

Social media guidance

Introduction

Communities have the power to make the world a better place. We know this, because we see it happen every day through the work of volunteers, consultants and staff throughout the United Nations system.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme embraces the fact that today's communities do not only exist in the physical world, but also online. UNV leadership recognizes that online communities have a wide-reaching impact and are growing in size and scope.

Social media is the term for Internet-based tools used for publishing, sharing and discussing information, and includes blogs, wikis and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram and LinkedIn. These emerging platforms are fundamentally changing the way we engage with people, allowing us new ways to reach our partners and stakeholders, current and former UN Volunteers and staff, as well as potential UN Volunteers and other interested parties. These guidelines* should provide guidance to UNV staff when using social media. Nothing in these guidelines modifies UNV or UN codes of conduct.

UNV staff may use social media as either representatives making official comment or in their private capacities as citizens. These guidelines are designed to provide helpful, practical advice and to protect UNV staff worldwide. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Communications Section in Headquarters (alba.candelpau@unv.org)

UNV global social media presence

UNV's social media presence is comprised of the global UNV social media profiles managed from HQ, the regional profiles managed from the Regional Offices, and some country-specific profiles managed from Field Units.

Messaging and accuracy are as important on social media platforms as in other public information materials. Creation of new accounts should be considered carefully with supervisors and colleagues as with every new communications initiative, taking the planning, staff and monitoring sections outlined below into account.

Posting on social media platforms requires sound editorial judgement with due attention paid to content, organizational priorities and user preferences.

All participation in social media activities is subject to the UN's core values of integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity, as well as other related behaviour codes, standards and policies.

Global profiles

What we prioritize on the global channels are the best of our work. We tell the story of our UN Volunteers' contributions to the mandates of the UN agencies they are serving, the stories of our partners and how they value the work of UN Volunteers, the story of transformation through the voice of the communities affected, and the stories of volunteers and volunteerism in general contributing to peace and development around the world.

We curate and re-write content pulled daily from our Regional Offices and Field Units, as well as from volunteer-involving organizations, through websites, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

It is important to note that posts on social media accounts of UNV Field Units and Regional Offices might be relevant to local or regional audiences but might not be equally relevant for the audiences of the global UNV social media accounts. This is the reason why content may be curated and re-written for the global accounts, but not necessarily reposted.

Regional and country profiles

Social media accounts of Regional Offices and Field Units representing UNV should develop objectives that are aligned with the UNV Communications strategy but adapted to different sets of audience who are interested in regional issues or only about particular countries.

For Field Units where the number of UN Volunteers is limited and so is the capacity to regularly post country-specific content, it makes more sense to promote content through the regional or global social media accounts.

Setting up social media accounts

It only makes sense to set up or maintain social media accounts which can be regularly updated with relevant content. A social media profile that is left to stagnate for too long and becomes outdated may give the impression of apathy or lack of professionalism. Accounts no longer receiving regular attention should be deactivated to avoid confusion.

All social media accounts should have clear objectives, with appropriate content approval policies in place. Always remember that engaging in social media activities is a long-term endeavour. Define a clear plan and responsibilities, including appropriate staffing, as with any other communications project.

To help you develop a social media plan, a checklist is provided in the Annex at the end

Staffing

Staff responsible for content posted on social media tools should be active users of the tool to better understand the rules and etiquette of the communication medium. This, along with sound editorial and political judgement, will help ensure avoiding unnecessary errors that might harm the organization's reputation.

Languages

Most content published on the global UNV profiles is in English as our key audiences are also publishing in English. Also, most articles published on the global UNV website are also in English. Therefore, the chances of our content being shared by UNV's global partners and stakeholders is higher when the content is posted in English.

For regional and country profiles, this may vary depending on the audience, so consider this carefully before deciding on the language or languages you will use for posting on your profile. A key consideration in this decision is also your staff capacity.

Moreover, please consider that content published on Twitter and Facebook can be translated by followers into their own language, so people who have set up their accounts in another language can translate content from English, and vice versa.

Objectives, audiences and metrics

Primary objectives

UNV seeks to increase its donor base, forge stronger relationships with UN partner agencies and mobilize more international volunteers. In this respect, the UNV social media objectives will be aligned to the goals of the organization.

More specifically, the UNV social media objectives are to:

- establish relationships and engage in conversations with current or potential donors
- engage in conversations with UN partner agencies
- reach out to new partners
- mobilize international UN Volunteers
- increase the number of organizations who would like to work with UN Online Volunteers
- promote the spirit of volunteerism
- increase engagement rates (comments, shares and retweets)

Secondary objective

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, communicating effectively the work of the UN development system has become more important than ever. As part of the overall strategy to mobilize the public-at-large and other partners on the work of the United Nations, UNV promotes other agencies' social media campaigns to gather attention from the public on the work of the UN in general.

Social media is also an opportunity to be more approachable and to rewrite our own narrative, break down misinformation, and show that for every negative story about the UN, there are 100 stories of positive action to improve conditions for the world's most vulnerable.

Audiences

- Current and potential partners
- Potential donors and funding institutions
- UN partner agencies
- Previous, current and potential volunteers
- Influencers in the field of volunteerism
- Volunteer-involving organizations

Metrics or key performance indicators

- Number of shares on Facebook (indicates increased brand familiarity/favourability)
- Number of retweets on Twitter (indicates increased brand familiarity/favourability)
- Number of conversations with key stakeholders (indicates potential to increase the donor base)
- The social media following of those who share/retweet content (indicates the level of influence)
- Traffic from social media to the website

For analytics on the global accounts, UNV uses Hootsuite. Although Facebook and Twitter have basic analytics functionalities, Hootsuite offers more elaborate metrics, so you may consider investing in Hootsuite subscriptions for your region or country.

Creating compelling content

What to post on UNV social media profiles

- Stories of UN Volunteers
- Stories of partners engaging UN Volunteers
- Stories of programmes and development
- Stories of beneficiaries
- Media articles about volunteerism
- News and current affairs about volunteerism
- Live events
- Volunteer opportunities
- Happenings and campaigns
- Celebrations for the International Volunteer Day

Not all social media content has to be original content. Already approved/published communications materials may form the basis of useful social media posts and often limits the need to seek content approval.

Writing style

Employ a consistent voice using engaging and approachable, yet professional and timely content, keeping in mind that many access social media content on mobile devices.

Whenever possible, link back to the original source rather than copying text, etc., onto social media platforms. Proofread your content carefully and make sure links are active before posting.

Monitoring and responding to comments and questions

When possible, answer genuine questions with links to helpful information. It is not necessary to respond to every question or comment or to respond directly.

It is usually not effective to address hypothetical questions or comments that are degrading, mocking, rants and incitements to anger. Remove comments that are obscene, defamatory, profane, libellous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful or embarrassing to any person or entity.

Allow user-generated content that may be off topic or critical but is not offensive. If you come across misrepresentation of UNV's work, correct it with factual information and, whenever possible, a link to additional information. Notable comments or trends should be shared with supervisors and/or forwarded to substantive departments for information purposes.

How to get content shared

- Post something current, exciting, innovative or describing something that never happened before.
- Use captivating visuals, infographics or videos. Note that videos get more engagement when they are uploaded than when they are posted as a link to YouTube.

- Avoid photos that look staged, such as groups of people smiling in front of a camera. Instead, find a picture that shows volunteers in action. Also, make sure the photo does not look blurry or dim and that people look engaged and their eyes are open.
- Try to catch people's attention -- Would YOU share this? If not, why should others?
- Post about UNV and the brand, but also share content from partners, opinion leaders, influencers and/or the media, or share posts from people we want to reach or engage.
- Respond to comments, participate in conversations and encourage more dialogue and engagement.

Whom to follow

Although different Field Units and Regional Offices will need to follow different influencers, below is a list of some influencers and important organizations that post messages related to volunteerism.

1. Accounts of other UNV Regional Offices, Field Units and staff members. For example:

@UNV_ROWCA
@UNV_ESARO
@UNVAsiaPacific
@UNVEurasia
@OlivieradamUNV
@ToilyKurbanov

2. UN Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies

@ilo
@HDRUNDP
@WFP
@UNUWIDER
@UNPeacebuilding
@WBPubs
@wb_research
@WorldBank
@OECD
@UNDESA
@GlobalGoalsUN
@GlobalGoals17
@unpublications
@UN_DPA
@UNPeacekeeping
@UN_Spokesperson
@UNrightswire
@UNmultimedia
@FAOnews
@UNDPLAC
@SustDev
@SDGaction
@UN_Women
@UNEP
@UNFPA

@UN_News_Centre
@WHO
@SayNO_UniTE
@UNCERF
@UNFCCC
@UNFoundation
@IOM_news
@voicesofyouth
@UNOCHA
@Refugees
@UNDP
@HelenClarkUNDP
@MarkLGoldberg
@undispatch
@UN
@UNESCAP
@UNHABITAT
@UN4Youth
@UN_Disarmament
@humanitarian
@Empower_Women
@UNICEF
@UNESCO

3. Economics and Human Development

@HumanityNews
@youth4SDG
@JeffDSachs
@Mashable
@GatesFoundation
@ONECampaign
@monkeycageblog
@WomenintheWorld
@HayesBrown
@BeautifulMaps
@TheAtlantic
@TheEconomist
@BrookingsGlobal
@NYTimeskrugman
@JosephEStiglitz
@ODIdev
@HarvardCID
@GdnDevelopment
@fp2p
@owenbarder
@viewfromthecave
@DAWNSDigest
@Wolfe321
@SlaughterAM
@m_clem
@CGDev

@africarenewal
@ZeroHunger
@Forbes
@nprnews
@CSRwire
@washingtonpost
@HuffPostImpact
@nonprofitorgs
@ReproRights
@AJEnglish
@devex
@HarvardBiz

4. Human Rights and Humanitarian Emergencies

@amnesty
@hrw
@theIRC
@SavetheChildren
@Oxfam
@eu_echo
@HHI
@AlertNet
@ICRC
@reliefweb
@Anti_Slavery
@MSF
@KenRoth

5. Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

@WomenWarPeace
@Peace_Women
@insightconflict
@ngowgwps
@RichardGowan1
@USIP
@ipinst
@CrisisGroup

6. Volunteerism

@VolunteerOttawa
@VolunteerWorld_
@dosomething
@PeaceCorps
@VSOCampaigns
@VSO_Intl

Social media guidelines

Who these guidelines are for*

These guidelines are meant for all UNV affiliates who want to utilize social media to help us contribute to peace and development through volunteerism. The guidelines will **familiarize you** with our overarching social media philosophy, **encourage you** to *find, join, and participate* in our overarching social media presence, and **help direct you** while forming your own social media plan. We are extending our ever-growing community by using social networking. However, a social media strategy at a national office location is a significant commitment of your time and even resources. When you enter the online sphere, please ensure that you have a plan in place to allow for a smooth transition to all forms of social networking.

These guidelines are to help us take part in global conversations related to the work we are doing at UNV, our volunteers, projects, and all the things about which we are passionate. If you are using social media tools such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr or YouTube, if you are blogging or if you are posting comments on other people's blogs, then these guidelines are for you.

Why "personal" and "private" are not the same

While communication through social media networks is primarily a *personal* matter, this is not the same as it being *private*. In a lot of cases, written conversations inside these networks can be found through search engines such as Google or Bing. Even in cases where only your contacts can see what you write, there is a possibility that one of them will forward what you say and make it visible to a wider audience; this is especially true with the 'print screen feature'. As a result, personal conversation(s) within social media networks should be considered public rather than private.

Best practices

1) Respect people's privacy

Respect people's right to privacy. It is your job to *protect vulnerable people*, not to exploit them.

Always ask for people's permission to take photos and always ask for people's consent before posting anything about them on social media platforms.

2) Be a good ambassador

You should always be aware that your behaviour and opinions reflect on the organization.

3) Be credible

Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.

4) Be passionate

Passion is contagious. Share the passion you feel for your work and talk about the successes in which you have partaken. The more effort you put into posting, the faster your audience will grow.

5) Add value

UNV believes that sharing of information and experiences benefits the whole volunteer community and ultimately the people we serve. Feel free to share and discuss your experiences in your work e.g. elections, field communication, crisis recovery, etc. If UNV staff is perceived to be knowledgeable and

helpful this will reflect positively on you and on the organization. Obviously, use common sense where information is concerned that is internal and/or confidential. If in doubt - ask the owner of the information you want to share. In short, *write only what you know!*

6) It is a conversation

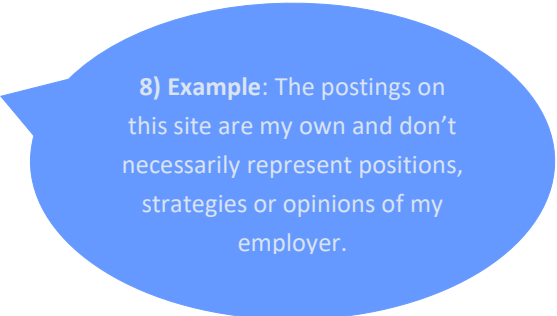
Talk to your readers like you would talk to real people in professional situations. In other words, *use plain, jargon-free, accessible language*. Note that even if we think things are common – e.g. NGO/CSO – they might not be to the end user! Don't be afraid to bring in your own personality and say what's on your mind. Consider content that's open-ended and invites response. Encourage comments. Ask questions. You can also broaden the conversation by citing others who are blogging about the same topic and allowing your content to be shared or syndicated.

7) Think of CNN, your mother and your boss

Don't say anything online that you wouldn't be comfortable seeing quoted on CNN or having to justify to your supervisor. Things employees write about employers are permanently indexed in digital form by Google, Bing, and dozens of other search engines and thus made publicly accessible. Whenever you write anything about UNV, it could be accessible by these parties and more. Never participate in Social Media when the topic being discussed may be considered a crisis situation.

8) Use a disclaimer on personal blogs

If you have a personal blog and talk about work-related issues, add a disclaimer to each page making clear that the views you express are yours alone. Be aware that this disclaimer doesn't free you from the obligations you have under UNV, UNDP or UN codes of conduct. If you have an "about me" page, we advise against using photos where you stand in front of one of the UNV or UN logos. You are personally responsible for all content on your personal site or content posted to UNV sites in an unofficial capacity.

A blue speech bubble containing text.

8) Example: The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent positions, strategies or opinions of my employer.

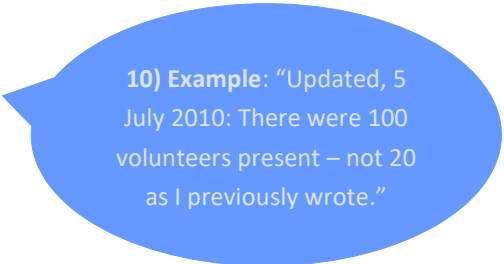
9) Feel free to correct others but stick to the facts

UNV and the United Nations are complex organizations, and we work in complicated legal and operational contexts. People frequently misunderstand or choose to misunderstand us. If you come across a misrepresentation of the organization or the system, feel free to identify yourself and organizational affiliation and correct their mistake but do so with respect and with facts.

If you don't feel comfortable doing it yourself, please contact the Communications Section in Headquarters (alba.candelpau@unv.org). In most cases people won't mind being corrected and they will frequently even distribute the correction themselves. However, if you get the feeling that someone deliberately misinterprets everything you say, just ignore them.

10) Be the first to admit a mistake

If you have made a mistake, be upfront about it. Admit and correct the mistake. If you correct an earlier post in a blog do so visibly, e.g. by using the strikethrough function and adding a paragraph that explains the update at the end.

A blue speech bubble containing text.

10) Example: "Updated, 5 July 2010: There were 100 volunteers present – not 20 as I previously wrote."

11) Use your best judgment

If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, let it sit for a few more hours or a day and think again whether this is what you want to say. If it still makes you feel uncomfortable, ask your supervisor for advice. If something happens, whether at work or something you read about in the news, take time to reflect on your feelings before posting something. Remember, even

if you delete a post, it is not possible to really retract something you put online – always be an ambassador for UNV.

12) Protect your own privacy

A lot of web sites allow you some form of control over who can see your material. *Use these features!*

- a. On Facebook, control your privacy settings under “Setting→Privacy Settings→Profile.” We recommend that you set all of these except for “Profile” to “Only friends.”
- b. On Facebook, beware of clicking bogus links. These may not only harm your computer but could also hack into your ‘friend’ list – giving everyone with whom you are friends the same bogus link.
- c. On Twitter, there is an option to protect your tweets. If someone wants to follow you, you must manually approve this. For more information on protecting your tweets, please visit: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/14016#>

13) Keep security in mind

Be particularly careful with what you are discussing online if you are in an operational context. Please make sure that you have read and follow your unit's security requirements. Never talk about things like routes or times of planned convoys. If in doubt, talk to the security unit. Never post personal details such as your home addresses or those of your colleagues. Bear in mind that personal details of local staff members can be very sensitive in many operational areas – this includes their names and pictures.

14) Spread the word and connect with your colleagues

Don't only talk about yourself. Try also to discuss the successes of your colleagues. Connect with them through social networks and spread their success stories.

15) Get advice

If your unit, programme or office wants to use social media to promote UNV activities, please contact the Communications Section in Headquarters (alba.candelpau@unv.org), which has the lead on social media activities for UNV and can ensure consistency and help with best practices.

Moderation guidelines

Moderation is the act of reviewing and approving content before it's published on the site (This applies to social media content written on behalf of UNV, whether the site is on unv.org or affiliated with it in some way). UNV does not endorse or take responsibility for content posted by third parties, referred to as user generated content (UGC). This includes text input and uploaded files (video, images, audio, executables, documents).

Social Networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube don't currently allow you to moderate comments before they're published for the world to see, so it is necessary to check all your UNV-sites as often as possible, especially on Monday morning.

If you have a blog, you can usually moderate your comments before they're published to your site. If you'd like to moderate your comments, you can use this language:

“Remember, we encourage you to comment on this blog. All viewpoints are welcome, but please be constructive. We reserve the right to make editorial decisions regarding submitted comments, including but not limited to removal of comments. The comments are moderated, so you may have to be a tiny bit patient in waiting to see them. We will review and post them as promptly as possible during regular business hours.”

While we encourage user participation in all forms, there are some guidelines we ask you to follow to keep it safe for everyone. Here are some [guidelines around the moderation of UNV official sites](#).

1) Add a disclaimer

To ensure safety of all users, add the following disclaimer to all social media sites:

Comments/opinions available through this page are for informational purposes only. The contents in and linked to this page do not reflect the policy or position of UNV and should not be construed as a substitute for professional decisions/advice. Reliance upon the content in or linked to this page is solely at the user's own risk.

2) Ensure balanced conversation

Even if we can only think about positive things to say about UNV, it doesn't mean that we should filter all negative opinions about our organization. If the comment is negative or 'mean,' but it is constructive or adds to the conversation, we should allow the dialogue to continue. To have meaningful online conversations, we must allow both opinions to be heard—both those favourable and unfavourable—to allow for two-sided conversations. If the comment is constructive, try to engage the user. Even if you lack answers, other users might be able to add to the conversation and help clear up any misunderstandings the user might have. If the comment is not constructive nor aligns with the fundamental principles of UNV, the content can be removed (see offensive content in 3.)

3) What if the content is offensive?

If the content is **offensive, denigrating, racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic, classist, religiously intolerant**, or just **completely out of context**, UNV has the right and obligation to **remove the material from our page**. Personal attacks and foul language should be removed ASAP.

4) Be professional

Even if the post is negative, try to remain professional. If the post was constructive, take time before responding to ensure a thorough, informative and cordial response. If the post was offensive and no one has commented on it, *do not make mention of it*—simply remove the post and act as if it never happened. The more you mention it, the more you are giving negative posts the spotlight – let the positive posts shine through. If others have responded to the perpetrator, simply write, "This post was removed for offensive language." Remember, for every negative comment, there are hundreds of supporters of UN Volunteers and their work with communities throughout the world.

Existing rules and obligations

1) Observe neutrality

Don't get involved with political initiatives. In the context of social media, it is important to remember that this applies not only when you represent UNV or during working hours but around the clock and even when you are on leave. This is especially true online.

2) Don't use the UNV emblem on personal blogs or social media profiles

You cannot use the UNV emblem as any part of your personal blog or social media profile.

3) Stay focused on your job

While the UNV leadership encourages the use of social media and online communities for business purposes and recognizes that these can be a valuable resource, keep in mind that you were not hired to spend time on Flickr and YouTube for personal matters. *Make sure that your online activities don't interfere with your job.*

4) Keep your manager in the loop

UNV requires that you obtain permission before publishing anything related to your function or assignment. This also applies to blogs and similar online publications. To avoid problems, discuss your work-related social media activities with your manager.

5) Observe IT security rules

Don't download or install software that you find through social networks on your work computer. If you have questions, please contact your IT focal point.

6) Be careful when quoting numbers

Numbers are very attractive for the media and if you don't reference the numbers correctly, a personal blog post could quickly turn into a headline that reads "UN says 10,000 injured in Alphaland."

Annex: developing a social media plan

Objectives:

1.
2.
3.

How will these objectives be aligned with the overall communications strategy?

1.
2.

Audiences:

1.
2.
3.

What type of content are these audiences interested in?

1.
2.
3.

Are there any other social media accounts offering this content?

1.
2.

If so, how will my social media account be different? What will be its niche or special offering?

1.
2.

Key performance indicators:

1. Number of followers by (when)
2. Number of likes/shares/retweets by (when)
3. Number of comments on average per post by (when)

Monitoring:

1. Potential offensive comments (how often)
2. Reports and analytics (how often)

Evaluation:

1. What makes certain posts more successful than others (photos, videos, specific content)?
2. How can we replicate the success of these posts (specific content, visuals)?
3. Are the key performance indicators met?