

# UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



# UNDP

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Agenda item 10

## UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS

### Report by the Administrator

#### Introduction

1. At its twenty-fourth session in June 1977, the Governing Council reviewed in comparative depth the activities of the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) on the basis of a detailed evaluation study (document DP/269) prepared by the Administrator in the light of experience gained in implementing the Programme since full operations commenced in 1972. In its decision, the Governing Council inter alia called upon the Administrator to enhance the scope and enlarge the size of the United Nations Volunteers programme through imaginative employment of the sources of technical expertise consistent with the needs and requests of developing countries. The Administrator was also requested to introduce the funding of the volunteer programmes increasingly from country IPFs. Simultaneously, the Administrator was called upon to publicize the value of volunteer contributions in terms of technical, practical and economic advantages and to integrate volunteers to the fullest extent in the formulation of country projects.

#### Programme Implementation

2. During 1977, the Programme achieved a significant broadening of its activities. First, on the numerical side, by 28 February 1978 the total of serving volunteers had risen to 331 from 299 a year previously. It is encouraging to note that since the end of March 1977 130 volunteers completed their assignments, meaning that total new recruitment of 172 volunteers was required during the year in order to bring the Programme to its current level. These volunteers were assigned to 54 developing countries of which 24 were least developed countries (LDCs). As of the end of February 1978, the great majority of United Nations Volunteers - approximately 85 per cent - were assigned to LDCs and Most Seriously Affected (MSA) countries, and 66 per cent of this majority were working in the hard core LDCs as identified by the United Nations. The participating volunteers accounted for 49 nationalities from both industrialized and developing countries (see Annex I for detailed breakdown).

3. Parallel with this traditional role of providing technically proficient volunteers, mainly through assignments to UNDP/Agency-assisted projects, increasing attention and activity were channelled into assisting domestic youth and volunteer service programmes - the objective being to encourage greater participation by local youth and volunteer services in their own, self-reliant development schemes. This is in pursuance of UNV's enlarged mandate under General Assembly resolutions 31/131 and 31/166 of December 1976. (These activities are reported in detail in paragraphs 12 - 18 below).
4. In order to move towards IPF funding of in-country costs, an initial system of 50 per cent co-financing as between IPF and the Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) was suggested for LDCs as a transitional measure within an established quota system for posts. Of the 236 existing posts in LDCs, 50 are now wholly or partly financed from the respective IPFs. Based on several recent responses, however, it is quite evident that Governments continue to be reluctant to accept financing under these conditions, most of them pointing to the already heavily committed IPFs. There have been many instances when new, well justified requests for UNV assistance have been cancelled or deferred as a direct result of lack of resources. The UNDP Administration and, in particular, the UNV Co-ordinator have consistently endeavoured through personal visits, briefings and correspondence to secure the fullest co-operation of Governments and Resident Representatives in giving effect to the Council's wish for a far higher proportion of charges to IPFs rather than to other financing sources. Unhappily, it cannot be said that these determined efforts have as yet had the desired results.
5. The further growth of the United Nations Volunteers programme is also to some extent affected by the availability of free assistance under the bilateral volunteer and the Associate Expert Programmes. These provide similar manpower to that supplied by UNV, but generally at no cost to the IPFs of recipient countries. Experience to date seems to indicate that the attractiveness of the truly international nature of UNV and the high average quality of volunteers fielded are not in themselves sufficiently powerful factors to outweigh the advantages enjoyed by these other programmes. The Associate Expert Programme, providing as it does similar type personnel at no cost from a selected number of industrialized countries, continues to have pre-eminent and wide appeal among both United Nations system, Agencies and Resident Representatives, in spite of the relatively narrow recruitment base. This is evidenced by the fact that, at the beginning of 1977, it was estimated that there were more than 900 Associate Experts serving in United Nations system-assisted projects. The Administrator trusts that the Council will continue to study ways in which this dilemma can be resolved.
6. A secure financial structure would go a considerable way towards enhancing numerically UNV's role in those development activities for which the Programme has shown unique capabilities. While there has been progress in breaking down earlier reservations about volunteer assistance, there does still exist some inertia among both United Nations system and Government personnel in regard to utilizing, where otherwise feasible, this innovative and relatively new source of technical assistance. On the recruitment side, it should be noted that UNV does not always enjoy autonomy since under existing procedures all recruitment and funding for volunteers from industrialized countries are undertaken on its behalf by sponsoring organizations. Since these organizations have their own bilateral programmes, the rather specialized requests under UNV emanating from the technical co-operation needs of United Nations system organizations tend to pose difficulties for the sponsors. Some progress, however, is being made in this area through strengthened support from certain organizations as well as from a growing interest among qualified persons in developing countries to serve under

the Programme. The Administrator is pleased to record that UNV has now built up an impressive roster of candidates possessing a broad range of technical skills.

7. Notwithstanding the inherent limiting factors now existing, it can be said that, during the reporting period, the evolution and implementation of the programme have been characterized by several positive developments. The numerical increase has been underlined by the fact that several Governments have previously benefitted from the efficacy and quality of volunteer assistance on an increasing scale. The progressive growth of Volunteer assignments in several countries - notably in Afghanistan (10), Botswana (15), Democratic Yemen (11), Guinea-Bissau (50), Lesotho (30), Sudan (26), Upper Volta (12), Yemen (51) - attest to UNV's acceptability in rendering important contributions once the initial reservations have been overcome and sufficient experience has been gained in utilizing and channeling volunteer assistance in particularly suitable fields. In some cases, Governments have earmarked special funds to provide for UNV programme costs. Not least as a contributing factor in this regard has been the ability of UNV to meet specific, urgent and often unusual local needs at a relatively modest cost. In particular, UNVs have proven to be an essential input for the type of development activity which is at the grassroots level or which by its very nature requires middle-level expertise. Such activities would include those meeting basic needs and/or concentrating on a poverty-oriented development effort. In this respect, UNVs have made particularly useful contributions in a spectrum of activities ranging from functional literacy, rural agriculture, primary health care, rural water supply and primary technology to the provision of basic vocational/technical training. UNVs have been effective in filling gaps requiring middle-level expertise and in extending project operations and the scope of experts' work to more remote rural areas.

8. In conformity with Governing Council recommendations of previous sessions, the distribution of UNV assistance continues to be largely geared towards favouring the LDCs. Of significance too has been the growing relevance of UNV assistance to some of the newly independent countries. In Guinea-Bissau, for example, some 50 UNVs who, for the greater part, are technically and professionally qualified and appropriately experienced geologists, surveyors, architects, engineers and teachers are working side-by-side with nationals in various governmental departments and institutions. In Cape Verde, Comoros and Mozambique, UNV inputs are being engaged in similar ways within various project activities. Another recent and noteworthy development at the inter-regional and regional level was the initiation of UNV assignments in the context of two UNCTAD-executed in-country projects which are designed to assist land-locked countries in the field of trade facilitation and trade policy planning.

9. The calibre of UNVs is good and continues to improve. This can be attributable to the fact that the Programme recruits candidates from both developed and developing countries and is thus benefitting from a large and diversified base from which to select applicants. In addition, the UNV programme, while it has been able to supply middle-level manpower inputs, has also fielded a good number of UNVs who, functionally, are able to carry out assignments which would otherwise have required the employment of full-fledged experts.

10. As regards the acceptability of the UNV programme by host Governments and United Nations system Agencies, much progress has been made, although concrete effort is still necessary in order to spread objective information about the Programme's potential and relevance as a low-cost input for development activities. In pursuance of the Governing Council decision to enhance the scope of the Programme's operations, the Administrator is urging Resident Representatives to give fuller consideration to utilizing the services of UNVs, whenever appropriate, during the country programming and project formulation stages. At the same time, the Co-ordinator and his staff are paying extensive visits to the field in order to assist in programming and to inform Governments and United Nations system project personnel about the additional dimension which UNV inputs can bring to project activities.

11. Perhaps one of the unique features of the UNV programme is the fact that it is an important instrument for furthering and giving practical effect to the concept of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC), to which UNDP is so actively committed. About 53 per cent of UNVs in the field are nationals of developing countries being assigned to projects in other developing countries, usually within the same geographical region. In these instances, an awareness and general familiarity with conditions in developing countries makes for successful volunteer assignments. Additionally, there is the reciprocal benefit - in terms of experience and enhanced skill - which the volunteer can expend in the development of his own country when he returns at the end of his assignment.

#### Youth and Domestic Development Services

12. UNV-assisted programmes in the field of youth and domestic development services are in conformity with its expanded mandate. Under General Assembly resolution 31/131, UNV was designated as "a major operational unit for the execution of youth programmes, especially pilot projects to increase youth participation in development activities and training programmes for youth workers, such programmes to be undertaken only after consultation with the Governments." In resolution 31/166, the General Assembly requested the Administrator to develop further and expand the activities of the UNV in the field of domestic development services.

13. The joint recommendations of the Administrator and the Secretary-General on the implementation of this mandate are contained in document A/32/205, submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session. Domestic development services (DDS) are defined as organized efforts by local indigenous groups and communities to promote self-help through programmes and projects which conform to national development priorities and structures. The role of UNV in this field is to serve as a catalyst by establishing contacts with as many domestic development service youth programmes as possible; to develop mutual technical assistance and joint programmes among such services; and to encourage and assist such services to extend their scope and programmes by the judicious placement of UNVs experienced in social and community development work and youth leadership and generally expected to serve under similar conditions and terms as national volunteers. This approach is intended to help strengthen local structures, consolidate domestic development service organization and assist in community and national self-help projects at the "grass-roots" level in such areas as basic health care, primary and adult education campaigns, rural water supply, self-employment and family planning, etc. The Programme's efforts in this field are orientated towards furthering co-operation among DDS in the same region, thus effectively realizing the concept of TCDC in another form.

14. As previously reported to the Governing Council, an Asian and Pacific Forum of Domestic Development Services was established in 1976 with the assistance of UNV, to advise UNV on programming in the field of domestic development services. In co-operation with the Forum, a regional workshop on appropriate technology and domestic development services took place in Sri Lanka in October last year. The workshop was attended by governmental and non-governmental domestic development service organizations with the objective of establishing co-operation and an exchange of information between domestic development services and foreign volunteer services. Special attention was given to increasing involvement in the field of appropriate technology and to discussing a strategy and possible projects for strengthening and creating "appropriate technology units" as part of development service structures. As a result of this meeting, UNV is now considering a regional project in appropriate technology involving domestic development services in several Asian countries.

15. Other DDS projects under active consideration by UNV include a multinational volunteer project in village development to be hosted by a Sri Lankan organization with the participation of volunteers from Japan, Bangladesh, and India, as well as from the host country itself; a one-year volunteer exchange programme between the National Development Service of Nepal and the Indonesian Board of Volunteer Service (BUTSI); a rural development project in Bangladesh involving some 20 volunteers to be recruited primarily from countries in the Asian and Pacific region for serving alongside volunteers of the Bangladesh Volunteer Service (BVS).

16. In Latin America a regional UNV project on "Promotion of Youth Participation" started full operations in August 1977. The regional project in which nine Governments of the Latin American Region are participating is co-financed by UNDP and UNV. It is designed to strengthen youth programmes at the national level, thus increasing opportunities for the participation of youth in development activities. At the same time, it promotes co-operation among Governments and youth organizations at the regional level and assists in elaborating youth strategies and programmes to increase youth participation in development.

17. Among the activities in the framework of this project are the following:

- A regional training course in planning and programming of youth activities in Venezuela, in which 20 programmers from different Government agencies participated;
- A regional training course on Self-Management of Youth Co-operatives in Costa Rica;
- The provision of volunteer programmers to several Governments of the region;
- The establishment of an information centre on questions related to youth participation in development.

18. In Africa a beginning was made for a wider involvement in domestic development service activities providing assistance to the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), a national organization whose aim is to mobilize youth for national development. UNV

assistance has comprised the provision of the services of 2 consultants and a UNV Programme Planning Officer to assist FLY in project planning and implementation. Specific activities have so far included refinement and implementation of its first real rural project. UNV is also currently assisting in the formulation of FLY's overall plan of activities with particular reference to providing future UNV inputs as required in follow-up projects.

#### The Special Voluntary Fund

19. Total contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund, established by the General Assembly for the support of the activities of UNV, amounted to US \$ 853,673 in 1977. (The status of the Fund appears in Annex II of this Report).
20. An important constraint in meeting the Programme's mandate is the modest level of contributions hitherto pledged for the Fund. The broad nature of UNV's mandate, requiring the encouragement of youth participation in development on a global basis, calls for a greater degree of financial support than has been evidenced in terms of past and present contributions. In particular, the limited level of resources available to the Programme remains a major handicap to its ability to respond to requests on a significant scale as well as to planning innovative programmes which could benefit from the kind of assistance which UNV can provide. It will be recalled that in addition to meeting external costs of volunteers from developing countries - which include recruitment costs, two-way air-travel and repatriation allowance - the Fund's commitments include meeting in-country volunteer costs in LDCs and newly independent countries, and promoting programmes in the youth and DDS fields. With the rise in number of UNVs recruited from developing countries, the demands on the Fund for financing external costs can be expected to increase steadily. In addition, the Fund remains the principal, if not exclusive, source of funding for youth and DDS programmes which are being promoted actively in pursuance of UNV's mandate. In this context, the General Assembly and the Governing Council at previous sessions have appealed to Governments to contribute or to increase contributions to the Fund in the light of the growing number and widening scope of UNV activities.



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English  
Annex I

ANNEX I

UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS ASSIGNMENTS

Countries of placement and origin  
as of 28 February 1978

TOTAL SERVING VOLUNTEERS - 331

Countries of placement

(a) Least developed countries (LDCs) and most seriously affected countries (MSAs)

Afghanistan 10, Benin 6, Botswana 15, Cape Verde 7, Central African Empire 6, Chad 3, Comoros 1, El Salvador 1, Gambia 2, Guatemala 2, Guinea-Bissau 50, Haiti 3, Honduras 1, India 1, Ivory Coast 5, Kenya 1, Lao People's Democratic Republic 1, Lesotho 30, Malawi, 1, Mali 3, Mauritania 2, Nepal 5, Niger 7, Democratic Yemen 11, Rwanda 4, Somalia 5, Sudan 26, Uganda 1, United Republic of Tanzania 7, Upper Volta 12, Samoa 1, Yemen 51.

TOTAL 281

(b) Other developing countries

Antigua 1, Bahrain 1, Bolivia 1, Colombia 1, Cook Islands 3, Costa Rica 1, Dominican Republic 1, Ecuador 2, Gabon 1, Indonesia 1, Iran 16, Jamaica 1, Liberia 3, Nicaragua 1, Papua New Guinea 6, Paraguay 1, St. Lucia 1, Swaziland 5, Venezuela 1, Zambia 2.

TOTAL 50

Countries of origin

(a) Developed countries

Australia 3, Austria 5, Belgium 13, Canada 11, Federal Republic of Germany 9, France 8, Ireland 6, Italy 10, Japan 5, Netherlands 14, New Zealand 1, Norway 1, Portugal 25, Sweden 7, Switzerland 9, United Kingdom 10, United States of America 18.

TOTAL 155

(b) Developing countries

Argentina 2, Benin 4, Bolivia 1, Brazil 12, Chile 5, Colombia 2, Cyprus 4, Egypt 12, Ethiopia 1, Haiti 1, India 42, Lao People's Democratic Republic 1, Madagascar 1, Mali 1, Nepal 11, Niger 1, Pakistan 7, Philippines 34, Rwanda 1, Senegal 1, Sri Lanka 18, Sudan 1, Thailand 4, Uganda 2, United Republic of Tanzania 1, Upper Volta 1, Uruguay 1, Zaire 2, Refugees 2.

ANNEX II

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNV SPECIAL VOLUNTARY FUND

(IN US \$)

1971/72	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
243,512	163,465	278,289	446,096	602,020	853,673

Contributions received in 1977

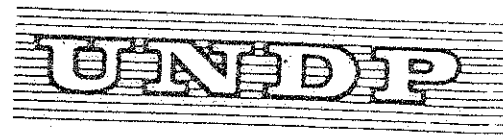
Austria	5 500
Belgium	28 571
Canada	94 340
Cyprus	195
Denmark	14 858
Germany, Fed. Rep. of	135 135
Indonesia	1 000
Iran	1 000
Israel	500
Liberia	1 500
Morocco	5 000
Netherlands	187 000
Norway	94 760
Switzerland	84 314
U.S.A.	200 000*

TOTAL 853 673

\* In addition the United States of America has made a further contribution of \$200,000 against funds budgeted for 1978 fiscal year.



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Corrigendum

Page 6, paragraph 19

Delete paragraph 19 and insert

19. Total contributions from Governments to the Special Voluntary Fund, established by the General Assembly for the support of the activities of UNV, were \$US 824,276 in 1977. (A schedule of Government contributions to the Fund appears in annex II of this report.)

Annex II

Delete annex II and insert attached revised annex II.

ANNEX II

GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNV SPECIAL VOLUNTARY FUND

(IN US \$)

1971/72	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
264,512	143,465	278,289	345,740	546,876	824,276

Contributions received in 1977\*

Austria	5 500
Canada	94 340
Cyprus	195
Denmark	14 857
Germany, Fed. Rep. of	129 310
Indonesia	1 000
Iraq	1 000
Israel	500
Liberia	1 500
Morocco	10 000
Netherlands	187 000
Norway	94 760
Switzerland	84 314
U.S.A.	200 000

TOTAL 824 276

\*In addition, Belgium pledged \$ 30,303 for 1977 and the United States of America has pledged a further \$ 200,000 against funds budgeted for their 1977/78 fiscal year.