



Plan of Action
to integrate volunteering
into the 2030 Agenda

REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE INTEGRATION OF VOLUNTEERISM AS A POWERFUL MEANS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDGS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**FINAL REPORT ON THE RESULTS
OF THE CONSULTATION**

APRIL 25TH, 2019



**UN
VOLUNTEERS**

INTRODUCTION

On April 25, 2019, the side event "Regional Consultation on the Integration of Volunteerism as a powerful means for the achievement of the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean" was held in Santiago, Chile during the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development[1], organized by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly recognizes volunteer groups as key actors to achieve the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Following the launch of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Plan of Action for Integrating Volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda, through Resolution A/RES/70/129[2] "Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond".

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, in its role as Secretariat of the Action Plan, has organized the regional consultation on volunteering with the aim of providing a space for interested parties to discuss evidence, data and approaches on volunteering in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, and share good practices in terms of promotion and integration of volunteering into the 2030 Agenda. The results of the regional consultation will feed the Global Synthesis Report for the Global Technical Meeting (GTM) on Volunteering that will take place during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2020 in New York.

During the regional consultation, about fifty representatives from civil society, public sector, private sector, academia and the United Nations participated. A high-level panel was held, made up of representatives from different sectors and moderated by UNV LAC Regional Manager Lita Paparoni.

[1] <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2019/es/informacion-evento>

[2] <https://undocs.org/es/A/RES/70/129>



PANEL DISCUSSION: “UNLOCKING VOLUNTEERISM’S GREAT POTENTIAL TO ACCELERATE SDGS PROGRESS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN”

SUMMARIES OF THE INTERVENTIONS

OPENING REMARKS

Ms. Emma Morley

Chief of Volunteer Advisory Services Section,
United Nations Volunteers Programme HQ



In her opening speech, Emma explained the importance of the Resolution of the UN General Assembly of December 2018 on "Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"[3], co-sponsored by 124 Member States, out of which 22 are from the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. She explained that the Plan of Action to integrate volunteering in the areas of peace, development and the SDGs is a collaborative effort between various stakeholders interested in volunteering, not exclusively among Member States. Working together with the private sector, academia, civil society and volunteer organizations allows to join efforts in producing evidence, best practices and research that contribute to improve the recognition of volunteering and maximize the potential impact of volunteering for sustainable development.

In this context, Emma pointed out that stakeholders will meet in New York during the High-level Political Forum in 2020 in a global technical meeting that aims to reimagine volunteering for the 2030 Agenda.

Emma clarified, that the 2030 Agenda explicitly mentions volunteer groups as a means of implementation to reach the SDGs. Nevertheless, it is important to ask ourselves if we are maximizing the potential of volunteering. Reference is made to the persisting stereotypes that dominate volunteering (for example, considering it an act of charity), which does not allow us to recognize its potential as a complementing force to development efforts.

The 2030 Agenda explicitly mentions volunteer groups as a means of implementation to reach the SDGs; nevertheless, it is important to ask ourselves if we are maximizing the potential of volunteering.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, Emma added, most of the volunteering is informal and many times invisible, without access to resources, organizations and benefits. There is no clear evidence on how the potential of volunteering for inclusion is being harnessed and as an integral mechanism to help achieve the SDGs.

[3] <https://undocs.org/es/A/RES/73/140>



Presentation of the Regional Synthesis Report of the Plan of Action to Integrate Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean

Ms. Piera Zuccherin

Regional Programme Analyst for Volunteer Advisory Services Section,
UNV LAC Regional Office



The regional report has been prepared based on seven different analysis on the state of volunteering in the world along with other official sources; although the information is very limited and therefore the analysis is not exhaustive, it is a good starting point to fuel the discussion.

According to UNV, volunteers worldwide correspond to 109 million full-time workers, of which 13.3 million are based in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). More than 60% corresponds to informal volunteering and women represent the majority of volunteers in the region.

Piera presented several examples on how volunteering contributed to the SDGs in LAC. Regarding the integration of volunteering in national strategies and policies, Piera mentioned that 16 countries in the region have frameworks that regulate, promote and protect volunteerism. Regarding the measurement of volunteering, she mentioned that in the region, according to the ILO, only 16 countries of the 33 LAC countries measured voluntary work in official statistics since 2007 and 2017.

The conclusions of the report recommend incorporating volunteering in all national and regional policies and strategies that address youth issues. In addition, the report endorses protecting and supporting the millions of people who volunteer, especially at the local level. One final challenge is to close the data gap on volunteering, along with the generation of evidence and analysis on the powerful contributions and impact of volunteers towards the SDGs.



Mr. Carlos Alberto Pereira Olmedo

Ministry-Executive Secretary for the Technical Secretariat for Economic and Social Development Planning, Government of Paraguay.

The Government of Paraguay was represented by Minister Pereira, who commented on how the law-making process initiated in 2001 at the initiative of a group of civil society organizations (CSOs), and ended with the enactment of the National Volunteering Law in 2018. This new regulation has authorized the constitution of the National Volunteer Council, which facilitates coordination between different institutions, such as the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency, the National Youth Secretariat, the National Emergency Secretariat, the Ministry of Social Health, the Office of the First Lady and seven CSOs.

Through volunteering, the gaps and inequalities resulting from the lack of access to goods and services in these prioritized areas, were successfully reduced.

He also shared the experience of Paraguay and the professional volunteering program called "Arovia", which implements an innovative methodology connecting public policies with voluntary work. It mobilizes professionals to districts prioritized by the needs established in the National Development Plan, creating spaces for interaction and social inclusion among volunteers and municipal, departmental and district councils. This interconnectivity empowers the communities of the most vulnerable sectors of the country, and through volunteering, the gaps and inequalities resulting from the lack of access to goods and services in these prioritized areas, were successfully reduced.





Mr. Arnaud Peral

Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Ecuador

The role of volunteering in localizing SDGs and in the promotion of citizen participation at a community level.

Arnaud started reflecting that, even when volunteering is recognized as an important medium in the 2030 Agenda and as an instrument of cooperation, the volunteering work on the national scale is still insufficient. In addition, he states that it is still difficult to have a common understanding of volunteering, transcending its perception as a charity or a contract that underestimates the volunteer's work. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of recognizing volunteering as a mechanism for building resilience to environmental, economic and social shocks as reflected in the 2030 Agenda.

In the context of current transformation processes, where the future of work, populations, and climate change is discussed, volunteering plays an important role. In addition, he pointed out the importance of incorporating mutual learning processes into volunteer programs, to enhance the development of mutual skills and the acquisition of technical knowledge for professional work, taking advantage of the different views on the forms of work that give rise to innovation.



Mr. Mirko Salfate

Director of the National Institute of Youth, Government of Chile.

Experience of volunteering from the Pacific Alliance, and the importance of the inclusion of volunteering from the South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation.

Mirko presented a thorough analysis of the Chilean youth, which, according to his intervention, lives in a paradox. Despite being the generation that has received the most benefits from the State in economic terms along with access to services, it is the generation that values democracy or institutions the least, and that participates least in democratic processes. It is a generation that has faced good indicators of quality of life and human development, but at the same time presents mental health problems and suicides, high rates of alcohol and drug consumption, disarticulation and individualism. Despite this, he says that certain social causes mobilize young people, such as the gender equality agenda and climate change, where many young people have contributed to change the country's political scene.

From his perspective, the region must advance in the construction of a greater and better social fabric, with a stronger, empowered civil society, from which a more resilient, cohesive and happier society can be built.

He stressed that volunteering becomes a fundamental part of the harmonious development of societies, by two essential elements: i) Volunteering is good for those who practice it, by giving them transformative experiences that redirect vocation and reaffirm convictions. Volunteering offers spaces of awareness and develops soft skills such as leadership, teamwork and problem solving, so valued now in the labour markets.

He states that volunteering humanizes and transforms people into more committed and competent citizens; ii) In addition to individual benefits, volunteering is good for the society as a whole as it gives a sense of belonging, generates links and spaces for social innovation, reaction and resolution of collective problems, and above all social cohesion. In short, it generates more resilient and more capable societies.

Therefore, the INJUV generates initiatives that support volunteering and a volunteer culture in Chile. Through the programme "Live your parks", young people from Chile are mobilized and are part of transformative and educational experiences, where networks are generated, and a series of projects are conducted in favor of environmental protection. The experience of the Pacific Alliance has been exchanged with the countries that represent it, with the regional dream of installing a transboundary program of young people working in unprotected wilderness areas. It has been extended to other topics, such as violence prevention, cultural heritage, mass events and this year COP25, in which volunteerism opens up significant spaces for participation, not for charity, but as a civic heritage of all citizens.

Among the future challenges of Chile is the measurement and creation of a national volunteer map, the approval of a special law, and the certification of skills acquired through volunteering.



Mr. Arturo Torres Gutiérrez

Secretary of Human and Social Development of the Municipal Government of Querétaro, Mexico

Engagement of people at a local level, especially youth, through volunteer work.

In Querétaro, the Law of Volunteering has been promoted to facilitate work with vulnerable groups since 2006. They currently work with 20 universities, mainly in programs for the rehabilitation of public spaces, access to education and improvement of housing conditions. From his experience, volunteering is a link that allows social cohesion and the reconstruction of the social fabric.

The presentation highlighted how his local government promoted programs with a focus on social equality and inclusion to leave no one behind, guaranteeing the participation of many young people, including vulnerable people in contexts with few resources or opportunities.

From his experience, the role of volunteering is evident as a link that allows social cohesion and the reconstruction of the social fabric. He explained how the lives of many people were improved through volunteering, reaching many families in situations of high vulnerability.

Currently, they work in 50 communities and contribute with all the resources to facilitate this space for young volunteers. Through federal agencies, they signed agreements that allow local authorities to carry out training courses, for example, for elderly adults who did not have the opportunity to complete their basic education. Arturo reaffirmed the enormous potential of volunteering to include certain groups and ensure social inclusion. Volunteer programs provide a motivating energy, and therefore, more and more volunteers join this initiative.



Ms. Alessandra Scalioni Brito

Researcher on Work and Performance. IBGE, Brasil.

The measurement of volunteering as a key issue to demonstrate the great impact of volunteering towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

To share Brazil's experience, Alessandra joined the panel explaining that it was in 2012 when the measurement of work in its broadest form began to be discussed, and the measurement of volunteer work was integrated into the Household Survey, following the recommendations of the International Labor Organization (ILO). According to the definition of the ILO, volunteering is an activity of at least one hour a week, which is not compulsory, without remuneration and which is not carried out within a family context, i.e. where the service is provided towards third parties.

The survey results of 2017 show that there were 7.4 million volunteers over the age of 14 in Brazil. Most of these people were women aged 50 years and older, with higher education. 90% of these people worked as volunteers through formal organizations, which means that informal volunteer work is still not being measured.

Alessandra concluded by stating that there are still aspects to improve in the survey, and that it will be important to be able to capture the data of informal volunteering, to obtain data that reflect an accurate picture of reality. In Brazil, said Alessandra, there is an erroneous tendency to consider only the type of volunteerism that is carried out through formal organizations.



Ms. Isabel Ramos

Vice-Rector of the University of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Ecuador

How academia can support the improvement of information on volunteering, recognizing volunteering towards the achievement of the SDGs, in particular with the elaboration of evidence in the countries of the South



Mr. Jesús Andrés Zarate

Coordinator of Institutional Incidence, Center for Action of Corporate Social Responsibility in Guatemala

The role of the private sector to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and the solutions it offers for the promotion of corporate volunteering for sustainable development.

Isabel Ramos affirmed that when looking for references about volunteering, there is the challenge for social sciences and research, as it is important to position volunteers within the context of the 2030 Agenda, linking systematic thinking with volunteering, development, citizenship and participation. In addition, it is important to conceptualize volunteerism due to the differences that exist in our understanding of volunteering and to link the notions to the different cultural contexts and organizational tissues.

What is not measured, does not exist

The academia, and above all the social sciences, should work to provide data that allows for an initial analysis. It is important to advance in comparing different experiences and types of participation that are demanded from the society and are legislated from the States. The recognition of good practices can support the development of indicators, which which are useful for the development of a methodology to measure the impact of volunteering.

The presentation concluded by pointing out the need to form technical teams for the management of volunteering in different areas, and reaffirmed the importance of reflecting in the generation of data so that volunteering can be promoted as a set of valuable experiences to contribute to a more just and equal world, where nobody is left behind.

Jesús offered the perspective of the private sector on the involvement of volunteering in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. CentraRSE's strategy is aligned to the SDGs and is made up by more than 120 companies in different sectors, where volunteering plays an important part.

CentraRSE invites their allied companies to have less assistance practices and be more strategic for incidence. To move forward with this issue, CentraRSE has teamed up with academia to generate alliances of the private sector with other stakeholders in advancing the SDGs. In addition, they switched to a decentralized training model to create volunteer programs within local communities. He also reaffirmed the importance of communication, to make the contribution of the private sector visible through good practices that also include volunteering.

There is a need to recognize the efforts of volunteers through the promotion of certificates or some type of official validation that verifies the learning, improvement of skills and experience acquired by volunteers while providing their valuable services.

Among the challenges, Jesús stressed that the fluctuation of governments and the different levels of their collaboration with the private sector, make it difficult to implement long-term strategies. This challenge needs to be solved by working together with different allies to leave no one behind.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE AUDIENCE

- TECHO shared their experience on measuring the impact of their volunteers' contributions. According to their data, 94% of the people interviewed (TECHO volunteers) consider that they make a concrete contribution to the SDGs. It was emphasized that it is important to create a space where the volunteer not only implements, in a utilitarian vision, but can furthermore participate in identifying challenges, as well as new indicators and goals.
- It is important that CVs do not only reflect formal professional work, but also volunteer experiences, providing services to society.
- We must take into account the double-triple working days when we analyze volunteering from a gender perspective.
- The importance of making visible the situation of volunteering in the Caribbean -which was not presented in the panel- was pointed out, along with existing studies that allow a broader representation of volunteering in the region.
- Online platforms are considered a critical tool to extend commitment and keep people inspired and motivated.

FINAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE PANELISTS

- Volunteer programs implemented by the government (AROVIA program) allow the interaction between the real needs of communities and young people who have the chance to offering their talents. The legislative framework is important to protect volunteering and voluntary organizations.
- Volunteering is an activity of the civil society and for the civil society; therefore, public policies should provide a space for youth participation and the role of volunteering.
- The importance of finding a research line on volunteering and development, where the different data that has already been generated in different ways can be systematized.
- It is important to know the causes for volunteerism and work together from different sectors in Latin America, where more women than men graduate from secondary education; nevertheless, women do not have the same opportunities as men in paid work and hence, might be forced to volunteer for this reason.



CONCLUSIONS



"Volunteers can, and they actually do, build more and better citizenship, which finally deals with co-creating to solve public problems, problems that affect us all"

Ms. Cielo Morales

Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of ECLAC

After reaffirming, on behalf of the Executive Secretary, the commitment of ECLAC to volunteering, Cielo acknowledges that we are in the process of recognizing the contribution of volunteering in building a stronger social fabric. The different ways in which volunteers can contribute to the 2030 Agenda are mentioned.

On her closing remarks, the Director highlighted the key role of volunteering as a powerful accelerator of the SDGs, generating solutions for the region's main development challenges, such as inequality, exclusion, poverty, violence and climate change - among others. Cielo mentions the closure of the democratic space in the Latin American and Caribbean region: according to the last Latinobarómetro of 2018, trust among citizens in the LAC region is at the lowest point in its history. This is a negative result when building democratic and peaceful societies, which are fundamental for the SDGs.

In this context, communication, measurement and compilation of evidence about the powerful role of volunteering for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is substantial. Volunteers are also essential data collectors, as they can get to remote areas to support efforts on monitoring and evaluating local agendas. It is important to achieve a common definition of volunteering and convene a standardized way of measuring volunteering, for example, by developing mapping tools and collaborating with different networks, such as the private sector. This is relevant for improving the acceptance of volunteering and strengthening its contribution.

From her point of view, the gender approach in volunteering is key. An important challenge is to understand the challenges at the regional level and that volunteering can make excellent contributions, always taking into account the characteristics of the region. In a middle-income region, volunteering must strengthen alliances, for example, between corporate, community volunteering, and academia through networks. There are many options to promote volunteering, including: the best use of technology, the creation of alliances, social innovation, citizen participation, leadership training, and a comprehensive inclusion strategy.

She concluded by reaffirming the importance of integrating volunteer groups and mentioning the importance of discussing this important issue, due to the key role of volunteering as an accelerator to achieve the 2030 Agenda.





Plan of Action

to integrate volunteering
into the 2030 Agenda

This report is an input to regional Plan of Action as requested by United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/140, and was prepared by the United Nations Volunteers programme Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. For further information on the side event, visit <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2019/es/programa/consulta-regional-la-integracion-voluntariado-como-un-medio-poderoso-logro-ods-america>.

For more information on the Plan of Action for Latin America and the Caribbean contact piera.zuccherin@unv.org.

