



**Reimagining  
Volunteering**  
for the 2030 Agenda  
JULY 2020

## Call to Action

### Volunteering in the Decade of Action

#### Preamble

We celebrate the spirit of all forms of volunteering and applaud action, contributions and efforts by all types of volunteers across the globe in helping meet the goals and principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and leave no one behind.

We acknowledge the shared urgency and ambition to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the nature and conclusions of the global technical meeting on reimagining volunteering for the 2030 Agenda held on 13-16 July 2020.

We recognize the progress and collective efforts of Member States of the United Nations, the United Nations system, volunteering involving organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia to implement the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereinafter the plan of action). We also recognize the pivotal role that volunteering has played in the recent global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking note of the incremental progress made across the three objectives of the plan of action – ownership, integration and measurement, we pledge to do more to:

- Ensure that volunteering translates into more meaningful ownership of the development agenda by all people to achieve the SDGs, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status;
- Recognize through integrated national, sectoral and local plans how all types of volunteers can contribute as innovators, entrepreneurs, leaders, experts and valued partners to drive SDG action and progress;
- Develop, pilot and use new tools and approaches to measure and better understand the scale, scope and economic and social contributions of volunteering as part of strengthening a knowledge base.

#### The vision: Volunteering in the Decade of Action for the SDGs



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Volunteering is a unique resource for the transformation and acceleration of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In the Decade of Action, we will contribute to the collective efforts of all stakeholders to:

- **Mobilize everyone, everywhere**
- **Demand urgency and ambition**
- **Supercharge ideas to solutions**

**We commit, and call on others to commit, through this Call to Action to implement the vision of volunteering for the Decade of Action where:**

- The full diversity of volunteering practices, particularly in the global South, is recognised and supported
- The transformational potential of volunteering is cultivated
- The volunteering policy environment responds to shifts in volunteering patterns as well as the sustainable development landscape
- Volunteering is better integrated into policies and planning as part of ‘whole-of-society’ approaches to the 2030 Agenda
- Stakeholders form new partnerships and alliances that can help maximise the impact of volunteer efforts towards the SDGs
- Actors invest in new ways that empower and protect volunteers, including new policies and safeguards, particularly for local and informal volunteers

By committing to this vision, we will boost the principles of the 2030 Agenda by:

- **Going further** through targeted investments in the resilience of people and communities of diverse backgrounds through volunteering
- **Going faster** with volunteering as a mechanism for ‘whole-of-society’ partnerships that accelerate progress towards pressing global challenges such as inequality and climate change
- **Going together** with volunteering as a channel for voice and ownership, particularly by women and girls, persons with disability, indigenous peoples, refugees and any other groups often considered excluded.

### **How do we achieve this vision?**

Over the next decade, we will:



## **1. Scale up access to volunteering and volunteering opportunities across the SDGs**

- Boost engagement with volunteers to strengthen integrated approaches across the SDGs, for example, in areas of digital communities, financial inclusion, resilient cities, gender equality and social cohesion
- Support ways to recognize informal volunteering as a relevant means to contribute to addressing global challenges that require local and people action, without undermining its unique values and attributes
- Encourage the private sector to scale up its support to diverse volunteer movements

## **2. Ensure that volunteering is well supported beyond formal, organization-based opportunities**

- Increase resources for people that volunteer informally, including through interactive spaces for knowledge, training and information; online and onsite informal platforms to seek ideas and guidance from others; tools and networks that enable volunteers to reflect and learn from their experiences and provide a sense of solidarity, even for those acting alone
- Develop new forms of engagement, coordination and cooperation that keep the spirit of informal volunteering, for example, as part of preparedness plans to support surges in volunteering during crises, or to sustain engagement from one issue-based campaign to another

## **3. Address inequalities and risks in volunteering**

- Remove barriers to volunteering for groups furthest behind, including through policies and programmes that cover resources from costs incurred by volunteer activities, to access to technologies
- Promote measures that promote equality, diversity and inclusion and open up the most beneficial opportunities, rewards and accreditation to those who would benefit most, for example, youth not in education or employment
- Promote and enact policies, safeguards and norms that remove inequalities in volunteering tasks and benefits between and across genders, age and social groups



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- Ensure the safety and security of volunteers by implementing new models for insurance, physical and mental health support and building support for the protection of volunteers in humanitarian work

#### **4. Strengthen structures for people's ownership of development processes through volunteering**

- Facilitate the establishment of structures and initiatives such as voluntary commissions that bring people together through voluntary action to look at complex development challenges
- Ensure that volunteer-led data and insights are meaningfully integrated into development processes, for example, investment in both digital and non-digital data and information platforms through which people can both input and create knowledge on the issues that affect them as well as on volunteering
- Recognize and support people led mechanisms and bodies of formal and informal nature, for example, volunteer SDG councils or social dialogues at the local, national and regional level that enable volunteers and volunteer supporters to share their needs, priorities, feedback and experiences, as part of 'whole-of-society' responses

#### **5. Create new models for voluntary action to supercharge ideas to solutions**

- Create and widen space and resources for experts to volunteer their knowledge and capacities – time-bound and context specific – for Member States and other development actors to help design sustainable development solutions
- Scale up and invest in new models and tools which align volunteer led sustainable development solutions to volunteer identified challenges
- Support the creation of informal virtual spaces where innovative ideas for voluntary action can be shared by diverse stakeholders including volunteers, policy actors, practitioners, academia and the private sector, with the aim of accelerating all types of knowledge sharing, including the sharing of local knowledge, beyond immediate communities
- Continue mobilizing resources and people's energy to create opportunities for individuals and teams to provide new perspectives from openly available data to supercharge ideas to solutions

#### **6. Measure the impact on well-being of volunteers and the 2030 Agenda**



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- Invest in national data on participation trends and patterns to help understand who volunteers and the roles that they play, in particular, using global standards and tools developed by the International Labour Organization
- Diversify approaches to understanding the costs and benefits of volunteering, not only to organizations benefiting from volunteering, but also to volunteers themselves and society at large as well as culturally appropriate ways of assessing the impact
- Further work on impact models so that policy actors can better understand the lasting impact of volunteering at all levels, as well as the relative impact of different models and approaches to volunteering and further recognize its value resulting in policy coherence and integration

## **7. Strengthen the alignment of volunteer efforts with SDG gaps and challenges**

- Ensure that the broad diversity of volunteering practices, approaches and models are thoroughly assessed as policy options to transform and fill SDG gaps and challenges at the global, regional, national and local levels, including through their integration into national, sectoral and local strategies and plans.
- Better reflect the diverse and unique approaches to reimagined volunteering and their transformational and accelerative effect on Member State-led SDG pathways and trajectories by moving beyond the positive contribution of interventions and projects involving only volunteers.

### **How will we work together?**

- We call for the passion, commitment, leadership, creativity and innovation of all stakeholders, including Member States of the United Nations, the United Nations system, volunteering involving organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia to engage in our reimagined approach to volunteering for the Decade of Action.
- We call for the deepening engagement and common solidarity of the global community of volunteers to help deliver the SDGs.
- We call for the sharing of new evidence and knowledge to strengthen the potential and impact of volunteering for the 2030 Agenda as well as the financing to support



generation of evidence and knowledge, particularly by actors from the global South.

- We call for expanded and diverse kinds of collaborations, alliances and partnerships that bring together diverse viewpoints, skills and models in more rapid and flexible ways to reenergize volunteering for the SDGs.

Looking forward to 2030 and beyond, we aspire to celebrate the spirit of all forms of volunteering and applaud action, contributions and efforts by all types of volunteers across the globe through a reimagined volunteering to the 2030 Agenda throughout the Decade of Action.