



Plan of Action

to integrate volunteering
into the 2030 Agenda

**A PLAN OF ACTION
SYNTHESIS REPORT ON**

**INTEGRATING
VOLUNTEERING INTO
THE 2030 AGENDA**

**IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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This is a synthesis report of Member State submissions on integrating volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda in accordance with the 2015 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General (A/70/118) and General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/140. Information synthesized in this report is based upon Member State National Situation Analyses on volunteering submitted to the Plan of Action Secretariat in 2018, contributions to the 2018 Secretary-General's report on volunteering and Voluntary National Reviews submitted by Member States as part of the process to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The report is an input to regional Plan of Action stakeholder consultations as requested by United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/140.

1. INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is a powerful means to engage all people to work together to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and to build an environmentally sustainable, peaceful world, free of poverty, hunger and inequality where no-one is left behind.¹ From providing medical care or taking climate action to giving technical assistance and monitoring post-disaster reconstruction, an estimated one billion people volunteer on the issues they care about.² Volunteerism is key to ensuring that global sustainable development efforts are owned by all people, implemented by all people and for all people.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the vital roles that volunteers everywhere are playing. Following the agenda's launch in 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Plan of Action developed by United Nations Member States through United Nations General Assembly Resolutions (Figure 1) to help all volunteering stakeholders enhance the recognition and integration of volunteerism into the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the concerted efforts of volunteers, governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations, the Plan of Action seeks to strengthen people's ownership of the 2030 Agenda, integrate and mainstream volunteering into national strategies and policies and better measure the impact of volunteers.

Figure 1 Key United Nations General Assembly Resolutions mentioning volunteering.



Substantial progress has been made in integrating volunteerism into the SDGs and volunteers not only have a voice at the United Nations,³ but increasingly in their own countries and organizations. More than 100 countries have now measured volunteer work and over 90 countries have policies or legislation that aim to promote volunteering.⁴ In 2018, 29 Member States recognized the efforts of volunteers in their Voluntary National Reviews on SDG progress.

The Plan of Action will shape the future of volunteering in the context of the 2030 Agenda and a Global Technical Meeting will be held in July 2020 with the theme of 'Reimagining volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda' at the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In the build up to this special event, the Plan of Action Secretariat is reviewing the role of volunteerism in achieving and localizing the SDGs and creating a knowledge base that is inclusive of good practices, lessons learned and data sets using inputs from Member States, United Nations agencies, volunteer-involving organizations, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector.

The Plan of Action aims to engage all stakeholders to generate evidence and convene dialogues to strengthen and broaden this knowledge base on how volunteerism can be reimagined for the 2030 Agenda.

In 2019, five regional consultations on volunteering will take place in the context of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development, providing space for Plan of Action stakeholders to discuss evidence and approaches, share best practices and identify areas and opportunities for addressing knowledge gaps. Further civil society-led consultations are envisaged in the second half of 2019 and will be supplemented by online consultations and conversations. Together these dialogues, analyses and best practices will inform a global synthesis report for the 2020 Global Technical Meeting.ⁱ

ⁱ As requested by United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/129, the United Nations Volunteers programme and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will chair a Global Technical Meeting at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2020, with Member States and other stakeholders.

Figure 2 Plan of Action process: Road to 2020 "Reimagining volunteerism"



This regional synthesis report is a Plan of Action input to the regional consultation on volunteerism held as part of the 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It draws on information from three sources (refer to Annex A for details). Firstly, it uses information from National Situation Analyses on volunteerism that were developed in consultation with the United Nations, civil society and volunteer-involving organizations to generate evidence and data on the scale, scope and impact of volunteerism for the Plan of Action.⁵ Secondly, it uses information on volunteering that was reported by Member States in their 2018 Voluntary National Reviews on progress towards the 2030 Agenda. Finally, evidence from recent reports was used, including the 2018 Secretary-General's report on volunteering, global, regional, and national level data from Member States and regional bodies and key reports from United Nations agencies and programmes.

This report consists of four chapters. Chapter 2 gives an overview of regional progress made towards the 2030 Agenda to help identify trends and opportunities in which volunteerism could help strengthen and accelerate SDG progress. Chapter 3 looks at existing progress on integrating volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda based on information provided by Member States. Chapter 4 brings together the information in Chapters 2 and 3 to provide initial recommendations on actions that volunteering actors in the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean region can take to achieve the goals of the Plan of Action. These initial recommendations are not exhaustive and will be used to input into further dialogues and consultations on the Plan of Action at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and in the lead up to the 2020 Global Technical Meeting.

2. THE 2030 AGENDA IN THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION

Across the Latin America and the Caribbean region, Member States are taking steps to achieve the SDGs by 2030.⁶ At least 20 of the 33 countries have established institutions and mechanisms to coordinate SDG implementation and most have begun to link their national development strategies to the goals of the 2030 Agenda.⁷ Between 2016 and 2018, 22 Latin America and the Caribbean countries reported on their SDG progress to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development through Voluntary National Reviews.⁸

Figure 3 Map of the 33 countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean region.



* The 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, together with several Asian, European and North American nations that have historical, economic and cultural ties with the region, comprise the 46 Member States of ECLAC - Economic Commission of the Latin America and the Caribbean. Fourteen non-independent territories in the Caribbean are Associate Members of the Commission.

This included three countries – Ecuador, Jamaica and Mexico – who in their 2018 Voluntary National Reviews explicitly acknowledged the positive contribution of volunteers to the SDGs.⁹ While volunteers are clearly playing an important role in tackling sustainable development challenges across the region, there is not yet enough data about their scale and impact, and only limited information about the level of integration of volunteering into broader SDG strategies. Based on a review of the evidence, this report has identified some urgent regional challenges for which volunteers are well placed to accelerate progress.

According to 2018 Human Development Index scores, in Latin America and the Caribbean five countries are categorized as ‘very highly developed,’ 21 are ‘highly developed,’ six are ‘medium-developed’ and only one is ‘low developed’ (Haiti).¹⁰ While over 80 million people in the region were lifted from poverty and extreme poverty between 2002-2014, an economic recession in 2014 reversed some of these gains, with poverty and hunger again on the rise.¹¹ A major challenge in the region is that of inclusion and inequality. Latin America and the Caribbean remain the world’s most unequal region, with an average Gini index almost a third higher than that of Central Asia and Europe.¹² When adjusted for inequality, the region’s average Human Development Index ranking falls by 22 percent¹³ and indices such as the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Indexⁱⁱ and Gender Inequality Indexⁱⁱⁱ reveal persistently high levels of inequality, particularly relating to income, gender gaps in employment, health and empowerment.¹⁴ Such disparities continue to seriously undermine progress against not just poverty reduction but all 17 SDGs.¹⁵

In terms of tracking progress against the SDGs, baseline data to produce national SDG indicators is currently lacking in the region. In 2017, only an estimated 45 percent of national indicators were produced with available information.¹⁶ In those areas where data is available, progress is uneven. There are positive results in areas such as SDG 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) and SDG 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all).¹⁷ However, progress in reducing inequality has decelerated partly due to a slower growth of employment, and access to decent work (SDG 8) remains a major challenge for the region, with approximately 22.8 million unemployed people in 2017, the bulk of whom are young people.¹⁸ Both inequality and youth unemployment are connected to another of the region’s major challenges: violence. With 27.3 murders per 100,000 inhabitants each year, it is one of the world’s most violent regions,¹⁹ with young men disproportionately affected and an average of 67 adolescents murdered every day.²⁰ In Mexico, a World Bank study found that an increase in the Gini coefficient translates into increased drug-related homicides,²¹ while another study in Brazil found that a growth in the number of unemployed men resulted in a rise in the murder rate.²² Volunteering is increasingly seen as a powerful means to tackle issues related to youth unemployment, including through enhancing human and social capital, and this report will consider some of these issues in the context of the region.

Volunteering can also be a means to help address the gender discrimination (SDG 5) that is a fundamental cause of inequalities and hampers progress against all SDGs. Gender gaps persist in the region mainly due to violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and an unfair social organization of care, including women doing the majority of mainly unpaid domestic work.²³ Discrimination against women in the labour market holds back productivity and perpetuates socio-economic inequalities,²⁴ with women’s labour force participation 20 percent lower than men’s and unemployment 1.4 times higher for women.²⁵ In the political sphere, women in the region hold less than 30 percent of government positions.²⁶ On the other hand, there are more women in parliaments in the

ii The Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) is the level of human development when inequality in the distribution of health, education and income is accounted for. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/inequality-adjusted-human-development-index-ihdi>.

iii The Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>.

region than ever before. The proportion jumped from 15.2 percent in 2000 to 29.4 percent in 2017, making Latin America and the Caribbean today the region of the world with the second highest number of female parliamentarians²⁷. Despite legislation criminalizing violence against women, levels of gender-based violence remain high, with an estimated 30 percent of women subjected to violence by a partner and 10.7 percent sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner.²⁸ As some examples from the evidence gathered for this report and others demonstrate, volunteering can be a powerful means to empower women and promote gender equality in the social, economic and political spheres.

Another major cross-cutting challenge that holds back sustainable development efforts across the region are issues related to climate change and environmental degradation (SDGs 13, 14 and 15). Volunteers are already at the forefront of efforts to mitigate environmental and climate change related threats and with rapid population growth and increasing rates of urbanization the region's diverse and rich ecosystems are under serious threat.²⁹ Forest cover, especially in the Amazon region, continues to be lost as a result of land-use changes and agriculture, which is responsible for 42 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the region.³⁰ The region's geography makes it vulnerable to the effects of climate change,

with island and coastal areas exposed to sea-level rise and arid areas susceptible to increased drought in the face of changing rainfall patterns.³¹

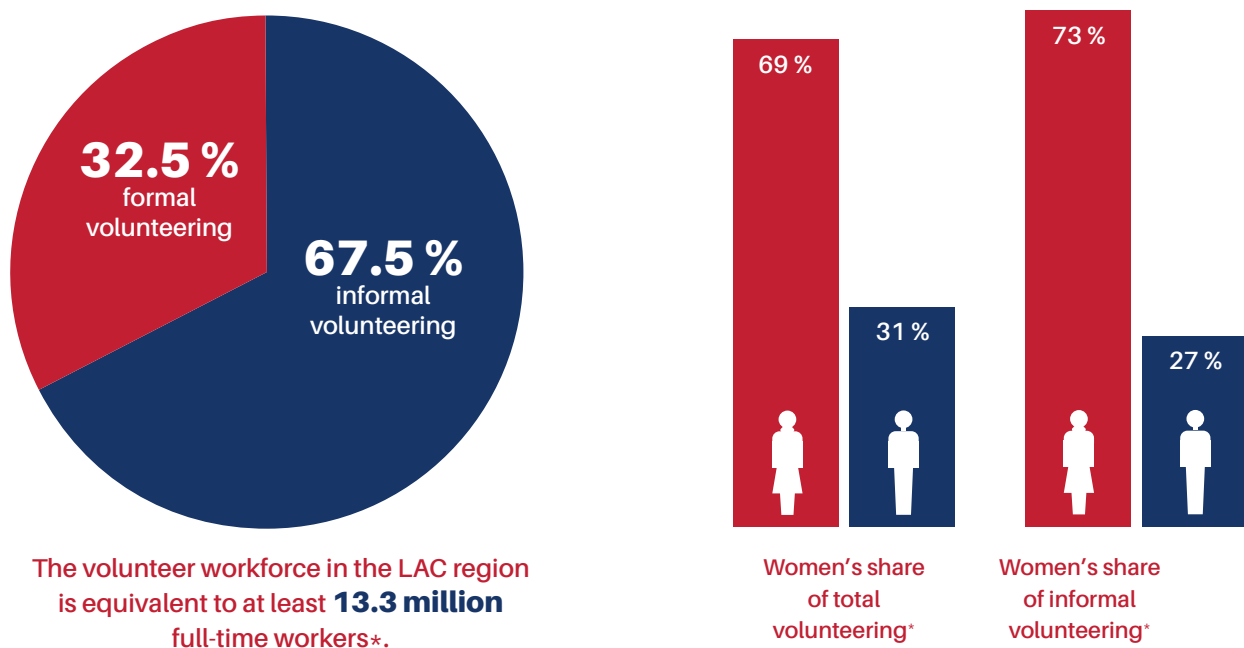
Finally, and connected to the challenges mentioned above, issues of migration and population displacement are increasing in intensity and posing large challenges for the region. Many Latin America and Caribbean countries have experienced high levels of outward migration and nearly 30 million people from Latin America and the Caribbean reside outside the country of their birth.³² Causes of migration include economic issues and climate change, but also conflict and political instability. Recent data shows that countries in the region are hosting an estimated 2.4 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela alone, of whom one million are in Colombia.³³

Based on a review of the evidence, this report has identified some urgent regional challenges for which volunteers are well placed to accelerate progress. The following sections outline key trends in volunteering in the region and examples of how volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations are already supporting SDG implementation. The section also considers progress and gaps in creating an enabling policy environment for integrating volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda and in measuring the contribution of volunteering to the SDGs.

3. KEY TRENDS IN VOLUNTEERING IN THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION

According to the 2018 *State of the World's Volunteerism Report*, the global volunteer workforce comprises approximately 109 million full-time equivalent volunteers. If the work of volunteers in Latin America and the Caribbean were combined it would represent an estimated 13.3 million full-time volunteers in the region.³⁴ The majority of volunteer work is carried out informally (67.5 percent) with women contributing 69 percent of total volunteer work and 73 percent of informal volunteering efforts. Volunteering is understood and implemented in different ways across the region. There is a long history of civic engagement and volunteerism in many countries, including peasant movements, trade unions and women's organizations.³⁵

Figure 4 Scale and scope of volunteering in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.



* Estimates derived from data from the 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report.

Volunteering is also an important part of traditional indigenous cultures, for example concepts of *mingas* in Ecuador³⁶ and *mink'a* and *minga ayni, yanapaña, jopói* in Bolivia are voluntary actions that express solidarity and reciprocity at the community level.³⁷ How people volunteer and understand volunteering continues to change across the region. New volunteering actors are emerging, including the private sector and online platforms, to create new channels for people to engage in volunteering. Volunteering is increasingly promoted through legislation and formal schemes. While significant gaps remain, gradually more and more data is being collected about what volunteers do and the impact they make.

3.1. STRENGTHENING PEOPLE'S OWNERSHIP OF THE SDGS

During the 2018 United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, it was noted that implementation of the SDGs in the region should be people-centered and involve all stakeholders.³⁸ The 2030 Agenda explicitly recognizes that volunteering can support a locally-owned and people-led approach to development. Evidence reviewed for this report highlights some ways in which this is happening across the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

TAKING ACTION TO TACKLE THE REGION'S MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES

Through volunteering, people act to implement the SDGs by delivering basic services, transferring skills and providing cost-effective methods to raise awareness and monitor progress. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region volunteers have long played an important role in promoting basic health care, particularly in rural areas. For example, in Belize, community volunteer health workers have been involved in eradicating malaria, including through monitoring and elimination of mosquito breeding sites,³⁹ while in Paraguay more than 2,800 volunteers raised awareness of elderly mental health issues.⁴⁰ With widespread habitat loss, escalating climate change and rapid urbanization, another key cluster of SDGs for which volunteers in the region are taking action relate to environmental protection and resilience. In Chile, young people volunteer through the "Youth Action for Social and Environmental Sustainability" (*Activo Joven Sustentabilidad Social y Ambiental*) programme promoted by the Youth National Institute to protect natural areas.⁴¹ Volunteers are also playing an important role in building resilient communities, such as in Jamaica where 117 volunteers were trained in disaster risk management, initial damage assessment and shelter management.⁴² And across the region volunteers support sustainable urbanization, such as through the non-governmental organization TECHO which has mobilized over one million youth volunteers

RAISING AWARENESS OF SDGS AND YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN MEXICO

The Mexican Youth Institute, in collaboration with several universities and state governments, created the Youth for SDGs project to raise awareness of the SDGs and youth volunteering. Between 2017 and 2018 the project involved over 1,000 young people in nine states across Mexico, giving youth the opportunity to contribute to the SDGs through volunteering and in doing so, take ownership of the solutions. Similar initiatives have been implemented at state level, such as one led by the state government of Morelos which established the "Generation 2030 Volunteering" project in 2018 to train 30 young volunteer leaders on SDG issues, including methods of influencing policy. Through these leaders, around 900 young volunteers have been mobilized across the region to train other volunteers.

Source: Government of Mexico, 2018a.

to construct emergency housing for poor families and build parks and recreation areas in informal settlements.⁴³

ENSURING THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND

With inequality one of the most significant challenges holding back progress against the SDGs, volunteerism has enormous potential to engage groups that are often left behind, both as volunteers and as beneficiaries.⁴⁴ In particular for the Latin America and Caribbean region, this includes the large un- and underemployed youth demographic and across the region many volunteering initiatives aim to provide channels for young people to take ownership of the solutions to the challenges they face. One example is a project initiated in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru to engage more than 31,000 young people to participate in discussions and exchanges about the SDGs in their communities.⁴⁵ Volunteering schemes also reach out to meet the needs of marginalized children and youth. In Ecuador, employees of the *Fundación Telefónica* volunteer to provide educational workshops, including on art, leadership and computer programming, with the programme reaching more than 60,000 vulnerable children in 2018.⁴⁶ Volunteering can also reduce social exclusion and marginalization among other groups. With aging populations in many countries in the region, elderly volunteers play an active role in volunteer networks. For example in Ecuador, the volunteering network ACORVOL includes groups of elderly volunteers who provide services to other elderly people and promote skills and knowledge sharing within the groups.⁴⁷ Volunteerism likewise provides a route for empowering people with disabilities and volunteering organizations such as the Brazilian *Argilando* work to improve accessibility of volunteering to people with disabilities.⁴⁸ Volunteer groups also empower women and overcome gender inequality, as in the Guatemalan community-based organization *Eucalyptus*, through which local women volunteers not only promote environmental sustainability but also gain valuable leadership skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge traditional gender norms.⁴⁹

INNOVATIONS AND NEW VOLUNTEERING PARTNERSHIPS

New innovations and partnerships have increased the potential for volunteering to strengthen ownership of the 2030 Agenda, including by extending new opportunities and support to more people. Technology is beginning to change the way that people volunteer and new online platforms have been launched across the region. One example is the “Generation 2030 Volunteering” project, which started in Mexico in 2018. It recruits volunteers through a mobile phone application as a way to encourage participation and reach the most vulnerable people.⁵⁰ Between 2015 and 2018, more than 6,000 volunteers from the Latin America and the Caribbean region were mobilized to support tasks through the United Nations Volunteers programmes’ online volunteering platform. Alongside technology, multi-stakeholder partnerships are creating new opportunities for volunteers to accelerate SDG progress. For example, in Ecuador the municipal government of Quito worked with civil society organizations, social enterprises, youth groups and academia to organize the “SDGLab”- a three-day activity that brought together over 60 student volunteers to come up with business ideas that address specific social and environmental problems. The best proposals were selected to receive financial support and form part of an innovation network to support the SDGs.⁵¹

The private sector is playing an increasing role in promoting volunteerism for the SDGs through corporate volunteering. In the region, corporate volunteering is promoted through national networks such as *CentraRSE*⁵² in Guatemala, *SUMARSE*⁵³ in Panama and *CERES*⁵⁴ in Ecuador. A regional network of private sector organizations, called *IntegraRSE*, includes seven countries – Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama – and aims to support companies to integrate social responsibility into their business strategies. A study conducted by *IntegraRSE* in five Latin America and Caribbean countries found high rates of corporate volunteering activities, for example in Honduras 93 percent of the companies interviewed ran

volunteering programmes.⁵⁵ Examples of corporate volunteering schemes include the National Bank of Costa Rica which gives employees the opportunity to volunteer to give financial education training to women, youth, indigenous people and people with disabilities. According to the Sustainability Report of the bank, in 2017 employees devoted more than 50,000 hours to corporate volunteering activities.⁵⁶ Similarly in Ecuador, the Bank of Guayaquil created the *Compañeros de Banca* volunteering scheme which engaged employees to provide training on financial education to 15,800 people in 2017.⁵⁷

3.2. INTEGRATING VOLUNTEERS INTO THE 2030 AGENDA

Volunteering is a cost-effective development modality, but to fully harness the potential of volunteers to accelerate SDG progress, volunteers need to be appropriately supported and fully integrated into broader efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. This includes through the provision of funding, the formation of schemes and programmes and the creation of legislation or other regulatory measures that protect volunteers and enable volunteering. And it includes the wider mainstreaming of volunteering into policies and development strategies at international, national and local levels.

MAINSTREAMING VOLUNTEERING THROUGH LEGISLATION AND POLICY

In the Latin America and the Caribbean region many countries have chosen to promote volunteering through strong institutional arrangements including legislation and the creation of national schemes. According to recent estimates, at least 16 countries in the region have introduced legislation, policies or other measures specific or relevant to volunteering.⁵⁸ Brazil passed a law in 1998 that defines volunteerism and updated the law in 2017 to mandate the creation of a national volunteer scheme.⁵⁹ Paraguay approved a law regulating volunteering in June 2018 which aims to define, regulate and facilitate voluntary civic participation in the work of both national and international non-governmental organizations and public institutions.⁶⁰ Peru passed a Volunteer Law in 2004, modified with a Law Decree in 2016, that sets out regulations, as well as social protection and reward systems for volunteers.⁶¹ A few countries do not have specific laws on volunteering but recognize volunteerism in other legal frameworks. For example, in Ecuador volunteerism is recognized as an important participatory contribution towards social development and is mentioned in the "Law of Citizen Participation."⁶² Mexico has no legal framework at national level, although the State of Querétaro passed a law on volunteering in 2017.⁶³

WIDENING CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN PARAGUAY THROUGH A LEGAL VOLUNTEERISM FRAMEWORK⁶⁴

One of the most recent laws on volunteerism in the region was adopted in June 2018 in Paraguay (Law no. 6060/2018). The Law was developed through a consultative process between volunteering organizations, legal and academic experts and the government, with the aim of promoting volunteering among a diverse range of stakeholders and ensuring the security and well-being of volunteers. It defines the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and volunteering organizations and Article 11 of the Law establishes the National Council of Volunteerism to promote the national policy of volunteering, supported by the Technical Support Unit. Under the Law, the Office of Technical Secretariat for Economic and Social Development Planning is responsible for overseeing the activities of the two bodies established.

Source: Government of Paraguay, 2018;

<http://www.stp.gov.py/v1/coordinan-acciones-para-la-conformacion-integral-del-consejo-nacional-de-voluntariado/>.

Volunteering is mainstreamed into some development strategies in the region. For example, in 2018 in Ecuador the National Secretariat for Risk Reduction and Emergencies established the Network of Volunteers for Risk Management, an initiative aimed at integrating volunteering into local plans for disaster risk reduction in order to improve capacity and share experiences.⁶⁵ In Bolivia, the current United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018-2022 includes volunteerism as a mechanism of social empowerment to strengthen the capacities of communities and promote participation of vulnerable groups.⁶⁶ Latin America and the Caribbean countries also work to create public awareness and recognition of volunteerism to encourage citizen engagement. Many of the region's countries present national volunteer awards or celebrate a volunteer day. Colombia has a National Youth Volunteers Award to recognize the work of youth volunteers,⁶⁷ while Uruguay's Global Youth Service Day is celebrated every April to recognize youth civic engagement. Ecuador organizes annual International Volunteer Day celebrations and as part of the 2018 celebrations a tree-planting activity was led by the Ministry of Environment with the support of civil society, United Nations and other organizations.⁶⁸ Brazil established an annual volunteer award and an online volunteer platform to increase incentives for university students to volunteer.⁶⁹

NEW NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SCHEMES

Coupled with new legislation and strategies, Latin America and the Caribbean countries are increasingly establishing new volunteering schemes. Many of these are national schemes and focus on developing the capacities of youth to enhance employability and promote good citizenship. In 2017, Brazil established a national scheme called "*Go Volunteers*" (*Viva Voluntario*) to strengthen citizenship and encourage the active participation of society in the 2030 Agenda.⁷⁰ In Paraguay, a government-funded national volunteer scheme called AROVIA places university graduates in communities for one year to provide basic social services and support local sustainable development priorities.⁷¹ In Uruguay, the Ministry of Social Development runs a national volunteer programme to strengthen social and civic participation in national development,⁷² while in Panama the Office of the First Lady encourages people to participate in a wide range of volunteer activities through government programmes.⁷³ Local governments are also creating schemes, such as in Mexico where the municipality of Querétaro promotes a university volunteer programme to engage youth in sustainable development.⁷⁴

Alongside volunteering schemes, the Latin America and the Caribbean region is rich in networks, platforms and coordinating bodies. In Chile, the National Council

PROMOTING SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

The Pacific Alliance youth volunteering programme was established in 2014 between Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Through the Alliance, youth volunteers are exchanged among the four countries to support government initiatives in different areas of sustainable development. In 2018, 48 youth were selected, 12 from each country. Chile and Mexico received volunteers to support the national environmental programme "*Enjoy your Parks*" (*Vive tus Parques*) to work with local communities to promote youth environmental protection. Colombia received volunteers to support youth enterprise initiatives, while Peru received volunteers to support vulnerable youth.⁸² Through exchanges such as this, the Alliance aims to not only accelerate sustainable development efforts but also regional integration through people to people exchanges.⁸³

Source: Government of Chile, 2018.

of Youth Volunteers provides space for discussion and sharing of good practices.⁷⁵ In Mexico, several platforms promote volunteerism at the national level and link actors from civil society, the private sector and universities, such as the Mexican Center for Philanthropy.⁷⁶ In Uruguay, the National Network of Dialogue on Volunteering and Social Commitment brings together different organizations and aims to promote legal mechanisms and institutional spaces for volunteers and increase volunteer opportunities.⁷⁷ In Peru, the “*I am a volunteer*” network (*Soy Voluntari@*), established in 2015, brings together different actors engaged in volunteering to share knowledge on volunteering.⁷⁸ In Jamaica, a National Disaster Risk Management Volunteers Database has been developed to streamline the deployment of volunteers to respond to disasters.⁷⁹ Finally, new international volunteer schemes and networks are also emerging as part of a global trend towards South-

South volunteering. Examples include Argentina’s White Helmets which uses volunteers to respond to disasters and build resilience across the region⁸⁰ and the “*America for Solidarity*” Foundation (*América Solidaria*) Foundation in Chile that mobilizes specialist volunteers to support civil society organizations across the region to eradicate child poverty.⁸¹

3.3. MEASURING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS TO THE 2030 AGENDA

As the trends and analysis in the above sections show, volunteering is increasingly recognized as an important means to engage people in sustainable development efforts. However, there is a notable gap in measuring volunteering. Data on volunteers, including

Figure 5 Geographical distribution of ECLAC (Economic Commission of the) countries by experience in measuring volunteer work, 2008-2017.



on what they do, how they do it and the impact that they have, is not regularly collected. This represents a significant challenge to volunteering in the region, as without this data it is difficult to shift the narrative on volunteering from descriptive to analytical, to identify gaps and opportunities to better support volunteers and to advocate for volunteering as a development modality.

A number of countries in the Latin American and the Caribbean region have taken steps to generate data on volunteering. According to International Labour Organization estimates, almost half of the countries in the region (16 out of 33) measured volunteer work in official statistics at least once between 2007 and 2017.⁸⁴ This data covers 89 percent of the region's population. A total of 20 data sources were used to measure volunteer work in these 16 countries, of which 12 were time-use surveys, which record how

people spend their time across a 24-hour period. For example in Peru, a time-use survey conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 2010 found that approximately 11 percent of males and female over the age of 12 undertake around four hours of volunteer work per week.⁸⁵

Other countries collected data on volunteering through household surveys. For example, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics collected data on volunteer work in their National Household Sample Survey. The Institute followed International Labour Organization definitions of volunteering and collected data through a mobile electronic collection device. According to the survey data, 4.4 percent of Brazilians aged 14 or above (7.4 million people) volunteered in 2017, which represents an increase of 12.9 percent compared to data collected in 2016 through the same survey. In 2018, Brazil launched a digital platform

Figure 6 Number of measurements of volunteer work in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, by type of data source, 2008-2017.



called “Go Volunteers” Platform (*Plataforma Viva Voluntario*)⁸⁶ that aims to enhance the future collection and analysis of data on volunteering, including their contribution to the 2030 Agenda.⁸⁷ In Mexico, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, through the National Survey of Occupation and Employment, measures the number of unpaid workers and the areas in which unpaid employment is concentrated. Additionally, the National Time-Use Survey in Mexico measures the “unpaid work as support to other households and volunteer work.” Mexico also has one of the few repeated national surveys on volunteering, the National Survey on Solidarity and Volunteer Activity

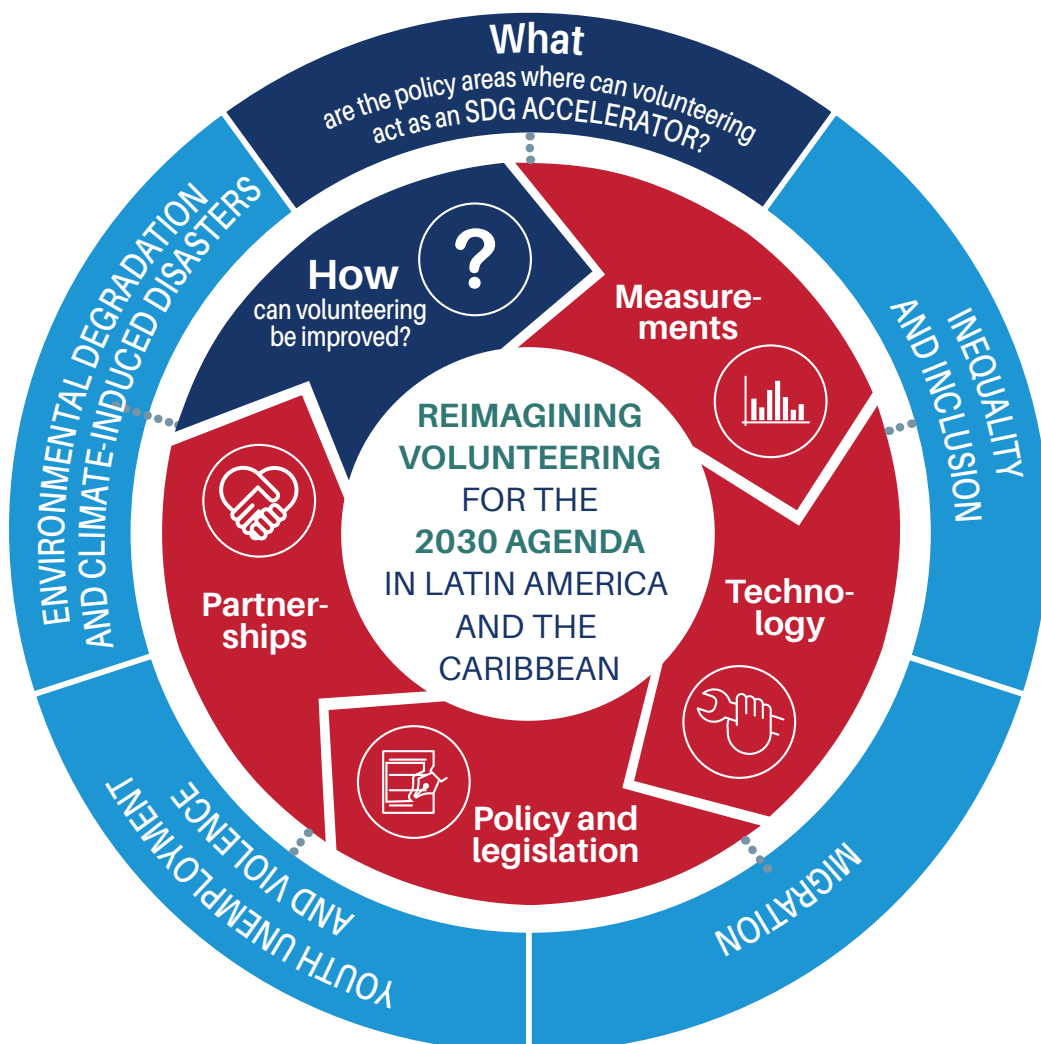
(ENSAV), conducted since 2005 by the Mexican Center for Philanthropy.⁸⁸

Some Latin America and Caribbean countries have a limited data set about volunteering in a specific sector or response. For example in Ecuador, the Office of National Secretariat for Policy Management collected data on volunteers responding to the humanitarian emergency after the April 2016 earthquake.⁸⁹

4. TOWARDS A REIMAGINED VOLUNTEERISM

The Plan of Action provides an opportunity to reimagine the future of volunteering so that it can play an even greater role in achieving the SDGs by 2030. But first there is a need to understand the past and present situation of volunteers, including identifying good practices, urgent challenges and under-utilized opportunities. The evidence reviewed in this synthesis report shows that there are already many ongoing efforts across the Latin America and the Caribbean region to leverage volunteering in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This includes progress against the three Plan of Action objectives.

Figure 7 Reimagining volunteering for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Across the region people are achieving greater ownership of efforts to achieve the SDGs by engaging in volunteering. Member States are increasingly integrating volunteering into their strategies to achieve their goals at the international, national and local levels. And efforts are improving to measure the scale, scope and impact of volunteers. The evidence clearly shows the diverse nature of volunteerism in many of the region's countries, including notable involvement of the private sector alongside government, civil society and academia.

This report also indicates some clear areas where improvements are still needed. Significantly for the region, these improvements can generate large gains with only relatively light levels of investment and, in some cases, minor adjustments to existing practices. But before addressing these recommendations it is important to recognize the limitations of the report. The evidence reviewed came from a limited number of sources. Only seven Latin America and the Caribbean countries submitted National Situation Analyses to the Plan of Action Secretariat, and seven Member States mentioned volunteering in their Voluntary National Reviews. Volunteering is only sporadically mentioned in other SDG reporting from the region, and while 16 countries were found to measure volunteering through collecting statistical data, this was not done consistently. Despite the limited evidence reviewed for the report, some initial recommendations are presented as a basis for discussions in the regional consultation and beyond. These recommendations address the issue of limited data, as well as the pressing regional challenges identified at the beginning of this report related to inequality and inclusion, migration issues and environmental degradation and climate change.

The first recommendation focuses on the gap in data and evidence. Rigorous, quality data and evidence are crucial to inform good policymaking on volunteering. Only with a strong evidence base can gaps be identified and challenges prioritized to enhance volunteering for development and to support volunteers. While some data on volunteer work exists in the Latin America and Caribbean region, it needs to be gathered more consistently and comprehensively,

allowing disaggregations that can shed light on issues of inclusivity and access. Perhaps most urgently, this report finds that while the majority of volunteers in the region are informal and local, evidence from the region largely ignores informal efforts, rather focusing on national-level formal volunteer schemes. It is therefore recommended that Latin America and the Caribbean countries **generate and promote the collection of quality data on volunteerism to enhance the performance, experience and recognition of all volunteers in their efforts to achieve the SDGs.** This includes collecting data through national statistical offices and following International Labour Organization guidelines on regular data collection through national surveys to enhance the quality and comparability of data. Alongside measuring the scale and scope of volunteering, it is important to use this data to start to understand the contribution of volunteering to SDG indicators. This is not yet being done, and this report recommends that volunteering organizations and governments work with academic and research institutions to develop methodologies to measure impact, including the economic and social impact of community-level and informal volunteering.

This report recommends that volunteering is utilized more to tackle the underlying causes of inequality and support disadvantaged and marginalized populations, including indigenous people, elderly people, and minority groups. Given their cross-cutting nature, the recommendations will focus on youth and gender dimensions. With the interlinked problems of high levels of youth un- and under-employment, persistent inequalities that marginalize and discriminate against youth and high levels of violence among youth populations, tackling youth issues is an urgent goal for the region. Well-designed volunteer initiatives have great potential to enhance the employability of youth, empower youth with new skills and knowledge and build trust and understanding to tackle the root causes of violence. Through doing so volunteering can help unlock the creativity and motivation of youth to transform the demographic from being a challenge to an asset. However, volunteering can also disempower and exploit youth, particularly when it is not combined with regular and fair employment or when access barriers prevent all youth from certain

types of volunteering. It is therefore recommended that **Plan of Action stakeholders mainstream volunteering into all legislation, policy and other measures that tackle youth issues.** This includes the creation of inclusive, open schemes that enable all youth to contribute actively to the SDGs locally and nationally, and through doing so develop skills and knowledge to improve employability. The design and implementation of these schemes must enable all youth – not just the most privileged – to access volunteering opportunities. And government and volunteering organizations need to work with the private sector to ensure that skills gained through volunteering are transferable and recognized. Youth schemes should be integrated into policy and legislation to ensure that youth volunteers are recognized, supported and protected. To achieve this goal, volunteering should be mainstreamed into all sector strategies that engage youth, for example volunteering should be integrated into education to normalize civic action and pro-social behaviour and into protection programmes, for the inclusion of youth in conflict with the law.

The third recommendation is that volunteering can be better harnessed to tackle issues relating to persistent gender inequality that hampers SDG progress across the region. Volunteering has the potential to tackle the structural challenges identified by the Montevideo Strategy: socioeconomic inequality and poverty; discriminatory cultural norms; unfair division of care and political discrimination.⁹⁰ Volunteerism can support women's empowerment by building knowledge, confidence and leadership skills. The opportunity to volunteer can be a chance to move from being a passive recipient to being actively engaged in development processes and becoming empowered to realize one's rights. Through volunteering, people can address the underlying structural reasons that cause women in the region to be disempowered. However, as with tackling youth issues, it is important to utilize volunteering in the right way so that it empowers rather than disempowers. **This report therefore recommends that Plan of Action stakeholders in the region promote evidence-based volunteering interventions to empower women and tackle persistent gender inequality.** Given that women

already take on the majority of volunteer work in the region, an important first step should be to gather evidence on how volunteering can best empower women and contribute to gender equality. This evidence needs to be locally relevant and consider the many underlying, contextually-specific inequalities that result in gender discrimination. With deeply held cultural norms that may prevent women from some types of volunteering, while preventing men from taking on the burden of care-related volunteering in communities, another important first step is recognizing these patterns and developing jointly owned solutions on the distribution of volunteer work. And given the emphasis of the 2030 Agenda on reaching the furthest behind first, targeted efforts should focus on women who are particularly disempowered, such as older women, women in remote rural locations and women from indigenous groups. These interventions should involve marginalized women in their design and implementation to ensure that beneficiaries are empowered and protected.

Across the region, volunteers are often instrumental in tackling the severe and urgent challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation. However, they often do so unsupported and unrecognized. In fact, in some countries in the region their efforts are actively discouraged and even persecuted. This report therefore strongly recommends that **Latin America and the Caribbean countries support and protect volunteers, in particular the millions of local volunteers, who are taking action to protect the environment and mitigate against climate change.** This aligns with the Talanoa Call for Action, which calls for participatory, multi-stakeholder and localized approaches to tackling global warming and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.⁹¹ And it should include the promotion of volunteering in the context of resilience, with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction calling for "a broader, more people-centered approach to disaster risk reduction," and noting that "governments should engage volunteers and others in the design and implementation of policies, principles and standards."⁹² As communities are the building blocks of resilience efforts that protect against environment and climate change-induced natural disasters, local

volunteers in particular should be supported. There are many local good practices in the region and these need to be identified, supported, scaled up and shared. Given resource restraints across the region, volunteers should also be recognized and utilized as cost-effective data collectors supporting participatory forms of monitoring environmental degradation and the effects of climate change.

Finally, following the Global Compact on Migration's call for a holistic "whole of society approach" to tackling migration issues, this report recommends that **volunteering should be mainstreamed into national and cross-national efforts to support migrants and refugees.**⁹³ This includes supporting the many volunteers who already provide immediate care and social services to migrants and refugees. Efforts should be made to ensure that this valuable work is done safely and reaches the most marginalized, with more evidence collected such as that recently conducted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the region.⁹⁴ Most important, however, is to engage refugees and migrants

themselves through volunteering, and to use voluntary action to foster positive relationships between people of diverse backgrounds, including new migrants and host communities. As with resilience-building in line with the Sendai Framework, similar efforts should be made to recognize and support local volunteers to strengthen trust and understanding between people with different backgrounds in migration contexts.

These recommendations are not meant to be final, rather they are put forward here to provoke discussion and investigation among Plan of Action stakeholders in the Regional Consultation and for further dialogues in the lead up to the 2020 Global Technical Meeting. The recommendations underline the broad point that we need to collectively deepen our understanding of the contribution and impact of volunteers, so that volunteerism for sustainable development is taken seriously. Volunteers cannot act alone – they require support to be inclusive, empowered and needs-based, and to ultimately help the SDGs to be owned by all people, implemented by all people and for all people.

NOTES

1. UNGA 2018a.
2. UNV 2018a.
3. This includes through the Volunteer Groups Alliance which represents volunteers and volunteer-involving organizations from over 150 countries as a stakeholder group at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/volunteers>.
4. ILO 2018; UNV 2018b.
5. In line with the 2015 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General (A/70/118), United Nations Member States were called upon to contribute National Situation Analysis on volunteerism in 2018 as part of the implementation of the Plan of Action and to submit these to the United Nations Volunteers programme.
6. ECLAC, 2018a.
7. ECLAC, 2018a.
8. ECLAC, 2018c.
9. In 2016, three countries from the Latin American and Caribbean region (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico) presented their Voluntary National Reviews to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In 2017, 11 of the region's countries (Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Peru and Uruguay) were among the 43 that presented their Voluntary National Reviews. For the 2018 High-level Political Forum, eight of the region's countries participated in the process: Bahamas, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay.
10. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf.
11. UNDP, 2017.
12. UNDP, 2017.
13. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/inequality-adjusted-human-development-index-ihdi>.
14. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.
15. ECLAC, 2018b.
16. ECLAC, 2018a.
17. ECLAC, 2018a.
18. ILO, 2015.
19. ECLAC and UNICEF, 2018.
20. ECLAC and UNICEF, 2018.
21. Enamorado, López-Calva, Rodríguez-Castelán and Winkler, 2014.
22. Cramer, 2010.
23. ECLAC, 2017d.
24. ECLAC, 2018a.
25. ILO, 2017.
26. ECLAC, 2015b.
27. ECLAC, 2018a.
28. UNDP, 2017.
29. ECLAC, 2018a.
30. ECLAC, 2018a.
31. ECLAC, 2018a.
32. UN DESA, 2017.
33. UNHCR, 2018b.
34. UNV, 2018a.
35. UNV, 2018a.
36. Government of Ecuador, 2018a.
37. See <http://www.nu.org.bo/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Undaf-2018-2022.pdf>, page 54.
38. ECLAC, 2018c.
39. Government of Belize, 2017.
40. Government of Paraguay, 2018.
41. Government of Chile, 2018.
42. Government of Jamaica, 2018.
43. UNV, 2018a.
44. See UNV, 2018a.
45. UNV, 2017.
46. Government of Ecuador, 2018a.
47. <http://acorvol.org/>.
48. UNGA, 2018b.
49. UNV, 2018a.
50. Government of Mexico, 2018b.

51. Government of Ecuador, 2018b.
52. See <https://centrarse.org/>.
53. See <https://www.sumarse.org.pa/somos-sumarse/>.
54. See <http://www.redceres.com/>.
55. <https://integrarse.org/en/inicio-3/>.
56. See <https://www.bncr.fi.cr/transparencia/Documents/Reporte%20de%20Sostenibilidad.pdf>.
57. Government of Ecuador, 2018a.
58. UNV, 2018a.
59. Government of Brazil, 2018.
60. See <http://www.stp.gov.py/v1/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/LEY-6060-Voluntariado-Paraguay.pdf>.
61. Government of Peru, 2018.
62. Government of Ecuador, 2018a.
63. See <http://www.yzproyectos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/LEY-DE-VOLUNTARIADO-Edo-QRO-sept-2017.doc>.
64. See <http://www.stp.gov.py/v1/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/LEY-6060-Voluntariado-Paraguay.pdf>.
65. Government of Ecuador, 2018c.
66. See <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/undaf/Bolivia%20-%202018-2022.pdf>.
67. <http://www.colombiajoven.gov.co/quehacemos/Paginas/premiovoluntariado2018.aspx>.
68. Government of Ecuador, 2018a.
69. Government of Brazil, 2018.
70. <https://vivavoluntario.org/pt-BR>.
71. Government of Paraguay, 2018.
72. See <https://voluntariado.mides.gub.uy/>.
73. See <https://www.despachoprimeradama.gob.pa/>.
74. <http://www.queretaro.gob.mx/sejuveqro/noticias.aspx?q=63j01wSCoaxZQhKXhp00DQ>.
75. See <http://www.injuv.gob.cl/red-nacional-de-voluntariado>.
76. Additionally, the National Platform of Volunteering was created in 2015 through an initiative led by the Mexican Alliance for Volunteerism, with the collaboration of the National Institute of Social Development; Government of Mexico, 2018b.
77. See <http://www.mesadevoluntariado.org.uy/>.
78. UNV, 2016.
79. Government of Jamaica, 2018.
80. See <http://www.cascosblancos.gov.ar/en/who-we-are>.
81. <http://americasolidaria.org/conocenos/>.
82. <https://alianzapacifico.net/en/postulese-al-voluntariado-juvenil-de-la-alianza-del-pacifico-y-viva-una-experiencia-fantastica-en-otro-pais-2/>.
83. <https://www.agci.cl/index.php/sala-de-prensa/1784-la-alianza-del-pacifico-dio-a-conocer-resultados-de-voluntariado-juvenil-2018-1>.
84. ILO, 2018.
85. Government of Peru, 2018.
86. See <https://vivavoluntario.org/pt-BR>.
87. Government of Brazil, 2018.
88. Butcher and Igartúa, 2016.
89. Government of Ecuador, 2018a.
90. ECLAC, 2017b.
91. UNFCCC, 2018.
92. UNISDR, 2015.
93. <https://undocs.org/es/A/CONF.231/3>.
94. <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/2019/02/01/analysing-risk-anticipating-need/>.

ANNEXES

ANNEX A. KEY SOURCES

The report is based on inputs from Member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean through National Situation Analyses on Volunteerism submitted in 2018, Voluntary National Reviews and contributions to the 2018 Secretary-General's Report on volunteering.

National Situation Analyses	Voluntary National Reviews (2017-2018)	Submissions to the 2018 Secretary-General's Report on Volunteering
Brazil	Belize	Ecuador
Chile	Bolivia	Mexico
Ecuador	Costa Rica	Paraguay
Mexico	Ecuador	
Paraguay	Guatemala	
Peru	Jamaica	
Uruguay	Mexico	

ANNEX B. TERM AND CONCEPTS

For the purposes of the report, **volunteerism** is understood to be “a wide range of activities undertaken of free will, for the general public good, for which monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor” (UNGA, 2002).

This report takes into account both formal and informal forms of volunteering.

Formal volunteering usually involves volunteers making a regular commitment and contributing their time to a civil society organization, governmental organization or private sector company (UNV, 2015).

Informal volunteering happens outside of organizational structures and takes different forms, including community-based activities and larger-scale mobilization of citizens, for example to respond to humanitarian disasters (UNV, 2015).

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PLAN OF ACTION FOR INTEGRATING VOLUNTEERISM INTO THE 2030 AGENDA

The Plan of Action for Integrating Volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda is a framework under the auspices of the United Nations through which governments, United Nations agencies, volunteer-involving organizations, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector come together to accelerate the impact of volunteerism for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by: a) strengthening people's ownership of the 2030 Agenda; b) integrating and mainstreaming volunteering into national strategies and policies; and c) better measuring the impact of volunteers.

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