
Special Voluntary Fund of UNV Reporting for 2020

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 promote volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda and to deploy volunteers to support the United Nations.

In 2020, 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.

In 2020, SVF resources allowed UNV to develop innovative and agile volunteer solutions, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to advocate widely for volunteering. In collaboration with Member States and other stakeholders, UNV continued to develop its specialist knowledge and evidence base on volunteerism in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on gender. Internally, the use of SVF funds helped UNV to increase its agility and efficiency by accelerating the organization's digital transformation.

Supporting the COVID-19 response

From its onset, the COVID-19 pandemic called for United Nations entities to work more closely than ever before with Member States, and throughout 2020, UNV supported Member States, United Nations host entities and UN Volunteers as well as people affected on the ground in responding to the unprecedented challenges posed by the crisis. Globally, volunteer action helped to meet the needs of governments and other stakeholders in reaching communities far and wide.

UN Volunteer Yasmin Lapeira, (right) serving as Humanitarian Officer with OCHA Venezuela, tracks humanitarian assistance requirements in the states covered by the Maracaibo Field Coordination Hub (Trujillo, Falcón, Lara, and Zulia) (UNV, 2020)

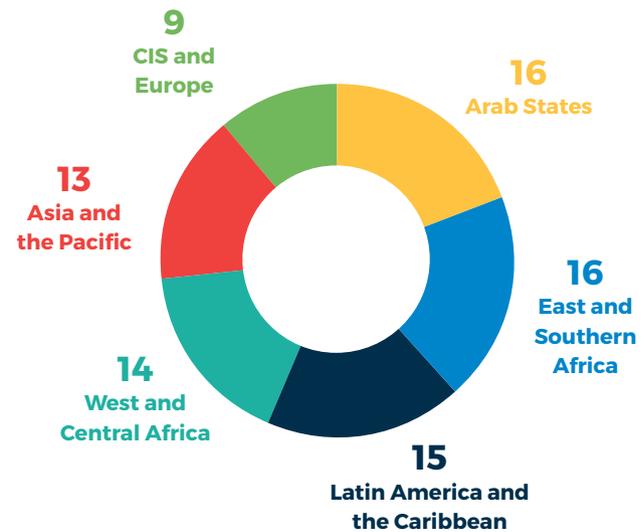


With long-standing experience as a system-wide service provider for the United Nations, UNV continued to make surge capacity available across the United Nations system to tackle the health emergency and to minimize its economic, social and health impacts. With a commitment of US\$ 2 million from the SVF, UNV was able to quickly deploy national UN Volunteers where additional resources were urgently needed to strengthen system-wide action on COVID-19.

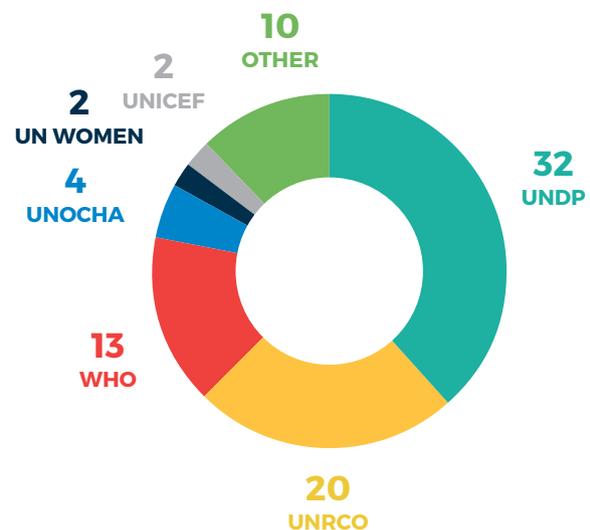
During 2020–2021, a total of 140 UN Volunteers will serve on COVID-related assignments with 18 United Nations entities in 79 countries. In 2020, 83 of these UN Volunteers were deployed to support inter-agency coordination, joint programmes and the public health response around the globe.

In **West and Central Africa**, UNV used SVF funds to support the most vulnerable in fighting COVID-19. Together with local volunteer organizations, UNV conducted awareness campaigns and provided communities with items to protect themselves from infection, including masks and handwashing kits. In **India**, UN Volunteer district youth coordinators conducted COVID-19 awareness campaigns in 58 districts to promote preventive measures and counter social discrimination experienced by those affected by the pandemic. They also trained community volunteers in an effort to reduce the burden on front-line health-care workers.

COVID-19 related national UN Volunteer assignments funded by the SVF, per region, 2020



COVID-19 related national UN Volunteer assignments funded by the SVF by UN host entity, 2020



SVF contributions in 2020

In 2020, contributions to the Special Voluntary Fund came from 11 funding partners: **Bangladesh, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand** and **Turkey**. The total amount of funding received was US\$ 5.9 million. Over 90 per cent came from the top four donors – **Germany, Sweden, Switzerland** and **France** – and in coming years, UNV will continue its efforts to further diversify the SVF donor base.

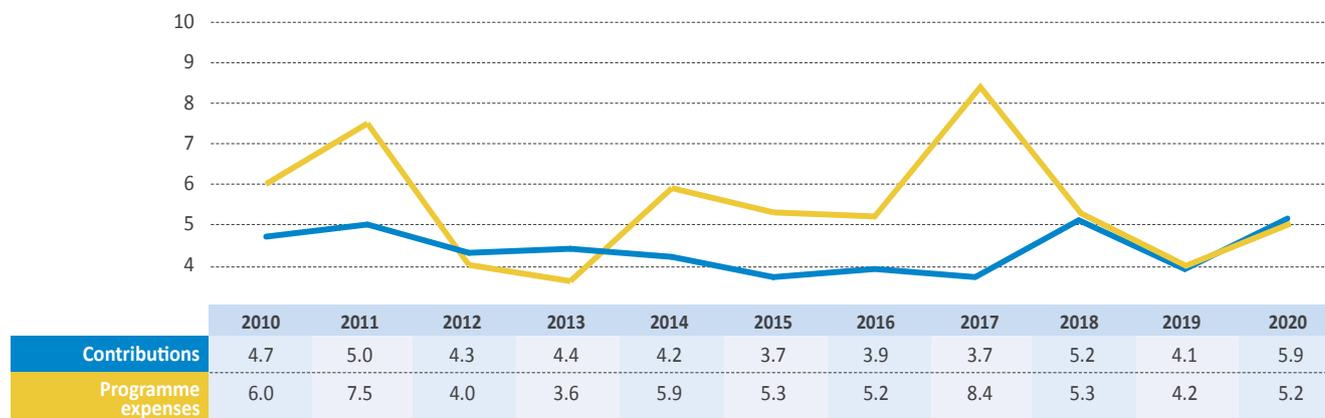
SVF contributions, 2020

FUNDING PARTNER*	Contribution (US\$)
GERMANY	3 102 705
SWEDEN	1 681 521
SWITZERLAND	818 032
FRANCE	200 000
IRELAND	59 737
CHINA	30 000
INDIA	19 975
CZECH REPUBLIC	12 544
TURKEY	10 000
BANGLADESH	2 000
THAILAND	1 521
TOTAL**	5 938 034

* Note: donor countries are ordered by magnitude of contributions received in 2020.

** Note: contributions have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole dollar.

SVF contributions and programme expenses, 2010–2020 (millions of US\$)



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

About the Special Voluntary Fund

The SVF was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1970. UNV reports on the use of the SVF to the UNDP Executive Board on an annual basis. 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 undertaking 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 the UNV Strategic Framework 2018–2021.

Leading the way on volunteerism

The highly visible role that volunteers have played in the response to COVID-19, backed up by UNV's ongoing promotion of volunteerism, has increased awareness of volunteering as a powerful cross-cutting means of implementing the 2030 Agenda. For the first time, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of the United Nations system's operational activities recognized that a conducive environment for volunteerism can enhance the sustainability of development results.

UNV uses the SVF to invest in volunteerism research, the promotion of volunteerism and the provision of technical support to Member States. UNV works with its partners to advance the understanding of the value of volunteering and to strengthen and diversify the contribution of volunteerism to sustainable development. In 2020, the fund allowed UNV to work with 27 countries on the establishment of volunteer schemes and the integration of volunteering into national policies and legislation.

With resources from the SVF, UNV partnered with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in realizing the Global Technical Meeting on Reimagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda during the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2020. The aim of the meeting was to provide a platform to advance discussions on how to jointly shape the future of volunteering to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The virtual meeting, bringing together 4,000 participants and 70 speakers from 60 countries, ended with a call to action encouraging broader and deeper stakeholder engagement with and contributions to the evidence, discussions and debates on integrating volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda.

In 2020, UNV and its United Nations partners mobilized 493,649 local non-UN volunteers in **Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, India, Kazakhstan, Kosovo², Peru, Sri Lanka** and **Turkey** through national volunteer schemes. This brings the cumulative number of local non-UN volunteers mobilized during the period of the UNV Strategic Framework 2018–2021 to 1,243,381.



² All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

UNV achievements in promoting volunteerism, 2020

WHAT?	WHERE?					
	West and Central Africa	East and Southern Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America and the Caribbean	Europe and the CIS
UNV provided technical support to develop policies, legislation and strategies on volunteerism	Cameroon (<i>draft legislation waiting for final approval</i>), Guinea-Bissau	Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe	League of Arab States	Sri Lanka	Paraguay (<i>draft legislation waiting for final approval</i>)	
UNV assisted the institutional strengthening of volunteerism at the country level	Benin (<i>development of a national volunteer programme and establishment of a volunteer coordination platform</i>)		State of Palestine (<i>establishment of a national volunteer programme</i>)	Sri Lanka (<i>establishment of the National Volunteering Secretariat and development of an online volunteer management system</i>)		Kazakhstan (<i>establishment of the Birgemiz Volunteer Office</i>)



Houda Abdoulbastoi, UN Volunteer Technical Advisor with UNDP in Fombouni, Comoros, helps prepare fruit species for a large-scale reforestation project expected to enhance community incomes and improve environmental conservation in the region. (UNV, 2020)

Extending UNV's knowledge and evidence base on volunteerism

As part of its commitment to fill knowledge gaps on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda, UNV used SVF resources to launch an online portal on volunteerism in 2020. The UNV Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism brings together global, regional and national data and evidence on volunteerism. It consolidates and makes accessible volunteering data to inform policy and advocacy, and it links data collectors with policymakers.

In 2020, UNV produced a toolkit on promoting gender equality through volunteering, and this was made available on its Knowledge Portal to assist in growing the evidence base on gender and volunteerism. The toolkit helps policymakers and development practitioners consider how volunteering can support efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment. It provides step-by-step guidance on how gender concerns can be integrated into national and subnational volunteering frameworks, strategies and plans. Building on scalable and replicable examples from a range of countries, the toolkit also provides inspiration for ways in which policymakers and their partners can promote gender equality through volunteerism.

Prioritizing agility and efficiency

In addition to enabling UNV to advance its innovation and research on volunteerism, upgrade its services to Member States and United Nations partners, and make investments where timeliness is critical, the SVF also helps UNV strengthen its overall efficiency.

Digital transformation

To better serve United Nations partners and to effectively support the delivery of the 2030 Agenda, SVF funds were invested into UNV's ambitious digital transformation process. In 2020, UNV continued to introduce robotic

Haya Al-Jamal (standing), national UN Volunteer with UNICEF, participates in an event for World Children's Day in Jordan. Haya supports the UNICEF flagship Makani programme, through site visits and feedback collected from refugee and Jordanian students. (UNICEF, 2019)



process automation. This resulted in the elimination of over 30,000 manual tasks annually, reducing the transactional workload and enabling staff to concentrate on tasks of higher value. UNV also launched a corporate service desk featuring AI and chatbots. In 2020, AI-powered chatbots on the UNV website and other platforms responded to an average of 400 inquiries a day – most of these from potential or serving UN Volunteers.

To strengthen its organizational readiness, UNV has embarked on a digital learning journey, offering capacity building and training for staff online. In 2021, UNV will accelerate its digital transformation, launching its Unified Volunteer Platform for recruitment and management of UN Volunteers.

Moving forward

Based on the strategic guidance of United Nations Member States through the QCPR, along with lessons learned, UNV will develop a new strategic framework to guide its work in 2022-2025. UNV will continue to promote volunteerism as a transformative accelerator for sustainable development and facilitate the generation of knowledge and evidence through United Nations partnership efforts. It will also publish the new edition of its triennial flagship publication, *State of the World's Volunteerism Report*, in 2021.

The SVF remains a crucial instrument for UNV to reinforce its role as a system-wide United Nations service and a global advocate for volunteerism in the context of achieving the 2030 Agenda.