



## UN Volunteer Mobilization and Management Strategy

### Strategic Communications Approach

UNV is a forward thinking, professional organization with a focus on outcomes and results, able to provide well-trained, skilled volunteers with a range of skills and expertise. Currently, UNV faces challenges in decreasing or stagnating numbers of UN Volunteers, which is impacting on the organization's growth and long-term stability.

The **overarching purpose** of this **strategic communications approach** is to outline the methodology that will be followed to communicate key messages and themes about UNV to its stakeholders, with a particular focus on the mobilization and management of UN Volunteers. It is meant to guide communications efforts throughout the organization, hence defines objectives and desired outcomes, as well as how they will be achieved. Furthermore, a **UNV Communications Suite**, featuring targeted and specific tools, channels and products, is integrated in the implementation plan of the UN Volunteer Mobilization and Management Strategy.

The **audience** is our client base, which includes:

1. UN entities: partners we already work with in mobilizing UN Volunteers that we want to stabilize and increase volunteers with, and potential partners we wish to build bridges to.
2. Programme governments: targeted communications so they have UNV at the top of their mind when partnering with UN entities, hence triangular advocacy
3. Donor governments: to increase full funding of UN Volunteers by communicating that and demonstrating clearly that investing aid resources in volunteerism bring the dual advantages of contributing to development impact and building national capacity. This also implies a need to enhance donor reporting and communications.
4. Development partners, including the private sector: to open avenues for corporate volunteering.
5. Academia, civil society, change makers: to further strengthen UNV advocacy, including policy guidance, convening, advocacy partnerships, and promotion of volunteerism, as we can only be relevant to UN partners if UNV is a known and respected authority on volunteerism, and provider of quality UN Volunteers.

UNV communications are directed at supporting the objectives of the UNV Strategic Framework, including the UN Volunteer Mobilization and Management Strategy. UNV **communications principles** include understanding, clarity and pride. Our communications are underpinned by confidence in our tone, consistency in our messaging and evidence in our reporting. These values are essential to delivering on our communications objectives and contributing to mobilization.

Specifically, UNV faces the following immediate and crucial **positioning, advocacy and communications challenges**:



1. Unequivocal recognition of UNV as the lead volunteer agency (i.e. challenges with UNOPS and UNESCO mobilizing volunteers or other similar cost-efficient skilled personnel)
2. Insufficient awareness and inconsistent use of communication materials marketing UN Volunteers and our different volunteer modalities.
3. Disparate communications efforts, with lacking consultation/coherence among materials produced in different sections of the organization
4. Lack of ownership of communications and reporting, with insufficient results, experiences, testimonials and photography being proactively highlighted to Communications Section for featuring.

In its **communications approach**, UNV needs to become agile in responding to the above challenges, as well as current trends, with strong, well-branded and targeted communications that highlight the added value of UNV and the lasting impact of the results UN Volunteers deliver. To achieve this UNV should:

- Liaise with VRRS and the UN client groups in creating communications products that support attracting high quality volunteer candidates,
- Collaborate with the learning pillar of VKIS to strengthen internal understanding and capacity to solicit information from UN Volunteers for better communications products.
- Working with RMSS and VPMG, streamline and improve evidence gathering, reporting from the field and knowledge to ensure more strategic and efficient communication that relies on evidence rather than anecdotal evidence, although there is space and need for both.
- In collaboration with VPMG and PCS, gather evidence and testimonials from relevant hosting partners in order to systematically map trends, inform programming and modalities, and reporting on successful collaboration and lessons learned.

**Informing and listening to our partners and stakeholders** is fundamental to our success. Effective communication across UNV and beyond is vital in demonstrating the difference UN Volunteers make, thereby raising the profile of UNV as an organization. We need to become more proactive, thinking with partners, not just delivering volunteers, and being more concerned about volunteer effectiveness and complementarity to their development activities and aspired results. Responding to this evidence would enable us to build credibility and trust, fostering a perception of UNV as a responsive, accessible, flexible organization that rapidly responds to partners' needs and priorities in mutually beneficial ways. Professional packaging, dissemination and utilization of such evidence of the value of volunteers has the potential to increase interest in and commitment to mobilization.

The need for consistent communication with partners is indisputable. It is essential to supporting the mobilization and management of UN Volunteers. In close liaison with partnerships colleagues and the Partnerships Development Specialist (UN entities), we should use tailor-made donor intelligence and mobilization projections to identify communications opportunities and innovations that could further mobilization targets.

UN client group heads have been assigned lead relationship managers of UNV main current mobilization partnerships and a select number of potential future partners. These staff



members should serve, or should designate a deputy to serve, as a dedicated, communications reference group. This group would serve as a go-to sounding board for all parts of the organization actively engaged in this concerted communications effort. Establishing such a regular cross-sectional forum and two-way feedback mechanism would ensure effective flow of information, present learnings for replication with other partners and provide fertile ground for brainstorming. The members of the group, as lead communications counterpart would be tasked to ensure better and timelier sharing of information about results, photo opportunities, missions, as well as volunteer/partner/community feedback for use in communications tools and channels.

UNV's **relationship with UNDP** can be extremely beneficial if strategically managed. Operating through UNDP, with its unique coordination role in the development system is a distinct advantage for UNV. UNDP also has much-valued undg coordination roles at country, regional, and HQ levels. This is where UNV must inject its own substantive programmatic value and market its UN Volunteers – through programmatic and communication interventions. Considering UNDP's tagline, "Empowered Lives. Resilient Nations", UNV needs to demonstrate its complementarity to the mother ship. We empower people through grassroots participation, while they focus on the policy level. We should produce targeted and specific communications products for UN Resident Representatives, Resident Coordinators and other field level UNDP staff, placing a particular emphasis on celebrating our individuality and fusion.

The "product" UNV offers – volunteers – is "marketable", and we have traditionally enjoyed positive rapport with our partners, donors and stakeholders. In order to increase the mobilization and enhance the management of UN Volunteers, it is essential that UNV engage with sister agencies, Member States and other partners to promote, protect and maintain key partnerships with lead hosting UN entities.

UNV staff and personnel should internalize the importance of communications and have their radars on. UNV should **seize the right marketing opportunities** at the right time with the right approach and communications product. Effective communication for UNV means building visibility today for tomorrow's mobilization opportunities within a principled, integrated and coordinated framework, based on sound operational standards. An event like the Olympics in Latin America, for example, offer potential for marketing, mobilization and partnership celebration – just visualize volunteers bearing UNV messaging or branding on their t-shirts or other items. Joint branding of typical promotional items (practical yet visible items like UNICEF caps, UNHCR vests) would strengthen identity of UN Volunteers and visibility of UNV. To achieve this, UNV would need to dedicate resources and pilot with a select few partners who are brand-savvy in promotional items.

The Communications Section enhances communication about the value of volunteerism and the contributions of UNV and UN Volunteers to the peace and development impact of the United Nations. However, all UNV personnel, in the field and Headquarters, and UN Volunteers, play a role in communicating consistently about UNV to enhance mobilization. We all need to be clear about how we are communicating, who we are talking to, the messages we need to get across and the channels/tools we can best use to communicate. This will be



done, to some extent, by the roll-out of the repositioned brand of UNV in 2016, which emphasizes UNV's added value to partners. Further activities around this awareness will be mandatory brand training for all personnel, along with the Communications team from HQ being present for important regional workshops to talk about brand, marketing and the importance of communications in their partnership building.

The new **brand boilerplate and added value statements** for UNV are:

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. We work with partners to integrate qualified, highly motivated and well supported UN Volunteers into development programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism.

**UNV mobilizes people.** UNV mobilizes a much needed resource of qualified people, from the seasoned and committed to the optimistic and young, who are ready to make their energy and skills available for UN partners to draw upon in the pursuit of peace and development.

**UNV enables participation.** UNV enables the UN system to broaden participation of people striving for a better future.

**UNV promotes volunteerism.** UNV promotes volunteerism for peace and development through its strong partnerships and capacity to engage volunteers.

**UN Volunteers make important contributions.** UN Volunteers make important contributions to the UN in the pursuit of sustainable development, with a particular focus on people in transition or crisis.

**UN Volunteers add unique value.** UN Volunteers constitute a resource in ensuring impact and sustainability in UN peace and development interventions. UN Volunteers embody the fundamental values of commitment, inclusiveness, engagement and solidarity.

**UN Volunteers bring communities together.** UN Volunteers work with people and organizations in local communities to link UN initiatives with local needs for sustainable solutions.

**Volunteers are catalysts of change.** Volunteers make a difference to the communities where they are assigned by being helping hands as well as being active models of change. Volunteers transform societies and are themselves transformed through volunteering.

**Volunteerism enables people to participate.** Volunteerism is an opportunity for everybody, including marginalized groups, women and youth, to have their voice heard and their actions recognized. Volunteerism strengthens social cohesion and trust by promoting individual and collective action, leading to sustainable development for people by people.

We are inspiration in action.

This is the crux of our **UNV messaging**. We need clear and succinct messaging on our specific mandate and diverse modalities, and the relevance of our UN Volunteers. Due to the



nature of our work we are fortunate in having an inspiring wealth of human interest stories to tell. This provides anecdotal evidence. However, we also need to focus on evidence-based reporting that attests to the results and impact delivered by UN Volunteers. Accordingly, CS should work closely with VKIS on the research agenda and to establish sound methodology to pursue such reporting. In both anecdotal evidence and results-based reporting, we must place emphasis on our partnership with the relevant UN entity, and how our UN Volunteers are supporting the entity in achieving its development goals.

Through the **brand repositioning roll-out** there will be an alignment and deep engagement across the organization to a clear and valuable brand purpose. This is anticipated to increase the awareness and recognition of the role volunteerism plays in global peace and development, improve relationships and reach with all current agencies, partners, staff and volunteers and enhance opportunities to partner with the private sector and wider UN audiences. Accordingly, all tools, materials and interactions with UN partners need to be on message and consistent with our brand. This comprises the UNV Communications Suite, which needs to be developed as part of a coherent and timely implementation plan.

[Annex I – Implementation plan, tools and channels](#) *(in process, to be completed)*

[Annex II – Strategic considerations and risk log](#) *(in process, to be completed)*