Results-based Management), Executive Office

To engage with staff in conversation, we have a dedicated channel called UNV Business Intelligence on Microsoft Stream, where we regularly post videos with PowerBI tips, new features, feedback from users and data talks. We also created a popular series.
on Women in Data, featuring colleagues using BI in their day-to-day work. --Bansi Zala, Data Analyst at UNV

BI is now at the heart of the organization and we can trigger the creation of a report for any process that can benefit from analyses. This is used to make decision of all types, for example investments, performance, data quality, contract management, procurement, project management, staffing, volunteer management process improvements and efficiency gain monitoring.

"We have invested a big effort into democratizing the data not only within UNV, but also across the UN system and among data professionals," Luis Lopez shares, UNV Data Analyst. "For the first time, UNV has been featured in Microsoft Data Gallery."

We are sharing live data and reports on our website and directly with other UN organizations, to transmit a clear picture of UN Volunteers serving with them – in real time and historically. Live up-to-date donor infographics are available on our website. In addition to this, dozens of Online Volunteers have worked with the open data UNV has published to create several data visualizations of our volunteer figures. --Luis Lopez, Systems Development Specialist at UNV

We leveraged the UNV digital transformation project to boost our BI delivery in 2019 and 2020 with the following major deliverables:

- Daily UN Volunteer trends reports related to COVID-19;
- Talent Pool statistics;
- Break-even calculator to monitor at global/regional/country level the cost recovered versus expenditures – this tool became an indispensable part of UNV daily analytics;
- Recruitment and deployment tracker to analyze performance and efficiency of UNV recruitment and deployment processes;
- UNV Workplan progress report (Budgeting, Planning, Monitoring and reporting). UNV is now able to monitor all workplan activities of each department, forecasting budgeting needs and monitoring live budget utilization;
- Procurement report with complete overview and detailed analysis of all procurement items with their status, highlights, payments, trends and timelines;
- Assets Management overview report. Overview of all UNV assets per department, cost, depreciation, quantities;
- Financial resource/project utilization monitoring to facilitate day-to-day project
utilization monitoring. This report is a great example of innovation using latest cloud technologies (BI, Robotic Process automation, SharePoint Online). Thanks to the integration of robotic automation to generate all financial data, we were able to automate a process which could not be done by human intervention;

- Cost-Recovery Monitoring Tool: as cost-recovery contributes to the financial sustainability of UNV, this tool provides an essential data source to enable timely and diligent monitoring of results;
- Financial Contribution Report: this is aimed at simplifying all reporting required across UNV, from partnerships monitoring and reporting and mission planning, to management/financial reporting and annual reporting. It is a one-stop shop for all contribution-related questions and is refreshed daily;
- Detailed human resource report with a complete overview of UNV staff, gender/country distribution and the history of all contract data at the global/regional and country level – this report really saved tremendous time for our Human Resources Section; and
- Service desk report to analyze the request tickets received from partners, workload distribution, performance and qualitative feedback received per agent.

"I’d like to reiterate that this BI report is amazing and I have already generated it several times! The system makes it really easy to find and use our data. --UNV staff member"

We are grateful to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) for its support to UNV’s Digital Transformation project, which has enabled our innovative pathway.

• Digital Transformation • Germany • business intelligence • World Statistics Day

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals