

Measuring Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda

Toolbox on Principles, Tools and Practices

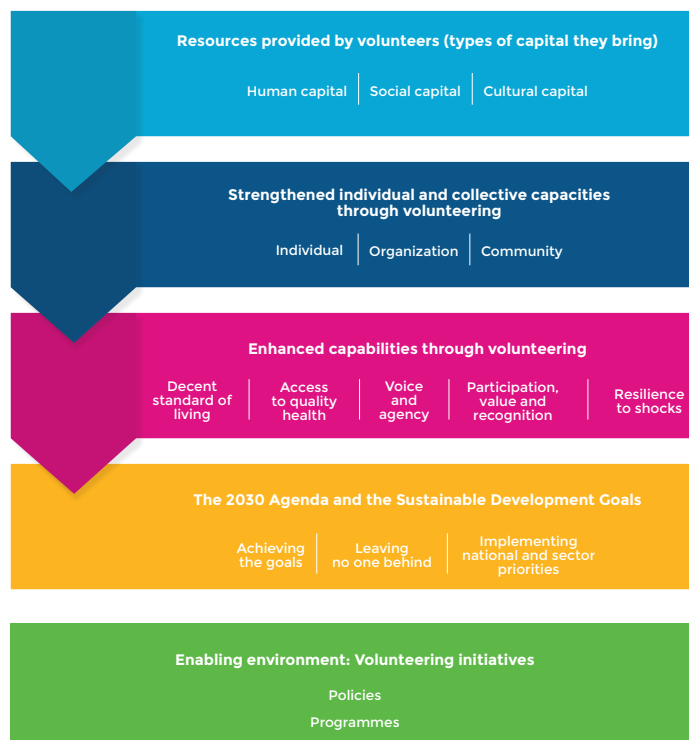
Every day, in every country in the world, millions of volunteers work with communities, organizations, companies and on their own to take action on the issues that affect them. But how many people volunteer and what do they do? How is volunteering linked to improved development outcomes? And how can we maximize the contributions of volunteers in the [Decade of Action](#) to deliver on the SDGs?

Answers to these vital questions require data and evidence to measure the status, effectiveness and impact of volunteering. Stakeholders from the Plan of Action to Integrate Volunteering in the 2030 Agenda have developed a [toolbox](#), drawing on guidance from the United Nations, initiatives by national governments, civil society and the private sector, as well as new research from leading innovators, to showcase principles, tools and practices that answer these key questions on how to measure volunteering.

MEASURING VOLUNTEERING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Measuring the results of volunteering has historically focused on the activities and services volunteers provide for others. However, there is a growing awareness that the ways volunteering contributes to the 2030 Agenda are much more complex. Volunteering is not only a delivery mechanism but also an important way for people to participate in the development processes that affect them. This creates a need to explore the potential benefits for volunteers themselves, such as improved health and well-being. There can also be broader outcomes for a community or society such as increased social cohesion or stronger norms for innovation or transparency and accountability. We need a multi-layered approach to understanding the relationship between volunteering and sustainable development. The toolbox presents the different domains for measurement in a framework for volunteering and human-development.

VOLUNTEERING CONTRIBUTION PATHWAYS



It explores each of the domains of measurement, sharing approaches and tools and providing quantitative and qualitative examples.

A: Measuring the scale and scope of volunteer work

B: Measuring the intrinsic value of volunteering

C: Measuring the instrumental value of volunteering

D: Measuring volunteering interventions (policies and programmes)

A: Identifying scale and scope

The cornerstone of understanding volunteering is being able to measure who is doing what. This section presents international standards and definitions for the statistical measurement of volunteer work and links to further guidance on how they can be applied to produce robust, comparable data.

Over the last decade, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and other stakeholders have developed official guidance on how to collect data on the scale, scope and trends of volunteer work at the national level. These have resulted

in the [Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work](#) and the [Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization](#). The latest [ILO guidance](#) published in 2020 confirms that integrating volunteering into existing labour force surveys is key to producing national statistics on volunteering. However, where this is not possible, time use surveys, administrative records and even national population censuses allow the collection of nationally representative data that can illuminate key trends in how people volunteer and the factors that can encourage more people to engage in volunteer work.

B: Reflecting intrinsic value

Looking at the economic and social contributions of volunteering helps us to move beyond counting volunteers in order to start to understand the value of volunteering for volunteers and their communities. This section outlines work done to date by governments and international organizations in this area.

Intrinsic value is the value created through the nature of any type of volunteer work. For example, people can contribute labour, which has economic value. Estimates for members of Rotary International found that the 47 million hours of volunteer work undertaken in 2019 alone was worth \$850 million. However, to really understand the economic value of volunteering we need to go beyond the value created for organizations and also look at the costs to volunteers. Such a cost-benefit analysis could

help us better understand disparities in volunteering across societies, especially for vulnerable and excluded groups, such as women and disabled people, for whom the economic costs of volunteering are often higher.

Economic and monetary contributions are not the only value provided through volunteering. New research highlights the roles volunteers play in building social value. When people work together for a common goal, such as in the aftermath of natural disasters, they may increase social capital, trust and resilience. Qualitative and participatory approaches can strengthen our sense of the social value of volunteering, ranging from the psychological support volunteers provide to the ways they address inequalities across social groups.

C: Capturing the instrumental value of volunteering

Instrumental value is different from intrinsic value: it measures how volunteering contributes to a specific goal or objective. We are only just seeing the emergence of models and approaches to measure the instrumental contribution of volunteering to national priorities, development outcomes and the 2030 Agenda and

implementation of the SDGs. Some of these are outlined in this section, such as case studies on volunteers serving as teachers and community health workers that measure their contributions to learning, health and other development outcomes enjoyed by communities under SDGs 3 and 4.

However, these approaches are limited. The toolbox argues that taking the measurement of instrumental value to the next level and understanding contributions to the principles of the 2030 Agenda requires new models

and approaches. Combining both the instrumental and intrinsic value of volunteering has the potential to help better understand and strengthen relationships between volunteering and sustainable development.

D: Evaluative research methods to measure the effects of volunteering initiatives

The previous sections look at volunteering as a phenomenon in society. However, we know that a wide range of government, organizational and company policies and initiatives bring volunteers together to produce goods or services for others. How can we measure these interventions, using both the intrinsic and instrumental

approaches outlined above? This section presents how quasi-experimental research and mixed-method case studies can help us better understand and isolate the impact of volunteering initiatives from national schemes to volunteer-led development projects.

AN AGENDA TO STRENGTHEN THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF VOLUNTEERING

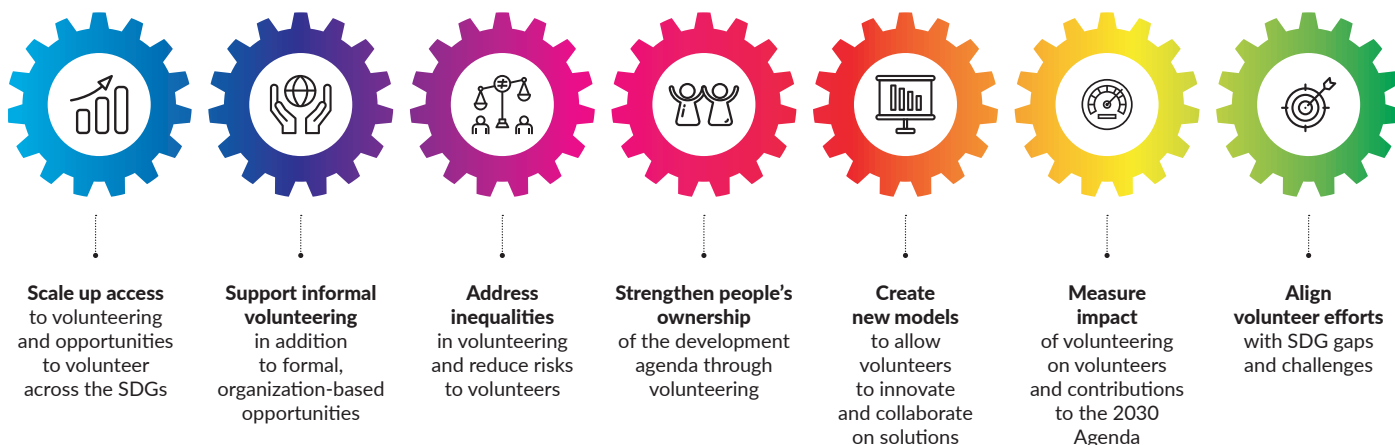
To improve the collection and use of quality data and evidence on volunteering, it is first necessary to create an enabling environment to advance the measurement of this critical resource. The work done by governments to integrate the measurement of volunteer work into the regular activities of national statistical systems is a key first step. Building models to help strengthen volunteering contributions to national and global objectives, reduce inequalities and inform efforts to leave no one behind, must emerge as a renewed priority. This requires collaboration across government, academia and practitioners to build and test models for measuring both economic and social value for different groups.

To support these efforts, UNV and other actors are generating and implementing systems for [knowledge-sharing and collaboration](#) to help stakeholders support each other in this critical task. At the outset of the Decade of Action, the measurement agenda stands to play a key role, not only in capturing the contributions of volunteering but in strengthening the work of volunteers to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Call to Action

Volunteering in the Decade of Action

Developed in July 2020 by volunteering stakeholders around the world, the [Call to Action](#) encourages actors to align volunteer efforts with the 2030 Agenda and to deepen the engagement and common solidarity of the global volunteering community to help deliver on the SDGs.



for more information visit www.volunteerSDGs.org