

## UNV Special Voluntary Fund



*UN Volunteers support the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima through 'Volunteers for Events', one of UNV's recruitment modalities made possible by the Special Voluntary Fund. (Diego Morales/UNV, 2019)*

The Special Voluntary Fund (**SVF**) is an open trust fund comprised of financial contributions from Member States. The SVF is an essential resource for the United Nations Volunteers (**UNV**) programme, allowing UNV to flexibly and strategically allocate resources to deliver its dual mandate: to promote volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda and to deploy volunteers to support the United Nations.

In 2019, UNV continued to use the SVF to achieve results in the two outcome areas of the UNV Strategic Framework 2018–2021:

**Outcome 1:**

The efforts of Member States to deliver on the 2030 Agenda are supported through volunteerism as an effective means of implementation and people engagement.

**Outcome 2:**

The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of UN Volunteers and the integration of volunteerism.

SVF resources allowed UNV to advocate widely for volunteering through conducting research and consultations, providing expert advice on volunteer policy and legislation.

UNV's Online Volunteering service continued to match volunteers and development partners in virtual volunteering opportunities, while thousands of volunteers were trained and managed for large-scale international events under UNV's "Volunteers for Events" modality.

## Strengthening national volunteerism

UNV provides technical advice to Member States on how to integrate volunteerism into policy, legislation and programming to help achieve national development objectives.

### National volunteer schemes

During 2019, UNV supported the establishment and operation of formal national schemes in **Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, India, Sri Lanka** and **Uganda**.

In **Cameroon**, UNV supported the mobilization of 435 UN Youth Volunteers in health, education and agriculture across 10 regions of the country.

With technical assistance from UNV, the **Uganda** Graduate Volunteer Scheme deployed 115 women and 91 men, 7 per cent of whom were persons with disabilities.

In **India**, UN Volunteers supported the United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**) with its "Strengthening Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and National Service Scheme" project, through which young people had the opportunity to bring positive change to their communities.

In addition, UNV collaborated with **UNDP** to establish community volunteer networks in the **Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama** and **Uruguay**, making a positive impact on conserving biodiversity and preserving indigenous knowledge.

### National volunteer policies and legislation

In 2019, Member States continued to seek UNV's advisory services to develop national policies and legislation on volunteerism. The following Member States developed and adopted national volunteer legislation and policies in 2019, with support from UNV:

- In **Cambodia**, volunteerism was officially recognized as a strategic priority of the national education plan.
- In **Cameroon**, a bill to create a national agency on volunteerism was adopted.
- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, national volunteer service came into effect and the new civic service law now incorporates volunteerism.
- In **Egypt**, UN Volunteers supported the development of a manual on the mobilization, management, rights, obligations and entitlements of volunteers.
- In **Guinea-Bissau**, a national policy on volunteerism is in the final stages of consultation.

- In **India**, the national youth policy now includes youth community service.
- In **Peru**, the country's first national volunteer platform was established.
- In **Sri Lanka**, a national policy on volunteerism was approved.

With resources from the SVF, UNV Regional Offices engaged with Member States on their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of the 47 VNRs presented at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019, 28 explicitly recognized the positive contribution of volunteerism to the SDGs.

### Event and online volunteering

As a result of funding allocations from the SVF in 2019, UNV continued the "Volunteers for Events" (**V4E**) initiative as well as once again expanding virtual volunteering through UNV's service. These diverse service offerings provided expanded opportunities for more people around the world – no matter their location – to contribute to the 2030 Agenda through volunteering.

#### Volunteers for Events

In 2019, 57 UN Volunteers and 19,270 volunteers were mobilized under V4E to support large-scale national, regional and international events around the globe. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNV supported the volunteer programme for the Pan American and Parapan American Games in Lima, in which 19,000 Peruvian citizens took part. In addition, UNV coordinated the volunteer programme for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Spain.

#### Online Volunteers

In 2019, online volunteering became an integral part of UNV's overall talent solutions for its partners. A total of 33 United Nations entities and international organizations as well as 183 civil society organizations, public institutions and governmental organizations engaged Online Volunteers through UNV's placement service. The impressive number of 13,186 Online Volunteers took up assignments in 2019, undertaking a total of 2,198 volunteer months of effort.

The most popular online volunteering assignments were in the areas of research, design, translation, writing and editing. In addition, Online Volunteers also served as distance teachers, web developers and data analysts. Notably, 58 per cent of Online Volunteers were women, and 5 per cent were persons with disabilities.

The SVF was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1970. Over time, the SVF mandate has been modified and expanded, with the SVF providing seed funding to scale up successful projects where volunteerism has had a transformative impact. The SVF is also used to develop innovative volunteer-based solutions as well as undertake research and knowledge sharing. During the development of the UNV Strategic Framework 2018–2021, UNV engaged with its partners to formalize the more flexible use of the SVF in support of the implementation of UNV's mandate.

The SVF Steering Committee, an internal UNV governance group, is responsible for the oversight and strategic direction of SVF-funded activities. This Committee ensures full integration and alignment of individual initiatives with UNV's Strategic Framework 2018–2021.

## Spearheading research and knowledge exchange on volunteerism

In 2019, UNV continued to lead research and promote knowledge exchange on the role of volunteerism in the 2030 Agenda. In particular, UNV developed key tools to improve the ways in which the scale of volunteering can be measured by Member States.

The development of a UNV knowledge portal on volunteering started in 2019 with a stakeholder survey and an evidence gap analysis. The portal, featuring a global volunteering database and an extensive evidence library, will be the go-to space for policymakers and development practitioners to access global, regional and national data and evidence on volunteerism. It will be launched during the Global Technical Meeting (**GTM 2020**) in July 2020.

During 2019, UNV and the International Labour Organization (**ILO**) supported nine Member States on the statistical measurement of the contribution of volunteering, up from five Member States in 2018. Support provided to **Ecuador, India, Nepal, Paraguay, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ukraine** and the **United Arab Emirates** included advice on integrating volunteer measurement into population census and labour force surveys along with the testing of new tools and volunteer surveys to capture the diversity of volunteer work across contexts. UNV and ILO also published guidance on volunteer measurement in population census surveys, completed the compilation and processing of volunteer data from labour force surveys in 60 countries and provided gender analyses and insights on women's unpaid work using volunteering data.

In terms of research, UNV published a paper entitled "The Role of Gender in Volunteerism for Community Resilience", which included recommendations for Member States to promote gender equality, inclusion and empowerment in their volunteering legislation, policies and programmes.

In **India**, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sport, with UNV's support, organized the "India Volunteering Conclave", which was held in August 2019. The conference had a particular focus on monitoring and evaluating key infrastructure indicators, while it also covered the economic value of volunteer work, the social impact of volunteering, certification for volunteers and innovative practices in volunteering.

## SVF funding 2019

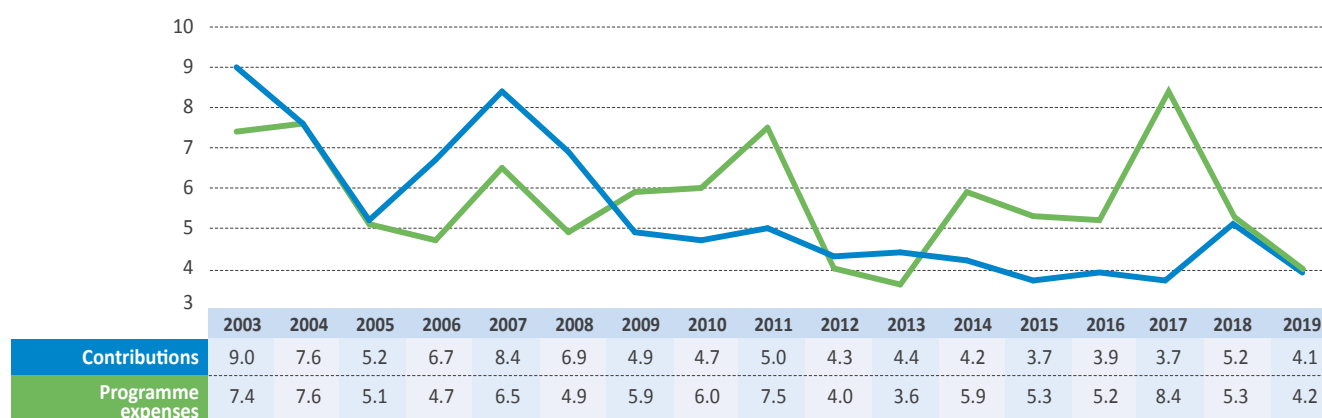
In 2019, contributions to the SVF amounted to US\$ 4.127 million, received from 11 United Nations Member States.

### Partner contributions in 2019

PARTNER COUNTRY	Programme funding received (US\$)
GERMANY	2 002 715
SWEDEN	957 799
SWITZERLAND	802 994
FRANCE	200 000
IRELAND	55 006
THAILAND	41 628
CHINA	30 000
INDIA	20 000
CZECH REPUBLIC	12 974
BANGLADESH	2 000
KAZAKHSTAN	2 000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4 127 116</b>

Note: the final amount of contributions reflected is the result of the rounding up and down of decimal places.

## SVF contributions and programme expenses 2003–2019 (in US\$ millions)



Note: the introduction of the Global Programmes in the Strategic Framework 2014–2017 allowed UNV to increase delivery of SVF.

# Plan of Action for Integrating Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda

The Plan of Action for Integrating Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda<sup>1</sup> calls on Member States, United Nations partners, civil society, academia and the private sector to scale up and enhance the ways in which volunteering can help achieve the SDGs. It also calls for the organization of a Global Technical Meeting on “Re-imagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda” during the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2020.

In 2019, UNV, together with partners, strengthened the knowledge and evidence base for the Plan of Action on how volunteering has contributed to SDG progress to date. UNV also tackled the critical question of how volunteering is to be “re-imagined” so that volunteer engagement is better positioned, resourced and utilized to accelerate SDG progress.

UNV undertook regional consultations with Member States during each of the annual forums for sustainable development hosted by the five United Nations Regional Commissions. Across the regions, stakeholders confirmed the relevance of volunteerism in solving a wide range of development challenges, ranging from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. However, the enabling environment for volunteering along with the gaps and challenges clearly differ by regional context:

- In the region of the **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**, evidence on the contribution of volunteerism to youth development, civic engagement and emergency response is well documented, and there are fewer visible barriers to volunteer action for a defined cause.
- In the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia** region, the key priorities are to strengthen relevant legal frameworks and harness the potential of volunteering to build young people’s skills.
- In the **United Nations Economic Commission for Africa** region, the most pressing need is to position volunteering, through partnerships with civil society and the private sector, as an integral resource to address gaps and inequalities in access to services.
- In the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific** region, stakeholders emphasized the need to integrate volunteering into national sector development strategies.
- In the **Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean** region, consultations called for the private sector, academia, civil society and volunteer-involving organizations to prioritize volunteering for sustainable development and to work together on research.

In addition to the regional consultations, UNV organized six consultations with partners:

- A round-table consultation with academics, civil society and think tanks in the **Russian Federation**.
- A round-table consultation with the Arab States in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (**IFRC**) in **Jordan**.
- An expert seminar on volunteering and inequality in cooperation with **UNDP**’s Human Development Report Office.
- A round-table discussion on “re-imagining” volunteering in Africa in cooperation with the African Union Commission and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (**GIZ**) in **Rwanda**.
- A technical workshop on accelerating progress on the SDGs in Asia in **Thailand**.
- A side event on “re-imagining” humanitarian volunteering in the 21st century in cooperation with the Government of Kenya and **IFRC** in **Switzerland**.

Through further online consultations, UNV received over 1,000 responses from 2,121 participants in more than 100 countries.

As a result of the consultations, the contribution of volunteering under the 2030 Agenda was included for the first time in the outcome documents of the regional forums, including a call to mainstream volunteerism into international development strategies and national road maps for the achievement of the SDGs.

Based on the knowledge and evidence gathered through these regional, partner and online consultations and the resulting synthesis reports, four cross-sectoral and integrated workstreams that support the overarching theme “Re-imagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda” were developed and approved by the Plan of Action Technical Working Group to frame and structure the technical content and preparations for GTM 2020:

## Workstream 1

Map evidence and document trends on how volunteering has contributed to the first cycle of the SDGs, and identify challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the remaining 10 years.

## Workstream 2

In the context of complex global problems, articulate how volunteerism as a transformative force can accelerate sustainable progress during the Decade of Action.

## Workstream 3

Identify what changes in volunteering policies and models need to be made to better enable environments to support and empower volunteers working to achieve the SDGs.

## Workstream 4

Capture accurate reporting on the impacts of volunteerism to inform national development priorities.

<sup>1</sup> A/RES/70/129 and A/70/118.