

Reflecting Volunteer Contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals in Voluntary National Reviews

Guidance Note for UN Member States

1 What is the VNR process?

Each year, UN Member States opt to present Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, which is convened by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July. The VNRs are a part of the follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The VNR process is supported by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), which provides intergovernmental support by facilitating major global conferences and summits, including the annual HLPF. DESA especially facilitates knowledge sharing and guidance on the VNRs by organizing an annual [knowledge exchange workshop](#) for reporting Member States, UN entities and civil society, and sharing various knowledge products such as the annual [knowledge exchange booklet](#) and [handbook](#) for VNR preparations, [voluntary common reporting guidelines](#), and [VNR synthesis reports](#). The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme engages in and contributes to these knowledge sharing activities by providing input on how to reflect contributions of volunteers and volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in VNRs as well as the support that UNV can provide to Member States' VNR preparations.

2 Why reflect volunteer contributions in VNRs?

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of volunteers in delivering services, disseminating information and awareness and developing localized solutions has proved as important as ever. UNV estimates that globally there are around one billion volunteers that carry out a range of roles in their communities and societies. Therefore, volunteering is an enormous resource for social, economic and environmental problem-solving throughout the world, with volunteers accelerating progress towards the SDGs in the Decade of Action by contributing to eliminate poverty, improve basic health and education, tackling environmental issues, and addressing social exclusion. The contributions volunteers make to the SDGs should be recognized in VNRs.

Incorporating data on volunteer efforts in VNRs is not only anchored in high-level political documents such as the 2018 General Assembly resolution A/Res/73/140 but can also enable countries to report in line with the principles of the VNRs, including to:

- Integrate a multi-stakeholder perspective and focus on engagement at the local level
- Draw on existing national official statistics and other evidence sources
- Analyze the means of implementation, highlighting gaps and opportunities for achieving the SDGs

3 How to document volunteer contributions in VNRs?

There are many ways in which governments have incorporated information on volunteer contributions over the years, ranging from anecdotal mentions of volunteer activities to documenting how volunteering is integrated into national development policies. For example, many countries recognize the role of volunteers in addressing development priorities at scale (including responses to the COVID-19 pandemic), reaching the furthest behind, raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda, strengthening innovation and social cohesion, and giving women and marginalized groups greater voice and ownership in development processes.



How to document Volunteer contributions in VNRs?

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to documenting volunteer contributions to the SDGs in VNRs, the following steps can provide some guidance for the VNR drafting team:

1. Coordinate with your country's volunteering line ministry or agency to identify available information, gaps and needs, and thematic priorities for documenting volunteer contributions to the SDGs in the VNR report.

For example, you might want to include:

- Facts and figures that demonstrate volunteer contributions under specific SDGs and targets
- Examples of volunteer activities and good practices that contribute to specific SDGs
- Volunteer data and statistics, if available
- Evidence of how volunteering is integrated into national development policies and plans

2. Reach out to your UNV focal point or Regional Office and express your interest in UNV's support. You can find out more [here](#).

3. Discuss your needs with regards to documenting volunteer contributions with the VNR focal point in UNV's Regional Office and agree on the way you wish to collaborate.

4. Engage other national and international volunteer-involving organizations, such as Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE), France Volontaires, and others, who can provide input. This can be done for example via workshops, online consultations and surveys, or direct exchange.

5. Collate and incorporate input on volunteer contributions to the SDGs in the VNR report as you see fit.

UNV supports VNR preparations in several ways:

- Providing data and evidence on volunteering in the national context at our [Knowledge Portal](#), especially the [Volunteering Database](#), which provides information on volunteering laws, policies and schemes, measurement work, and VNR reporting; the [Evidence Library](#), which provides information on volunteerism and the SDGs; and [knowledge products](#) like the [Global Synthesis Report](#).
- Providing additional information on national statistical data of volunteer work at ILOSTAT: [statistics on volunteer work](#) and [indicator description: volunteer work](#)
- Convening volunteering stakeholders at national level to collate and validate data and inputs for specific themes or SDGs. For example, in Kenya, UNV partnered with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) to organize a one-day meeting for volunteer-involving organizations, during which a data collection and reporting tool was developed. This tool helped organizations across the country identify the specific SDGs their volunteers work on as well as their impact in terms of beneficiaries reached. The collated information helped inform the volunteering-related parts of Kenya's 2020 VNR report.
- Collating [good practices on volunteering for the SDGs](#) from governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, UN entities and volunteers at our Knowledge Portal.
- Facilitating volunteer-led data collection processes with target groups (e.g. youth or rural communities) to fill data gaps for the VNR processes.

How can UNV support VNR contributions?

