



UNV ADVOCACY STRATEGY

2014 - 2017

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme's Advocacy Strategy is one of the supporting strategies for the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2014 – 2017 (SF). Advocacy contributes to both expected SF outcomes. On the one hand, it aims at the integration of volunteerism into policies and programmes, thereby strengthening an enabling environment – for volunteerism as a concept as well as for volunteer organisations and groups as development actors. On the other hand, it contributes to increasing opportunities for volunteer mobilization.

UNV is a UN entity and a volunteer involving organization (VIO) at the same time. Being a UN entity places UNV in a unique position of legitimacy and neutrality to facilitate and widen dialogue between governments and the volunteer involving segment of civil society. As a VIO, UNV contributes to building capacity to integrate volunteering as a complementary mechanism for the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). UNV aims to communicate the legitimacy and primacy of people's perspectives and helps to address critical programming and/or policy gaps in support of development efforts.

What is advocacy for volunteerism?

UNV defines advocacy for volunteerism as a deliberate effort, based on evidence, aimed at persuading decision-makers to adopt policies and take actions that promote people's participation in local and international development through volunteerism.

India: National UN Volunteer Amita Dahiya gives a speech on the occasion of Global Youth Service Day in New Delhi.

A recent external evaluation showed that UNV has played an important role in the promotion of a better understanding of volunteerism and appreciation of its values at global and national levels.



Haitian community volunteers, together with UN Volunteers and in collaboration with other UN agencies, rollout MY World offline in an IDP camp in Haiti. This provides an example of how joint advocacy by UNV and partners brings increased attention to people-centred development and to the key role that volunteerism plays for people and countries.

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A recent external evaluation on UNV's contribution to volunteer infrastructures at national level shows that UNV has undoubtedly played an important role in the promotion of a better understanding of volunteerism and appreciation of its values at global and national levels. The evaluation identifies however the need to sustain and enhance the capacity of all stakeholders to establish sustainable volunteer infrastructures, and contribute to an enabling environment for volunteerism. It also suggests strengthening the coordination mechanisms for these efforts.

The Advocacy Strategy aims at enhancing corporate oversight, support and capacity building connected to these efforts at national and global levels, while raising the visibility of related results. UNV also collects and translates the knowledge, ideas and skills into evidence for policy and resource solutions that are built on successful examples of where volunteerism has made a difference.

Aims and objectives of the UNV Advocacy Strategy

Through the Advocacy Strategy, UNV, together with partners, brings increased attention to:

- the importance of people's engagement in all aspects of development efforts (also known as 'people-centred development'), and
- the key role that volunteerism – whether a non-formal voluntary engagement or one that is formally conducted through organizations – plays for people and countries. In particular, through its capacity to engage all, regardless of the socio-economic context, volunteerism provides opportunities to address inequalities based on gender and age.

The added-value of volunteerism

Wide-spread and long-lasting misconceptions see volunteerism purely as a cost-efficient way to get a job done. From this perspective, its main contribution is in economic terms, equivalent to the costs that would have been incurred had the same activity been carried out by paid staff.

However, while the economic factor is an important element to be taken into consideration, it falls by far short of volunteerism's real contribution to development. The State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) has in fact demonstrated that, in addition to 'getting the job done', volunteerism durably influences the attitudes, mindsets and sense of well-being of both the communities where volunteers are active and of the volunteers themselves.

To achieve concrete results within the period covered by the SF 2014 - 2017, the Advocacy Strategy identifies **two overarching objectives**, both to be pursued together with partners and stakeholders:

1. positioning volunteerism within the debate about the definition of the **post-2015 sustainable development** agenda and its means of implementation, including issues related to engaging people in participatory **accountability mechanisms**;
2. developing a **Ten-Year Plan of Action to integrate volunteering in peace and development in the next decade and beyond** as mandated by the UN General Assembly (Resolution A/RES/67/138), which will provide overall guidance across the SF period and beyond on the integration of volunteerism in policies and programmes.



Global and national advocacy are necessary to achieve both objectives:

- at national level, UNV focuses on strengthening national volunteer infrastructures and the national positioning of volunteerism in 20 key countries, including through supporting national coordinating bodies and steering committees;
- at global level, UNV engages with institutional mechanisms and Member States to position its vision and related evidence in the decision-making spaces related to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

Partners and partnerships

UNV's advocacy-related partnerships enhance the relationship with partners with whom UNV shares a common vision through different forms of collaborative engagements at local, national, regional and global levels. These are defined in UNV's Partnerships Strategy, and include:

- connecting volunteer knowledge to volunteer action in order to integrate volunteering into peace and development;
- convening alliances and fora to increase volunteering awareness and actions for peace and development.

In fact, the recent notion of "Volunteer Groups", embedded in various UN documents and resolutions related to the post-2015 development agenda, underlines their relevance as a stakeholder for SDG planning and implementation in its own right. This reality demands a redefinition of the modalities of engagement with partners, such as the newly created Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group, composed of some of UNV's long-standing and new partners as well as global youth organisations.

Advocacy yields the best results when undertaken on a long-term collective basis and in partnership. UNV will therefore partner with stakeholders through the Ten Year Plan of Action to facilitate a more systematic collective approach to influencing change. This will help bring the voices, knowledge and expertise of Member States, UN entities, Volunteer Involving Organizations (VIOs), civil society, volunteers themselves and other development practitioners to the attention of policy-makers at national and international levels to suggest solutions for lasting impact.





The speakers panel at the UNV side event to the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW58) in New York, 2014, including representatives from the UN, CSOs, volunteer involving organisations and member states, is an example of how UNV engages with partners to promote volunteerism

UNV's advocacy efforts contribute to the perception of UNV as substantive actor in the development debate as well as convener of the volunteer involving segment of civil society and facilitator of concrete engagement and outreach at community level. This strengthens the notion of volunteerism thematically and provides opportunities for its integration into the planning, implementation and monitoring of the emerging post-2015 agenda, including through reaching out to local communities to strengthen a state - people feedback loop for accountability purposes.

UNV's engagement in this debate at national and global level is in turn expected to increase overall visibility and credibility of the organization and the concept it stands for and therefore to lead to an enhanced global perception by member states and UN partners of the value of volunteering and the related programmatic opportunities. Ultimately this is expected to strengthen UNV's mobilization efforts.

Areas of action for the implementation of the strategy

- 1. Strengthening engagement with UN, CSO partners, volunteer involving organisations at large, as well as with Member States;
- 2. Enhancing the capacity of UNV Field Units to facilitate integration of volunteerism for UNV personnel and volunteers, as well as stakeholders, particularly at national level;
- 3. Leveraging and sharing knowledge about volunteerism's contribution to development, in collaboration with stakeholders, based on the evidence produced through UNV's and the stakeholders' global research agenda;
- 4. Increasing visibility of content and process-related information and activities; setting up knowledge and communication platforms for partners to engage in collective advocacy efforts.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming and mobilizing volunteers. UNV is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). For more information about UNV, please visit www.unv.org.