



UN Volunteers: supporting the UN system’s COVID-19 response

This paper outlines specific support UN Volunteers can provide UN partners to overcome the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

UN Volunteers are supporting the rapid scale up of the UN system’s COVID-19 response. They can be deployed quickly with the skills and experience required by UN partners to overcome the global COVID-19 crisis. In the first two months since the pandemic was declared:

- UN partners have requested almost 600 UN Volunteers, 90 per cent of which are national UN Volunteers.
- Over 1,700 Online Volunteers have supported the COVID-19 response through the UNV Online Volunteering service.

Shortly after the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic in March 2020, UNV published an overview of UN Volunteer capacity solutions for UN partners. The UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 subsequently highlighted volunteer action as critical to socio-economic recovery and expanding partnerships for greater impact. This built upon the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan that recognized the importance of volunteers to community engagement and capitalizing on existing local skills.

This paper provides an update of UNV’s COVID-19 response based on empirical evidence from several hundred UNV deployments since the start of the crisis, in alignment with the UN’s three multi-lateral strategic frameworks.

Key lessons UNV has observed working across the UN system include the need to enhance operational efficiencies, localize solutions, and optimize duty of care. For instance, UNV has:

- boosted its global and national talent pools by 50,000 new candidates, 32,000 of which are in Africa. This includes 17,000 health, 14,000 community and civil society development, and 9,000 crisis management and emergency relief professionals.
- Introduced more flexible options with more systematic options for telecommuting and remote working – with over 1,200 UN Volunteers telecommuting.
- Scaled up the deployment of national and community UN Volunteers to provide fast, local solutions.
- Reduced deployment timeframes by 15 days for UN Volunteers.

UN strategic response priority

How are UN Volunteers contributing?

UNV profiles available for UN partners

UN strategic response priority	How are UN Volunteers contributing?	UNV profiles available for UN partners
Global Humanitarian Response Plan	<p>UN Volunteers are supporting UN partners to protect the most vulnerable – especially those enduring protracted, multi-dimensional crises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Timor Leste, UNDP is deploying four Community Sensing Officers and four Youth Engagement Officers to launch a nationwide ‘citizen sensor’ network with community and youth groups to detect ‘early signals’ on domestic violence, community transmission of COVID, and emerging social unrest. - 19 community UN Volunteers with OCHA are supporting coordination, policy development and civil society engagement in Venezuela. - In Serbia, UN Community Volunteers from the local Roma population are working with UNHCR and UNDP to promote the inclusion of their community in the COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Supply chains and logistics</i> - <i>Humanitarian Affairs</i> - <i>Protection, including Sexual and Gender Based Violence and child protection</i> - <i>Nutrition</i> -



	response, including working with local institutions to ensure access to sanitation measures.	
<p><i>Health First: Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis pillar</i> - UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19</p>	<p>UN Volunteers are working with UN partners to scale health programme delivery, reach vulnerable groups (including women, young people and those outside of government systems), and maintain health services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WHO is deploying 100 African female, early-career health professionals (including epidemiologists, health researchers, and health emergency management specialists) to support its work in 47 countries. - In Uzbekistan, trained 400 community health volunteers that were previously trained by UN Volunteers with UNDP and the Resident Coordinator's Office are now conducting disease prevention outreach in rural communities. - IOM is deploying 10 Medical Officers and 20 Nurses to Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh to provide health screening and essential nursing care to COVID-19 patients. - In Liberia, 50 Community UN Volunteers are supporting a joint UNDP/IOM project to support contact tracing at the borders. - In MINUSCA (Central African Republic) and UNMISS (South Sudan), UN Volunteers in gender, human rights, civil affairs, public information and electoral assistance are undertaking community door-to-door sensitization campaigns, training community volunteers as COVID-19 ambassadors, supporting the production and dissemination of radio shows and sketches in local languages, and helping local authorities in setting up COVID-19 crisis management committees. - UN Volunteers are also engaged in creative initiatives to support national efforts in the field of online education (Guinea); sensitization posters in local languages (Nigeria); preparation and distribution of masks (Chad). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Epidemiologists</i> - <i>Anthropologists</i> - <i>Midwives</i> - <i>Public health</i> - <i>Risk Communications</i>
<p><i>Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services pillar</i> - UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19</p>	<p>UN Volunteers are supporting partners to deliver food assistance, water and sanitation, Gender-Based Violence and maternal health and family planning programmes, as well as supporting social behavior change and education initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN Volunteers across 58 districts in India are working with UNDP and the government to deliver food and groceries to vulnerable groups, sanitize public spaces, conduct health check-ups and promote social change through public messaging campaigns. In two weeks, over 700,000 people were reached. - In Laos, UNICEF is deploying three National and four International UN Volunteers to support child protection and the development of online learning resources for children during the COVID-19. - In Mali, 60 UN Community Volunteers with UNDP are supporting water, sanitation and hygiene sensitization and behavior change campaigns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Education</i> - <i>Programme</i> - <i>Sexual and Reproductive Rights</i> - <i>Water, Sanitation & Hygiene</i> - <i>Social workers</i>
<p><i>Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and Informal Sector Workers pillar</i> - UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19</p>	<p>UN Volunteers are a resource for economic recovery, skills development, training and social entrepreneurship for young people and women – with evidence linking volunteering and employability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Cameroon, 10 Community UN Volunteers with UNDP are being mobilized to collect data and conduct consultations with young people to help connect them with socio-economic, political and social opportunities. - A team of online volunteers is supporting UNDP on digital assessments and data visualizations to inform household level socio-economic impact assessments and recovery planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Livelihoods</i> - <i>Cash-based interventions</i> - <i>Gender</i> - <i>Impact Assessments</i>
<p><i>Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration pillar</i> -</p>	<p>UN Volunteers can provide technical advice, collect data and facilitate information management and sharing between institutions to support macroeconomic responses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Economists</i> - <i>Partnerships</i> - <i>Data collection</i>



<p>UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN Volunteers are supporting Resident Coordinators' Offices as socio-economic research coordinators and partnership coordination officers to inform macroeconomic responses and multilateral collaboration. - UN Volunteers are being mobilized with UNCDF across the Pacific to support climate change resilient economic growth and support local government financing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Information Management</i>
<p><i>Social Cohesion and Community Resilience</i> - UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19</p>	<p>UN Volunteers are a substantial resource to support community engagement, resilience and building trust to overcome the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Guinea-Bissau, a UN Volunteer with UNFPA (in a UNPBF project) is engaging women and young leaders to disseminate COVID-19 prevention messages. Through a cascading model, 1,000 women and young leaders will be trained to promote social change and contribute to COVID-19 early warning systems. - In Peru, UN Volunteers with UNDP trained over 12,000 digital volunteers to call over 200,000 senior and disabled citizens to check on COVID-19 symptoms and wellbeing – protecting vulnerable groups and fostering social cohesion. - A UN Volunteer with UNICEF in Moldova are adapting the U-Report platform to combat misinformation and raise awareness about the pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Community Engagement/Outreach</i> - <i>Youth Empowerment</i> - <i>Women's Empowerment</i> - <i>Disaster Risk Reduction</i> - <i>Volunteer Management</i>
<p>System-wide operational support</p>	<p>As the UN system faces increasingly complex operational environments, UN Volunteers can quickly provide capacity to support country level responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11 UN Volunteers have been deployed and an additional 22 UN Volunteers are being mobilized to support Resident Coordinators' Offices as provincial information management officers, data management and coordination analysts. - UN Volunteer medical and healthcare professionals are also being deployed, including eight staff counsellors with IOM in six regions globally, and 48 emergency health professionals in the UN clinic in Yemen. - In DRC, Sao Tome y Principe, Mauritania, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Niger, UN Volunteers are being mobilized to provide medical services in UN clinics and for the local population. - 16 UN Volunteer medical professionals are supporting the UNAMA-based Medical Emergency Response Team, serving the entire UN System in Afghanistan. - In MINUSCA (Central African Republic), a UNV Civil Engineer is supporting the establishment of Covid-19 patient and isolation wards. - Online volunteers were deployed in 48 hours to support UNDP's translation of health programming guidance materials for Country Offices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Coordination</i> - <i>Procurement</i> - <i>Finance</i> - <i>Camp and facilities management</i> - <i>Air operations</i> - <i>Medical and healthcare</i> - <i>Staff counsellors / mental health</i> - <i>Online (including translations, data analysis, social media surveillance)</i>

Further information

Information on UNV services and solutions can be found in [UNV's COVID-19 website](#).

UNV's network of field units and regional offices are ready to support; contact them [here](#).