



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

# Global Technical Meeting 2020

Reimagining Volunteering  
for the 2030 Agenda





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## 1. INSPIRING. ENGAGING. REIMAGINING.

### A virtual meeting to shape the future of volunteering

**Separated by screens, but united in purpose.** 2020 is the year of virtual gatherings. It was no different for the Global Technical Meeting (GTM2020) on “Reimagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda.” Speakers from nearly 60 countries and thousands of participants from United Nations (UN) member states, civil society, academia and think tanks, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, IFRC and UN entities, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations, as well as volunteers joined together for this online discussion amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic.

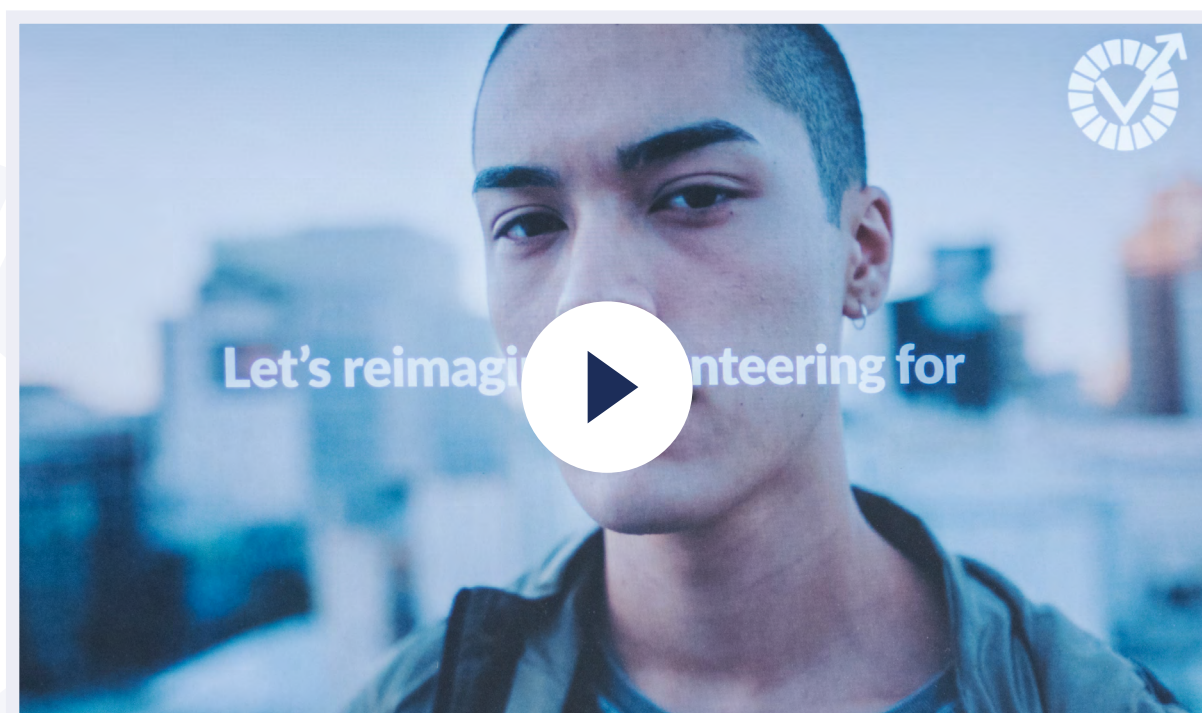
Energizing contributions and inspirational videos filled the four days of the GTM2020. Through expert contributions, diverse perspectives, and dynamic panels, attendees journeyed through a series of virtual debates on the **future of volunteering**.

This report will recap and highlight the event’s **five global panels** covering a wide variety of volunteering themes and giving a voice to a multitude of speakers:

1. [A global invitation to reimagine volunteering](#) for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development launched the event by setting the stage through diverse perspectives on why and how we need to reimagine volunteering in the SDG Decade of Action.
2. [A global volunteering snapshot](#) examined what volunteering is doing for the SDGs and dove into the latest evidence on how volunteering adds value and contributes to promoting the 17 SDGs.
3. [Volunteering and the SDG Decade of Action](#) focused on policy integration, transformation, and acceleration. The session further explored different dimensions of volunteering that can transform and accelerate the 2030 Agenda. Experts examined how to better link volunteering and the SDGs through policy coherence and integration.
4. [The path to a post-pandemic future](#) showcased and discussed innovative policies and practices that will shape the next generation of volunteering. An international panel pitched how their regions re-envision the role of volunteering for the future.
5. The event concluded with a [global call to action](#), applauding the role of volunteers in addressing global challenges and advocating for reimagining volunteering for the 2030 Agenda through global and local action led by the people.



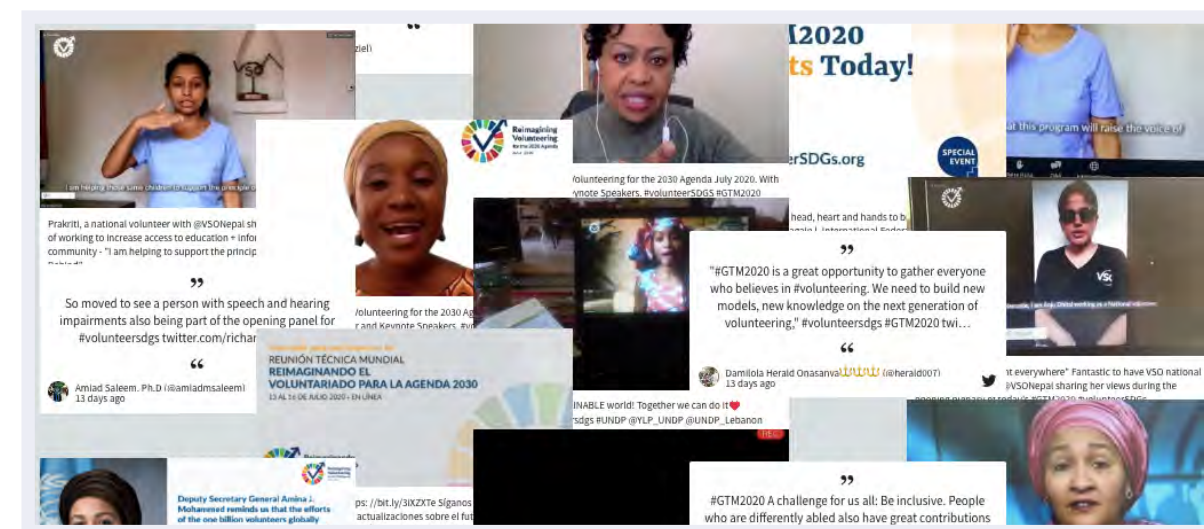




**Staying connected while socially distant.** Striking up conversations and spreading the word before, during, and after the #GTM2020 was key to engaging the attendees and speakers in this virtual format. The social media campaign served as a space for exchange, promotion, and celebration. The impact was global: the event hashtag #volunteerSDGs reached over 2.5 million people between June and July 2020. Facebook posts reached 10,647 total engagements and 9,215 likes; while Twitter posts reached 21,659 total engagements and 2,198 retweets. Sharing a short highlight, video clip, quote, or opinion was the link that united participants.

*“The pandemic has highlighted the **enormous potential of the human capacity** to adapt to change and to support each other. This spirit is perfectly encapsulated in the scale of volunteering.”*

Amina Mohammed,  
UN Deputy Secretary-General



*“We want to build on new evidence, new knowledge, new debates on **next generation models of volunteering.**”*

Olivier Adam,  
UNV Executive Coordinator



Olivier Adam  
@OlivieradamUNV

An inspirational first day of the #GTM2020. Thank you to all of the speakers and for ideas and creative solutions that will be food for thought for the days to come.  
[#volunteersdgs](#)

*“Volunteers, you are the **symbol of hope and dignity** to the people who may have lost hope and dignity.”*

Jagan Chapagain,  
IFRC Secretary General



## 2. A GLOBAL INVITATION

### Let us reimagine volunteering for the 2030 Agenda

A first panel discussion moderated by broadcast journalist, Redi Tlhabi, explored the various facets of volunteering. From formal to informal, in the global South and global North, and with young and old.

*“The world cannot be successful without **solidarity between countries, nations, and generations.**”*

Hindou Ibrahim,  
President of the Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad  
(AFPAT) & UN SDG Advocate

- Volunteering today needs a transformation. Ambassador Neil Pierre, Coordinator of the Group of 77 and China, Permanent Mission of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to the United Nations, explained that everyone is getting involved in nation- and community-building, but nevertheless “the perception of volunteering has to change.”
- SDGs are universal, but not universally known. Kamilla Sultanova, a volunteer at Global Dignity Finland, stressed that “there still needs to be awareness-building.” Although actions may be integrated, a wider understanding is still missing.



Kamilla Sultanova  
@KamillaUbuntu

Joining the UN global technical meeting - a great opportunity to share my passion for volunteering & cross-sectoral cooperation. Read my blog Why Need to Acknowledge Volunteering for [#SDG2030](#) [#GTM2020](#) [@UNVolunteers](#) [@ToilyKurbanov](#) [@GlobalDignity](#) [@EAsadova](#)



- A global pandemic calls for global action. IFRC President, Francesco Rocca, encourages volunteers to bring together collective expertise, resources, governments and development actors to move forward. His message was clear: “**No one can face this pandemic alone.**”
- Volunteering leaves no one behind. “Migrant communities bring with them their own culture, language, traditions,” shared Xavier Castellanos, Acting Under Secretary General for Programmes and Operations of IFRC. When it comes to volunteering, he believes creating an **enabling condition for migrant communities** is essential.
- To give back as a volunteer fosters and invests in community. “Volunteering is embedded in the **ethos, spirit, and power** that it brings to a sense of community,” highlighted Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator.



**Achim Steiner** ✓  
@ASteiner

Worldwide, millions of volunteers are a formidable force 4 the **#SDGs**. The collective power of **#volunteering** to tackle complex challenges is evident more than ever in the response to **#COVID19**. A pleasure to join 1,500+ participants at 'Reimagining Volunteering 4 the 2030 Agenda'

### 3. GLOBAL VOLUNTEERING SNAPSHOT

#### What is volunteering doing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The second panel involved representatives from **five countries** to share their views on volunteering's potential in the world of research and policy to drive the mission of the SDGs. Moderated by UNV Executive Coordinator, Olivier Adam, the panel discussion tackled diverse topics and thought-provoking questions.



*“Volunteering leaves a **footprint on people’s lives.**”*

Bianca Fadel,  
Plan of Action research Team

- The perception of volunteering varies globally. Professor Peter Kanyandago from Ethics and Development Studies at Uganda Martyrs University, stressed the importance of context when **supporting global South-led research**. “Not all people perceive volunteering in the same way, yet people are committed to using talents and expertise at the service of others,” he shared.
- Sustain female-focused volunteering efforts. “I strive to ensure **women’s contributions to the SDGs**,” stated Zohra Jalal, a national UN Volunteer with UN Women Afghanistan. Her experience further highlighted the capacity of civic engagement to learn firsthand challenges and cultivate female-driven solutions.

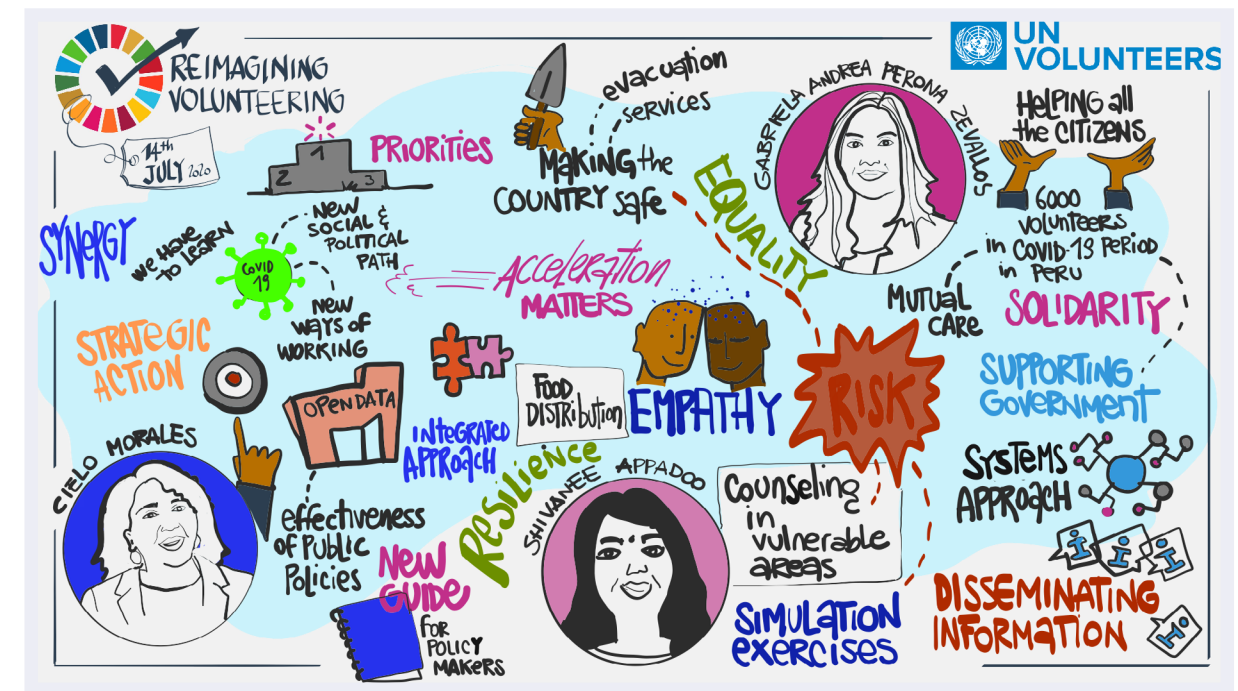


- Volunteering creates space for open dialogues. In Russia, Professor Lev Jakobson expressed the nation’s commitment and support towards the SDGs. From his research as Vice President of the Higher School of Economics, he revealed the need to “set up structures to modulate **dialogue between civil society and governments**.”
- A flexible approach to volunteering is key. Krishnamra Nadhavathna, Director-General of the Department of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, highlighted the country’s integration of volunteering programs in schools. “Thailand sees much **potential in involving young people**,” he urged.
- Volunteering needs to become visible. For ILO’s Director of Statistics, Rafael Diez de Medina, reliable and timely data is fundamental for the future of volunteering. “Volunteering contributes to the **well-being of communities**,” he reflected. Yet, without accurate data this contribution remains invisible.

## 4. VOLUNTEERING AND THE SDG DECADE OF ACTION

### Policy integration, transformation, and acceleration

The third panel, moderated by Cielo Morales, Director of the Latin American and the Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), focused on the added value of volunteering in policy integration.



*“COVID-19 has put a magnifying glass on increasing inequalities in gender, territorial development, and social protection. We need to **reflect on what we have learned**.”*

Cielo Morales,  
ILPES



- A space prone to natural disasters calls for volunteers. Shivanee Appadoo, Coordinator at the Ministry of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management in Mauritius, explained how **volunteering fuels teamwork, integration, empathy, and enhanced skills** to reduce climate risks. “We make use of volunteer efforts,” she affirmed.
- Crisis highlights the risks of vulnerable and disabled people. For Gabriela Andrea Perona Zevallos, Executive Director of Bicentennial Project within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, volunteering in Peru became a support strategy. She shared the key: “A new form of citizenship to create a link with our citizens through **solidarity, support, and mutual care.**”
- To volunteer is to **bring together people, knowledge, and skills**. “Volunteerism is one of our greatest values as Africans,” Sarah Anyang Agbor passionately declared. She acts as the African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology and called for more policy space in volunteering in order to harmonize volunteer efforts around the planet.
- Post-war volunteering solves land and water conflicts. Wjdan Al-Matari, volunteer and founder of Helping Hudaida Migrants Initiative, reflected on the **intersection of volunteering and conflict in Yemen**. “Who’s going to tackle it locally?” she probed. One word: volunteers.
- Partnerships by the people for the planet. Galina Bodrenkova, President of the National Volunteer Center in Russia, emphasized the importance of alliances at local and national levels for efficiency and resilience. She proudly stated: “Our model **empowers volunteers at the global level.**”



**Galina Bodrenkova**  
@GBodrenkova

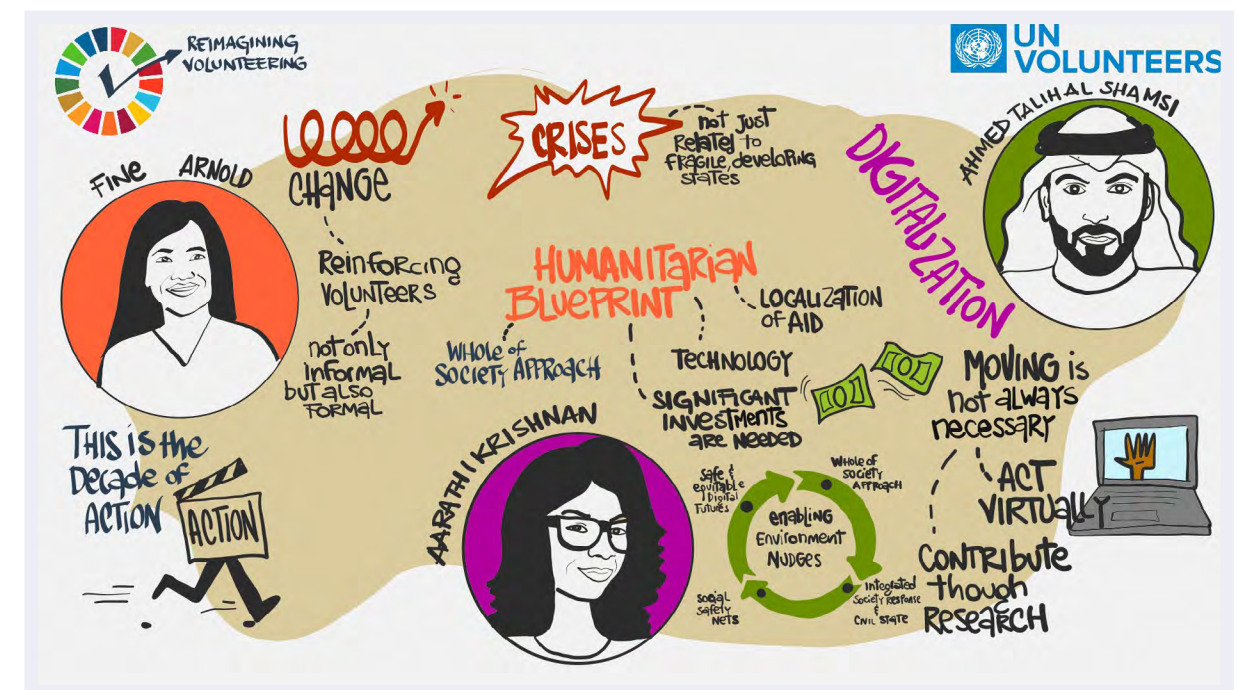
[twitter.com/UNVolunteers/s...](https://twitter.com/UNVolunteers/s...)

Галина Бодренкова поделилась своими  
соображениями о том, как сети и организации могут  
помочь позиционировать # волонтерство в качестве  
стратегической силы **#SDGs**  
**#volunteering #SDGs #HLPF2020 #GTM2020**  
**#volunteerSDGs**

## 5. THE PATH TO A POST-PANDEMIC FUTURE

### What does the next generation of volunteering look like?

The fourth panel dove into the capacity of volunteering to **act in a post-COVID-19 world**. Moderated by Fine Tu’Itupou Arnold, Secretary General of Cook Islands Red Cross, speakers from every corner of the world pitched how they envisioned the next generation of volunteering.



*“We must harness together the **knowledge of the elderly** and the **energy of the young.**”*

Fine Tu’Itupou Arnold,  
Cook Islands Red Cross



- Humanitarian action rallies people to respond in solidarity. Aarathi Krishnan, the Humanitarian Futures and Strategic Foresight Advisor, presented six hypotheses for change and four arenas in which to nudge an **enabling environment for a broader agenda for the future**.
- Volunteering is going digital. Facilitated access to giving back and shifting to a virtual format is how Ahmed Talib Ali Al Shamsi, CEO of the Emirates Foundation, imagines volunteering after COVID-19. **"Volunteering is not bound by physical space,"** he emphasized and highlighted the virtual efforts in the United Arab Emirates.
- The volunteering bar needs to be raised. "We advocate for a double-edged strategy to focus on a legal **framework to protect volunteer rights**," expressed Lani Anaya from MY World Mexico. By providing higher levels profiles, volunteers become more professional and act in safer conditions.
- **Humanitarian actors take the reigns of their community.** Dr Amal Emam, Youth and Volunteering Coordinator of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, stressed for better attention to volunteers' critical role and risk. "The future belongs to those who question the present," she shared.
- Mobilize volunteering action for a resilient future. The millions of volunteers reacting to COVID-19 in China particularly struck Yang Yang, Vice Chairperson of the Chinese Young Volunteers Association. She further explained her vision: "We must support various online volunteering services, establish partnerships, and **promote cross-regional service, actively.**"
- Transparency and collaboration lead to **open and inclusive actions**. Founder of Namarie Society and Core Team at the Global Hack, Marko Russiver, shared three fundamental lessons learned from his Hack the Crisis hackathon: "Together, we should build sustainable systems, lead by example, and build collective knowledge."



**Marko Russiver**  
@markorussiver

Was honored to be on the panel at @unvolunteers Global Technical Meeting on 'Reimagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda'. Beautiful discussions and thoughts, thanks!

- Fostering volunteer networks leaves no one behind. Through people-centered, self-organized solutions Latin America's informal volunteering models could be reversed. Matias Acosta from the UNDP Accelerator Lab in Argentina explained the power of creating an enabling network that **connects volunteers and breaks silos**. "Bottom-up solutions are value-driven," he affirmed.

## 6. A GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION

### Advocating to recognize and support volunteering

"We are here to **celebrate the strong community** we built together through our lively exchanges these past few days," Boram Kim, Plan of Action Coordinator, opened up the fourth and final day of the GTM2020.

Toily Kurbanov, Deputy Executive Coordinator of UNV, shared his take on the past three days of discussions exchanged between speakers and volunteers:

- **Reflection** on the diversity of volunteer action
- **Recognition** of volunteers' contribution to the SDGs
- **Regionalization** to facilitate acting locally, while thinking globally



**Toily Kurbanov**  
@ToilyKurbanov

I used Bulgakov's quote: everything is an epilogue to something and a prologue to something else. And so **#GTM2020 #HLPF2020** is an epilogue to initial **#VolunteerSDGs** efforts and at the same time a prologue to scaled **#Volunteer** action to support **#2030Agenda**



- Five regional breakout groups presented their main perspectives on the future of volunteering:
  - \* For the Latin America and the Caribbean breakout group, volunteering is a strategic approach to the current social tensions. Raaida Mannaa, Global Advocacy and Partnerships Development Manager at IAVE, expressed the **importance of strategic partnerships** for power dynamics to find neutrality and enable safe volunteering environments.
  - \* The African breakout group, presented by Africa continental volunteer expert, Robert Toe, dug into the rich and diverse perspectives on **volunteering for peace and development**: build upon informal and traditional forms of volunteering, enhance inclusion with digital tools, and integrate volunteering in national development agendas.
  - \* Through **inclusive, socially responsible volunteering**, a new, data-based approach to volunteering is the future according to the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States breakout session. “We need to attract people from more sectors,” emphasized Iskander Akyibaev, Executive Director of the Council on International Relations of Kazakhstan.
  - \* **No one should be left behind** was the main focus of the Asia and the Pacific breakout session. “Inclusive volunteering,” explained Khairunnisa Ash’ari from IFRC Pacific, “creates an environment where everyone, even marginalized groups, can have access and build their capacity.”
  - \* The Arab States breakout session stressed for better integration of volunteering in policy agendas, educational programs, and inclusive digital platforms. “Together, we can **build a peaceful, prosperous, equitable future**,” concluded Aya Sleem.

- A group of volunteers shared key messages of the global Call to Action titled “Volunteering in the Decade of Action”:

We celebrate the spirit of all forms of volunteering.

We applaud contributions by all types of volunteers to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to date.

We acknowledge the urgency and ambition to achieve the SDGs.

We acknowledge the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

And we acknowledge the conclusions of the GTM2020 on “Reimagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda.”

We are also proud of the progress made in implementing the Plan of Action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda in the last five years.

The Plan of Action that made us gather all together this week.

And we pledge to do more.



- 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

Our vision: “Volunteering as a unique source for the transformation and acceleration of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.”

- To fulfil this vision, we demand commitment from all, including ourselves, to the following:
- Full diversity of volunteering, especially in the global South
  - Transformational potential of volunteering
  - Policies that respond to evolving volunteering patterns



- Full integration of volunteering into the 2030 Agenda as part of ‘whole-of-society’ approaches
- New partnerships to maximise the impact of volunteering on the SDGs
- Investment in new ways that empower and protect volunteers

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

By going further, through investments in the resilience of people and communities through volunteering.

By going faster, with volunteering as a mechanism for ‘whole-of-society’ partnerships to accelerate progress towards the SDGs

And by going together, with volunteering as a channel for voice and ownership, especially by women, indigenous peoples, refugees, and other groups that are often excluded.

How do we achieve this vision?



Over the next decade,

We will scale up access to volunteering for all. And we will scale up volunteering opportunities across all the SDGs.

We will make sure that informal volunteering is as well supported as formal volunteering, because informal volunteering often drives local and people action.

We will address inequalities and risks in volunteering.

We will support structures, initiatives, and mechanisms of both formal and informal nature to enhance people's ownership of development processes through volunteering.

We will create new models for voluntary action to supercharge ideas to solutions.

We will measure the impact on the well-being of volunteers and the 2030 Agenda.

We will strengthen alignment of volunteer efforts with SDG gaps and challenges.



How will we work together?

We call for commitment, creativity, and innovation of all stakeholders to engage in our reimagined approach to volunteering for the Decade of Action.

We call for strong engagement and common solidarity of the global community of volunteers to help deliver the SDGs.

We call for generation of new evidence, knowledge sharing, and related investment to strengthen the potential and impact of volunteering for the 2030 Agenda



We call for diverse collaborations, alliances, and partnerships to re-energize volunteering for the SDGs. Looking forward to 2030, we aspire to celebrate the spirit of all forms of volunteering. We aspire to applaud action, contributions, and efforts by all types of volunteers to the 2030 Agenda and throughout the Decade of Action.

These key messages of the global Call to Action were presented by:

- Bubacarr Singhateh, Volunteer, Gambia Red Cross Society (Republic of The Gambia)
- Kamsha R. Maharaj, Volunteer, University of Leicester (Trinidad and Tobago)
- Wang Xiukun, Volunteer, Young Volunteer Association of Wuhan University (China)
- Alvise Schiavon, Volunteer, Centro Servizi per il Volontariato Padova (Italy)
- Nisrine Kammourieh, Volunteer, Makassed Volunteering Unit (Lebanon)



# 7. A LAUNCH FOR THE FUTURE

## Tools and resources to accelerate the 2030 Agenda

The fruitful reflections and collaborations with Member States, UN entities, international organizations, volunteer involving organizations, civil society, the private sector, and academia culminated in useful resources to promote volunteering in the Decade of Action:

- The UNV *Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism* contains global, regional, and national data and evidence on volunteerism. The Volunteering Database displays measurements of volunteer work as well as laws, policies, and schemes to create an enabling environment for volunteering. The Evidence Library consolidates evidence products and provides deeper dives into thematic issues relevant to volunteerism.



- The recent *Global Synthesis Report* publication reviews the progress made towards the Plan of Action objectives to integrate volunteering in the 2030 Agenda. Evidence and data stem from 43 National Situation Analyses, 2016–2019 Voluntary National Reviews, and on-site and online consultations with different Plan of Action stakeholders, including regional consultations and other evidence generation activities undertaken in preparation for the GTM2020.





- The *Volunteering Practices in the 21st Century* research paper presents an updated framework looking at the different dimensions and categories of volunteering in the 21st century. Building upon the UN volunteer typology discussed in 1999, it takes into account the rapid and widespread changes in the social, political, economic, and technological landscapes across the globe. The paper also examines the 'face' of volunteering in so-called global South communities and reflects the diversity of volunteering practices in low- and middle-income countries.
- The think piece *Flourishing in the New Normal* challenges long-held assumptions about what is needed to achieve social progress, sustainability, equity, and justice. It also raises questions on how governments and volunteering bodies can respond to the 'new normal' and their ability to create a broader space for people engagement.
- The toolbox for *Measuring Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda* showcases principles, tools, and practices in the field. It draws on guidance from UN entities, initiatives by national governments, civil society, and the private sector, and new research from leading innovators. Through benchmarks for measuring volunteering, it reflects on volunteers' contributions towards economic, social and environmental development under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

## 8. WHERE WE ARE, WHERE WE ARE GOING

### Outcomes, reflections, and next steps after the GTM2020

The GTM2020 culminated in a symbolic signing of a global Call to Action by UNV and IFRC to mobilize everyone, everywhere; demand urgency and ambition; and supercharge ideas to solutions for Volunteering in the Decade of Action.

The Call to Action is a chance for all of us to think about our principles, values, and behaviours. How might we enable volunteering to be a transformative force for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs? **By going further, going faster, and going together.**

Cécile Aptel, Acting Under Secretary General for the Partnerships Division of IFRC, warmly welcomed the Call to Action: "We wish to engage more effectively with the billions of people who want to **make a difference globally.**"

Executive Coordinator of UNV, Olivier Adam, concluded the event by expressing his gratitude to all involved, sharing food for thought, and encouraging all stakeholders everywhere to uphold and aspire to the global Call to Action when implementing their efforts to realizing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs during the Decade of Action.

UNV will use the Call to Action and the key takeaways of the GTM2020 by **translating the forward-looking actions into guidance and advisory services** for UN member states as well as revitalized policy partnerships for collective action and collaboration with other UN entities, the volunteering community, the private sector, civil society, and academia.

**4000+**

attendees came together from all around the globe

**70+**

speakers from nearly 60 countries shared how to reimagine volunteering in plenary and breakout sessions

**1**

call to action on Volunteering in the Decade of Action





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

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