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UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME

Report of the Secretary-General and the Administrator
of the United Nations Development Programme

INTRODUCTION

1. During the course of 1972, the United Nations Volunteers programme was reviewed in detail by the Governing Council of the UNDP at its thirteenth and fourteenth sessions, 1/ by the Economic and Social Council at its twenty-seventh session 2/ and by the General Assembly. The General Assembly, in resolution 2970 (XXVII), took note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Volunteers programme (E/5146) and expressed satisfaction with the progress of the programme. It also requested the Secretary-General and the Administrator to report, through the Governing Council and the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session on the progress made in implementing the provisions of the resolution.
2. The present report reflects the experience gained during the initial two years of operational activities since the establishment of the programme and is designed to keep the Governing Council informed of current progress. In formulating the basic policies and procedures for the implementation of the programme, the Administrator was guided primarily by the following terms of reference outlined in General Assembly resolution 2659 (XXV) establishing the Volunteer programme:

1/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-third Session, Supplement Nos. 2 and 2A, chapters V and III, respectively.

2/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 3, paras. 152-157 and 166.

"Convinced also that voluntary service in development assistance activities is a rewarding form of such participation and one that can make a substantial contribution to their success by the provision of an additional source of trained manpower, provided that:

(a) Such service is well planned and directed, utilizes volunteers recruited and serving on as wide a geographical basis as possible, including in particular the developing countries, and the necessary resources are made available,

(b) Volunteers have the technical and personal qualifications required for the development of recipient countries, including the transfer of skills,

(c) Volunteers are not sent to a country without the explicit request and approval of the recipient Governments concerned."

3. The preparatory phase of the programme was based on the recognition that it should be properly introduced to Governments of developing countries as a new and valuable source of multilateral development assistance through the provision of highly motivated and technically qualified personnel at the intermediate level, at relatively modest cost. At the field level, the UNDP resident representatives were entrusted with the responsibility for promoting the programme and for ascertaining the willingness of Governments to formally request the service. Resident representatives were also charged with undertaking the subsequent programming exercise leading to an identification of suitable programme assignments within given projects in partnership with field personnel of the specialized agencies. The active support and co-operation of participating and executing agencies and organizations in the United Nations system in ensuring progressive and systematic integration of United Nations volunteers in their projects was accepted as especially important.

4. The programming, administrative and financial arrangements for the programme were evolved in close consultation with concerned participating and executing agencies and organizations in the United Nations system, also taking into account the views of international and national voluntary organizations. It was recognized that the creation of a voluntary service in the context of United Nations development assistance called for a pragmatic approach with emphasis on flexibility at the level of implementation. In particular, such questions as the development of United Nations volunteers assignments in United Nations system projects, the negotiation of agreements with recipient Governments, improved planning and programming of the United Nations volunteer component with due regard to the special nature of voluntary service and motivation; recruitment and relationship with sponsoring organizations, uniform and acceptable conditions of service for United Nations volunteers and volunteer support at the field level have demanded continuous and periodic surveys with a view to evolving suitable long-term policies.

5. Additionally, the clear interest voiced by many young people in participating in the programme, coupled with the desire of numerous volunteer agencies to participate, placed substantial administrative demands on the programme, especially

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in recruitment. Accordingly, it was decided to utilize the services of international institutions with experience and professional expertise in the field of volunteer service during the early phase of UNV.

I. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE

6. As of 31 March 1973, 161 volunteers from 27 countries, including nine developing countries, have been assigned to 19 different countries. Recruitment is currently under way for 121 new posts and is expected to bring the total programme assignments to 250. With increasing awareness of the programme's objectives and potential impact among Governments, resident representatives and agency personnel and, as a result of positive evaluations of the work of United Nations volunteers in the initial stages, a growing momentum in new requests has been shown by the fact that in the last four months, 90 new requests for volunteers have been received. Negotiations on future assignments are at present continuing with several developing countries.

7. A status report of volunteer assignments listing participating countries - both as recipients and donors - is contained in the annex to this report. While these figures reflect a modest beginning, they indicate that a substantial number of countries are interested in participating in the programme. As mandated by the General Assembly, United Nations volunteers are sent to meet well-defined manpower needs at the intermediate level in development projects implemented by United Nations agencies. Accordingly, the recruitment and selection of volunteers has been geared to technical standards established by agencies of the United Nations system prior to final acceptance by recipient Governments.

8. Most requests for United Nations volunteers to date have been for fairly specialized, junior expert personnel. For example, in Chad and in Togo, United Nations volunteers are assisting in the development of forest resources and wildlife conservation. A large group of volunteers in Iran, working in such diverse areas as functional literacy programmes, industrial engineering, electronics, road construction, animal husbandry, forestry and hotel management, is engaged in a broad range of projects executed by several United Nations agencies. In Lesotho and the Yemen Arab Republic, teams of volunteers, working closely with local communities and farmers, are engaged in such fields as agronomy, agricultural extension, ground-water exploration, road surveying, irrigation water supply, soil science and veterinary science. The foregoing illustrates the basic principle that United Nations volunteers should generally be assigned to work at the grass roots level. Further examples include a team of technical instructors presently teaching a variety of skills in youth camps in Jamaica, a group of volunteers assigned as teachers of public administration in Niger, and several volunteer agriculturalists assisting in the implementation of a rice cultivation improvement scheme in Liberia. A few volunteers are also serving at junior professional levels in UNDP field offices.

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9. These examples of the activities undertaken during this initial phase of the programme operations suggest that it is capable of mobilizing young people to play important roles in the United Nations development system. The majority of assignments for United Nations volunteers thus far have been largely of a technical nature. As awareness of the advantages of utilizing volunteer manpower spreads throughout the United Nations system, a wider role for volunteers may be envisaged. The kind of projects which particularly lend themselves to an international team of young volunteers with a moderate level of technical skills include youth activities, paramedical activities such as public health education and family planning projects, urban and rural sanitation projects, rural development schemes, social welfare, low-cost home improvement schemes, "village technology" centres, child and adult education, work-oriented literacy projects, simple building, road construction, irrigation and water development schemes, and agricultural extension work. In this way maximum use could be made of the manpower resource which the programme represents.

II. LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

10. A number of restraining factors in the early phase of the programme's activities may also be noted. First, the programme had to overcome the natural reservations of Governments regarding an untested source of technical assistance. An additional constraint has been that, unlike many bilateral volunteer programmes, Governments in countries other than the 25 least developed were asked to bear the in-country costs of United Nations volunteers as charges against their indicative planning figures. The financial modalities of the programme also have restricted participation largely to UNDP financed projects. Owing to limited resources, the regular and other programmes of organizations of the United Nations system have not been able generally to take advantage of the volunteer assistance.

11. Apart from increased use of volunteers in UNDP-assisted projects, there would also seem to be scope for a more intensive participation by agencies and programmes such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) capable of utilizing larger numbers of United Nations volunteers.

12. There also have been certain inherent difficulties in recruitment. A number of organizations are finding it difficult enough to recruit suitable persons with technical qualifications for their own bilateral programmes and thus the volunteer programme requests have in many instances caused genuine difficulty. As to the developing countries, it has taken some time to establish proper channels for tapping potential sources for volunteer selection and recruitment.

13. At the field level, the programme has experienced certain problems inevitable in a programme of such complexity. For instance, the selection of a few inappropriate projects during early stages created difficulties. Some posts to which volunteers were assigned did not coincide with the job descriptions circulated as the basis for recruitment; other posts proved to be ill-suited for

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the assignment of volunteers. Some volunteers found that they were not fully employed, and a few found that the tasks assigned to them were neither rewarding nor in line with their qualifications and experience. Frustration has been noted also when volunteers have been assigned to desk and office research jobs where the routine and discipline tend to suppress their natural spirit of initiative and their desire to work directly with the local populations.

III. MOBILIZATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAMME

A. Country programmes and general programming guidelines

14. The Administrator has encouraged Governments and specialized agencies to give special consideration to the progressive and proper integration of United Nations volunteer in-puts in country programming exercises, and a number of recent country programmes have made appropriate provision for the services of United Nations volunteers. It is hoped that this initial experience will stimulate the expanded provision of programme participation in the early stages of the planning and formulation of projects.

15. The Administrator, together with the specialized agencies, has drawn on the initial experience of operating the volunteer programme and is formulating programming guidelines to assist those responsible. These guidelines highlight the need for planning and proper identification of projects and the required volunteer in-puts with due consideration to the specific nature of voluntary service. The following basic provisions were defined:

(a) A volunteer assignment should have clear, identifiable and attainable goals which are related to the over-all objectives of a United Nations project or where volunteers can have a measurable impact;

(b) Volunteer activities may be especially relevant in demonstration and extension activities at the grass roots level;

(c) Whenever possible, the volunteer's work should be directly associated with local counterparts able to continue the work. Volunteers are often useful in bridging the gap which sometimes exists between the high-level experts and planners from the population concerned;

(d) Volunteers should be encouraged to give ideas and suggestions for improving the efforts of the projects and agencies with which they are working.

16. Among the specific functions which volunteer assignments would perform, the following were noted:

(a) Transmitting a variety of skills and techniques to the local population;

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(b) Facilitating extension activities of projects in such a way that volunteers can supervise and execute, in collaboration with local personnel, the instructions given by experts;

(c) Providing feedback to the United Nations staff which could help keep projects relevant, valid and efficient, in relation to the real needs and aspirations of the local community;

(d) Achieving a better integration of personnel of internationally assisted projects into local society;

(e) Effectively assisting the experts by releasing them from time-consuming work which does not necessarily require their expertise;

(f) Reducing the number of experts in cases where international personnel have been hired under expert contracts due to lack of qualified local personnel for administrative functions or for tasks at the intermediate technical level.

17. The guidelines listed above seek to reconcile the basic task of the programme to provide suitably qualified volunteers to assist in the implementation of development projects of the United Nations with concepts which frequently conflict. Firstly, certain volunteer sponsoring agencies question a narrow emphasis on technical qualifications. Secondly, it is a fact that these agencies find volunteers with less specialized backgrounds more readily available and thus experience serious difficulties in recruiting a sufficient number of highly skilled volunteers for their own bilateral programmes.

B. Recruitment

18. The volunteer programme enjoys the intrinsic advantage of being able to tap the resources of both developed and developing countries. This has helped it to maintain a high standard of qualification among the United Nations volunteers. Of the total number of volunteers fielded so far, 110 have come from developed countries, while 51 were from developing countries. With the establishment of proper machinery for recruitment in developing countries, the proportion of volunteers from these countries is likely to grow considerably in the future. A number of developing countries are particularly able to provide qualified persons for service and there is a strong latent interest in serving as United Nations volunteers among nationals of developing countries. In addition, experience thus far suggests that United Nations volunteers from developing countries have shown a ready adaptability to local conditions in their host countries, thus creating an over-all favourable impression and heightening their effectiveness.

19. A further positive aspect of participation by developing countries as donors of United Nations volunteers - which may be increasingly relevant in future - is that programme assignments provide valuable training to their own nationals which could be utilized to advantage in their own development efforts. This factor has apparently encouraged the Governments of developing countries to support the programme.

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C. Clearing-house arrangements

20. In the initial phase, recruitment was entrusted primarily to two international volunteer organizations, namely, the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service (ISVS) and the Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS). Approximately 83 per cent of the total number of 161 United Nations volunteers fielded so far have been recruited by ISVS and the remainder by CCIVS and other organizations. An agreement between the programme and ISVS was concluded initially for a period of 24 months from 1 May 1971 to 31 April 1973. The Administrator has recently proposed to ISVS an extension of this contract through June 1974.

21. The extension of this agreement is based on the understanding that during this interim period the programme would take parallel steps necessary to establish its own recruitment machinery. The Administrator believes that the programme ultimately should assume the principal responsibility for its own recruitment, working directly with sponsoring agencies and organizations (governmental and non-governmental) interested in participating in the programme. It is felt that such an arrangement would result in improved efficiency, administrative simplicity and economy by combining functions such as recruitment, training and field orientation. The programme already has drawn to some degree on resident representatives' offices and agency field personnel as important channels for recruitment of volunteers from the developing countries.

22. While co-operation with CCIVS was also initially established in the field of recruitment, CCIVS recently indicated that, in view of its own priorities in other fields of voluntary service, it did not wish to continue in the capacity of a recruiting agency.

23. The Administrator has taken particular note of the growing importance and desire in many developing countries to involve their youth in more activity in the development process through the establishment of domestic volunteer services. Moreover, the subject of establishing effective channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and international youth organizations has been the subject of consideration by the General Assembly (resolutions 2497 (XXIV) and 2633 (XXV)).

24. For the interim period and pending clarification of what role UNV may be called upon to play in this increasingly important field, the Administrator has agreed to explore, with UNESCO and possibly other agencies, the possibility of providing assistance to a few selected pilot projects involving domestic volunteer services in which the experience and services of CCIVS and its affiliates at the field level might be utilized.

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D. Training

25. It has been necessary thus far to adopt a pragmatic approach to the training for United Nations volunteers. Since the numbers involved are relatively few, and in most cases volunteers have been recruited from a wide range of countries and have tended to take up their assignments at different periods, it has not proved feasible to organize formal pre-service training courses on a regular basis.

26. The programme has therefore placed greater emphasis on in-country orientation and briefing courses on arrival in the countries of service. These orientations are generally organized with the active assistance of resident representatives and agency field personnel. An example of in-country training exists in Iran where a large team of United Nations volunteers have been placed. In this case, the host Government has, at its own cost, made available all facilities, including personnel, to provide proper in-country training. These courses are held for a duration of seven to eight weeks.

27. In addition, and specifically with regard to candidates from developed countries, sponsoring organizations in many instances provided pre-service training to those they sponsored by them for UNV service.

E. Further development of the programme

28. Based on the programme's experience to date, and on consultations with the agencies utilizing the majority of the United Nations volunteers currently in the field, it has been agreed to concentrate on expanding the programme in a relatively limited number of countries, particularly in those among the least developed nations, by exploring with Governments, resident representatives and agency field representatives the prospects for fielding teams of United Nations volunteers. This expansion would take place without prejudice to the programme now in operation in a substantial number of countries.

29. The advantages of the volunteer team approach are many, the most significant being improved programming, longer lead time for recruiting volunteers, better possibilities for more effective training, and improved prospects for providing solid administrative support and supervision to the volunteers once they are in the field.

30. The question of strengthening in-country volunteer support is a continuing concern of the programme, and the co-operating volunteer sponsoring organizations. It is recognized that resident representatives' offices will need to be appropriately equipped to undertake increasing responsibilities which may arise from the placement of larger teams of volunteers in one country. While it is not proposed that the programme should have an elaborate field structure for the support of volunteers, some reinforcement of the field offices will be considered where necessary. One possibility would be to assign junior professional officers or experienced volunteers with primary responsibility for assisting in administration at the field level in four to six key countries.

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31. Experience also indicates that the programme may be able to make an especially significant contribution in the least developed countries and it is planned to focus on these countries in developing the team approach. A growing interest on the part of these countries in receiving assistance has been observed, prompted in part by the Administrator's authorization of use of UNDP programme reserve funds to meet in-country volunteer costs in the least developed countries, as indicated in his report (DP/L.263) to the Governing Council at its fifteenth session. These costs will amount to about \$270,000 in 1973.

IV. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Administrative budget

32. In line with previous recommendations of the Governing Council concerning economy and taking into account both the growth of programme activities and the need for efficiency, the Administrator and the Co-ordinator have made every effort to maintain a modest administrative unit for the programme. Accordingly, a total saving of \$161,800 was effected during 1972 in the administrative budget. Out of the approved budget of \$390,800, total expenditure incurred for the programme amounted to \$229,000. The bulk of the saving arose from postponement of recruitment of approved posts during this period.

B. The Special Voluntary Fund

33. Contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund, established under General Assembly resolution 2659 (XXV), have now reached a total of \$337,505. The pledges listed below have been made as of 31 March 1973.

Contributions from Governments

Contributions from non-governmental
and private sources

(United States dollars)

	<u>First pledge</u> <u>1971-1972</u>	<u>Second pledge</u> <u>1972-1973</u>		
Canada	20,200		Friends World Committee for	
Cyprus	240		Consultation (Quakers)	3,000
Denmark	10,000	15,000	New York Interprovincial	
Federal Republic			Council of the Third Order	
of Germany	22,050		of St. Francis (Caritas)	900
Holy See	1,500		Wayland United Nations	
India	10,000		Committee	100
Indonesia	1,000			
Iran	10,000	20,000	Contributions from	
Iraq	1,000		individuals	15
Israel	1,000		Commission on Voluntary	
Laos	1,000		Service and Action	200
Lebanon	1,000			
Morocco	5,000			
Pakistan	1,100			
Switzerland	10,000			
Togo	700			
Turkey	2,500			
United States				
of America	200,000			

34. General Assembly resolution 2659 (XXV) leaves the use of the Fund flexible for the support of "the activities of the United Nations Volunteers". In practice, the Fund has been used primarily to meet external costs of volunteers from developing countries (international travel, resettlement allowance etc.). Experience indicates that external costs for each volunteer recruited from a developing country for a period of two years amount to an average of \$2,400. However, it has been necessary to make limited use of the Fund for the following additional purposes:

(a) Local and in-country costs of volunteer assignments in certain selected projects where, owing to limited resources in project budgets, volunteer assignments cannot be undertaken. These would include projects assisted by the regular programmes of the specialized agencies including other activities financed outside the scope of UNDP assistance;

(b) Miscellaneous and contingency expenses for which provision cannot be made from available resources within project budgets. These costs would, for example, include such expenses as may result from unforeseen hardships, from illness or accident or other costs connected with the reassignment of volunteers.

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V. SUMMARY

35. The relatively brief experience in the implementation of the United Nations Volunteers indicates that the programme is viable and capable of rendering a valuable contribution to the development activities of the United Nations system. The programme also highlights the inherent complexities of introducing this new element within the existing framework of United Nations development assistance and thus calls for a high degree of initiative and imagination in its implementation.

36. The Administrator considers that the programme should be progressively expanded and concentrate its activities in areas in which a maximum impact can be achieved in the field of development. This will be done by (a) fielding teams of volunteers in a selected number of countries; (b) concentrating on the least developed countries; (c) increasing the relative number of volunteers from developing countries; and (d) increasing the capacity of the field offices by assigning field staff (experienced ex-volunteers) responsible for volunteer support in a few key countries.

37. Now that the initial phase of programme activities is over, the next phase will involve a consolidation of activities, strengthening of the capacity of the UNDP and the United Nations Volunteers programme to undertake all the complex tasks involved in this operation, and integration of the programming of volunteer assistance more fully into the over-all country programming process, thereby ensuring that the United Nations Volunteers achieves the role envisaged when the General Assembly approved the inauguration of this programme in resolution 2659 (XXV).

Annex

STATUS OF UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS AS OF 31 MARCH 1973

I. Status of volunteer assignments

Total number of posts officially requested	322 in 38 countries
Posts filled	161
Posts for which candidates have been submitted but not yet accepted	40
Vacant posts	121
Number of volunteers in service or "en route" to assignment	137
Volunteers who have completed their assignments.	24
Total of volunteers engaged from 1 September 1971 and 31 March 1973	161

II. Countries in which volunteers are serving

(a) Africa:

Botswana (1), Chad (1), Gambia (1),
Ghana (2), Lesotho (3), Liberia (3),
Malawi (1), Niger (6), Senegal (1),
Sudan (1), Swaziland (1), Togo (7) = 12 countries

Subtotal 28 = 26.9%

(b) Middle East:

Yemen Arab Republic (21) = 1 country

Subtotal 21 = 20.2%

(c) Latin America and Caribbean:

Haiti (1), Jamaica (17),
El Salvador (1), Paraguay (1),
Peru (1) = 5 countries

Subtotal 21 = 20.2%

(d) Asia:

Iran (34) = 1 country

Subtotal 34 = 32.7%

Total

19 countries 104 volunteers

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III. Recruitment

Origin of United Nations volunteers in service (by country)

Developed countries

Australia (1), Austria (4), Belgium (2), Canada (1),
Denmark (3), Finland (2), Federal Republic of Germany (4),
Ireland (8), Italy (3), Japan (5), Netherlands (2),
New Zealand (2), Norway (1), Portugal (1), Sweden (5),
Switzerland (3), United Kingdom (11), United States
of America (15)

= 18 countries

Subtotal 73 = 70.1%

Developing countries

Argentina (3), Chile (4), Egypt (3), Ghana (1),
India (1), Iran (3), Kenya (1), Pakistan (3),
Philippines (12)

= 9 countries

Subtotal 31 = 29.9%
