



Online Volunteers are passionate about helping, even virtually or from a distance, and can add value to any team, like Online Volunteers Sonia Agarwal (Slovakia, on the left) and Ildikó Dén-Nagy (Hungary).

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Online Volunteers in times of war: helping from a distance

When war broke out in Ukraine, Oksana Udovyyk was in dire need of additional expertise to support the response. The head of Experimentation at the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Accelerator Lab in the country selected four Online Volunteers to help create emergency web pages, maps and chatbots. Little did she know that they would soon become a source of energy for the team.

Online Volunteers are valuable assets in implementing projects that require data analysis and digital technologies. The [SDG AI Lab](#) at UNDP Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development (IICPSD) brought together over 100 Online Volunteers from 45 countries under its Volunteer Data Scientists initiative, a partnership with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

The initiative received more than 1,000 online applications during four rounds of recruitment. In the upcoming weeks, a new cohort of Online

Volunteer data scientists will start their work on projects related to social listening, vulnerability mapping and digitalization of everyday processes in the United Nations.

“ Online Volunteers donate their time and their contribution to the public good and can use this experience to append projects to their data science portfolio. --Dina Akylbekova (Kazakhstan), UN Volunteer Outreach and Partnerships Analyst with IICPSD’s SDG AI Lab

Naomi Levy, an Online Volunteer from France based in Nairobi, joined UNDP’s Accelerator Labs in Ukraine with the task of estimating innovative approaches for emergency response and later recovery. She mapped different types of urban shelters and reconstruction initiatives.

She also developed an application that unites Ukrainians abroad around work opportunities. "The fantastic thing about online volunteering is that you can help a cause while being far away and even if you do not have experience with the UN," she says.

“ I love working with Online Volunteer enthusiasts. They are indeed full of ideas. Lily Ounekeo, a visual and verbal storyteller who I have worked with within the Biomimicry Innovation Challenge in Ukraine really gave UNDP communications a human voice with her creativity. --Oksana Udovik, Head of Experimentation at UNDP’s Accelerator Labs in Ukraine

"Online Volunteers are amazing professionals who are highly motivated to

help," echoes Olena Tarasova-Krasiieva, a Project Manager who also worked with Online Volunteers for the UNDP project in Ukraine before 2022.

The skills and drive of Online Volunteers are a useful asset when emergency calls to action require widespread outreach, as is the case in the United Nations response to the war in Ukraine. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Health Organization (WHO) and UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) are currently recruiting onsite UN Volunteers psychologists, coordinators and communication experts. These volunteers will support refugees from Ukraine in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

To aid the recruitment process and expand UNV's talent pool, more than 30 Online Volunteers are disseminating volunteer opportunities to potential candidates in the region in their local languages.

One of these is Sonia Agarwal, an Online Volunteer who helped identify and approach job portals in her home country, Slovakia. With guidance from UNV, Sonia launched a social media campaign to broaden talent acquisition in the region.

“ Our team of Online Volunteers is diverse and global. We have team members working from Ukraine, Russia, Barbados and the United Arab Emirates. Every one of us brings our uniqueness, language skills and insights for a common goal. --Sonia Agarwal, Online Volunteer



Online Volunteers in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia introduced UNV to 600 job portals and organizations. Their aim was to motivate skilled professionals to apply for opportunities and disseminate information to the relevant audiences through these channels.

Ildikó Dén-Nagy (Hungary) is another Online Volunteer with ten years of experience in scientific research and needs assessment. The mother of three children volunteered with her family to support those fleeing Ukraine. They delivered bottled water and hygiene products to those in need, and even provided temporary accommodation to a Ukrainian family.

Then Ildikó became an Online Volunteer, offering her expertise in coordinating international online projects, mapping and reporting.

“ I wanted to do more by utilizing my complex skillset. While browsing the site of UNV, I discovered a wide range of opportunities. Online tasks gave me a chance to align volunteering with my flexible work and family commitments. --Ildikó Dén-Nagy, Online

Volunteer



Online Volunteers also serve as developers and teachers, counsellors and managers, designers and translators. The range of profiles Online Volunteers have and the tasks they can support through UNV's Online Volunteering service are endless.

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