

UN Volunteer Conditions of Service Review

Information Note

UN Human Resources Network



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Introduction & Rationale

Guiding Principles for the Review of the Conditions of Service (COS) for UN Volunteers

The following framework guides the review of the Conditions of Service for UN Volunteers. In the formulation of recommendations, the Working Group took into account the COS review objectives established by the Executive Coordinator: to reduce transactional costs with minimal changes to the proforma and the UN Volunteers' entitlement packages while developing a unified UN Volunteer Conditions of Service for national and international UN Volunteers and enhancing the added value of engaging UN Volunteers for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation.

The COS changes review are aligned with the Digital Transformation Unified Volunteering Platform development and release tentatively in January 2021.

The United Nations system defines volunteering considering three fundamental criteria: an action must be undertaken of the **person's free will, underpinned by non-pecuniary motivations and undertaken for the benefit of the common good.**¹

UN Volunteers and internal considerations for review of the Conditions of Service

- UNV will follow the duty of care principles for the UN Affiliated work force such as risk awareness and transparency, safe and healthy working and living environment, inclusion and respect for dignity, caring for consequences of risk, and accountability at all levels.
- Changes in the Conditions of Service should lead to simplification of administrative procedures for UNV, UN Host Entities and the UN Volunteers.
- The roll-out strategy should be aligned with the launch of the Unified Volunteer Platform.

¹ UNV, 2011 State of the World's Volunteerism Report – Universal values for global well-being, p. 4

Transition Approaches

APPROACHES	TRANSITION METHODS	IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS
Hard Launch	Fixed date when changes occur regardless of contract cycle	COS comes fully into effect upon UVP launch date
Contract Cycle Alignment	Align contract expiration on fixed date so that all new contracts are embedded with new terms	All contracts expire on 31 December 2020 in order for transition to occur on 1 Jan 2021
Legacy Accrued Rights	Accrued rights are maintained for a fixed period of time, requiring two systems effectively to be administered. New contracts have new system	Grandfathering of accrued rights that could last either until contract extension or a fixed date in the future (long and cumbersome transition)
New Horizon	Reset from zero into the new entitlements	Modification to all above models that would only look forward and not in the past

Conditions of Service changes - Recommendations

No	Proposed Changes	Rationale	Impact on Proforma / UNVs Package	Recommendation
1	Conditions of Service design	<p>Leaner Conditions of Service document with fewer revisions required to the core document. Flexibility in policy to be contained in Policy Notes and /or implementation guidelines, which can be modified more seamlessly</p> <p>One set of UN Volunteer COS instead of current two versions for national and international volunteers</p>	Simplified COS design for COS provisions with legal aspects, minimum eligibility criteria, and benefits and entitlements that are equal to all UN Volunteers contained in the COS with tailored policy and operational portions referenced in guidelines	<p>One set of Conditions of Service for standardized UN Volunteer categories:</p> <p>International – Youth, Specialist, Expert;</p> <p>National – Community, University, Youth, Specialist, Expert;</p> <p>University category under a special programme.</p> <p>Provisions for specialized initiatives.</p>
2	Eligibility criteria	<p>Removing overlaps in criteria for streamlining and consistency</p> <p>Focus on relevant experience.</p> <p>Legal basis for differentiation of</p>	Minimum criteria with differentiated benefits and entitlements justified based on the distinguishing aspects	<p>Experience: Zero experience (Community) 0-2 years (University/Youth) 2+ (Specialist) 15+ (Expert)</p> <p>Age requirements: Community 21+ University & Youth 21-26</p>

		<p>benefits package that otherwise contradict principle of equity</p>		<p>Specialists & Experts 27+</p> <p>Status: University Volunteers should be students or recent graduates.</p>
3	<p>Minimum contract duration</p>	<p>Shorter term contracts create workload</p>	<p>Cost-recovery policy establishes deployment charge that makes short-term contracts economically unviable. Furthermore, workload for short-term contracts are viewed as marginally beneficial to UNV due to the workload involved.</p>	<p>Three (3) months minimum across all categories.</p>
4	<p>Entry Lump Sum</p>	<p>Simplification and merger of multiple entitlements at the initiation of a UN Volunteer assignment results in a reduction of costly transactions.</p> <p>Greater equity between UN Volunteers as the</p>	<p>Consolidation of multiple variable payments into Lump Sums with strong policy rationale has small increase to proforma for UN Youth Volunteers and a reduction of proforma costs for UN Volunteer Specialists.</p>	<p>Merge pre-departure, shipment, Settling-In-Grant (SIG), additional SIG into one Entry Lump Sum:</p> <p>USD 4000 international UN Volunteers, USD 400 national UN Volunteers, USD 50 UN Community Volunteers.</p>



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		Entry Lump Sum is the same amount for similarly situated UN Volunteers.		
5	Post Adjustment Multiplier (PAM)	Affect minor number of countries that has multiple PAM established	Minor	Post Adjustment Multiplier (PAM) at capital/highest rate.
6	Travel ticket	<p>Reduction of back and forth via emails.</p> <p>Better compliance with Home Visit.</p> <p>Repatriation Travel compliance improved to leave the duty station.</p>	<p>Current practice of monetization showed no major proforma impact for international UN Volunteers. Nationals currently require reimbursement which is administratively burdensome. Thus, change is seen as streamlining processes and providing funds in advance without proforma impact.</p>	<p>Monetization of all entitlement travel through lump-sum payments.</p> <p>National UN Volunteers to receive lump-sum quote.</p>

7	Volunteer Living Allowance (VLA)	Periodic review of the Volunteer Living Allowance, which includes Monthly Living Allowance and Family Allowance necessitated by the review of the Conditions of Service.	Methodological legal basis for differentiation of VLA and modernization of Family Allowance in line with trends in the United Nations System.	Monthly Living Allowance (MLA) base rate and Family Allowance methodology are under review.
8	Accommodation Supplement (AS)	<p>Accommodation Supplement as an individual entitlement creates workload for payroll colleagues and incentivizes low bargaining in the rental market that results in sentiments of inequality between UN Volunteers.</p> <p>The PAM includes a housing element and therefore to some extent reflects the housing cost in a given country. Current system lacks cohesion and a global indicator to</p>	Emphasis is currently on covering full accommodation and supplements reduces incentives for more modest housing and price conscious negotiation that can inflate the costs of fielding a UN Volunteer.	Discontinued and removed as individual entitlement. Delegation to ROs/NYO for duty station wide supplement setting, where informed and appropriate.

		benchmark housing costs.		
9	Dependents alignment	The principle of equity between UN Volunteers is the alignment of all dependency benefits for similarly situated UN Volunteers (national and international)	Proforma has to accommodate for three potential outcomes or are merged into a singular estimate (see proforma documents), dampening accuracy at the stage of confirmation of funds. 1 dependent is generally used as a benchmark for proforma estimation.	Tickets, insurance and inclusion of dependents extended to all UN Youth Volunteers. University remain single status due to short duration. Family Allowance extended to International Youth.
10	Well-Being Differential	Would not necessitate UNV colleagues using Google maps to choose closest duty station for unclassified duty stations. This will result in a reduction of disputes of Administrative Duty Stations and is easier to administer in the system using an “unclassified”	Unclassified duty stations by the ICSC that are non-family would be provided a Well-Being Differential as a presumption.	UN Volunteers placed in unclassified non-family duty stations receive Well-Being A. Unclassified non-family / Danger Pay duty station receive Well-Being B.

		duty station for reporting.		
11	Sick leave	<p>Administratively cumbersome calculation that is based on contract period. Change promotes equity and simplification</p> <p>eServices used by 1,838 volunteers: 1,985 sick leave takes.</p>	Reduce administrative processes associated with pro-rating entitlements depending on length of contract.	Calculation streamlined using annual 30 days. After 20 days sick leave the case is referred to UNOG. Decision on separation for prolonged illness after 30 days delegated to Host Entity.
12	Special leave without pay	<p>Special Leave is viewed as a staff entitlement and the rationale is not applicable for volunteers</p> <p>No longer necessitating programming SLWOP into systems and a reduction of errors and insurance overpayment.</p>	<p>Not applicable to a UN Volunteer assignment</p> <p>No proforma impact</p>	Special leave without pay is discontinued.
13	Parental leave	Equity between UN Volunteers - UN Youth Volunteers are in stage of life when procreation issues arise.	No direct financial impact though parental leaves takes by UN Youth Volunteers accounted for under IPSAS rules	Parental leave (maternity and paternity) is extended to all.

		Gender equality in line with overall trend in the United Nations System		
14	Individual Learning Allowance	Individual Learning Allowance is seen as an administratively burdensome and ineffective as a learning tool	Proforma reduction of \$15 a month in global charges. Funds allocated for learning will be facilitated through group learning opportunities in the field.	Learning is embedded in other activities (e.g. replaced by expanded CDLF (Capacity Development and Learning Facility) and online activities).
15	Maximum period of service	Unified system upon which to check UN Volunteers' maximum service period. The current system allows four (4) years of service for each contractual category, except two (2) years for youth - considered to be complicated Reduction of checks and better automation	Streamlining maximum duration period. No proforma impact through potentially slightly higher turnover with Host Entities that have high numbers of UN Volunteers serving greater than four (4) years.	Equivalent to four (4) years per volunteer assignment type, with the possibility for national UN Volunteers to become international UN Volunteers for another four (4) years. The ten (10) years lapse in service rule is discontinued.
16	Exit allowance	Equity between the UN Volunteers as currently UN Youth Volunteers receive less as a	Slight proforma increase for UN Youth Volunteers that is in part mitigated by a reduction of shipment allowance	Resettlement Allowance (RSA) entitlement for Specialists is extended to Youth.

		Resettlement Allowance (RSA)		Shipment is discontinued.
17	Reassignment	To serve the needs of UN Host Entity partners in mobility of UN Volunteer the reassignment policy must be adaptive.	Reassignment is at the discretion of a UN Host Entity; however, it triggers costs associated with travel and resettling the UN Volunteer in the new duty station.	To be permitted for national and international UN Volunteers for reassignment within the same Host Entity, same country, same category, but different duty station. Otherwise treated as new assignment.
18	Special situations	Reduction of administrative burden	No proforma impact.	No reductions when UN Volunteer has spouse in the UN system.

Administrative Effectiveness

The following are the administrative efficiencies/reduction of transactions associated with current contract management of UN Volunteers.

UNV will avoid:

- Proration of SIG for contracts less than 12 months
- MLA calculation for SIG payments that vary by country
- Individual learning allowance requests entered manually (370 plus reduction)
- Dependent documents uploads/verification for international UN Volunteers in non-family duty stations
- Accommodation Supplement charges in payroll will stay only for missions' deductions as per MOU
- Well-Being Differential deductions in payroll
- Calculation of sick leave
- Maximum duration periods between categories and lapse checks
- Volunteer Living Allowance Methodology for international and national UN Volunteers to be reviewed for both in 2020
- Streamlined entitlements will lead to reduction in help/service desk queries

References

1. [International UN Volunteer Conditions of Service](#)
2. [National UN Volunteer Conditions of Service](#)
3. [Information for UN Host Entities: How to Host a UN Volunteer](#)