



Evaluation of the United Nations Volunteers 2018-2021 Strategic Framework

Final Report

Prepared for //

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

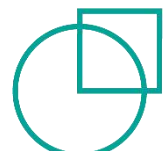
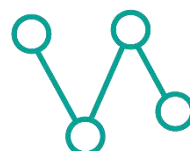
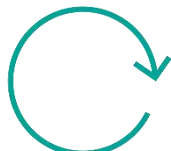
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Evaluation of the United Nations Volunteers 2018-2021 Strategic Framework
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The analysis and recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), its Executive Board or the United Nations Member States. This is an independent publication commissioned by UNV that reflects the views of its authors.

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The Technical Annex Pack is available on the following website:

<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/13096>

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARGUS	Atlas Role Generation and User-provisioning System
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CRM	Client Relationship Management
DOA	Descriptions of Assignments
DT	Digital Transformation
EES	European Evaluation Society
EN	English
ES	Spanish
ExO	(UNV) Executive Office
FF	Full Funding (Programme)
FGD	Focus group discussion
FR	French
FU	Field Unit
GA	General Assembly
GHR	Gender and Human Rights
GTM	Global Technical Meeting
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
ICF	Internal Control Framework
KII	Key Informant Interview
LPL	Local Price List
MTR	Mid-Term Review
PoA	Plan of Action
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RFP	Request for Proposals
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SF	Strategic Framework
SVF	Special Voluntary Fund
SWVR	State of the World's Volunteerism Report
ToR	Terms of Reference
UKES	UK Evaluation Society
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

UNOPS	The United Nations Office for Project Services
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UPL	Universal Price List
UVP	Unified Volunteer Platform
VIO	Volunteer involving organisations
VMAM	Volunteer Management Applications Modules
VNR	Voluntary National Reviews
VRA	Volunteer Reporting Application

Executive Summary

Background

The evaluation of the 2018-2021 Strategic Framework (SF) was conducted as part of UNV's 2018-21 evaluation work plan. The evaluation provides accountability to both internal and external stakeholders related to the planning, implementation and results of the SF as well as a learning opportunity for the preparation of the next SF 2022-2025.

Evaluation objective, purpose and scope

This evaluation of the SF covers the full strategic period 2018 to 2021 and UNV's strategies, work and activities developed and implemented related to the SF. The primary objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of outcomes achieved or expected to be achieved by UNV during the period covered by the 2018-21 SF.
- Facilitate learning from the UNV experience during the SF period; with regard to outcome 1, outcome 2, the interlinkages between both outcomes, as well as institutional effectiveness.
- Validate and follow up on the findings and future actions identified in the SF's Mid-Term Review (MTR).
- Provide strategic recommendations regarding the next Strategic Framework 2022-25.

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted between October 2020 and April 2021 by a team of three senior independent evaluators, plus supporting research assistance. The evaluation approach was based on highly consultative and comprehensive data collection and analyses processes including all levels of the organisation and external stakeholders. The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach, combining multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative evidence, including: i) a systematic desk review of more than 150 internal and external documents; ii) engagement from more than 2,500 stakeholders, including over 120 internal and external consultations with stakeholders through interviews and focus group discussions conducted at country, regional and headquarters (HQ) levels; and iii) two

surveys conducted in three languages involving almost 200 partners (with a response rate of 18.7%) and over 2,200 UN Volunteers (38.9%). The evaluation was managed by the UNV Executive Office (ExO) under the supervision of the Chief of ExO, and in cooperation and direct consultation with the Management Team. In February 2021, consultations with the Management Team were held to present emerging findings and a presentation was made to all staff at a Townhall Meeting. Based on the key evaluative findings, the following conclusions and recommendations are presented.

Conclusions

Relevance and coherence

Conclusion 1 (based on findings #1-10; and 12¹)

SF 2018-21 has been instrumental for providing strategic focus and guidance and has served to consolidate UNV's position as a key actor that is uniquely placed to integrate volunteerism in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The SF is highly relevant to the needs of key stakeholders; is coherent, responsive and explicit in relation to the 2030 Agenda and clearly aligned with the resolutions that have shaped UNV's mandate. The SF is highly relevant to UNV's needs, aligning the organisation's work with QCPR 2016, alongside successfully addressing a challenging financial situation and strengthening institutional effectiveness. UNV's comparative advantages are manifold, including: i) its capacity to directly contribute to the work of UN agencies by providing flexible, timely, cost-effective human resources through a comprehensive range of volunteer modalities that are effectively delivered at country, regional and/or global levels; ii) its unique convening power and distinction as the only UN entity with a mandate related to volunteerism; iii) its ability amplify globally the value of volunteer actions led by the global South and effectively support South-South cooperation. Key external partners note, however, further opportunities for UNV to leverage its unique position to play a stronger knowledge brokering role in the volunteer sector.

The internal logic and coherence of the SF could be strengthened, since in the absence of explicit interlinkages between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2,

¹ Findings statements are presented in the main section of the evaluation report, in clear coloured boxes, sequentially numbered with supporting evidence and analysis present below each.

their implementation has operated more in parallel, rather than in a coherent and complementary manner.

Conclusion 2 (based on findings #11-14)

The SF has brought about positive results for UNV under both strategic outcomes and has successfully introduced innovative measurement mechanisms that have contributed to strengthening UNV's results-based approach. However, outputs are not fully adequate in scope and number to cover each outcome, and the indicator basket does not fully capture all the richness and complexity of UNV's results and achievements.

Overall, the SF is logical, coherent and has brought improved organisational focus and clarity to the work of UNV. However, there remains room for improvement at two levels: the inter-relatedness between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, and indicator formulation. Whilst the strategic outcomes provide organisational focus, this has also resulted in elements of siloed implementation. Measurement mechanisms developed under this SF, through growing maturity of the RBM culture in UNV, are innovative and constitute a significant improvement compared to the systems in place prior to 2018. Nonetheless, challenges remain in terms of the limitations of the indicator basket (i.e. what is being measured), since the indicators used to measure progress towards each output do not adequately capture all the results achieved and the difference they are making. Targets were set realistically, based on an assessment of external factors, though opportunities for further ambition are possible in the next SF.

Efficiency

Conclusion 3 (based on findings #15-33)

The implementation of the SF has been accompanied by an ambitious organisational transformation process that has been efficiently delivered. Decentralization has brought UNV closer to its partners with positive results reflected both inside UNV (operational efficiency) and outside UNV (mobilization); while digital transformation is likely to result in significant efficiency gains during the remaining SF implementation period. However, FU capacity requires strengthening and staff capabilities have not fully kept pace with the organisation's shifting demands and the rapidly evolving context.

UNV has invested significant effort and resources to enhance its operational efficiency over the SF period through well planned and effectively implemented organisational improvement initiatives. This has included enhanced decentralisation to RO and FU levels and increased professionalisation/nationalisation of key field-based roles; revisions and extensions to delegations of authority; the establishment of a new Internal Control Framework; delivery of digital transformation initiatives and streamlined business processes. These initiatives have resulted in more effective, decentralised delivery with improved institutional memory; strengthened national capacity and ownership, even if FU capacity still requires strengthening. Multiple levels of highly effective financial stewardship has stabilised UNV's financial health; with the principles of results-based budgeting and breakeven modelling tools effectively applied, aligning financial resources with the strategic objectives/ intended results of the SF. Clear gains are evident in delivery efficiency and, following the full implementation of digital transformation and the resulting benefits being fully realised, opportunities to create more cost-efficient service provision delivery to the benefit of UNV and the wider UN system are present.

Effectiveness

Conclusion 4 (based on findings #34-38 and #45-47)

UNV has implemented the SF as planned, achieving important results under both strategic outcomes and exceeding most targets to date. However, while focusing efforts on Outcome 2 has allowed UNV to restore its financial situation, recognizing resources contributing to the financial sustainability of UNV are generated mainly from the cost-recovery for the volunteer management services (Outcome 2), this approach risks fully leveraging the potential of Outcome 1. This may constitute a risk for both the organisation's long-term relevance and sustainability.

UNV has been highly effective in achieving the intended outputs and outcomes. It has performed highly effectively in both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 and for Institutional Effectiveness measures, exceeding most targets consistently over the SF period. Overall, UNV has implemented the SF as planned. Under Outcome 1, UNV has contributed to the increasing number of countries including references to the role of volunteerism in their VNRs; engaging more than 1,000,000 local non-UN volunteers across all regions in 22 countries; supporting policies and legislative development with

Member States; and supporting the General Assembly's adoption of the resolution on Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (73/140). Under Outcome 2, partners are highly satisfied with UNV's provision and deployment of UN Volunteers. In this regard, UNV has galvanised its reputation as a responsive and flexible partner organisation. However, there is a strong perception expressed from donors and partners that UNV should focus more on Outcome 1, which is where UNV's unique added value is perceived to lie. Recognising the symbiotic, rather than competing, nature of promoting volunteerism and mobilising volunteers, UNV risks disproportionately gearing operational resources in the pursuit of funding (cost-recovery); rather than promoting volunteerism (revenue rather than value driven). Although the focus on volunteer mobilisation has been fundamental to improving UNV's financial position, UNV risks its sustainability prospects if it continues to over-focus on its role as "HR provider" without embracing its expanded mandate with adequate resources. In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world of the value of volunteerism and provided evidence of its importance, thereby creating favourable conditions for a bold promotion of volunteerism. UNV attributes to itself a "residual duty of care" that may translate in liaising with host agencies "to ensure that policies and practices are being properly applied and that UN Volunteer's wellbeing and safety is assured". Whilst the vast majority of UN Volunteers noted their satisfaction with their experience (97% positive satisfaction); the evaluation finds that issues around well-being and fair treatment remain a concern for a minority of UN Volunteers who responded to open questions in the surveys. Concerns related to support and well-being were particularly noted for female UN Volunteers which provides useful information for UNV as it updates its Conditions of Service.

Conclusion 5 (based on findings #39-44)

UNV has strengthened existing partnerships and succeeded in establishing new ones. However, the focus on UN Volunteer mobilization appears to have led UNV to prioritize partnerships that contribute to mobilization efforts to the detriment of partnerships with a stronger potential to promote volunteerism (such as VIOs and CSOs), that could support ongoing efforts to diversify UNV's partnership base. UNV has also focused more on output-oriented partnerships instead of investing in long-term outcome-orientated partnerships. UNV's resource mobilisation has been effective in meeting contribution targets.

UNV engages with its partners effectively. It has highly productive engagements with partners and is highly efficient in the management of donor relations. Delivery of the SF has responded to the needs of donors and partners, particularly in relation to the mobilisation of UN Volunteers (Outcome 2), though the response to the volunteerism-promotion needs of partners (under Outcome 1) could be strengthened. UNV's reliance on the same small basket of donors remains a perennial challenge requiring further diversification. UNV has nurtured partnerships with organisations with the capacity to host UN Volunteers, although likely to some extent to the detriment of partnerships with the greatest potential (and/or legitimacy) to promote volunteerism and volunteer action. Both the increase in the number of UN Volunteers and the positive assessment of the recruitment service offered by UNV are the result of intensive partnership efforts carried out by UNV and are testament to the hard work of staff and senior management. UNV's resource mobilisation has been effective in meeting its contribution targets, both through the Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) and Fully Funded (FF) volunteer contributions, which have both increased under the SF.

Sustainability

Conclusion 6 (based on findings #48-61)

UNV is widely recognised as a global agenda-setting organisation with unique convening power that generates high-quality knowledge and evidence on volunteerism and has the potential to play a stronger knowledge-brokering role in the volunteer sector.

UNV's knowledge generation is recognised and appreciated inside and outside the UN system, including the production of a series of high-quality knowledge products (global and regional in scope) and the generation of relevant evidence for the volunteer sector (with a focus on contributions to SDGs), illustrating UNV's agenda-setting role in the sector. While partners perceive that UNV 'does what it does well', partners were equally strong in the perception that UNV could strengthen its role in terms of promoting volunteerism and enhancing its role in the evidence generation → knowledge brokering → setting the global agenda cycle. The comprehensive Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism for Development Practitioners and Policymakers launched in 2020, which constitutes one of the main outcomes of the Plan of Action process, has been well received and can be expected to play a pivotal role in promoting the uptake and use of knowledge and evidence generated under the current SF beyond 2021. The

latest knowledge products have strengthened UNV's credibility and positioning in research on volunteerism. However, no comprehensive analysis of use and uptake has been conducted, since metrics on outreach and uptake are limited, and no indicators linked to this aspect of knowledge management are included in the SF results framework.

Cross-cutting issues

Conclusion 7 (based on findings #62-64)

UNV has made significant efforts to incorporate core principles related to human rights and equality during implementation of the SF with positive results to date. However, additional efforts are required to provide a more granular analysis of issues affecting gender and inclusion, in order to improve UNV's understanding of these issues and better reflect the SF's contribution to these themes, and to address issues related to the well-being of UN Volunteers.

Reporting on cross-cutting issues continues to evolve, with gender disaggregated data on UN Volunteers presented in the narrative of the EB reports. Nonetheless, there are opportunities for further integration through systematic data disaggregation, analysis and reporting that would allow for a more nuanced understanding of issues around gender equality, provide learning opportunities for how UNV can strengthen its strategy and approach to gender and women's empowerment, and showcase the full range of achievements. Important milestone achievements have been reached in 2019 and 2020, with UNV reaching gender parity among UN Volunteers, with women representing 52 per cent of volunteers globally in 2020. UNV has several signed partnership agreements with UN agencies and donors to work on different aspects related to gender equality and social inclusion. Major efforts have been made on inclusion, as evidenced by the growing proportion of citizens from the Global South being deployed as UN Volunteers and the integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities as UN Volunteers, which have received significant praise from partners and donors. The inclusion of an increasing number of UN Volunteers from vulnerable population groups requires UNV to further prioritise equality and well-being issues, and points to the need to ensure that duty of care and safeguarding is adequately understood by host agencies.

Conclusion 8 (based on findings #65)

UNV has responded robustly to address the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,

demonstrating agility and speed both externally with partners and operationally. The pandemic has provided a timely reminder of the value of volunteerism and has generated valuable evidence of the importance of volunteer action in responding to and recovering from crisis and for the achievement of the SDGs, thereby creating an enabling environment for UNV's work to continue to evolve and expand. In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world of the value of volunteerism and provided evidence of its importance, thereby creating favourable conditions for a bold promotion of volunteerism and the utilisation of online volunteering modalities.

UNV's response to COVID-19 includes the deployment of 947 UN Volunteers on COVID-19 related assignments: with 780 National and 167 International UN Volunteers deployed from 117 nationalities to 108 locations internationally supporting 27 UN agencies. Furthermore, the rapid deployment of SVF-funded UN Volunteers has been an effective response, positively acknowledged by donors and partners, allowing 105 volunteers to be deployed rapidly to support the COVID-19 response. Internally, flexible institutional arrangements and increased tele-commuting are in place allowing UNV to continue to deliver; with staff perceiving working virtually to have further increased their sense of engagement. Whilst not accounting for a global health pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19, UNV's comprehensive risk management and mitigation processes (including corporate risk logs detailing impact of political and global public health dynamics; financial risk analysis of impact of COVID-19) responded successfully, allowing response contingencies to disruptive global events to be enacted. Favourable conditions are present for UNV to adopt an even bolder and ambitious promotion of volunteerism in this new context.

Recommendations

The evaluation recommendations are derived from the evaluative findings in this report and conclusions presented above.

Relevance and coherence

Recommendation 1 – strategy (based on conclusion 1)

UNV should rebalance its strategic focus by strengthening actions on promoting volunteerism

developing appropriate mechanisms, either programmatically or otherwise, that promote the role of volunteerism in the 2030 Agenda, ensuring continued organisational relevance and deploying its comparative advantage in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda whilst continuing to respond to UN partner needs.

UNV should ensure the inter-relatedness and complementarity of promoting volunteerism and volunteer mobilisation is comprehensively articulated and embraced to reduce the risk of a split in strategic focus and operational siloing as well as to provide consistency in strategic messaging externally.

Recommendation 2 – results measurement (based on conclusion 2)

UNV should develop a comprehensive results framework with gender sensitive, composite indicators to strengthen outcome-level reporting and ensure the full range of outputs and outcomes are accurately captured, monitored and reported. **UNV should include social inclusion indicators** (for example, People Living with Disabilities and marginalized groups).

UNV should develop more comprehensive measures of results beyond the current limited basket of indicators, across a broader range of indicators for management information and accountability purposes.

Efficiency

Recommendation 3 – organisational structure, capacity and capability (based on conclusion 3)

UNV should review the balance of financial and human resource distribution to the delivery of strategic outcome results; ensuring the current structure is fit for purpose and geared towards implement the next SF through a gradual re-alignment and adjustment of its operating model and structure geared to strategic requirements. **UNV should continue to enhance decentralisation** by strengthening its field presence to meet current and future demand, in alignment with the QCPR (2020).

UNV should seek to identify opportunities to foster further collaborative working practices to ensure the full value of the inter-linkages between promoting volunteerism and volunteer mobilisation are harnessed, both horizontally between the organisation's sections and vertically through the global structure. This may include increasing opportunities for multi-disciplinary working on key

strategic and operational issues and strengthening internal organisational learning mechanisms.

UNV should ensure UNV's operating structure is fit for purpose and geared towards implementing the next SF by conducting a periodic needs assessment of required skills to meet the next SF period and accompanying skills audit. **UNV should ensure tailored learning and development opportunities to meet future need are available and taken up**, with impact assessed. Where additional skills are not present and cannot be developed internally, UNV should proportionately invest in securing those skills externally to meet future need. UNV should ensure that all staff can clearly articulate the different elements of its work across all strategic outcome areas in a consistent and coherent manner.

Effectiveness

Recommendation 4 – engagement with UN Volunteers (based on conclusion 4)

UNV should strengthen the engagement with UN Volunteers throughout their placement and beyond, with the aim of further improving the UN Volunteers' experience matched to their expectations through the ongoing review and revision process of the Conditions of Service in order to leveraging the network of UN Volunteers to contribute to UNV's strategic objectives.

On the 'UN Volunteer experience', **UNV should improve the coordination between the host agencies and UNV field units in order to ensure the duty of care is discharged** appropriately to ensure the wellbeing and career development of UN Volunteers. UNV should ensure consultations with host agencies balance the needs of UN Volunteers with the demands of the agencies, as defined by UNV and its partners, to hold UN Volunteers and host agencies to account.

UNV should utilise the untapped resource of former and current UN Volunteers developing opportunities to further engage the network of UN Volunteers as a route to i) increase opportunities for learning; ii) exert further influence; and iii) access the networks of its constituency of UN Volunteers. This serves dual purposes - awareness raising on the value of volunteerism and in the promotion of the UNV brand.

Recommendation 5a – partnerships (based on conclusion 5)

UNV should develop strong value-propositions that allow for consistent communication of its comparative advantage; demonstrate the uniqueness of partnering with UNV and articulate its added value to partners' medium- and longer-term strategic and people objectives.

UNV should ensure flexibility in its approach to customisation by (balancing standardised and tailored products and services) with recruitment measures that ensure a commitment to volunteerism in order to maintain and protect UNV's reputational brand. **UNV should strengthen outreach and awareness raising on the importance of the UN Volunteers in the host agencies**, increase the visibility of the UNV brand through its UN Volunteers; communicate the advantages of UNV and informing host agencies about the role of UN Volunteers.

UNV should maximise its unique convening power to connect partners and expand and deepen its partnership strategy for the promotion of volunteerism to support longer-terms forms of collaboration.

UNV should make efforts to diversify and broaden its work with other UN agencies; while maintaining the efficacy of its partnerships with core UN partners. **UNV should ensure its partnership engagement is both strategic and tactical in nature** (HQ, regional and field level engagements), by aligning UNV propositions with UN agencies' global strategic planning processes and people strategies. This should include continued efforts to identify opportunities to strengthen and jointly capitalise on the relationship with UNDP.

Recommendation 5b – Resource mobilization (based on conclusion 5)

UNV should diversify its financing partnerships and review its tools and mechanisms for resource mobilisation, and associated conditions, to facilitate increased contributions to UNV focus areas (for example, COVID-19, digital transformation, policy work).

UNV should adopt a two-pronged approach on SVF both to increase SVF contributions and further diversify SVF partners. In pursuit of diversification, UNV should pursue (soft) earmarking of contributions to attract new partners. UNV should explore further diversification strategies to increase the number of Member States contributing to Fully-Funded or providing other sources of funds to UNV.

Sustainability

Recommendation 6 – Knowledge development, management and organisational learning (based on conclusion 6)

UNV should strengthen the links between knowledge development, knowledge management and organisational learning, allowing UNV to maximise the use and uptake of data in a more systematic and strategic manner. This will help UNV to bridge the advocacy/ policy-making gap; ensure that volunteering policy is informed by high quality research; and strengthen the inter-linkage between promoting volunteerism and mobilisation of UN Volunteers.

UNV should seek to play a stronger knowledge brokering role in the volunteer sector by building on its recognised convening and leadership role in the sector, by strengthening relevant research, evidence and knowledge generating capacities in the organisation.

UNV should develop a dissemination, outreach and usage strategy for knowledge production in order to maximise efforts and achieve greater impact. This would involve adequately measuring outreach and uptake of knowledge products through appropriate monitoring efforts and indicators.

Cross-cutting issues

Recommendation 7 – Gender, inclusion and South-South cooperation (based on conclusion 7)

UNV should conduct more granular analysis of issues affecting gender discrimination and social inclusion as part of the SF development process, to improve UNV's understanding of how discrimination dynamics work and to inform future strategies not to perpetuate them.

UNV should maintain efforts to ensure gender parity at a global and regional level; providing concerted efforts to address current regional disparities and disparities across different volunteer modalities that may be contributing to perpetuate discriminatory dynamics.

Recommendation 8 – enabling environment for future SF (based on conclusion 8)

UNV should be ambitious in the next SF. The current positive environment for volunteerism, extending from COVID-19 and aligned with the 2030 Agenda, coupled with the renewed recognition on the part of Member States on the value of volunteerism, are generating valuable evidence on the importance

of volunteer action for bringing about transformative change, in responding to and recovering from crisis and for the achievement of the SDGs.

UNV, and its key constituencies, should take advantage of this context to further promote volunteerism and the role of UN Volunteers in crisis responses; strengthening and expanding the use of the Online Volunteer modality, where global

travel restrictions remain in place, as this modality is highly relevant in responding to the evolving situation with COVID-19 and aligns well to the UN future of work agenda UNV should identify further opportunities to respond through innovative practice and special initiatives. Given the improved financial and organisational health, and increasing relevance of volunteerism, UNV is in a strong position to respond to this call.

Introduction

1. This report articulates the methodological approach used for the evaluation of UN Volunteers' (UNV) Strategic Framework 2018-2021. It outlines the evaluation's purpose and scope, primary audience, data collection methods and analytical tools, key findings organised by evaluation criteria, overall conclusions and recommendations. The report includes the following sections²:
 - Introduction (purpose, primary audience, learning objectives, use and structure).
 - Description of the SF (what is being evaluated, what are its expected results model).
 - Evaluation scope and objectives (scope, objectives, criteria and questions to be addressed).
 - Evaluation approach and methods (including data sources, sampling, data collection instruments, stakeholder participation, ethical considerations, evaluation team and limitations).
 - Data analysis (procedures, stages, gaps and limitations encountered).
 - Findings.
 - Conclusions.
 - Recommendations.
2. The final evaluation report was finalized based upon comments received through Executive Office.

Purpose

3. The evaluation of the 2018-2021 Strategic Framework (SF) was conducted as part of UNV's 2018-21 evaluation work plan. The evaluation provides accountability to both internal and external stakeholders related to the planning, implementation and results of the SF as well as a learning opportunity for the preparation of the next SF 2022-2025.

Scope and Objectives

4. This evaluation of the Strategic Framework (SF) covers the full SF period 2018 to 2021, and all UNV strategies, work and activities developed during this period and related to the SF.
5. The primary objectives of the evaluation are to:
 - Assess the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of outcomes achieved or expected to be achieved by UNV during the period covered by the 2018-21 SF.
 - Facilitate learning from the UNV experience during the SF period; with regard to outcome 1, outcome 2, the interlinkages between both outcomes, as well as institutional effectiveness.
 - Validate and follow up on the findings and future actions identified in the SF's Mid-Term Review (MTR).
 - Provide strategic recommendations regarding the next Strategic Framework 2022-25.

² See UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, pp.49-51.

Primary audience

6. The evaluation serves the dual purpose of accountability and learning:
 - **Accountability** – It is expected that UNV will prepare a management response to the evaluation detailing actions to be taken in response and the mechanism for monitoring the implementation of recommendations. The evaluation and subsequent management response will feed into relevant reports to the UNV governing body (i.e., UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board) and to donors. The evaluation will be publicly available on the Evaluation Resource Centre of UNDP where it can be consulted by UNV partners, UN Volunteers and the wider volunteer sector.
 - **Learning** – this evaluation will also provide robust evidence, and frame recommendations that will be of use to UNV at different levels. We anticipate that the learning emerging from the process will be used by the Management Team within UNV, as well as larger stakeholder groups including staff in HQ, Regional Offices and Field Units. Most relevantly, the evaluation will provide evidence-based findings that will inform the design of the next Strategic Framework that will come into effect in January 2022. Additionally, by introducing a participatory and facilitative approach to reflection and data collection, new insights and learning will emerge of direct and immediate use to the stakeholders involved, so that the outcome of the evaluation is not limited to the report.

Description of the SF

What is being evaluated

7. The object of the evaluation is UNV's Strategic Framework 2018-21 (DP/2018/6), which sets out the organisation's statement of intent: *"UNV, through the placement of volunteers within the United Nations system and the promotion of volunteerism will (a) contribute to raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda in remote areas and with marginalized populations; (b) enable the monitoring of the Goals through citizen-driven qualitative and quantitative data collection; (c) provide technical expertise to encourage conducive policy environments and opportunities for people to volunteer; (d) help improve the delivery of services; and (e) model behaviours to inspire others."*
8. UNV's current SF builds on the recommendations of the external evaluation of SF 2014-17, which called for a review of its mobilization model (increasingly focused on mobilizing IUN Volunteers); strengthening efforts to engage with UN partners, while diversifying partnerships and devolving responsibilities to the regional and country level. It is also guided by the UN GA resolutions 70/129 [Plan of Action³] and 71/243 [on **Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)**].

Expected results and contextual factors

9. UNV is currently implementing its SF 2018-21 (DP/2018/6), with the overall objective of "a world where volunteerism is recognized and integrated as a means of engaging people in sustainable peace and development". Two outcomes are sought by this SF, namely: i) "Member States are supported in their efforts to deliver Agenda 2030 through volunteerism as an effective means of implementation and people engagement"; and ii)

³ Integrating Volunteering into Peace and Development: The Plan of Action for the Next Decade and Beyond

“UN system is supported to deliver on Agenda 2030 through the engagement of UN Volunteers and integration of volunteerism”. Each outcome includes 2 outputs and a series of output indicators.

10. Outputs are as follows:

- Output 1.1. Member States are supported in developing programmes, policies and legislation that promote volunteerism and volunteer action; and Output 1.2. Promotion of volunteerism and its value is advanced through engagement of Member States, civil society and academia in research, public dialogue, documentation and dissemination.
- Output 2.1. Expand the opportunities for more people to contribute to United Nations development, peace and humanitarian efforts; and Output 2.2. Motivated, well-equipped volunteers mobilized to contribute to United Nations peace, humanitarian and development efforts.
- For Institutional Effectiveness, UNV has 3 results in pursuit of institutional fitness-for-purpose: 1. Culture and capacity to deliver; 2. Leveraging partnerships to deliver; and 3. Operational excellence.

11. Since the introduction of the current SF, UNV has stabilized its income and strengthened its financial sustainability; with a new simplified cost-recovery policy put in effect as of 01 January 2019 to increase transparency. The total number of UN Volunteers mobilized has increased⁴, while the decentralization process has brought the organisation closer to its partners. The organisational transformation has also brought about the introduction of new volunteer modalities, the modification of existing volunteer management practices and the development of new partnerships; the rationale being an effort to be client-oriented, and responsive to the rapidly changing needs in fluid development, peace and humanitarian scenarios.

Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria and questions addressed

12. The evaluation used a blend of United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)/ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) criteria adapted specifically to UNV requirements to guide the enquiry, focusing on the key areas of accountability to the Executive Board and of interest to UNV Senior Management and other stakeholders as outlined in the evaluation ToR.
13. Table 1 summarizes the criteria selected and how they have been applied for this evaluation. The lines of inquiry relating to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and coherence will be more backward-looking, while when considering sustainability, the evaluation will be more forward-looking.

⁴ Annex 2: 2019 Statistical Overview of UN Volunteers, Report of the Administrator DP/2020/14.

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Source	Application/ scope
Relevance/ Coherence	UNEG/ UNDP	Examined in relation to the UN system, related to the 2030 Agenda, evolving UN landscape, and collaboration with UNV partners, to test the relevance of strategic objectives and ambitions of UNV, the alignment with partner entities and the extent to which implementation has met the requirements set out in the Strategic Framework. It will be examined at the level of outputs, and associated work plans and actions put in place to achieve the outcomes.
Efficiency	UNEG/ UNDP	Examined at the level of specific plans and actions, to test whether the intended outputs (including Digital and Organisational Transformation) have been delivered in line with planned effort/ resources. The evaluation will consider whether outputs were achieved on time and in line with expectations and allocated budget.
Effectiveness	UNEG/ UNDP	Examined at the level of specific plans, actions, outputs and outcomes, to test whether the objectives of the SF have been achieved or are considered likely to be achieved, and to identify factors which may have constrained or enabled effectiveness. The evaluation will also focus on the ways UNV implementation mechanisms have contributed and supported the achievement of outputs and outcomes.
Sustainability	UNEG/ UNDP	Considered at institutional level, in terms of whether the benefits of SF contributions are likely to continue after the SF has been completed and examine the probability of long-term benefits yielded from UNV's knowledge, evidence and policy development on volunteerism and what changes may be necessary to support the sustainability of the SF results going forward.
Cross-cutting	UNV	Examined in relation to the level of alignment of the SF to global norms and standards on human rights, gender equality, equal opportunities ⁵ ; in addition to the responsiveness of the SF to sudden onset challenges such as COVID-19.

Key evaluation questions

Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions
1. Relevance and Coherence: is the SF doing the right things? How well does it fit?	1.1 (A) To what extent are the outputs and outcomes designed under the SF relevant to key stakeholders and in line with the 2030 Agenda?
	1.1 (B) To what extent does the SF respond to the new UN development landscape?

⁵ Guided by UNEG guide for HRA and GEEW responsive evaluations.

Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions
	1.2. What is the comparative and collaborative advantage of the UNV SF, UN Volunteers and volunteerism in response to the SDGs and the new UN development landscape?
	1.3. What has been the contribution of the four individual outputs to the outcomes of the SF?
	1.4. How relevant have they been?
2. Efficiency: how well are resources being used?	2.1 To what extent have UNV resources been used efficiently in contributing to the outcomes and results outlined in the SF?
	2.2. What are the results of UNV's organisational and digital transformation and how has it influenced institutional efficiency and effectiveness?
	2.3. To what extent have the management and coordination among teams (at the global, regional and country levels) have ensured the efficient implementation of the SF?
3. Effectiveness: is the SF achieving its objectives?	3.1. How effective has UNV been in achieving the expected outcomes of the SF?
	3.2 How have different UNV partnerships and stakeholder relationships contributed to the outcomes of the SF?
	3.3. What are the major factors (both internal and external) helping (enabling) or hindering (constraining) the implementation of the SF?
	3.4. How effective have the implementation mechanisms been in supporting the achievement of the SF outcomes and results?
	3.5. To what extent has UNV contributed/is expected to contribute to the SDGs at the country and regional and global levels through the achievement of the SF outcomes?
4. Sustainability: will the contributions last?	4.1. To what extent is the SF conducive to the long-term sustainability of UNV?
	4.2. To what extent can the concrete results obtained through the SF (under both outcomes) be sustained into the future?
5. Cross-cutting issues - Is the SF aligned to global norms and standards & responsive to COVID-19?	5.1. To what extent has the SF been conducive to the incorporation of core principles such as human rights, gender equality, equal opportunities for people with disabilities and marginalized groups, resilience and leaving no one behind?
	5.2. To what degree was the UNV SF robust, flexible and adaptable to address the challenges caused by the global COVID-19 crisis?

Evaluation approach and methods

Evaluation approach

14. The evaluation team applied a theory-based approach to the evaluation of the SF, which considered the importance of UNV's operating context, and sought to identify the causal chain between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. To frame the evaluation the team has used the SF Results Model as a theory of change and further refined this through reconstruction, as part of standard practice (UNDP guidelines). This approach works well in theory-based evaluations as they are designed to meet real world challenges and complexities, as well as those which are emerging/ formative in nature. Using this approach, the evaluation team tested the hypothesis of the Strategic Framework logic (i.e., how change takes place for the SF to achieve its intended objectives and results); including reference to context relevant to understanding the change process, and prerequisites for change to happen. Through this approach, the evaluation team sought to understand how change is expected to happen and what it would look like, and then identify and analyze how the SF is contributing. Factors that hindered or facilitated change were also identified during the evaluation process.

Data sources

Documents

Desk Review

15. During the inception phase, key documents for the desk review (Annex 6) were identified and accessed with the support of UNV evaluation focal points (Annex 5).
16. A systematic desk review of more than **150 internal and external documents** was conducted, with documents analyzed against the analytical framework derived from the evaluation matrix, using content analysis software (NVivo and Dedoose) when appropriate.

UNV monitoring tools

17. UNV made available to the evaluation team two monitoring tools that were analyzed to inform several of the evaluation questions as indicated in the evaluation matrix. These tools were:
 - **PowerBI**: a data gathering, clean-up and visualization tool that uses various databases (such as VMAM, OV, Atlas or VRA) as data sources to provide updated information on the numbers of UN Volunteers per host entity, country, region, gender, type of assignment and other relevant variables.
 - **Volunteer Reporting Application (VRA)** – a volunteer reporting application introduced during the current Strategic Framework period that serves as the basis for UN Volunteers' feedback on their assignments. The evaluation team worked to ensure that the tools used to consult UN Volunteers complemented this information while avoiding duplication.

People

18. The evaluation team built a comprehensive stakeholder inventory of 2474 contacts related to different aspects of the SF. The inventory was compiled on the basis of detailed information provided by UNV HQ, the regional offices and the FUs.
19. Contacts were categorized as internal to UNV (HQ staff, Regional staff, former staff, and FU staff) and external to UNV (UN Agency, VIOs, Government, Government Donor, and bellwether). Other categories covered in the inventory were, gender, region, and those that can be considered partners for Outcome 1 or Outcome 2 of the SF. The inventory also included UN Volunteers.
20. The inventory served two purposes: it provided a snapshot of the range of UNV stakeholders and was used to sample potential groups to be consulted through the different data collection tools.

Sampling

21. The guiding principle of the sampling was that it should be broad-based and jointly agreed with UNV during inception to relevance, credibility and familiarity with UNV during the evaluation timescale. Joint efforts were made to ensure a range of voices were represented covering all the categories of the stakeholder inventory in a balanced and fair manner following the guiding principles of inclusiveness and Gender and Human Rights (GHR) approach.
22. To select participants for interviews, focus groups and other more innovative forms of information collection (such as ParEvo), the evaluation team used an intentional non-probabilistic sampling, which involved inviting identified stakeholders who had richer information about the questions posed in the evaluation matrix. This sample was agreed and approved by UNV in the Inception Report.
23. To address the inherent limitation in any non-probability method of not reaching sufficient stakeholder representation, the evaluation team developed online surveys that were sent to a wider population. The information collected through these survey instruments was used in conjunction with other sources to triangulate the findings.

Data collection instruments

Interviews and focus groups

Over 120 internal and external stakeholders were consulted through interviews and focus group discussions conducted at country, regional and global levels.

Table 2: Internal and External Stakeholders

	KII	FGD	ParEvo
UNV HQ/ RO staff	24		
UNV RO/FU Staff		51	
UN Volunteers			15
Partners/ VIOs	12	20	

24. These interviews and focus groups provided a richness of information that has been essential to understanding the experience of the Strategic Framework implementation. Interviews and focus groups were undertaken using semi-structured tools (see Annex 3). All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted remotely given the global restrictions due to COVID-19.
25. Interviews covered common elements, and also included additional questions specific to the roles of interviewees. Not all questions were asked of all interviewees: interviews were geared to role, responsibilities, and familiarity with the topic. Given the nature of an interview process, questions were high level and sought to draw out thematic evidence but also drilled down to detail where relevant to the specific interviewee or where there was not adequate evidence from other sources.
26. Focus groups provided an opportunity to assess perceptions of implementation progress, views on the extent to which specific outputs and objectives had been achieved and barriers to progress. These structured group discussions also provided insights on the process of implementation and provided a sense of the extent of change related to the Strategic Framework implementation, and the distance travelled.

Online surveys

27. Two web surveys were conducted to obtain valuable quantitative data and to ensure that a maximum number of views were represented, including a significant proportion of all the stakeholders identified in the stakeholder inventory and of all UN Volunteers who have served from 2018. The survey sample and response rates are detailed in the table below:

Table 3: Survey samples and response rates

Actuals	Total population	English	Spanish	French	Total per survey	Response rate
Partner	1038	150	22	22	194 ⁶	18.7%
Volunteer	5682	1331	298	581	2210	38.9%

28. The questions included in the survey of UNV partners were both qualitative and quantitative (see Annex 3), covering the extent of Strategic Framework implementation and progress in key strategic areas. Quantitative questions used a forced-choice rating system or Likert scale. Limited high-level metadata, including sex, partner typology, country representation, type of work was collected to ensure inclusive participation in the survey; and identify patterns among and across types of partners or regions. This assisted with differentiation of responses in analysis and enabled the evaluation team to assess how representative the survey respondents were. Prior to analysis the survey data was tested for validity and cleaned as necessary. The survey was available in three UN languages: EN, ES, FR. The survey was piloted with a small group of staff before use to test for validity, completeness, relevance and ease of use.
29. The online survey was hosted on secured servers; confidentiality was protected through restricted access, and feedback from the survey was anonymised and themed. Invitations to participate were sent by email with an embedded web-link to the survey from the UNV Executive Office. Response rates were monitored, and reminders issued to secure increased responses.

⁶ Partners survey responses include 158 related to the Outcome 2 survey branch; and 36 responses related to the Outcome 1 survey branch

30. Respondents were asked to complete the survey within three weeks in January 2021. Reminders were sent out at the end of the second week to encourage participation. An email helpdesk was available for any queries for the whole of the survey period and publicized to participants. Survey Monkey was selected as a suitable software for survey administration and analysis as the evaluation team have used this platform for similar surveys.
31. **Partner survey:** The evaluation team developed a single survey with two branches to consult all UNV partners identified in the stakeholder inventory for Outcome 1 and 2. The recipients of the survey were over 1,000 contacts, compiled in the stakeholders' inventory combining information provided by UNV⁷.
32. **UN Volunteers survey:** Volunteer input was essential for several of the questions included in the evaluation matrix. Much of this information is already captured by UNV's monitoring systems, in particular the VRAs. However, the evaluation team identified some information gaps that are detailed in the evaluation matrix and for which consultation with volunteers is essential. These areas are:
 - SF alignment with UN Volunteers needs/expectations
 - What is the unique UNV offering vis-a-vis other VIOs
 - Has delivery met their expectations - recruitment, on job support, etc.
 - Any unexpected effects for UN Volunteers; career development, well-being, etc
 - Contributions to personal changes in different groups; women/men, South/North
33. To cover these, a short online survey was conducted in English, French and Spanish, mainly containing closed questions to all UN Volunteers who had served since 2018 (See Annex 3).

ParEvo

34. To offer a more holistic perspective and deepen the analysis, the evaluation team used ParEvo on a sample of UN Volunteers. ParEvo⁸ is a method of developing alternative past histories or future scenarios, using a participatory evolutionary process. This involves the re-iteration of variation, selection and reproduction i.e., the evolutionary algorithm⁹. The process is designed to be used by multiple people, to produce a collective good – a set of storylines. In addition, the process generates data on how value has been created individually and collectively.

Limitations to the evaluation

35. The following table summarizes limitations and applied mitigation measures during evaluation design, data collection and data analysis:

7 For Outcome 1, contacts under Excel Sheets - 3. Key VIO Contacts 2020 and 4. FU, MemberStatesContacts2020; For Outcome 2, contacts under Excel sheets 1. UN Partner Contacts 2020 (not all); Partner Survey 2016; Contacts FU 2016 and Evaluation Stakeholder Map 2016.

8 Developed by Rick Davies

9 Campbell, 1960; Simonton, 2011

Table 4: Limitations and mitigation measures

Inception/ evaluation design		
#	Limitations	Mitigations
1.	During inception stage discussions with UNV, a number of evaluation questions and sub-questions were discussed and the feasibility of responding to these satisfactorily was explored due to data paucity challenges, including limited data on impact or contribution to SDGs	Revision of evaluation questions and sub-questions was proposed and approved in the Inception Report.
2.	The evaluation takes place at a time when the SF had 12 – 15 months still to run (from mid-October 2020 onwards); and close to the MTR which was completed April 2020.	The evaluation team identified both what has been achieved or is expected to be achieved against the relevant evaluation criteria.
Data collection and analysis		
#	Limitations	Mitigations
3.	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all data collection has been done remotely; through virtual collaborative technologies (Zoom; TEAMS; WebEx; etc) and using online data collection tools (electronic surveys and ParEvo).	Through purposive sampling, the evaluation team sought to identify as many key stakeholders as possible, internal and external to UNV, to ensure a diversity of views was collected. Working with UNV's Executive Office, the evaluation team is confident that most important stakeholders were included.
4.	Due to the timeframe for data collection (just after Christmas) some challenges were experienced in stakeholder availability, which resulted in some data collection occurring at the same time and initial analysis was being conducted and initial findings shared.	The evaluation team flexed their own availability and ran processes in parallel to mitigate where possible the concurrent workstreams. A new timeline was proposed and accepted by UNV; delaying by a week the submission of the draft report.
5.	Whilst UNV has been effective in providing most sources of data and evidence to the evaluation team, access to some key data sources (for example, HR reporting in Power BI) was delayed.	A new timeline was proposed and accepted by UNV, delaying by a week the submission of the draft report.
6.	UNV Survey respondent database contained old or inaccurate contact information.	The evaluation team maintained detailed records of bounce backs and ensured sample size was revised accordingly to ensure accurate universe of survey respondents.
7.	Survey instruments were only available in 3 UN languages (English; French; Spanish).	Limitation discussed and accepted by UNV.
8.	Survey completion rate for UNV's partners was quite low (19%); though 39% of UN Volunteers surveyed responded.	Survey data was tested and triangulated against other data points for validity.
9.	Interpretation of survey data given the inevitable bias in the perceptive based data provided.	Survey data was reviewed and triangulated amongst the team, through team workshop and discussion.
10.	During reporting drafting and the Quality Assurance process, some evaluation sub-questions included in the evaluation matrix had common elements that could be analyzed together in order to provide a more accessible document.	Sub questions merged in reporting, though traceable in key findings table.

Data analysis

Procedures for analysis, triangulation and validation

36. The evaluation framework was used to analyze data from different sources and to organize and tabulate it in relation to the evaluation questions, using systematic analytical tools including Excel tabulation and content analysis software (including NVivo or Dedoose). These systematic approaches to analysis ensured traceability from findings to conclusions and to recommendations.
37. We identified thematic findings that served to identify system wide factors of relevance to the evaluation criteria. We ensured that the analysis and triangulation included a gender, human rights and equity lens. Three types of triangulation methods were applied: cross reference of different data sources (interviews, focus group discussions, survey, and documentation); triangulation within the team; and the evaluation team members' own process of verification of findings and information post-data collection. The team conducted an evidence confidence review identifying areas which were considered low confidence and thus open to challenge. This was reinforced during the draft reporting process in concert with UNV. The team considered confidence in evidence to require quality, validation, and triangulation of the evidence sources and across sources, with the following scale applied. The evaluation report contain evidence with predominantly high confidence.
 - High confidence: Independent evidence is available and/or a key corporate document responding to the evaluation question/ sub-questions and/or multiple sources are available with strongly coherent, consistent evidence
 - Medium confidence: Some evidence from different sources that is neither definitive nor comprehensive, though it provides useable, partial evidence responding to the evaluation question/ sub-questions. Some contradictions in the evidence are present
 - Low confidence: Limited evidence is available or of poor quality.
38. As part of team verification and validation, a 2-day team analysis workshop was conducted to systematically review data and verify and identify main findings as a group. The triangulation efforts tested for consistency of results, noting that inconsistencies do not necessarily weaken the credibility of results, but reflect the sensitivity of different types of data collection methods and the diverse contexts in which UNV works. These processes sought to ensure validity, establish common threads and trends, and identify divergent views. Survey data are not taken to be statistical representative and are used as an evidence source to strengthen triangulation. At the request of UNV, the report uses a standardised set of quantifier descriptors to define the qualitative data sets through-out the report based on those consulted (see agreed stakeholder list, Annex 5), as follows:

Table 5: Qualitative data: standardised descriptors¹⁰

Descriptor	Describes
The majority of... participants from that stakeholder group consulted on that issue during the evaluation	More than 66% of that stakeholder group
A mixed response from...	A 50% / 50% balance of views expressed by that stakeholder group
A minority of...	Less than 33% of views expressed by that stakeholder group

Reporting

Reviewing emerging findings

39. A summary of initial findings was shared with the UNV Management Team on 16th February 2021. This session sought to build awareness of the emerging findings and offer an opportunity for the Management Team to signal resonance, validate or challenge these findings, as well as to avoid surprises in the latter stages of reporting. Such discussions increase the quality, utility and relevance of the evaluation, and provide a productive space for organisational reflection.

Draft and final reporting

40. The draft report was prepared for comment, setting out the key findings and presenting the voice of those stakeholders involved in the evaluation, conclusions, and recommendations. Comments received from UNV were consolidated into a single comments matrix and checked by the UNV Evaluation Manager for consistency. The evaluation team addressed each comment and indicated how each point has been addressed; both tracked change and clean versions of the final report were shared for tracking purposes. A single round of comments was agreed during inception.

Final report

41. The final report was based on the draft report and amended to take account of comments provided by UNV.

Presentation

42. We will be available to present the summary findings, conclusions and recommendations upon request.

¹⁰ Views across the stakeholder groups, from majority to minority views, are included in the report for two reasons: i) provide a fully rounded presentation of views for absolute transparency; and ii) providing maximum opportunity for learning.

Evaluation team

43. The evaluation team has worked with many different multilateral and bilateral evaluation offices and brings comprehensive experience of successfully completing global and corporate evaluations. We have an ability to work collegiately and with agility to use and adapt technologies innovatively to conduct evaluations under difficult conditions such as those presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.
44. The Evaluation Team Leader is Matthew Crump and evaluation team members are Eva Otero and Itz'ar Gómez Carrasco supported by dedicated Quality Assurance. The team have comprehensive evaluation and multilateral/UN experience combined with in-depth familiarity with UNV alongside excellent analytical, report writing and communication skills. IOD PARC is an active member of the UK Evaluation Society (UKES) and European Evaluation Society (EES).
45. The team is gender-balanced (1 male: 2 female), multinational (UK and Spanish) and multilingual (English, Spanish and French).
46. Whilst firmly protecting the independence and integrity of our evaluations, our approach is a collegial one among professionals. We operate on a basis of assumed professional trust. We have sought to work with UNV applying an iterative, collaborative, participatory-based approach.

Findings

47. The evaluation identified the following findings, organized according to the United Nations Evaluation Group evaluation criteria, highlighting both implementation achievements and gaps in the implementation of the Strategic Framework to date.

Relevance and coherence

48. Under relevance and coherence, the evaluation considers the extent to which the Strategic Framework is aligned to UNV's mandate; to the 2030 Agenda; responsive to the UN development landscape; articulates and allows UNV to leverage its comparative advantage in response to the SDGs and coherent in its internal logic.
49. This section addresses 4 key evaluation questions: (1a) To what extent are the outputs and outcomes designed under the SF relevant to key stakeholders and in line with the 2030 Agenda?; (1b) To what extent does the SF respond to the new UN development landscape; (2) How does UNV position itself in relation to VIOs outside the UN system and/or other organisations (inside and outside the UN system) mobilizing cost-effective talent?(3) What has been the contribution of the four individual outputs to the outcomes of the SF, and (4) How relevant have they been?
50. **The evaluation finds that the SF is well regarded and actively used. The SF has provided UNV with a clear organisational focus that is consistent with its mandate, as defined in GA resolutions, and is the result of a participatory development process. The SF sets out UNV's contribution to the 2030 Agenda, although it does not fully articulate the potentially strategic role that UNV can play in mobilizing a wide range of stakeholders. The SF is also clearly aligned with QCPR (2016) and UN Reform, since it promotes decentralisation with the objective of enhancing support to partners, strengthening national capacities at the country/Field Unit level, and facilitating UNV's inclusion in UNSDCF's, albeit with uneven results (see section on UNV's inclusion in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs)).**

1.1 (A) To what extent are the outputs and outcomes designed under the SF relevant to key stakeholders and in line with the 2030 Agenda?

FINDING 1 - UNV's SF 2018-21 is coherent, aligned and explicit in relation to the 2030 Agenda. As the first SF to be developed after 2015, it seeks to leverage the power of volunteers and volunteerism as a means for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and for engaging people in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

51. The narrative of the SF highlights how "*the centrality of people in the agenda makes volunteerism and UNV more relevant than ever*" and describes the five areas to which UNV seeks to contribute: namely, (a) raising awareness on the 2030 Agenda in remote areas and with marginalized populations; (b) enabling SDG monitoring through citizen-driven qualitative and quantitative data collection; (c) providing technical expertise to encourage policy environments and opportunities for people to volunteer; (d) helping to improve service delivery; and (e) modelling behaviours to inspire others.

52. The relevance of these efforts was confirmed by a partner survey conducted within the framework of this evaluation, where an average of approximately 85% of respondents¹¹ agreed that UNV was contributing to these five areas¹². Furthermore, UNV's potential to serve as a catalyst for implementing the 2030 Agenda (inside and outside the UN) is one of the aspects that consulted stakeholders¹³ valued the most, since many see UNV as an enabler of effective engagement (especially involving youth) and believe that the 2030 Agenda provides an effective vehicle for channeling the contribution of volunteerism¹⁴.
53. In terms of approach, the SF states that UNV will contribute to the 2030 Agenda through the placement of UN Volunteers within the UN system and through the promotion of volunteerism, while strengthening and diversifying its UN Volunteer modalities for greater impact. While the SF does not fully articulate the role that UNV should have in the mobilisation of a wide range of stakeholders for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the majority of consulted stakeholders (including UNV staff, VIOs, donors and partners), noted that UNV is uniquely placed to convene a wide range of actors, and to link the notion of sustainable development to local action through its community-based approach, thereby supporting UN efforts to embrace a whole-of-society approach for attaining the SDGs.

Addressing the mandate

FINDING 2 - UNV's Strategic Framework 2018-21 is clearly aligned with the 25 UNGA resolutions that have shaped its mandate since its foundation in 1971 (UNGA Resolution 2659).

54. The mandate of UNV has evolved and expanded since 1971, setting the ground for the organisation to play a wider and more strategic role within the UN system and in the volunteer sector.
55. During the first year of SF implementation, an additional UNGA resolution was passed on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda (UNGA Resolution 73/140/2018¹⁵). This resolution detailed UNV's lead role in the organisation of the Global Technical Meeting on "Reimagining volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda" held in 2020, thereby further strengthening the existing alignment between UNV's mandate and the SF, which explicitly refers to the 2030 Agenda in both its narrative and in its two outcomes.
56. UNV's mandate is perceived by stakeholders in different ways. The majority of consulted UN partners see UNV primarily as a service provider that can bring valuable human

¹¹ Around 170 partners (with slight differences in numbers of respondents per question line).

¹² According to the survey, partners believe that UNV supports their organisations by contributing to raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda in remote areas and with marginalized populations (55% completely agreed; 32.2% somewhat agreed); by enabling SDG monitoring through citizen-driven qualitative and quantitative data collection (46.1% completely agreed; 37.6% somewhat agreed); by providing technical expertise to encourage conducive policy environments and opportunities for people to volunteer (49.1% completely agreed; 37.4% somewhat agreed); by helping to improve the delivery of services (57.7% completely agreed; 29.1% somewhat agreed); by modelling behaviours to inspire others (53.6% completely agreed; 33.9% somewhat agreed).

¹³ Issue raised in all the KII with volunteer sector experts and in both FGDs with UN Partners, one FGD with donors and in four open-ended questions of the partner survey.

¹⁴ UNGA Resolution 73/140 recognises "that volunteerism can be a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, that it can help to expand and mobilize constituencies and engage people in the national planning and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and that volunteer groups can help to localize the Agenda by providing new areas of interaction between Governments and people for concrete and scalable actions".

¹⁵ UNGA Resolution 73/140 "recognizes the United Nations Volunteers programme as the appropriate United Nations entity to support the implementation of the plan of action, and expects the programme to coordinate the work to consolidate and disseminate good practices and lessons learned, promote successful volunteer actions and ensure that the differentiated impact of volunteers on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is documented as part of regular national policy, planning and implementation practices".

resources as part of its mandate of supporting UN agencies to achieve the 2030 Agenda through community engagement¹⁶. All sector experts understood UNV's mandate but placed greater importance on advocacy and support to Member States on volunteerism¹⁷. The majority of consulted UNV staff noted that under the current SF, UNV has focused its efforts on mobilizing UN Volunteers in alignment with its foundational mandate (under Outcome 2); while other elements of its extended mandate received fewer resources and attention during SF implementation (under Outcome 1). This is illustrated by the distribution of staff resources (as detailed under Efficiency), as well as by the difference in the number of partners provided by UNV in the stakeholder mapping for this evaluation¹⁸. Nonetheless, despite this uneven distribution of resources, most targets have been achieved or exceeded under both outcomes (see section on Effectiveness).

SF development process

FINDING 3 - SF 2018-21 was 'a strategy fit for its time', since it sought to respond to a series of urgent needs identified during the SF development process. The development of the SF was considered inclusive, participatory and consultative, despite on-going organisational transformation.

57. Firstly, the SF sought to align UNV's work with QCPR 2016 and the 2030 Agenda in order to ensure that the organisation would remain relevant in a rapidly evolving context by following a similar evolution to other development actors inside and outside the UN system. These efforts translated into the development of an SF that placed the 2030 Agenda at the centre and made decentralization instrumental for its implementation, in alignment with the recommendations of QCPR 2016.
58. Secondly, UNV's challenging financial situation at the time of SF development and declining numbers of UN Volunteers also determined the nature of the SF (see details under 2.1). This situation led to a renewed focus on mobilisation for cost recovery through a strengthened service-oriented approach. Thirdly, specific results indicators related to institutional effectiveness were included in response to the findings of the external evaluation of the previous SF (2014-17), which noted that UNV's growth had been negatively impacted by cumbersome internal business processes and structures.
59. The SF was the result of a participatory process that involved the creation of working groups to draft thematic think pieces. UNV Section chiefs were directly involved and were responsible for involving their team members through various consultative processes. The majority of consulted UNV staff members described high levels of consultation across the organisation, including over 40 focus group discussions. Although staff consultation was more limited at the regional and country levels, it also involved in-person consultations (such as the initial meeting held with UNV staff from the regions in Bonn in December 2016, which included UNV Programme Officers), global townhall meetings and an online process launched to elicit feedback.
60. Although UNV introduced various channels to encourage staff participation in the definition of the SF (such as townhall meetings and weekly transformation updates), a minority of consulted UNV staff members noted that the context for participation was

¹⁶ This issue was brought up in all the FGDs with UN partners and raised in the open-ended questions of the partner survey (see details under footnote 14 below).

¹⁷ The qualitative analysis of responses to the open-ended questions included in the partner survey revealed 14 references to the value of UNV in the promotion of volunteerism and 45 references to the recruitment of volunteers.

¹⁸ 250 contacts for Outcome 1 (including VIOs and Member States); and 828 contacts for Outcome 2 (UN entities).

challenging because the organisation's transformation process was taking place at the same time.

61. Outside UNV, Executive Board members were consulted during 2017 and 2018 through formal and informal EB meetings, as well as bilateral discussions with EB members. These consultations were complemented with surveys and other consultations with external stakeholders. UNV staff members from two of the six regions consulted during this evaluation noted that they had received comments from partners who felt excluded from the SF consultations and who would have welcomed the opportunity to engage more strategically, while in other regions partners were more heavily involved.

Strategic risks and implicit assumptions

FINDING 4 – Although UNV is perceived to have adequately considered risks and assumptions during the development of the SF, certain risks were not fully assessed, while not all implicit assumptions held as expected.

62. During the implementation of the SF, UNV has conducted annual risk analyses through its corporate risk register, with core risks focusing on UNV's financial health, including considerations about the market share of UNV, high cost-recovery, competition from other organisations (contractual modalities and programme), and the cost of continued programmatic engagement, among others.
63. The SF built on a series of assumptions (as described in the SF's methodological note) and also involved a series of implicit assumptions that emerged during FGDs and KIIs, including the following: (a) moving away from programmatic/project-based work would allow the organisation to embrace a more cohesive and focused approach; (b) decentralization and professionalization/ nationalization would improve UNV's rapport with partners and strengthen mobilization efforts; (c) governments would be willing to pay UNV for advisory services to support volunteer legislation, infrastructure, etc¹⁹; (d) private sector partnerships would strengthen and multiply²⁰; (e) the FU structures in place²¹ would be adequate for implementation.
64. Certain risks were adequately assessed, and some assumptions held. For example, mobilisation figures suggest that the strategy of moving closer to partners and strengthening UNV's presence at the field level has brought about positive results for SF implementation. This has been widely confirmed by the majority of consulted stakeholders both inside and outside UNV, since decentralisation has been seen as a decisive positive move for the organisation.
65. The evaluation notes that the risks associated with moving away from programmatic engagement²² and its repercussions at the field level were not fully considered. UNV staff in ROs and FUs consulted on the issue of UNV's programmatic engagement expressed mixed views. On the one hand, UNV staff argued that the decision to no longer engage in programming (beyond completing on-going projects) was justified in light of the difficulties managing several programmes, the risk of covering other UN agencies' ground and the need to focus efforts on mobilisation. However, UNV staff at RO and FU level also noted that engagement in programmes strategically positions UNV at the country level (see

¹⁹ See also "Partnership and Resource Mobilisation Strategy 2018-21".

²⁰ See "Partnership and Resource Mobilisation Strategy 2018-21".

²¹ As established through Governing Council decisions 79/24, 88/46 and 90/45.

²² As evidenced by the number of programmes signed by UNV under the current SF (2 were signed: a) Digital Transformation and b) Phase 2 of the NYKS/NSS programme), as well as by the declining number of focal points for projects, from 12 in 2018 to 3 in 2021 (see stakeholder mapping provided by UNV for this evaluation).

section on UNSDCF integration below) and promotes its mandate while also providing opportunities to mobilise UN Volunteers. Senior leaders in UNV note a decision was made to prioritize and continue to promote strategic programming work related to its mandate, promoting programming in line with the positive findings of the evaluations conducted during the 2018-21 period²³ and with one of the recommendations of the SF 2014-17 evaluation²⁴. Efforts to mainstream the promotion of Online Volunteering (OV) and the integration of people living with disabilities (PWD) as an alternative to implementing specific programmes are ongoing.

66. Certain assumptions held at the time of SF design did not hold during the implementation period. In this regard, the example that was most frequently raised during the evaluation was the cost-recovery strategy foreseen under Outcome 1 (which built on the assumption that Member States would be willing to pay for advisory services), which did not bring the expected benefits. Developing partnerships with the private sector is another area of work that turned out to be more complex than expected, given the legal challenges encountered when promoting corporate volunteering.

1.1 (B) To what extent does the SF respond to the new UN development landscape?

Alignment and coherence with QCPR and UN Reform

FINDING 5 – The SF is well-aligned with QCPR 2016 and UN reform, since its implementation has been driven by an ambitious decentralisation process that has allowed UNV to be closer to its partners in the field, thereby enhancing support to partners and strengthening national capacities at the country/FU level.

67. The implementation of SF embraces the spirit of UNGA Resolution 71/243 on the “Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for the development of the UN system” (QCPR 2016) by enhancing UNV’s ground presence in its countries of operation, strengthening capacity at the country level through the nationalization of Country Coordinator positions and promoting engagement with Member States through its engagement with United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) in UNSDCF processes.
68. UNV has aligned its transformation process with the strategy proposed by UNGA Resolution 71/243 and followed by other UN entities. Recommendations included shifting efforts towards the country level, tailoring responses, and delegating authority to ROs to ensure that decisions are taken closer to the ground and in consultation with government actors to ensure that UNV’s work is aligned with national development needs and plans. These efforts have also succeeded in improving UNV’s efficiency and facilitating rapid deployment of UN Volunteers, thereby effectively supporting the implementation of QCPR recommendations by UN partners. Decentralisation has brought important benefits in

²³ Reviewed evaluations of the following projects (2018-20): UNV Talent and Capacity Development Programme for an Inclusive UN System for Persons with Disabilities (2020); UNV Support to Enhancing Capacity of UN Plan of Action on DRR for Resilience in South and East Asia and Pacific Regional Project (2018); Poverty Reduction among Youth in Cambodia: Development of Youth Volunteers’ skill sets for Increased Employability (2020); Partners for Prevention Regional Joint Programme for Violence against Women and Girls Prevention in Asia and the Pacific (2018); UNV’s Support to UN Peacebuilding Fund’s Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI) (2020); UNV Online Volunteering Services (2020); Mid-term Evaluation Report: Strengthening NYKS and NSS (2018); Évaluation à mi-parcours: Mise en place du Programme National de Volontariat en Côte d’Ivoire (2018).

²⁴ The external evaluation recommended UNV to focus its programmatic approach on those areas where partners perceive it to have a key added value and that can be most clearly linked to its mandate: volunteer infrastructure and youth.

terms of aligning UNV's work with the QCPR and operational results obtained since 2018 have been clearly enabled by the changes enacted.

69. The majority of UNV staff working at the RO and FU levels consulted noted that while the SF provided a clear and concrete document for engaging with governments, it also left enough leeway and flexibility for ROs and FUs to work with the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), UNDP Resident Representative (RR) and UNCT in different ways according to each context. On a similar positive note, it has been widely recognised that Regional Managers and Country Coordinators have been better placed than HQ staff to understand operational contexts and partner needs, and to meaningfully engage in these processes under this SF.
70. Other emerging issues associated with the changes brought about by UN reform are worth mentioning. First, the majority of UNV staff working in the field noted that UN reform implied important changes for ROs and FUs as a result of the de-linking of the RR and RC positions. Although the relationship between UNV and UNDP is defined by a series of documents (including strategic plans, annual reports to the Executive Board, records of UNDP organisational Performance Group and an MoU between UNV and the UNDP Bureau of Management Services), there was a mixed response from UNV staff who noted a certain absence of clarity in the articulation of this relationship at the field level. The evaluation notes that in some countries, UNV staff are included in UNCT meetings, while in other countries, UNV staff report being excluded from certain important meetings because as a programme administered by UNDP, they have no seat at the table²⁵. In the latest Action Brief for the Organisational Performance Group (OPG) and associated decisions, UNDP acknowledges the need for "UNDP RRs to advocate on UNV's behalf in UNCT and facilitate UNV's participation in CCA/UNSDCF" as well as "the need to include UNV in CO programme/management teams". It is also noted that "RRs can help UNV FUs by ensuring they are provided a fully functional working environment and included in all internal communications²⁶".

UNV's inclusion in UNSDCFs

FINDING 6 – UNV has invested significant efforts and resources in facilitating the inclusion of volunteerism and UNV in UNSDCFs though with uneven results to date.

71. For a minority of consulted UNV staff from ROs and FUs, the SF has facilitated inclusion because it is a clear, straightforward document that has made communications with partners easier and has allowed UNV to speak the same language as UN agencies. However, for the majority of consulted UNV staff, it was the nearness to partners brought about by decentralisation that was crucial for facilitating inclusion in UNSDCFs. In fact, several positive experiences of engagement in UNSDCF processes were reported during this evaluation. For example, it was noted that the SF had helped to link the UNSDCF to national development plans in Nigeria (where volunteerism was included as relevant for implementing the 2030 Agenda), and also in Cameroon, where UNV was able to engage in three of the four pillars of the framework. In Senegal, it was also possible to integrate a concrete reference to volunteerism under the data collection and management component. Successful experiences were also shared from the Asia-Pacific region, where UNV staff reported playing an active role in UNSDCF discussions in several countries, including Sri Lanka, India and China for the first time. In Bolivia, UNV has been participating in UN framework processes since 2012, with volunteerism featuring as a

²⁵ See also "Qualitative review of the integration of volunteerism into the UNSDCF: Reimagining the role of UNV under the new Cooperation Framework and a way forward", p. 9.

²⁶ See "Action Brief for the Organisational Performance Group" (17.02.21) and OPG Decisions (17.02.21).

transversal pillar, while in countries such as Brazil, UNV is included in the framework but without a wider reference to volunteerism. In Arab States, general references to volunteerism have been included in different UN strategic processes under this SF and volunteerism has been included in the Results and Resources Framework (RFF) of several countries (including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq and Tunisia). Finally, although in Central Asia most UNSDCFs have integrated volunteerism, no indicators related to civil engagement were integrated in the framework.

72. According to the majority of UNV field staff consulted, effectively including UNV in UNSDCFs has been difficult due to two main factors: firstly, the lack of a programmatic approach with funding attached has been perceived to limit UNV's leverage and influence. It was noted that in these discussions, UN agencies do not only bring their mandates to the table: they also bring resources. Secondly, UNV field staff noted that the guidelines provided on how to engage were not clear enough and created a sense of ambiguity, while the lack of evidence on the contribution of volunteerism remained an obstacle. Thirdly, a minority of UNV staff members consulted on this issue raised questions on the real value of being involved in these time-consuming processes, which entail diverting resources away from other areas such as mobilisation. This was a particular concern in countries where the FU is composed of only one person (Country Coordinator)²⁷.
73. UNV recently conducted an analytical review on the integration of volunteerism in UNSDCFs to date, facilitated by VASS and conducted in close collaboration with Regional Offices, Field Units, New York Office, Executive Office and other internal units, as part of UNV's efforts to define its approach in alignment with key principles and approaches, and to shape future advisory services and advocacy strategies. This analysis revealed that a significant amount of effort was invested by ROs and FUs in seeking inclusion in UNSDCFs, resulting in 58% of the 27 UNSDCFs analyzed mentioning volunteerism. Some of the recommendations included in this analysis resonate with the feedback received from UNV field staff during this evaluation (such as the recommendation to "engage with larger programmatic entities (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA) to collect data and research on volunteering for the SDGs²⁸" given UNV's limited capacity). However, the focus on integrating and streamlining the contribution of volunteerism "without necessarily bringing programme resources²⁹" and pursuing the inclusion of an indicator in the RRF on volunteerism in a way that "should be made clear to the UNCT about who leads the measurement of that specific indicator, bearing in mind that UNV is not a programme entity³⁰" may prove challenging in light of the difficulties described by field staff. Furthermore, other issues emerged, since staff members noted that including the words "volunteerism" or "UNV" would have no significant weight unless a specific activity-oriented reference could be included in the RRF (which was considered unlikely in the absence of programmatic action). For some of the consulted staff, the ultimate end of pursuing inclusion in UNSDCFs was not always clear, especially given UNV's focus on mobilisation and the fact that new UN Volunteer recruitments can be negotiated without UNV being included in these processes.

27 See also "Qualitative review on the integration of volunteerism into the UNSDCF: Reimagining the role of UNV under the new Cooperation Framework and a way forward", p. 9.

28 See "Qualitative review of the integration of volunteerism into the UNSDCF: Reimagining the role of UNV under the new Cooperation Framework and a way forward", p. 11.

29 See "Qualitative review of the integration of volunteerism into the UNSDCF: Reimagining the role of UNV under the new Cooperation Framework and a way forward", p. 11.

30 See "Qualitative review of the integration of volunteerism into the UNSDCF: Reimagining the role of UNV under the new Cooperation Framework and a way forward", p. 10.

1.2 How does UNV position itself in relation to VIOs outside the UN system and/or other organisations (inside and outside the UN system) mobilizing cost-effective talent?

Comparative and collaborative advantage

FINDING 7 – UNV’s comparative advantage brings diversity and inclusivity to the UN, as well as closeness to the ground, while facilitating an enabling environment for youth engagement and providing flexible, timely, cost-effective human resources. However, excessive focus on mobilisation and perceptions of UN Volunteers as ‘cheap labor’ present risks for UNV.

74. Partners and donors see UNV as a tool for inclusion that provides an attractive talent pool composed of a wide range of backgrounds and levels of expertise (see 5.1. for details on inclusion). From the point of view of UN agencies, UNV’s community-based/grassroots approach is of special importance, since it constitutes a key aspect of SDG localization and allows UNV to be “the face of the UN” in remote areas³¹. From this perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of UNV as both provider and mobiliser of community-based human resources in crisis situations, and as an effective bridge between the work of local CSOs and national/global UN responses.
75. The main comparative advantage highlighted by UN partners is UNV’s capacity to directly contribute to the work of UN agencies³² by providing flexible, timely, cost-effective human resources through a comprehensive range of volunteer modalities³³ that are effectively delivered at country, regional and/ or global levels³⁴ (under Outcome 2). UNV handles most of the recruitment process in a manner that is considered cost-effective and fast, and this is highly valued by host agencies. However, a minority of stakeholders inside and outside UNV noted the risk involved in excessively focusing only on the HR-related added value in detriment of other aspects of UNV’s mandate that go beyond the mobilisation of UN Volunteers. The importance of accompanying UNV’s market proposition with a well-articulated value proposition was raised during most FGDs held with current and former UNV staff.
76. UNV Partners, Donors and UN Volunteers also stressed UNV’s added value as a UN entity that provides an entry point into the UN system for individuals (particularly youth) who may not be able to easily access through other channels, such as candidates from countries from the Global South with limited opportunities (see 5.1.) or countries lacking Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programmes; as well as candidates from remote or marginalized areas who may access the UN through community-based positions offered by UNV. The majority of consulted UNV staff on this issue noted that this aspect was recognised by LDCs, who value that joining the Fully-Funded (FF) programme allows for their representation in the multilateral system to grow.
77. For the majority of UN Volunteers consulted, UNV’s comparative advantage is that it can serve as a stepping-stone in their professional careers or an entry point to multilateral

³¹ This was brought up during both FGDs with UN partners.

³² 100% of partners identifying as a UN agency perceived UN Volunteers make a positive contribution to their UN entity’s mandate; with 96% perceiving UN Volunteers make a clear and distinctive contribution to the implementation of 2030 Agenda (a total of 117 partners responded).

³³ 93% of partners perceive UNV to offer an attractive pool of skills; with 85% perceiving UNV to offer an attractive range of contract modalities (a total of 113 partners responded).

³⁴ 85% of partners perceive the most appealing characteristic of hiring UN Volunteers is cost-effectiveness; with 89% of partners understanding the costs of the UNV management fee; and 87% perceiving this fee to represent good value for money (a total of 115 partners responded).

organisations including UN agencies³⁵. Hence, UNV's comparative advantage is also its capacity to provide opportunities for youth to gain experience and exposure to the UN system in the field of peace, security, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, and improve their employability prospects (see 3.1). Although UNV is seen as a positive way of democratizing access to the UN system, concerns were raised during this evaluation about UN Volunteers being considered 'cheap labor' when there is a perception that UN Volunteers are covering regular positions at a lower cost³⁶ (see also 3.1.).

FINDING 8 – UNV also has significant comparative advantage vis-à-vis other VIOs, given its global convening role, coupled with the fact that UNV brings multilateralism to the sector by serving as a bridge between CSOs and UN agencies. Furthermore, UNV's agenda-setting role and support to South-South cooperation make UNV better placed than other VIOs to amplify the value of volunteer actions led by the global South.

78. During the evaluation, stakeholders from outside the UN system identified several areas where UNV has significant comparative advantage vis-à-vis other VIOs and in the wider volunteer sector. In this regard, one of the main aspects to note is that UNV plays a global convening role³⁷ that is widely recognised and appreciated by the majority of consulted stakeholders. This unique convening power has allowed UNV to lead a highly inclusive and participatory be Global Technical Meeting (GTM2020) on Reimagining Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda (convened with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) under the Plan of Action to Integrate Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda, despite the challenges of a context marked by COVID-19 (see 3.1).
79. VIOs, partners and donors also appreciate that UNV brings multilateralism to the volunteer sector by serving as a bridge between CSOs and UN agencies. UNV carries the independence, credibility and neutrality associated with the "UN brand" in the sector and benefits from being broadly perceived as a non-threatening, non-contentious organisation.
80. As "carrier of the UN brand", UNV can empower people's ability to advocate for themselves and advocate for others, following the principle of leaving no one behind, and ensuring that marginalized groups participate and benefit from the results of volunteering. Its global position and support to South-South cooperation also make UNV better placed than other VIOs from the global North to amplify the value of volunteer actions led by the global South (see section 3.2). UNV is showcasing the contribution of volunteerism and there is consensus among the consulted volunteer experts that the value of volunteer actions led by the global South needs to be much better recognised, understood and promoted, with most research to date done by and in the global North and recognition that UNV is also well-placed to support these efforts (as noted in the GTM 2020 Concept Note).

³⁵ 66.8% of UN Volunteers completely agree while 25.5% somewhat agree with this statement.

³⁶ The issue of "cheap labour" perceptions has been raised by other recent external evaluations. For example, the MTR of the project "Strengthening Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and National Service Scheme (NSS)" in India noted that "UNV should position itself as a UN body with a mandate to mainstream volunteering to add value to development programmes and enhance outcomes and sustainability. It should not be perceived as a placement agency or a source of cheap labour" (Recommendation 8). In a similar vein, the evaluation of SF 2014-17 noted that "cheap labour" was mentioned as a concern by UN host agencies and VIOs, while there was "a perceived gap between the value driven communication of UNV about volunteerism [...] and UNV's business model", p. 57.

³⁷ 96% of partners perceive UNV as a credible partner in the volunteer sector with the capacity to facilitate contacts with Government bodies and key stakeholders (a total of 178 partners responded to this question).

FINDING 9 - UNV is uniquely placed to support volunteerism as the only UN agency with a mandate that involves the promotion of volunteerism and as a programme administered by UNDP, the UN agency leading efforts to localize the SDGs.

81. The role of volunteerism in the implementation of SDGs is recognised in several key UN documents³⁸, including UNGA resolutions, and the SF is clearly aligned with the 2030 Agenda, which understands volunteerism as a tool for civic engagement and part of SDG localising efforts. Citizen participation is at the heart of these development processes and UNV can provide an entry point into relevant civil society networks, liaise with local governments, and offer the necessary operational support for UN agencies to “walk the talk” while connecting the local with the global by embracing a multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach. This was confirmed by the majority of consulted partners, who noted that UNV has not only the mandate, but also the will and capacity to lend expert advice on volunteer legislation³⁹. UNV’s capacity to support Member States in the development of volunteer infrastructure and volunteer programmes was also noted by consulted partners during this evaluation, as evidenced by the survey⁴⁰ and FGDs.

1.3 What has been the contribution of the four individual outputs to the outcomes of the SF? 1.4 How relevant have they been?

FINDING 10 – The SF is considered a significant improvement on previous SFs, since it has brought greater focus and clarity to the work of UNV through its two outcomes and four related outputs. The principle of simplification sought by UNV was enacted successfully, since the resulting document is considered clear, accessible and usable.

82. The SF sets out the organisation’s objectives through two outcomes; namely: i) Member States are supported in their efforts to deliver Agenda 2030 through volunteerism as an effective means of implementation and people engagement; and ii) UN system is supported to deliver on Agenda 2030 through the engagement of UN Volunteers and integration of volunteerism. Through these two outcomes, the SF brings together the key elements of UNV’s mandate: Outcome 1 reflects the spirit of the different resolutions that extended the foundational mandate, since it focuses on supporting Member States in the promotion of volunteerism, while Outcome 2 directly responds to UNV’s foundational mandate as provider of UN Volunteers for the UN system.
83. UNV staff members who are familiar with previous SFs noted strategic shifts over the years from a focus on programming to a focus on the mobilisation of UN Volunteers. The evaluation found widespread consensus⁴¹ among UNV staff, UN Volunteers and other stakeholders (including donors, partners and VIOs) that both outcomes must be pursued, with proportionate vigor and resources, in order for the organisation to remain relevant in the current and future context and to adequately fulfil its assigned role.

38 Including UNGA Resolution A/RES/67/290 establishing the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, UNGA Resolution A/RES/70/129 on integrating volunteering into peace and development; the Plan of Action for the next decade and beyond (A/RES/70/129); UNSG’s Synthesis Report on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/69/700); and A/RES/73/140, which encourages cooperation between governments, VIOs and CSOs.

39 60.6% of consulted partners strongly agree, while 36.4% somewhat agree.

40 61.2% strongly agree and 36% somewhat agree that UNV has sufficient understanding and knowledge to effectively support the development of volunteer infrastructure and volunteer programmes.

41 During the majority of KIIs and FGDs with UNV staff, donors, partners and sector experts.

84. Although both outcomes are at the same level; at the implementation level, the SF's weight rests more on Outcome 2 (which reflects UNV's founding mandate). This is reflected in the allocation of resources and in the means available for supporting the implementation of each outcome, as well as in the performance and measurement mechanisms established for each (see Effectiveness and Efficiency). Despite this, virtually all set targets have been met under both outcomes (see 3.1).

Complementarity and alignment of outputs

FINDING 11 – The four outputs included in the SF are complementary and clearly aligned with their respective outcomes; however, they are limited in scope and number and hence, do not fully capture the full range of actions undertaken by UNV within the framework of the SF.

85. The contributions of the four outputs are aligned with the two outcomes of the SF (and complementary) but limited in scope, given their narrow formulation. Outputs 1.1 and 1.2 respond to both the needs of Member States and UNV's mandate, and directly contribute to Outcome 1 but only cover part of the outcome, since critical aspects such as the links between evidence generation, knowledge brokering and advocacy are not included (see 3.1). Under Outcome 2, the two outputs are also clearly aligned with the needs of UN partners and with UNV's mandate and consider both the deployment of UN Volunteers and their level of satisfaction. However, there is a gap in the results-chain from the output to the outcome level due to the narrow scope of the outputs under Outcome 2, since not all the actions conducted are considered under these two outputs. For example, these outputs do not cover the promotion of volunteer schemes and volunteerism within UN agencies (mentioned under this outcome). Under Institutional Effectiveness, the notion of "fit-for-purpose" is also limited by the narrowness of the four indicators used to measure progress towards this objective.

Internal logic and coherence of SF

FINDING 12 - The internal logic and coherence of the SF could be strengthened, since in the absence of explicit interlinkages between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, their implementation has operated more in parallel, rather than in a coherent and complementary manner.

86. In terms of the internal logic and coherence of the SF, the evaluation finds from reviewing the SF that there is an absence of explicit interlinkages between outcome 1 and outcome 2. Although the simplified results chain of the SF included in UNV's methodological notes is in line with UNDP's Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results, the vertical logic is limited, since the outputs are insufficient for measuring the full range of results. Consequently, even if the two outputs under each outcome are achieved, other aspects required for achieving the outcome are not included⁴². The implementation of the SF has also shown that the two outcomes operate in parallel, rather than in a coherent and complementary manner. There is no blended approach in place to convey this workflow logic and this leads to UNV efforts focusing on one outcome or the other in isolation and to different elements being siloed.

⁴² For example, under Outcome 2, the integration of volunteerism in the UN (not through UN Volunteers) is not included.

Results measurement mechanisms

FINDING 13 – The measurement mechanisms developed under this SF are adequate and innovative, and they constitute a significant improvement compared to the systems in place prior to 2018. However, although they provide solid quality data, the indicators and targets included in the SF do not serve to fully capture and measure the results achieved to date.

87. The different tools and systems⁴³ have continued to develop and mature throughout SF implementation and they provide solid quality data for all indicators through regular updating and upgrading of data analytics. The strengthening of UNV's results-based culture is clear, particularly since the last SF evaluation. However, measurement challenges remain in terms of what is being measured under the current SF, since the indicators used to measure progress towards each output do not fully capture what is being achieved. Although they are adequate, they are not stretching (e.g., 1 million of non-UN Volunteers mobilized), they do not cover all the results (e.g., UNV's efforts to integrate people with disabilities); and they do not measure other aspects of UNV's work that are also important for providing a comprehensive overview of results (e.g., UNV's efforts to promote volunteerism inside the UN system).
88. The evaluation finds that as currently formulated, indicators and targets only provide a partial picture of UNV's overall results under the SF. The SF indicators⁴⁴ only measure one or two dimensions of results because they are limited in scope and number, when the evaluation finds that the results achieved are rich and complex in nature but under reported. Furthermore, the qualitative indicators in place would benefit from additional qualitative metrics to provide a more comprehensive overview of results (e.g., combining UN Volunteer expectations and wellbeing with satisfaction). Consequently, the basket of indicators fails to do justice to UNV's achievements under this SF and only presents a partial picture of results achieved during SF implementation.
89. Under Outcome 1, a minority of UNV staff in ROs and FUs noted that not all their efforts and achievements were being reflected in reporting. The evaluation acknowledges the global level reporting constraints though notes that wider opportunities to reflect a broader spectrum of achievements is available through the AWP end year reporting alongside opportunities for showcasing achievements and impact through website case studies. Certain aspects (such as the number of volunteer schemes or policies developed) can be easily measured, while other elements (such as the uptake of knowledge products, benefits linked to networking or contributions to Voluntary National Reviews through UNV's engagement in multi-stakeholder processes) are more difficult to capture but would serve to provide a fuller picture of achievements.
90. Measuring results under Outcome 2 has been less challenging, given the focus on the quantitative data related to the number of UN Volunteers deployed. This evaluation finds that there is substantial qualitative information and data available on the experiences of UN Volunteers that is being collected through new features in the VRA and used in various communications internally (VRA summaries, presentations, workshops), externally (partner VRA summaries) and the general public (annual UNV reports) and there is further potential to use VRA data. A more detailed and granular analysis of the experiences of UN Volunteers is needed to provide further insight on their motivations, expectations, and

⁴³ See details of tools and systems under Effectiveness (3.4).

⁴⁴ The SF includes 13 indicators in total: 4 at the Outcome level, 5 at the Output level and 4 under Institutional Effectiveness.

well-being during their assignments⁴⁵, and improve UNV's understanding of the UN Volunteer experience (see 3.1).

91. On the measurement of institutional effectiveness results, the evaluation reaches a similar conclusion, since the four indicators in place are limiting and narrow to adequately reflect progress towards the three statements. Incorporating indicators related to key aspects such as UNV and partner satisfaction, HQ/RO ratio, staff mobility or partnership development, would provide a richer and more accurate picture of what is being achieved.

FINDING 14 – UNV collects quality data through a broad range of channels. However, the information available is not being maximized to generate knowledge that allows UNV to operate as a learning organisation.

92. Although UNV is collecting quality data through a range of different channels, UNV is not managing information in a manner that is fully conducive to generating and disseminating knowledge and learning inside the organisation (despite the reference to a learning objective included in the SF⁴⁶). Whilst the evaluation notes that Mid-Year Reviews (MYR) and End-Year Reviews (EYR) provide space for learning and action from evidence, the evaluation team considers a more sophisticated selection of indicators would further enrich this review process and better serve the complexity of the results that UNV is trying to capture and measure through the SF and provide a more granular measurement of the different workflows. Furthermore, it would also allow UNV to create opportunities for identifying longer term benefits (including learning opportunities) beyond a focus on more internal and short-term results.

Efficiency

93. Assessing efficiency considers whether resources were adequately used under the current SF (i.e., how inputs have translated into outputs) by analysing whether outputs were completed and delivered on time, within budget, and as planned. Applying the efficiency lens to an evaluative process usually entails analysing the three core aspects of a concept known as “value for money-V4M”, which encompasses the three *Es*: Economy (reduction of cost), Efficiency (relation between investment and results) and Effectiveness (to what extent expected objectives have been accomplished) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Value for Money (LSE, 2011)⁴⁷



However, it is important to highlight that the evaluation of UNV's SF 2018-21 has primarily focused on one of these three core dimensions, namely the first “E” (economy), understood

⁴⁵ 56.5% of UN Volunteers completely agreed with the statement “I have had a high level of well-being in my placement as a UN Volunteer”, while 34.4% somewhat agreed.

⁴⁶ The SF states that “The results matrix for the UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, sets out the results and measures that allow UNV and stakeholders to monitor achievements, learn lessons and hold the organisation accountable” (see p. 8).

⁴⁷ (2011) LSE; Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates

as the relation between cost and investment (i.e., how reductions in inputs lead to cost savings). This approach was agreed with UNV during the inception phase and is in line with the economic restoration focus of UNV's strategy. It should also be noted that UNV plans to commission a broader efficiency analysis to complement the efficiency findings described below.

94. This section addresses 3 key evaluation questions: (1) To what extent have UNV resources been used efficiently in contributing to the outcomes and results outlined in the SF?; (2) What are the results of UNV's organisational and digital transformation and how has it influenced institutional efficiency and effectiveness?; (3) To what extent have management and coordination among teams (at the global, regional and country levels) ensured the efficient implementation of the SF? All figures presented are based on report USD values, unless otherwise noted. Source data is present as footnotes.
95. **Overall, the evaluation finds UNV has delivered efficiently on outputs across both Outcomes and Institutional Effectiveness results, despite the recent operating context of COVID-19. Work planning, financial management systems, risk analysis, cost control and the corporate control environment have been considerably strengthened during the SF period. Available human and financial resources have been used efficiently in contributing to the outcomes and results set out in the SF, with staff capacity currently weighted towards Outcome 2 at a ratio of approximately 4.5:1⁴⁸. The management efficiency ratio has improved consistently year-on-year and UNV's resource mobilisation efforts have been effective in meeting contribution targets. Decentralization has brought UNV closer to its partners with positive results reflected both inside UNV (operational efficiency) and outside UNV (mobilization), while digital transformation has made important efficiency gains and is likely to make further gains during the remaining SF implementation period.**

2.1 To what extent have UNV resources been used efficiently in contributing to the outcomes and results outlined in the SF?

Use of resources

FINDING 15 - Human and financial resources have been used efficiently in contributing to the outcomes and results set out in the SF; with efficiency enhanced through system and process improvements geared at reducing and containing costs, while increasing alignment with financial resources and future projections.

96. UNV applies comprehensive breakeven monitoring tools and approaches as a fundamental financial principle (i.e., revenues should exceed costs); with multiple levels of highly effective financial stewardship ensuring UNV operates with a surplus to maintain financial health and support financial sustainability. UNV tracks key financial metrics to inform management decision making including detailed analysis available on: i) revenues; ii) reserves; iii) management efficiency ratio; and other resources mobilized which are actively analyzed using the highly efficient PowerBI system. UNV has continued to increase its extra-budgetary reserves, complying with the Executive Board-approved UNDP policy on maintaining a minimum of twelve months' reserves, progressively

⁴⁸ UNV HR Reports data, PowerBI, April 2021

increasing from \$38 million in 2019 to \$48.4 million in 2020⁴⁹, with reserves of 16 months at end of 2019 and 19 months at end of 2020.

97. Increased financial sustainability has been achieved over the SF period, with the overall volume of UNV's business (total financial volume) showing an initial stabilization, followed by an increase during the SF period: tracking from \$199.6 million (2018) to \$221.3 million (2019) and \$237.4 million (2020) due to increasing programme expenditure. Management expenditure has remained stable at just over \$9 million (\$9.1 million in 2020), a decrease from \$9.5 million in 2019⁵⁰. UNV's overall expenses (Core, XB Cost Recovery and SVF) have shown some variation over the SF period, from \$34.7 million (2018); \$33 million (2019) to \$35.5 million in 2020⁵¹.
98. UNV's focus on efficiency is primarily addressed through the pursuit of institutional effectiveness results in the SF. In developing the results indicators for institutional effectiveness, UNV documentary evidence notes that whilst it is important that management and operational support provided for programme delivery is effective, it is equally important that this be done in an efficient manner⁵².

Management Efficiency

FINDING 16 - UNV has continued to improve its management efficiency ratio year-on-year, reducing it from 8 per cent (2018) to 7 per cent (2019) to 6 per cent (2020) from a baseline of 9.75 per cent (2014-2017); consistently exceeding the UN standardised target. This has been achieved through a combination of increases in mobilization levels primarily through associated cost recovery⁵³ coupled with continued cost reductions over the SF period.

99. UNV tracks its management efficiency ratio as a key measure of operational efficiency and adopts the standard measure and definition for the management efficiency ratio used by UNDP and other UN organisations (total management expenditures divided by total programme delivery; reported as an average percentage during the strategic framework period and the standardised UN target of 8% by 2021). UNV has achieved and exceeded this target every year over the SF period. This has resulted in a positive partner perception expressed by the majority of partners consulted through interviews that UNV is viewed as a lean and efficiently managed organisation. Interviews with senior management at HQ and corresponding documentary evidence notes that performance in the management efficiency ratio can primarily be attributed to the increase in mobilization and associated cost recovery, noting the 48% increase in mobilisation during the SF period, coupled with cost reductions⁵⁴.

49 UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2018, 2019, 2020

50 50A change in accounting method was introduced in 2019, where part of the management expenses are charged to programme expenses as Direct Programme Cost

51 UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2018, 2019, 2020

52 UNV Strategic Framework: 2018-2021 Results Matrix Indicator Methodological Notes

53 See effectiveness section, 3.1, outcome 2 for more information on cost recovery.

54 UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual session 2021

FINDING 17 - UNV's use of efficiency measures and associated metrics are adequate though opportunities to further strengthen them are present to better inform management decision-making internally, and to enhance UNV's accountability to external stakeholders, since the measurements instruments and indicators in place are limited.

100. Interviews with senior management at HQ, combined with an assessment of current efficiency measurements and associated metrics by the evaluation team note that, whilst adequate, measurement instruments and indicators can be further strengthened to inform decision-making internally and further enhance UNV's accountability to external stakeholders.
101. Within the SF, UNV set out a range of strategic ambitions for strengthening partnerships with Member States, which involved expanding and diversifying its resource base by engaging with a wide range of countries and, specifically, by measuring the total resource mobilization with partners providing funding to UNV through its four types of partnering mechanisms: i) Special Voluntary Fund; ii) Cost sharing; iii) Trust Funds (including the UNDP/UNV Youth Volunteer Trust Fund); and iv) Fully Funded. Through a collaboration among ROs, ERCS, and others (NYO, VSC), particular attention has been devoted to emerging economies from the global South, as well as regional organisations and private sector and foundations, with positive results (see Figure 2 below). The evaluation notes that the majority of Trust Funds (TF) have been inactive since December 2017; with the exception of one active TF, Japan. UNV tracks this results indicator specifically as the *cumulative quadrennial of other resources mobilized* (in United States dollars). Performance against this results indicator is impressive and UNV has been highly effective, noting achievement of target at 161%⁵⁵ during 2018-2020 (\$72,43 million) against a target of \$60 million USD (2018-2021), which was based on the previous cycle 2014-2017 in which UNV mobilized \$50 million USD.

Special Voluntary Fund

FINDING 18 - There has been a significant increase in contributions made through to UNV through the SVF during the SF period, increasing 67.56% from baseline (2017) by 2020. Reliance on the same basket of donors remains a perennial issue, with a need to diversify and increase the number of countries contributing to the SVF recognised.

102. UNV relies on the Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) for volunteerism research and promotion, rapid response and the provision of innovative solutions. Over the SF period, UNV has sought to strengthen and diversify partnerships for the SVF to broaden the coalition of partners supporting UNV's mandate. Figure 2 shows year-on-year SVF contributions (plus interest) and the composition of donors.

⁵⁵ 2020 Annual Performance Indicators, Annex 4, UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2020

Figure 2: Summary of SVF contributions (Desk Review)⁵⁶



103. SVF contributions have increased overall during the SF period from \$5.2 million in 2018; \$4.5 million in 2019; and \$6.2 million in 2020, from a \$3.7 million baseline in 2017. There has been a significant rise in contributions in 2020, primarily due to an increase in funding from the Governments of Germany and Sweden. Overall, the SVF contributions show a clear, positive trajectory, though as noted by the Executive Board, the aim of diversifying and broadening the number of countries joining to give funding for the Special Voluntary Fund has not yet been fully realised. In 2020, for example, over 90 per cent of the funding came from the top four donors – Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and France – illustrating the need to further diversify the SVF donor base. Nonetheless, as evidence in section 3.2 notes, UNV is highly effective at managing existing relationships with donors: a positive contributing factor in maintaining consistent funding streams. Preliminary discussions on how to increase the diversity of donors are currently underway, considering different modalities of contributions that can give more clarity to donors on how and where the SVF funds are targeted and utilized. Illustrative of this, the SVF played a critical role in 2020 through the SVF-COVID 19 Mechanism (see section 5.2 on UNV’s response to COVID-19), receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback from the majority of donors interviewed. UNV senior staff note there is the potential and opportunity for more stretching resource mobilisation targets to be established, requiring a renewed partnership strategy and more assertive outreach.

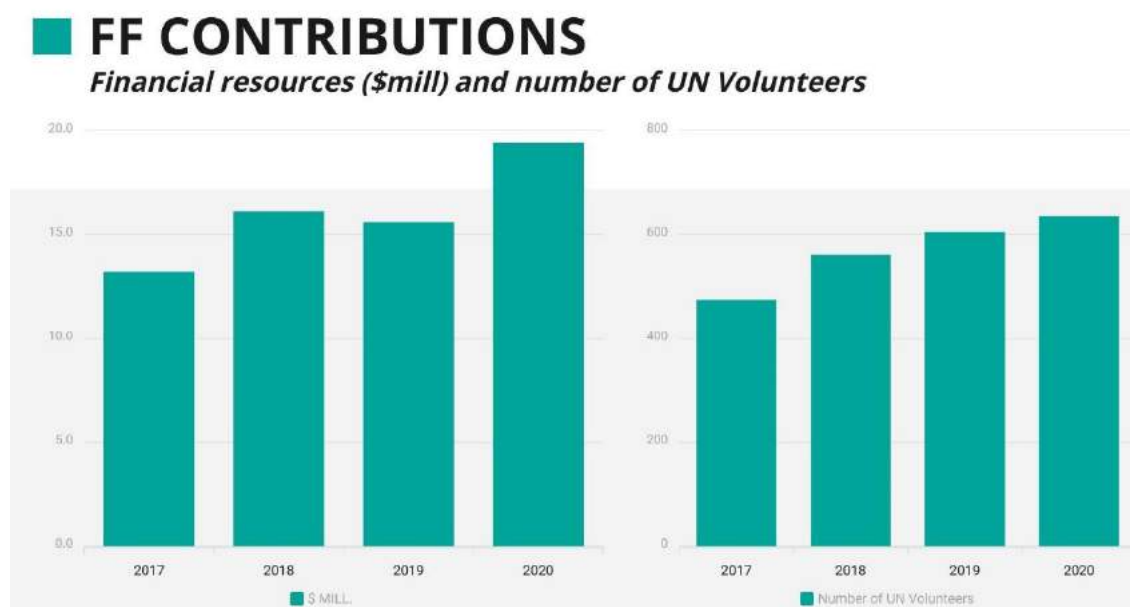
Fully-funded programme

FINDING 19 – Fully Funded (FF) volunteer contributions have increased under the current SF, with evidence showing a 46.96% increase in 2020 (\$19.4 million) from 2017 (\$13.2 million). The number of fully-funded volunteers deployed has similarly increased, with evidence showing a 33.96% increase in 2020 (635) from 2017 (474).

⁵⁶ UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2018, 2019, 2020

104. Within the SF period, UNV has continued to partner with Member States to mobilize United Nations Volunteers through full funding of assignments. Figure 3 shows year-on-year contributions and total number of fully funded volunteers deployed.

Figure 3: Summary of FF contributions⁵⁷



Fully Funded (FF) volunteer contributions have increased under the current SF, with evidence showing contributions initially increasing then stabilizing before increasing once more, constituting 46.96% increase in 2020 from 2017. Initially, significant increases were achieved in 2018 (+18% from \$13.2 million in 2017 to \$15.6 million in 2018); stabilizing in 2019 (\$15.6 million) before a further increase in 2020 (\$19.4 million +24%), compared to the previous year⁵⁸. UNV has consistently increased deployment from a baseline of 474 in 2017 to 561 fully-funded volunteers in 2018; to 605 fully-funded volunteers in 2019; and 635 fully-funded volunteers in 2020.

Results-based budgeting

FINDING 20 – The principles of results-based budgeting and breakeven modelling tools are effectively applied by UNV, with the most recent annual work plans and budgets clearly aligning financial resources with strategic objectives/ intended results of the SF. Systems are available and routinely used to track costs from activity to result (outcome) and assess breakeven.

105. The evaluation finds evidence of improved costing of management and development results, evidenced in the majority of KIIs with UNV staff consulted at different levels of the organisation, and supported by documentary and Power BI evidence, demonstrating the ongoing development of an improved system of budgeting. The recently concluded

⁵⁷ UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2018, 2019, 2020

⁵⁸ Notes: A new revenue recognition policy that accounts for total agreement amounts was introduced and effective as of 2019

Workload Study⁵⁹ provided useful management information to ensure greater alignment of the organisation's budget and expense structure to its funding framework, as spelled out in Joint Report of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF on the Road map to an integrated budget: cost classification and results-based budgeting⁶⁰. Annual work planning and budgetary processes have been strengthened considerably, in pursuit of a clear line of sight from the SF through budget centres/ section plans to individual contributions, with data from the 2020 UNDP/ UNV Global Staff Survey⁶¹ noting that 88% of UNV staff see a clear link between what they are expected to do in their job and [higher order] goals and objectives; with 8% neutral and 4% holding negative perceptions⁶².

106. A clear and widely understood process for annual work planning by budget centres/ sections is evident, evident from a review of corporate documentation and reinforced by the majority of UNV staff consulted in KIIs. Annual workplans are finalised promptly by the autumn milestone (end September/ early-October) and are then reviewed by the Executive Office to ensure clear, documented linkages with SF which enhances strategic and operational alignment. Timeline, tools and templates for corporate planning and reporting are available to UNV staff on a dedicated SharePoint page: a review of these corporate documents by the evaluation team confirms that they provide effective guidance for staff. For budgeting operating costs, there has been a progressive shift away from historic budgeting; with the Executive Office and Finance and Budgeting section (FBS) ensuring budgets are based on activities contributing directly to UNV results, based on actual activity forecasting from budget centres. Specific section/ budget centre activities are now systematically linked to the SF using identifier codes, which can be tracked in PowerBI. Further details on the strategies and mechanisms have supported the implementation of the SF can be found in 3.4.

Cost tracking and containment

FINDING 21 – Financial management systems have been actively strengthened, providing enhanced financial oversight to the senior management, facilitating more efficient use and mobilisation to contribute to the outcomes and results outlined in the SF. Significant improvements (culture, system, process) have been made to ensure costs are managed, tracked and contained.

107. Significant improvements to the financial management systems and controls have been progressively made by UNV during this SF period; for example, with the introduction of quarterly financial reviews presenting comprehensive management information to inform senior management decision making at the regular management team meetings. Data analytics have likewise become more sophisticated and comprehensive since 2019. During this SF period, improved cost control has been exerted through use of near-live data, utilizing PowerBI. For example, the introduction of the budget balance reporting mechanism provides a daily basis for review against output/ activities (for 2020-21 cycle, UNV has changed activity coding in Atlas system to support project and activity budgeting). A system review conducted by the evaluation team, shows that this granular reporting allows the budget centre owner to monitor each budget line using budget balance reports. This level of detailed analytics was regarded positively by the majority of UNV staff consulted with monitoring responsibility. Budgets are monitored, with analysis conducted at FU and RO level and then aggregated to global level to control costs. Annual

⁵⁹ UNV Report on Workload Study, July 2020

⁶⁰ DP-FPA/2010/1-E/ICEF/2010/AB/L.10.

⁶¹ UNV responses to the UNDP Global Staff survey totalled 157 respondents.

⁶² UNDP Global Staff Survey 2020

financial review meetings are conducted with UNDP; with mid-year reviews conducted by the Executive Office. Corporate documentation identifies the following notable improvements, including: new policy and procedural guidance/reports; improved Budgeting Planning Guidance; Workload Study analysis and operational recommendations; new Cost-Recovery policy; piloting of Universal Price List (UPL)/Local Price List (LPL)-based UNDP Country Office Support Services.

FINDING 22 – UNV has an effective cost control system and has maintained a consistent focus on the pursuit of efficiency gains over the SF period, with an emphasis on delivering to its mandate in a cost-conscious manner. Senior managers have provided robust financial stewardship of resources, which is replicated throughout the organisation. Cost controls at a central level are exerted by the Finance and Budgeting Section (FBS) who, at the start of the annual work planning cycle, review workplans to ensure only justifiable costs associated with the delivery of the SF are approved and to ensure the workplan is adequately staffed and costed (including necessary vacant posts).

108. UNV conducts a thorough cost control analysis across section workplans to ensure no duplication of costs are present and corrects duplications to ensure unnecessary costs are not incurred. Routine and regular reviews of overall breakeven levels are continuously monitored on PowerBI.
109. Other examples of efficiency gains include the expansion of a pilot on cost-recovery based on the UPL/LPL for the services related to volunteers⁶³. As an illustration of this new capability from LAC, it was highlighted that FUs in Ecuador, Guatemala and Colombia have piloted this approach (which replaces the 2.5% costs recovered by UNDP CO for every UN Volunteer mobilized by a payment per service based on the UPL). These pilots have shown that the services were 2 to 3 times less costly than with the flat 2.5%. In Guatemala, this approach brought UNDP's cost recovery from \$20,000 down to circa \$3,000. Likewise, in Colombia, the costs decreased from \$63,000 to circa \$10,000 with replication across the region was under way. Savings made through this arrangement have offered the FUs an opportunity to mobilize national UN Volunteers to support FU activities (e.g., social media outreach, induction of newcomers, national rosters of specialists, etc.).
110. Further efficiency gains are detailed under section 2.2 below, as they relate to organisational and digital transformation.

2.2. What are the results of UNV's organisational and digital transformation and how has it influenced institutional efficiency and effectiveness?

111. The implementation of SF 2018-21 has been accompanied by an ambitious organisational transformation process that has been efficiently delivered. Decentralization has brought UNV closer to its partners with positive results reflected both inside (operational efficiency) and outside UNV (mobilization), while digital transformation has made important efficiency gains so far and is likely to result in significant further gains during the remaining SF implementation period if accelerated with the Unified Volunteer Platform

⁶³ UNV. 2019. Interoffice Memorandum. Expansion of the pilot on cost-recovery based on the UPL/LPL for the services related to volunteers 12 December 2019. Bonn.

(UVP) forecast to achieve gains in candidate identification; volunteer recruitment; volunteer management; and payroll alongside the achieved gains through the Client Relationship Management (CRM) system.

Organisational transformation

Finding 23 – UNV has undertaken considerable organisational transformation during the first two years of SF implementation through a highly organised and effectively implemented process of regionalization, structural changes at the global level and professionalization of country-level capacity.

112. The drivers for organisational transformation are well evidenced⁶⁴, providing compelling motivations for change, including: i) the need for greater alignment with the principles of the QCPR and Agenda 2030, with the 2016 QCPR stating that the UN must be “*physically aligned*” with national needs and that agencies must have a “*mobile and flexible global workforce*”; ii) UNV’s challenging financial position at the time of SF design, caused by a combination of factors including reductions in core allocation from UNDP, donor revenues, volunteer mobilisation figures, and an expectation that UNV’s top three UN partners would experience funding cuts of 30 per cent⁶⁵; and iii) the recommendations of the evaluation of SF 2014-17 which concluded that UNV’s growth was negatively impacted by cumbersome internal business processes and structures that led to a lack of clarity over accountabilities⁶⁶. In response, a package of organisational transformation measures was pursued and monitored, with the aim of: i) improving the financial sustainability of UNV; ii) enhancing decentralization; iii) expanding and streamlining UNV’s product line; iv) increasing volunteer mobilization; v) improving volunteer management; and vi) diversifying partnerships⁶⁷. With the support of the Management Consultant Team (MCT), which was engaged to bring a degree of impartiality and experience in conducting similar structural changes within UNDP offices, UNV embarked on transformation planning in early 2017, with seven staff-led task forces leading on the development of functional and structural recommendations. A new operational structure for the implementation of the new SF began on 1st January 2018 and lasted most of the year, as recruitment processes were completed across the organisation. In UNV HQ, the changes resulted in a new structure and a reduced team of 112 staff (from the former 166), translating to a dollar reduction of \$6.9m, or 33% reduction by May 2018. Following the regionalization and structural changes at the global level, UNV has finetuned its country presence by professionalizing country-level capacity and consolidating it from 79 in 2016 to 60 countries in 2019⁶⁸.
113. Aligned to the SF, two new sections were created at the HQ level to lead delivery on each of the two outcomes: the Volunteer Advisory Services Section (VASS) and the Volunteer Solutions Section (VSS). VASS was created by bringing together the former Volunteer Knowledge and Innovation Section (VKIS) and the Program Coordination Section (PCS), with a role to support efforts to create enabling environments for volunteering in UNV

64 General Assembly resolution 70/1, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, 25 September 2015; General Assembly resolution 71/243, “Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system”, 21 December 2016; Final Evaluation of UNV’s Strategic Framework 2014-2017.

65 UNV’s financial position at the time noted that core allocation through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was reduced to \$8.4m in 2016, down 36 per cent since 2013; revenue generated from donors was at \$13.8m in 2016, a decrease from \$19.2m in 2014; UNV’s mobilisation figures had reduced: in 2016, 6,590 UN Volunteers served in the UN system, a decrease of 22 per cent since 2005.

66 Final Evaluation of UNV’s Strategic Framework 2014-2017.

67 UNV Transformation, Note to the Deputy Secretary General, April 2019.

68 Ibid.

countries of operation through UNV Regional Offices (ROs) (under Outcome 1). VSS plays a central role in the implementation of Outcome 2. VSS is the owner of the Volunteer Management Cycle architecture and business processes (SOPs); coordinates UNV's efforts for offering solutions through tailored systems and products; and develops policy and guidance notes to sustain their quality and effective implementation. VSS also leads the implementation of UNV's Digital Transformation (see below). VSS works closely with the Volunteer Services Centre (VSC) which was set up to support the timely recruitment of volunteers, implement the Conditions of Service and also to manage the UNV payroll. While VSC was established in Bonn (UNV HQs), several posts to support National Volunteer recruitment were established in several regional and field locations in 2019. Decentralization resulted in the creation of five Regional Offices (ROs) in Amman, Bangkok, Dakar, Nairobi and Panama; with a Sub-Office for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) established in the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub and as of 1 Jan 2021 the Istanbul Office became a full RO. UNV's decentralization effort also resulted in the establishment of Field Units (FUs) in selected countries based on criteria including LDCs, mission contexts and strategic positioning. with a significant number of deployed UN Volunteers, thereby reducing the organisation's presence from 79 to 60 countries in 2019. At field level, nationalization and professionalization was completed, with National Program Analyst positions were created ("UNV Country Coordinators"); allowing UNV to retain some of the talented staff that had served as IUN Volunteers by offering them national positions in their home countries. Country Office Assistants also became Program Assistants in Field Units requiring two or more staff members (depending on the volume of UN Volunteers in the country) as part of this restructuring process.

114. The decentralization process took place in parallel with the centralization of human resource management, led by the Human Resource Section (HRS). The centralization of HR services in UNV HQ, for all UNV staff members, was in pursuit of improved efficiency; though it is noted that despite the substantial increase in the section's workload, no additional staff were hired. The UNV Executive Office (ExO) became UNV's strategic planning cell. The former Results Management Support Section was dissolved and an RBM team of three staff included in the Executive Office team, with the Chief of the Executive Office serving as the UNV Strategic Planning Advisor. The External Relations and Communications Section (ERCS) was created by merging the former External Relations/Partnerships Team and the Communications team (which was reduced to three staff members, while Communications Associate positions were created in Regional Offices). Management Services (MS) were composed of the Common Services Section (CSS); the Finance and Budget Section (FBS); the Human Resources Section (HRS); the Information and Communications Technology Unit (ICTU); and the Procurement and Travel Unit (PU), previously Administration Unit, which has broadened its functions from focusing on UNV HQ to also lending support to UNV globally. As of October 2020, VSC was also included in the MS. UNV's office in New York extended its scope from a prior focus on intergovernmental relations and UNDP (as well as on advocating on volunteerism within UN intergovernmental mechanisms and Permanent Missions to the UN); to also leading on global UN partner account management and advocacy, pursuing new partnerships with North American partners (government, foundations, CSOs, etc.) and developing flagship strategic programs with UN partners globally.

Results of organisational transformation

Finding 24 – Organisational transformation has achieved a stronger client focus; more effective, decentralised delivery with improved institutional memory and strengthened national capacity and ownership, though FU capacity still requires strengthening. The transformation has resulted in improved gender parity of UNV personnel.

115. The evaluation finds strong evidence including the rightsizing of staffing structure aligned and adjusted to the SF; a reduction of costs and an alignment of expenses with an initial cost decrease of 11 per cent (\$2.5 million) in 2018 compared to 2017⁶⁹. Independent documentary evidence⁷⁰ notes that, as part of the organisational transformation, these changes contributed to cost reductions. Changes included a realignment of staff positions, with 116 positions being changed, including 55 positions abolished and 41 created.

Table 6: Staff realignment (Desk Review)

UNV STAFF REALIGNMENT	
Type of Realignment	Number of Positions
Abolished	55
Downgraded	4
Frozen	1
Monetized	1
New	41
New / Abolished	6
New / Downgraded	2
Org Design	1
Upgraded	5

116. From a count of 264 staff positions in 2017⁷¹ (baseline), current staffing is recorded at 273 as of April 2021⁷². UNV has stabilized its human resource following the transformation with the staffing structure showing, inter alia, a decrease in the number of P4 posts and an increase in the number of P3 and G6 posts. Transformation has resulted in improved gender parity of UNV personnel with 57 percent of personnel are women and equal representation reached in the International Professional category with 53 percent women and 47 percent men⁷³. In terms of location, HQ/VSC has seen an increase in the number of positions attributed as well as most of the ROs; although vacant positions mitigate the increase.

69 UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual session 2019, DP/2019/19

70 UNV Strategic Framework (2018-2021) Midterm Review, April 2020

71 2017 breakdown includes: 166 HQ staff; 6 RO staff; 90 country presence staff

72 2021 breakdown includes: 126 HQ staff; 59 RO staff; 88 field unit staff

73 Note on UNV transformation for DSG

117. Data analytics show the geographic distribution of staff is weighted 59% to the global south⁷⁴, which has been a key success of the decentralisation process association with the organisational transformation; though the majority of Director (D) and International Professional (IP) positions are allocated in the global north (46); with 29 IP and 70 National Professional positions⁷⁵ allocated in the south.
118. As well as moving closer to its partners, in line with the principles of QCPR (2016) and UN Reform, UNV has further delegated decision-making authority to regional and country levels, ensuring decisions can be made at the right level and closer to where services are delivered. During FGDs, the majority of RO staff consulted indicated that the delegation of authority granted with the regionalization and further clarified by HQ over the SF period has helped to manage certain processes more efficiently, such as the reassignment of UN Volunteers from one duty station to another. Likewise, during FGDs, the majority of ROs consulted noted that much time was previously needed to clear with UN partners a reassignment, and to manage it. This has now become delegated to the ROs, which facilitates and speeds up the process. Furthermore, UNV's pursuit of a professionalized workforce, increasing the levels of national officers comparative to international UN Volunteers at the country level is noted to have enabled the strengthening of institutional memory, building national capacity and ownership, and thus enhancing continuity in the workforce. However, a minority of UNV staff noted that, in certain countries, having an international country coordinator might be more strategic (due to factors such as the political environment), since the same staff composition does not necessarily work in every context, in the same way that a set minimal FU structure may not constitute the most efficient solution in every location. Positive staff and partner perceptions from the majority of KII and FGD participants consulted note that decentralisation is perceived to have increased UNV's ability to work more efficiently with partners and has led to a positive impact on engagement. However, the majority of consulted UNV staff working in the field widely noted that opportunities for further decentralisation exist and were needed.
119. As part of UNV's drive for increased efficiency, it has pursued the principle of simplification in its operations, including in its volunteer management, where adjustments to UNV's organisational design have improved client engagement and achieved economies of scale through simplified volunteer management systems. Simplification has also led to a leaner UN Volunteer recruitment process with positive results reflected in reduced time for deploying volunteers.

Digital transformation

Finding 25 – UNV has made significant progress on its flagship initiative on digital transformation since 2019. CRM (sales force) and UVP plus Business Intelligence Dashboard; combined with investment in certification and training for staff has sought to ensure staff digital skills are aligned with system improvements.

120. With initial funding (€1.8 million) secured from the Government of Germany during 2018-2019 and a further €900,000 in 2020, UNV has made significant progress on digital transformation since 2019. Informed by a detailed *Theory of Change* and accompanied by comprehensive project documentation the outcome pursued by UNV was to be transformed “... into a modern, digital organisation where business processes are supported by frontier technologies such as AI, Blockchain, Big Data and cloud

⁷⁴ UNV HR Reports data, PowerBI, April 2021

⁷⁵ Breakdown of National Professionals includes: 8 NOA, 61 NOB, 1 NOC

computing.”⁷⁶ Two goals have been pursued, including: i) to facilitate volunteer mobilization by establishing an intuitive single-entry point for candidates to offer their services and for organisations to request services of volunteers (the Unified Volunteer Platform (UVP); and ii) to optimize efficiency by digitizing non-digitized and partially digitized business functions such as partnerships, resource mobilization, sales and pipeline management, service desk, outreach and advocacy management (the Salesforce/ Client Relationship Management (CRM)). Six gender-balanced, project working groups were established to deliver through a 6-staged implementation process for delivery, overseen by the Digital Transformation Project Board. These stages included: i) initiation; ii) prototyping; iii) development; iv) output delivery; v) tune-up; and finalization. Detailed workplans and budget were developed. A series of enabling activities have been undertaken relating to ‘organisational readiness’, ‘digital partnerships’ and ‘ongoing improvements’ running in parallel. UNV invested in certification and training for staff to ensure their digital skills have been enhanced and aligned with these innovations.

Progress and Results of Digital transformation (to date)

Finding 25 – UNV has made notable achievements from DT, including UNV users reporting an increase in satisfaction as a result of the improvement in business processes and upgrading of systems through digital transformation and a reduction in transactional workload for staff as a result of process automation eliminating over 30,000 manual runs annually, thus enabling staff to concentrate on tasks of higher value. As a result of delays, primarily due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the full launch of the UVP (a key initiative planned for 1st January 2021) has shifted to 1st October 2021.

121. During 2019, business requirements were established during initiation, with over 200 hours dedicated to this examination, including over 50 project working-level meetings, 30 demonstration sessions, and UNV-wide consultation exercises conducted. Over 20 external stakeholder consultations were also conducted. Business requirements were validated during a Digital Transformation workshop. Subsequently, UNV concluded prototyping of a client relationship management (CRM) platform launched in the second half of 2020, aimed at fully digitizing partner intelligence, volunteer deployment, and demand opportunity management, partnerships, outreach and advocacy efforts. During this time, UNV users reported an increase in satisfaction as a result of the improvement in business processes and upgrading of systems through digital transformation⁷⁷. UNV invested in certification and training for staff to ensure their digital skills are aligned with these innovations. In parallel, UNDP embarked on its own digital transformation process, which was anticipated to impact systems central to UNV operations; thus, UNV closely engaged with UNDP in planning and implementing its digital transformation and sharing lessons learned from the UNV transformation process with UNV an active member of the UNDP Digital Governance Group⁷⁸.
122. During 2020, documentary evidence notes UNV continued to make progress with its digital transformation, achieving new work process efficiencies and improved service provision to partners and clients through the introduction of robotic process automation to reduce the high volume of duplication and manual actions required in its systems. These

⁷⁶ UNV Digital Transformation Project Document, 2018

⁷⁷ UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual session 2020, DP/2020/14

⁷⁸ Ibid.

efficiencies were likewise noted by UNV staff in VSS and ITCU. Notable gains including UNV users reporting an increase in satisfaction as a result of the improvement in business processes and upgrading of systems through digital transformation; and automated processes resulted in the elimination of over 30,000 manual runs annually, thus reducing transactional workload and enabling staff to concentrate on tasks of higher value. Furthermore, UNV launched a corporate service desk, supported by artificial intelligence (AI), chatbots and other case resolution tools, as well as self-service knowledge articles. In 2020, AI-powered chatbots responded to over 150,000 enquiries around the clock, or an average of 400 inquiries a day, most of these from potential or serving UN Volunteers⁷⁹.

123. During 2021, to date, UNV continues to work on a unified volunteer platform (UVP), to be launched in late-2021, combining several existing systems into one. The UVP will include a module for recruitment that uses artificial intelligence, robotic process automation and other innovations to streamline volunteer mobilization and management processes. Documentary evidence⁸⁰ notes that delays have been experienced in the full roll-out of the UVP, primarily due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, though also noting an underestimation of project complexity; the need to adopt new technology solutions (B2C, etc.); and some fragmented understanding of business needs at all team levels. As a result, the UNV Digital Transformation Project Board made the decision to change the date of launch of the UVP (planned for 1st January 2021) to 1st October 2021⁸¹. The Board has also decided to shift the launch of the new UN Volunteer Conditions of Service (COS) to the same date and fully align it to the UVP launch.

Finding 27 – Evidence of efficiency gains from digital transformation is already evident; including a reduction in deployment time for volunteers; the introduction of Salesforce for the helpdesk which has allowed timely resolution of queries (approx. 400/month) from UN Volunteers within agreed KPI turn-around time frame; the launch of chatbot on e-Campus reducing in-coming queries from volunteers and freeing-up human resources to deliver enhanced learning.

124. Salesforce has also increased transparency and provides clear, traceable data to internal KPIs (to resolve helpdesk requests within 3 days: and secure satisfaction rating (0 – 5 stars). ITCU staff note that automation has allowed greater analytics as well as process efficiency gains to be achieved – for example, it has provided definitive information on helpdesk requests conducted, that was previously reported using the email system. In relation to UVP, documentary evidence⁸² notes the UVP has strengthened, or will result in, efficiency gains in the following areas during the SF period:

- *Streamlined Conditions of Service (CoS)* – new CoS were created with the goal of reducing transactional load in volunteer management processes, with the new system designed with the same goal of reducing transactional load.
- *Automation* – reducing repetitive activity and being able to complete tasks faster thereby reducing user fatigue and potentially increasing motivation of staff to focus on problem solving rather than time consuming data entry. This is noted as particularly important for recurring tasks, and for reducing duplication in manual data entry.

79 UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual session 2020 DP/2020/14; 2021

80 2020 Annual project Progress Report UNV Digital transformation

81 Note to the File; For setting up a new date for Unified Volunteering Platform and Conditions of Service Launch, 30th April 2021

82 UVP Efficiency Gains Report, Version 5.1 / 27th Jan 2021

- *System Integration* – reducing the number of different applications that the user has to switch between is considered by the report to strengthen efficiency gains, in addition to reducing manual data entry into different systems.
- *Reducing complexity* – by reducing the number of choices provided to the users for data input and entry reduces the possibility of immediate and delayed errors.
- *Better Distribution of Labour* – increased use of Self-Service mechanisms enabled by UVP will allow OAs in VSC to focus on more qualitative work.
- *New ERP* – this is a longer-term gain that can strengthen efficiency gains; potentially providing better integration and automation functionality.
- *Single Platform* – by eliminating multiple platforms (online volunteering, vmam on-site volunteering, UNDP e-recruitment) that resulted in “data islands” and duplication of work – will result in gains from centralized process efficiencies of a single common platform, and far easier maintenance as only a single platform needs to be maintained as opposed to multiple.

Finding 28 – The majority of consulted UNV staff from ROs and FUs recognised the benefits of digital transformation from an efficiency perspective. However, it is also important to note that certain concerns were raised about the effects that DT could have on PA positions and on UNV’s relations with partners and UN Volunteers.

125. UVP will require partners to play a greater role in recruitment processes, although reductions in pro-forma costs are not foreseen in the short-term. There was a mixed perception from UNV staff, with some perceiving that the change could affect the satisfaction not only of host agencies, but also of UN Volunteers who often face connectivity issues in remote areas and require a more human touch that cannot easily be replaced.
126. The majority of UNV staff consulted at field level note an expectation that the digital transformation process, and the accompanying efficiency gains foreseen, will serve to enhance local capacity and be accompanied by more training opportunities and initiatives such as knowledge groups for mutual learning across FUs. The Workload Study⁸³ notes that the IT advisory and infrastructure support function is the highest in effort (33%) and cost (38%) within the scope of ‘Management and Oversight’ family of functions; performed not only by Management Services Division but also by all units across UNV, including ROs/FUs, given the ‘IT & Infrastructure’ function supports the organisation-wide path of digital excellence with most important deliverables due in 2021.

2.3. To what extent have management and coordination among teams (at the global, regional and country levels) ensured the efficient implementation of the SF?

Finding 29 – UNV has taken progressive steps to enhance management and coordination, including strengthening coordination and collaboration mechanisms, specifically management arrangements at the global, regional and country levels. UNV has strengthened its control environment.

⁸³ UNV, Workload Study, July 2020

127. The evaluation finds that coordination and collaboration mechanisms, specifically management arrangements at the global, regional and country levels, have been considerably strengthened and clarified with the development of UNV's first Internal Control Framework (ICF) launched in 2019; alongside the release of new Descriptions of Assignments (DOAs) which provide a decentralisation of specific approval rights to regional managers and modification of ARGUS profiles.

Mechanisms for coordination and collaboration

128. Over the SF period, UNV has taken progressive steps to enhance management mechanisms, including strengthening its control environment to provide reasonable assurances across a range of categories: increasing the reliability of financial reporting, compliance with applicable laws and regulations. UNV's first ever comprehensive Internal Control Framework (ICF) was developed to address several issues including a lack of clarity between financial responsibility and accountability and a recognition that delegations of authority were historic and hierarchical, not based on need and did not adequately reflect the organisational structure. UNV's ICF was launched alongside the release of new Descriptions of Assignments (DOAs) which set out a decentralisation of certain approval rights to regional managers, supported by modification to ARGUS profiles (Atlas Role Generation & User provisioning System). The majority of RO staff consulted in FGDs noted delegations of authority have improved; with Regional Managers recognizing an ability to take decisions related to recruitment processes closer to the ground. This was validated by data from the 2020 UNDP/ UNV Global Staff Survey confirming delegations of authority are effective for the majority of staff, with 64% perceiving they have authority to make relevant decisions that enable them to do their job effectively; this is 4% points up against the global data set. 15% responded neutrally, with 21% holding negative perceptions⁸⁴. Nonetheless, a minority of UNV staff based in the ROs and FUs also expressed a need to continue simplifying and consolidating procedures, conditions of service, and delegation of authority. On the latter, RMs called for further delegation, specifically for HR management authority to achieve greater empowerment of staff.
129. In relation to coordination amongst UNV teams and efficient collaboration across organisational levels, data from the 2020 UNDP/ UNV Global Staff Survey notes that 64% of UNV staff in HQ, regional, country and other offices/teams perceive UNV collaborates effectively, this is 1% points down against the global data set. 26% responded neutrally, with 10% holding negative perceptions. the survey also positively notes that 73% of UNV staff perceive the management team provides effective direction and leadership; this is 2% points higher than the global data set. 17% responded neutrally, with 10% holding negative perceptions. However, a more mixed response from the survey is also noted with 53% of UNV staff perceived the management team makes decisions transparently; this is 10% points lower than the global data set. 28% responded neutrally, with 19% holding negative perceptions.

Human resource investment and management focus

Finding 30 – Staff capacity is weighted towards Outcome 2. Whilst capacity of human resources has been largely sufficient to achieve the SF objective, and despite the enhancements through digital transformation, UNV staff noted capacity constraints and perceptions of being overworked with a high degree of consistency across the levels of the Organisation.

⁸⁴ UNDP/ UNV 2020 Global Staff Survey

130. The evaluation considered multiple data points, when examining staff capacity; including headcount⁸⁵ primarily targeted towards strategic outcomes; and staff effort/ cost targeted towards specific functions from the UNV Work Study⁸⁶ (see para 132). Both data sources show a weighting towards Outcome 2.
131. Staff capacity is currently weighted towards Outcome 2 at a ratio of approximately 4.5:1, with 17 positions in Volunteer Solutions Section (VSS) and 38 positions in Volunteer Services Centre (VSC) primarily geared towards Outcome 2; compared with 12 positions in Volunteer Advisory Services Section (VASS)⁸⁷ primarily geared to Outcome 1. Currently, VSS staffing composition includes 6 professional (P grade) and 11 general service (G grade) staff, weighted 56% to the global north; VSC staffing composition includes 2 professional (P grade) and 37 general service (G grade) staff, weighted 51% to the global north; and VASS staffing composition includes 8 professional (P grade) and 2 general service (G grade) staff, weighted 56% to the global north. More than half (3/5) of VASS regional programme specialist and analyst positions are presently frozen⁸⁸. Over the SF period, this ratio has shifted from approximately 3.8:1 in 2019⁸⁹ weighted towards Outcome 2; and approximately 4.8:1 weighted towards Outcome 2 in 2020⁹⁰. This analysis does not account for staff/staff time of Finance, Human Resources and other sections, including Executive office, as it assumes these are supportive of both outcomes as core organisational functions.
132. Whilst capacity of human resources has been largely sufficient to achieve the SF objective, and despite the enhancements through digital transformation, a majority of UNV staff consulted at field and regional level noted in KIIs and FGDs capacity constraints and perceptions of being overworked with a high degree of consistency across the levels of the Organisation from HQ through ROs to FUs. The 2020 UNDP/ UNV Global Staff Survey notes 52% of UNV staff perceived their workload is manageable and they generally have enough time to complete all their work tasks within working hours; this is in line (2% points lower) with the global data set. 12% responded neutrally, with 35% holding negative perceptions. Furthermore, the survey data also notes only 46% of UNV staff perceived workload is distributed fairly in their office. This is the lowest positive rating across the survey and is 4% points lower than the global data set. 25% responded neutrally, with 28% holding negative perceptions. Both these work loading data points received the most negative responses across all questions from UNV staff.
133. At field unit level, the majority of staff consulted in the FGDs noted activities are more focused on volunteer management and on volunteer mobilisation and they have been less focused on advocacy and partnerships. The majority of FU staff consulted expressed that they do not have sufficient time for outcome 1-related activities. The Workload Study⁹¹ similarly notes that aggregate functional analysis revealed effort (based on percentage of hours) and cost incurred where weighted highest in functions attributed to volunteer management, with 38% of all time spent. This was followed by 'management and oversight' functions with 28% of all time spent; and then partnership/ advocacy functions with 25% of all time spent.

85 UNV HR Reports data, PowerBI, April 2021

86 UNV Workload Study, July 2020

87 UNV HR Reports data, PowerBI, April 2021

88 UNV HR Reports data, PowerBI, April 2021

89 Based on management information from ExO, in 2019, 15 positions (1 vacant) in Volunteer Solutions Section (VSS) and 42 positions in Volunteer Services Centre (VSC); with 15 positions (10xHQ+5xRO) in Volunteer Advisory Services Section (VASS).” Ratio 3.8:1.

90 Based on management information from ExO, in 2020 14 positions in Volunteer Solutions Section (VSS) and 49 positions (with 5 vacant) in Volunteer Services Centre (VSC); with 12 positions (9xHQ+3xRO – 2 frozen) in Volunteer Advisory Services Section (VASS).” Ratio 4.8:1.

91 UNV Workload Study, July 2020

Finding 31 – Further capacity-building and resources are required to strengthen FUs, to sustain the positive results achieved under this SF into the future.

134. Field Units are typically composed of a Country Coordinator (supported by a Programme Assistant in countries with larger volumes of UN Volunteers). Recognizing the challenges related to not having local backstopping in one-person FUs, the position of Country Coordinator has evolved under this SF to entail an increasingly wide variety of functions that include communications, monitoring, strategic engagement, resource mobilisation and operational tasks. The majority of field level staff noted that more capacity-building and resources are required to strengthen what is considered the weakest link of the chain, in order to sustain the positive results achieved under this SF into the future. The majority of UNV staff working in ROs and FUs noted the limitations of the current structure as one of the challenges for guaranteeing the quality of its work and ensuring adequate support to UN Volunteers and partners.
135. UNV staff working in ROs and FUs also described how their work under Outcome 1 had been primarily guided by an HQ-driven approach that was not delivering as planned. Whilst during the SF period, UNV had VASS positions at RO levels, presently 3 of the 5 P3 regional VASS positions are frozen. According to consulted staff members, country-driven approaches to volunteerism promotion would help to ensure the greater sustainability of results under this outcome through stronger engagement with governments and CSOs at the field level. The continuation of a VASS presence at the field level was considered important for strengthening the promotion of volunteerism and rebalancing UNV's focus beyond 2021.
136. From the perspective of UN host agencies, the majority of survey respondents noted that UNV should strengthen its FUs (47.3% completely agreed; 35.7% somewhat agreed); should make its administrative processes more agile (31.5% completely agreed; 40.5% somewhat agreed); and should introduce other UN Volunteer modalities to respond to the needs of the sector (50.9% completely agreed; 37.3% somewhat agreed)⁹². The majority of UNV staff in ROs and FUs reinforced this partner perception, noting that the FUs were on the front line to support the achievement of the SF and needed adequate staffing capacities to achieve corporate objectives and manage the increased volumes of mobilization triggered over the past couple of years⁹³.

Knowledge, skills and capacity

Finding 32 – UNV staff are dedicated, diligent and have shown considerable adaptability during the SF period. However, capabilities have not always kept pace with the shifting demands of the organisation and the rapidly evolving context it operates in.

137. Whilst a full skills audit is outside the scope of the evaluation, there was a high degree of consistency in the perception shared by senior UNV staff⁹⁴ that capabilities have not always kept pace with the shifting demands of the organisation and the rapidly evolving context it operates in. UNV staff are dedicated, diligent and have shown considerable adaptability during the SF period, according to the majority of senior UNV staff in KIIs; this was echoed by external partners. Internally, senior managers noted that knowledge,

⁹² In the open-ended responses from the survey to UNV partners, the first weakness identified was related to limited capacity at the field level.

⁹³ UNV staff KIIs and FGDs

⁹⁴ UNV staff KIIs and FGDs

skills and experience are continually evolving to keep aligned with the shifting requirements of the organisation. Documentary evidence notes individual learning and development opportunities have increased with budget utilization for learning and development at 99%⁹⁵. Data from the UNDP Global staff survey notes 58% of UNV staff feel they receive sufficient learning opportunities, including training, relevant for their job; this is 3% points up against the global data set. 25% responded neutrally, with 17% holding negative perceptions⁹⁶. Nonetheless, areas for capability development remain, identified by senior management in KIIs, including skills development linked to digital transformation to further facilitate the automation of currently manual work will enable UNV to move up the value chain; advanced research methods and evidence development skills; capability in innovation and prototyping new solutions; alongside enhancing communications and multilingual skills; and knowledge-brokering. As UNV transitions from one strategic period to the next, with shifting emphasis on strategic intent and objectives, there may well be an opportunity to review the organisational structure through a gradual alignment of UNV's institutional setup.

Impact of decentralisation on management arrangements

Finding 33 – The decentralised structure is highly efficient and working well according to the majority of UNV Staff, allowing a grassroots focus on strategic objectives, particularly mobilisation. The decentralised structure, combined with a strengthened central team has had a positive impact on delivery making UNV more relevant, sustainable, regionally oriented and has streamlined the overall structure.

138. The decentralised structure is highly efficient and working well according to the majority of UNV Staff interviewed during the evaluation. The decentralised structure, combined with a strengthened central team engaged in developing policy and process, delivering core HR, ICT, procurement, common and volunteer services, has had a positive impact on delivery. It has made UNV more relevant, sustainable, regionally oriented and has "flattened"/ streamlined the overall structure. Over the SF period, UNV has established effective management arrangements that allow staff to cooperate and communicate between each other at HQ level and between different organisational levels; ensuring all levels support in the implementation and attainment of the results and achievements of the SF. UNV staff note there is room for improvement in managing staff welfare, to avoid overwork and burnout; alongside managing sensitive messages in some locations. Whilst decentralisation was acknowledged as challenging for some staff, and with staff morale reporting as low following transformation, data from the 2020 UNDP global staff survey notes 69% UNV staff feel they are adequately informed when their office or the organisation at large goes through a change process. This is in line with global response. 22% responded neutrally, with 9% holding negative perceptions. During KIIs and FGDs, evidence from the majority of UNV staff consulted in the evaluation consider decentralisation, and the associated professionalization of national staff has been highly successful.

⁹⁵ HRS data

⁹⁶ UNDP/ UNV 2020 Global Staff Survey

Effectiveness

139. In the section of effectiveness, the evaluation addresses the extent to which the Strategic Framework is achieving its objectives. This section addresses 5 key evaluation questions: (1) How effective has UNV been in achieving the expected outcomes of the SF?; (2) How have different UNV partnerships and stakeholder relationships contributed to the outcomes of the SF?; (3) What are the major factors (both internal and external) helping (enabling) or hindering (constraining) the implementation of the SF?; (4) How effective have the implementation mechanisms been in supporting the achievement of the SF outcomes and results?; and (5) To what extent has UNV contributed/is expected to contribute to the SDGs at the country and regional and global levels through the achievement of the SF outcomes?
140. **Overall, the evaluation finds UNV has been highly effective in achieving the intended outputs and outcomes. The SF is being implemented as planned and has performed effectively under both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, exceeding most of the targets consistently from the beginning of SF implementation.**

3.1. How effective has UNV been in achieving the expected outcomes of the SF?

What has been done to support delivery of Outcome 1?

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.

FINDING 34 - UNV has consistently exceeded most of the targets under Outcome 1, on an annual basis. UNV has provided support and technical advice to Member States; has also generated and disseminated knowledge products and evidence on the contribution of volunteerism to peace and development processes; has organised events and facilitated spaces for reflection, advocacy and knowledge exchange on issues related to volunteering across regions.

141. Under Outcome 1, UNV has consistently exceeded its annual targets each year. Only one output indicator (1.2.1) has been off track for two consecutive years (2019 and 2020). The number of countries contributing research and knowledge products to the Plan of Action (output 1.2.1) has also increased significantly during the course of the SF. Consistent, progressive performance across all indicators at both Output and Outcome levels is noted (see Table 7). During the course of the SF, the Member States including volunteering data in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) increased by 19% and the number of non-UN volunteers mobilized in regional/national volunteer schemes supported by UNV increased by 89%⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2018, 2019, 2020

Table 7: Progress on Outcome 1

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.						
Performance Indicator	2017 Baseline ⁹⁸	2018 Results	2019 Results	2020 Results	% increase during SF	Target 2020
1.1 Percentage of countries reporting a positive contribution of volunteerism to the Sustainable Development Goals in voluntary national reports on progress towards the Goals.	39%	41%	53%	58%	19%	47%
1.2 Cumulative quadrennial number of other volunteers mobilized in regional/national volunteer schemes supported by UNV.	131,099	255,921	493,811	1,243,381	89%	1,000,000
Output 1.1. Member States are supported in developing programmes, policies and legislation that promote volunteerism and volunteer action.						
1.1.1. Number of volunteer schemes (online, on site, regional, national, subregional, youth, etc.) supported by UNV	12	11	11	16	25%	14
1.1.2. Number of Member States partnering with UNV to develop their policies and legislation on volunteerism	3	5	5	11	73%	10
Output 1.2. Promotion of volunteerism and its value is advanced through engagement of Member States, civil society and academia in research, public dialogue, documentation and dissemination.						
1.2.1. Number of Member States contributing research and knowledge products to the plan of action	3	35	8	50	95%	51
1.2.2. Number of plans of action partners engaged in technical meetings and consultations at global and national levels	8	53	87	101	92%	98

Source: EB reports 2019, 2020, 2021

142. UNV has provided support and technical advice to Member States to strengthen data and analysis on volunteering for inclusion in their respective Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and provided support and technical expertise to 21 countries⁹⁹, mainly for the development of volunteer infrastructure and volunteerism legislation. Furthermore,

⁹⁸ Annex 3 2018 Progress Review of Strategic Framework Indicators Milestones

⁹⁹ Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, India, Kazakhstan, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, the State of Palestine, Paraguay, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, and Ukraine.

together with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNV supported 11 Member States¹⁰⁰ in the statistical measurement of the contribution of volunteering.

143. Under the current SF, UNV has generated and disseminated knowledge products and evidence on the contribution of volunteerism to peace and development processes. Particularly noteworthy for their quality and relevance, according to the majority of volunteer sector experts consulted for this evaluation, were the 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: The Thread that Binds – Volunteerism and Community Resilience, the products¹⁰¹ generated under the framework of the Plan of Action, the Global Technical Meeting (GTM), and the knowledge platform on volunteerism¹⁰².
144. UNV has organised events, facilitated spaces for reflection, advocacy and knowledge exchange on issues related to volunteering across regions. Among them, consulted documents¹⁰³ and the majority of all stakeholder groups consulted¹⁰⁴ highlighted the International Volunteer Day (IVD) celebrations every 5 December for their global significance and outreach¹⁰⁵; the five regional consultations convened with the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions in 2019 within the Annual Regional Forums on sustainable development, and the Global Technical Meeting (GTM) convened by UNV and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies at the margins of the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which was considered particularly relevant for the sector. Another important component is the development of the roster of experts; reported to the EB in 2020 as work-in-progress.

What has been achieved under Outcome 1?

FINDING 35 - Under Outcome 1, UNV has contributed to; i) the increasing number of countries including references to the role of volunteerism in their VNRs; ii) the engagement of more than 1,000,000 local non-UN volunteers across all regions in 22 countries; iii) several policies and legislation in different Member States; and iv) to the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 73/140 of 17 December 2018 on Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

145. As a result of these achievements, UNV has contributed to the increasing number of countries including references to the role of volunteerism in achieving the SDGs in their VNRs. A recent study¹⁰⁶, conducted by UNV, shows that in the period between 2018 and 2020 *“UNV supported 29% of all VNRs, the net effect being an increase in VNR reports*

100 Colombia, Ecuador, India, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Paraguay, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, UAE, Ukraine. (Source: EB Reports 2020 and 2021).

101 (EB report 2020) the “Global synthesis reports, reviewing progress made against the three Plan of Action objectives, Toolbox and an anthology of papers containing different analytical approaches for measuring volunteering”.

102 (EB report 2020) A knowledge portal containing a volunteering database with country profiles including facts and figures on laws, policies, schemes and measurement data, an evidence library and knowledge exchange.

103 Including UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2018, 2019, 2020.

104 KII and FGDs with UNV Staff from HQ and regions, FGDs with UN Partners and donors and KII with volunteer sector experts.

105 In 2018, During the annual campaign for International Volunteer Day, 5 December, 30 United Nations agencies, at the global, regional and national levels, echoed the campaign “Volunteers build resilient communities” on social media with the hashtags #IVD2018 and #ResilientCommunities. In 2019, 5 United Nations partners joined UNV in the global ‘Volunteer for an inclusive future’ campaign. In 2020, 30 UN partners joined UNV in the global campaign, Together We Can, Through Volunteering.

106 UNV (2020) Exploratory Study of VNR Processes and Outcomes 2016-2020

*recognizing volunteer contributions from 57% to 61% overall*¹⁰⁷. The same study also shows that in cases where UNV had been involved, VNRs significantly increased the links between volunteer contributions and gender aspects. Even if, as the study explains, this increase cannot be attributed exclusively to UNV's work, it is a promising indicator of the impact of the organisation's efforts in this area¹⁰⁸.

146. As a result of UNV's work with Member States, through (inter alia) technical support and advice, it has contributed to the engagement of more than 1,000,000 local non-UN volunteers through national volunteer schemes across all regions in 22 countries¹⁰⁹. Noteworthy examples include the partnership established with the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and National Service Scheme (NSS)¹¹⁰ in India, through which UNV contributed to engaging 254,128 volunteers in 2018 and 463,140 volunteers in 2019¹¹¹. This is the result of a strong partnership initiated in 2013 through a project in which UNV, UNDP and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) joined forces to support this organisation¹¹². As a further illustrative example of South-South cooperation in 2019, UNV, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia, and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation implemented a project to build young people's skills through volunteerism. The project received volunteers from China, India, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand, and mobilized more than 1,450 Cambodian volunteers locally¹¹³.
147. UNV has contributed to mobilizing significant numbers of volunteers through strategic placements of UN Volunteers in other UN agencies. For example, in 2020, a national UN Volunteer working in one of the UNICEF volunteering programmes in Kazakhstan¹¹⁴ coordinated a training scheme for young people in volunteerism that ultimately engaged an audience of 750,000 online users¹¹⁵. In 2019, 40 UN Volunteers, working with UNOPS, facilitated a volunteer training programme for thousands of young applicants who wanted to contribute to the Pan American and Parapan American Games in Lima, Peru, and which were of vital importance for holding the events¹¹⁶.
148. UNV is credited¹¹⁷ with having contributed to policy development and legislative processes in different Member States, such as the bill for the creation of a national agency on volunteerism in Cameroon¹¹⁸ in 2019; or the national policy on volunteerism approved in Sri Lanka¹¹⁹ also in 2019.

107 As the study indicates, this is not definitive evidence that UNV's support was the direct cause of volunteer recognition in the reports. Various forms of bias could exist, affecting the selection of countries to be supported by UNV (based on established partnerships, interest in volunteering in the country, or clear volunteering line ministries and focal points).

108 Overall, only 12% of the 2016-2020 VNRs referenced volunteering in relation to gender. Out of the 42 VNRs that UNV engaged with, 26% linked volunteer contributions to gender aspects in comparison to only 9% of the 160 VNRs that UNV did not engage with.

109 Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Mali, Pakistan, Panama, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe

110 <https://nyks.nic.in/>. This project signed a second phase in July 2018 under this SF.

111 UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual sessions 2019, 2020

112 https://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/strengthening-nyks-and-nss.html

113 <https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/SSiA-UNV-FINAL-Web.pdf>

114 <https://www.unicef.org/kazakhstan/en/unicef-volunteering-programmes-kazakhstan>

115 UNV Report of the Administrator Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, Annual session 2020

116 <https://www.lima2019.pe/en/news/close-to-6000-volunteers-participate-in-lima-2019-parapan-american-games>

117 All these examples were highlighted in the EB reports and/or in the FGDs with regions.

118 https://procurement-notices.undp.org/view_file.cfm?doc_id=193624

119 https://www.socialservices.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=85&Itemid=208&lang=en

149. Furthermore, UNV Regional Offices reported¹²⁰ to have successfully promoted policies or legislations on volunteerism. For example, in Nigeria, the approval of a Volunteerism Policy was included in UNV's work plan; in Ukraine, UNV had extensive discussions on legislation and on "Youth of Ukraine 2021-5", a social programme adopted by the government. In Zambia, funds were raised with UNDP and UNICEF to hire consultants for drafting volunteerism legislation and UNV coordinated the signature of two MoUs with Ministries. The Ministry of Education is promoting volunteerism through higher level institutions, and a university volunteer programme funded by UN agencies is taking shape as part of efforts to mobilise universities and VIOs. As part of UNV-led advocacy efforts, a paper to Parliament proposing the inclusion of "volunteerism as a national value" in the Constitution was submitted, which was a positive achievement (even if it was not passed).
150. Within the UN, UNV was instrumental for the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 73/140 of 17 December 2018 on Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹²¹.
151. Finally, all sector experts and other partners consulted on this issue agreed that the GTM, that was held virtually in 2020 under the auspices of UNV, was a significant achievement. In addition to its organisation, consulted attendees highlighted its inclusiveness, impressive convening power, broad multi-stakeholder engagement, and the technical quality of materials and debates throughout the process. In terms of impact, what stood out the most was the effectiveness of the process in positioning volunteering as a key resource to deliver the 2030 Agenda¹²².

Meeting stakeholders' expectations – Outcome 1

FINDING 36 – Partners and volunteer sector experts perceive that UNV "does what it does well" under Outcome 1. Nonetheless, the majority of partners equally noted that UNV could do more in terms of promoting volunteerism which is where its unique added value is perceived to lie. In this regard, stakeholders perceive that UNV needs to strengthen inputs and effectiveness to all stages of the cycle: evidence generation → knowledge brokering → agenda setting. Additionally, under this Outcome, UNV falls short of what stakeholders expect in two aspects: i) in terms of long-term strategic alignment with the wider volunteer sector and ii) in terms of outreach.

152. From the detailed analysis of the literature, qualitative evidence collected in FGDs and KIs, and the partner survey, a consistent perception from partners is that UNV has effectively achieved positive results under Outcome 1, as illustrated in the following quotation:

"They did a great job in pivoting and delivering a different type of event (GTM) and coming out with 'a call for action'. This sums up where we are and where we need to be (as a sector). On the knowledge board they have produced a huge amount of material of really high quality; the measurement tool kit that came out of the GTM is very good (...) it has been helpful with an area of work that everyone is struggling with. The state of the world reports also, particularly the last one; addresses a particularly important question".

¹²⁰ All these examples were raised by UNV staff during the FGDs with regions.

¹²¹ Reported in EB reports and backed by all volunteer sector experts consulted during the evaluation.

¹²² All three volunteer sector experts highlighted this aspect.

- Volunteer sector expert

153. Evidence from the partner survey notes that these efforts have borne important results. According to the partner survey¹²³, Outcome 1 partners consider that through their partnerships with UNV they have: i) contributed to putting volunteerism on the political agenda; ii) contributed to elaborating volunteer policies; and iii) accessed cutting-edge research (see Figure 4). These findings were supported by the majority of sector experts and UNV Partners consulted in KIIs and FGDs¹²⁴.

Figure 4: Partners say (Survey to partners)



154. While the majority of partners perceived that UNV “does what it does well”, they equally noted that it could do more in terms of promoting volunteerism, which is where its unique added value is perceived to lie¹²⁵. The MTR draws a similar conclusion, with recommendation 3 highlighting this suggested cause of action¹²⁶. There are strategic areas of work which partners would necessarily expect UNV to be addressing more clearly but which are not fully articulated in the SF. That is, they are implicitly or explicitly included in the SF narrative but do not have dedicated outputs and/or related indicators to measure their progress. The areas that have emerged more clearly relate to the following cycle: evidence generation → knowledge brokering → agenda setting.
155. All 32 partners who replied to this survey question agree that “UNV should continue to generate knowledge products on volunteerism” (94% strongly agreed with this statement). This perception also emerged consistently from the majority of sector partners and from donors in the FGDs. Partners expressed they not only expect UNV to produce quality research but also to act as a knowledge broker (see 4.2). Consulted experts and UNV staff consistently recognised that volunteering and volunteerism are often not seen as a high political priority. In this context, all sector experts consulted understand that UNV has the responsibility and the opportunity to bridge the gap between volunteers and the higher policy level, for example advocating to Member States about the recognition and the

123 28 out of 30 respondents agree that UNV have contributed to putting volunteerism on the political agenda; 27 out of 31 respondents agree that UNV is contributing to elaborating volunteer policies; and 22 out of 28 respondents agree that the partnership with UNV has allowed them to access cutting-edge research on volunteerism.

124 All three volunteer sector experts consulted mentioned this. Some of this content was also brought up by UNV partners in two of the FGDs.

125 This was brought up in all KIIs and FGDs with external stakeholders apart from the FGD held with FF donors and the KII with UNDP Management Consulting Team.

126 UNV MTR (2019), page 29.

protection that volunteers need, though the response from UN partners was more mixed¹²⁷.

156. Related to this knowledge broker role, partners emphasized UNV's unique position as agenda setter and convener; with 176 out of 182 (89%) of all partners who replied to this survey question agreeing that *"UNV is a credible partner in the volunteer sector with the capacity to facilitate contacts with government bodies and key stakeholders"*. Correspondingly, all experts consulted also agreed that this was one of the central roles that UNV should play in the sector.
157. The majority of consulted experts also highlighted UNV's unique position in contributing to the decolonization of the sector and for amplifying the voices of the South, both through the prioritization of research led by Southern researchers, as well as by promoting South-South exchanges and strong partnerships with Southern volunteer schemes (such as the initiative developed by the African Union) and with civil society in the global south¹²⁸.
158. Sector partners recognise that UNV has played these roles during this SF to an extent. However, the majority of partners surveyed noted that often UNV's actions do not adequately respond to a longer-term and well-structured strategy¹²⁹. This means that there is insufficient clarity about how the dots between outputs and strategic objectives are connected¹³⁰. For example, in the case of the GTM, although partners were appreciative of the relevance and technical implementation of the event, all of those consulted on this matter pointed out that more was expected from UNV in terms of follow-up, and that while the outputs did live up to expectations, they seemed to have become an end in themselves rather than a catalyst as this quote illustrates.

"The GTM was fantastic! but to some extent it was quite curated (...) In terms of the depth of relationships and partnerships ongoing it felt like more of a one off that didn't connect to the longer term."

- Volunteer sector expert.

159. Another important aspect regarding stakeholders' expectations that was highlighted was the extent to which UNV is reaching a critical mass of volunteers. Although the cumulative quadrennial (other) target of more than one million volunteers mobilized in regional/national volunteer schemes supported by UNV ¹³¹ may seem very large in absolute terms, from the perspective of stakeholders consulted on this issue, these numbers are underwhelming for a UN Entity/ large international organisation. The following benchmarks offer useful comparisons: IFCR mobilizes around 12 million volunteers¹³²; as of March 2021, Wikipedia had engaged 143,161 volunteers in the previous 30 days¹³³; while small but innovative organisation like Getzelos¹³⁴ mobilized an average of 2,000 volunteers every week to help with the COVID crisis.

127 This point was also brought up by one of the consulted UN Partner in the KIIs and FDGs. Additionally, a qualitative analysis of the open ended questions in the survey to partners found 28 references to this point.

128 In the survey, a main weakness identified by both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 partners was the lack of strong partnerships with Southern Civil Society.

129 All 31 partners who replied to this survey question agree that UNV should engage with VIOs more meaningfully.

130 This point came up in all KIIs with sector experts. It was also corroborated by UNV staff for example during the Management retreat 2020.

131 It refers to the 1,243,381 (cumulative quadrennial number of other) volunteers mobilized in regional/national volunteer schemes supported by UNV, as reported under Outcome indicator 1.2.in the EB in 2021.

132 In the survey, a main weakness identified by both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 partners was the lack of strong partnerships with Southern Civil Society.

133 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedians#:~:text=The%20English%20Wikipedia%20currently%20has,contributors%20participate%20in%20community%20discussions.>

134 <https://getzelos.com/case-studies/covidhelp-coronavirus-cri>

160. The idea that UNV should invest more efforts in broadening its social base among volunteers worldwide was a consistent theme during the KIs and the FGDs with development partners and sector experts¹³⁵. Corresponding evidence from the survey also noted this issue, with more than half of the respondents disagreeing with the statement, “our partnership with UNV has benefitted from UNV’s capacity to mobilize high numbers of volunteers”¹³⁶.

What has been done to deliver Outcome 2?

Outcome 2: The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of UN Volunteers and integration of volunteerism.

FINDING 37 - Under Outcome 2, UNV has recruited and deployed UN Volunteers to support the work of UN Entities. In December 2020, the number of UN Volunteers reached an all-time high of 9,459, mostly derived from the increase of national UN Volunteers (96% increase) during this SF. The number of UN partners hosting UN Volunteers increased by 76%. Additionally, the predominant presence of UN Volunteers from Southern countries gives UNV an exceptional added value on two fronts, showcasing how South-South volunteering can be done, and leveraging the kind of local knowledge and trust that National Volunteers command in their communities. Under this outcome, UNV has additionally expanded its learning and career development support to all UN Volunteers.

161. Under Outcome 2, UNV has consistently exceeded its annual targets each year (see Table 8). Particularly significant is the progress of indicator 2, the number of UN partners hosting UN Volunteers, which has increased by 76% during this SF. The implementation of measurement systems during this SF period have made it possible to obtain general data on indicator 1 and determine that there has been an increase of 7% in the number of UN partners reporting positive contributions of UN Volunteers to their mandate.
162. Partner responses to the evaluation survey record 99% of respondents who had hosted UN Volunteers agreed with the statement that “*UN Volunteers make a positive contribution to my UN entity’s mandate*”¹³⁷ with 84% strongly agreeing¹³⁸. Corresponding evidence was noted in the FGD with the partners and through the qualitative content analysis of the open-ended questions included in the survey. The evaluation notes how UN entities are not only reporting these positive contributions in UNV surveys but also in their internal monitoring reports¹³⁹.
163. At the output level, the targets for two of the indicators, i) the number of months volunteered through UNV (onsite and online) and ii) the number of people who volunteered through UNV (online and onsite), were exceeded. Both the number of volunteers and the number of months onsite has grown significantly during the course of this SF, 46% and 48% respectively. The data informing the two targets on online volunteering was not available for the last year (2020). In the previous two years, performance on this indicator has been mixed due to the introduction of a user fee. The percentage of UN Volunteers reporting enhanced personal and professional development

¹³⁵ This issue came up in the FGD with Development partners and in conversations with sector experts. It was also mentioned in KIs with UNV staff.

¹³⁶ 13 out of 25 partners who replied to this question in the survey.

¹³⁷ 130 of the 131 who replied to this question.

¹³⁸ SF Evaluation survey to partners

¹³⁹ “The national UNV programme continued to be a solid programme that generated a promising female talent pipeline” UNICEF Result Assessment Module (RAM) 2020.

and satisfaction with the UNV experience has remained above target and consistently above 95%, from a baseline of 91% during the SF (see Table 8).

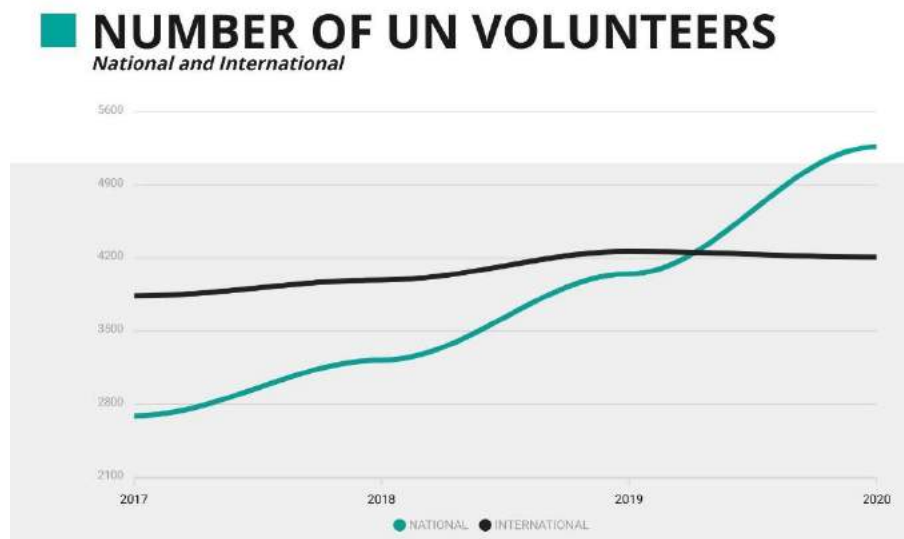
Table 8: Progress on Outcome 2

Outcome 2: The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of UN Volunteers and integration of volunteerism.						
Performance Indicator	Baseline	2018 Results	2019 Results	2020 Results	% increase during SF	Target 2020
Percentage of United Nations partners reporting a positive contribution of UN-Volunteers to their mandate.	92%	-	93%	99%	7%	93%
Number of United Nations partners engaging UN-Volunteers.	34 (56) ¹⁴⁰	38 (59)	54 (73)	60 (79)	76%	53
Output 2.1. Expand the opportunities for more people to contribute to United Nations development, peace and humanitarian efforts.						
Number of months volunteered per year through UNV (onsite)	52,768	53,194	65,014	78,260	48%	65,000
Number of months volunteered per year through UNV (online)	2,099	2,886	2,198	-	-	2,553
Number of people volunteered per year through UNV (onsite)	6,501	7,201	8,282	9,459	46%	8,500
Number of people volunteered per year through UNV (online)	12,592	17,028	13,186	-	-	15,318
Output 2.2. Motivated, well-equipped volunteers mobilized to contribute to United Nations peace, humanitarian and development efforts.						
2.2.1 Percentage of UN Volunteers reporting that their assignment enhanced their personal and professional development	93%	92%	92%	92%	-1%	94%
2.2.2 Percentage of UN Volunteers satisfied with their volunteering experience.	91%	95%	95%	96%	5%	94%

Source: EB reports 2019, 2020, 2021 and UN Volunteers data from Power BI

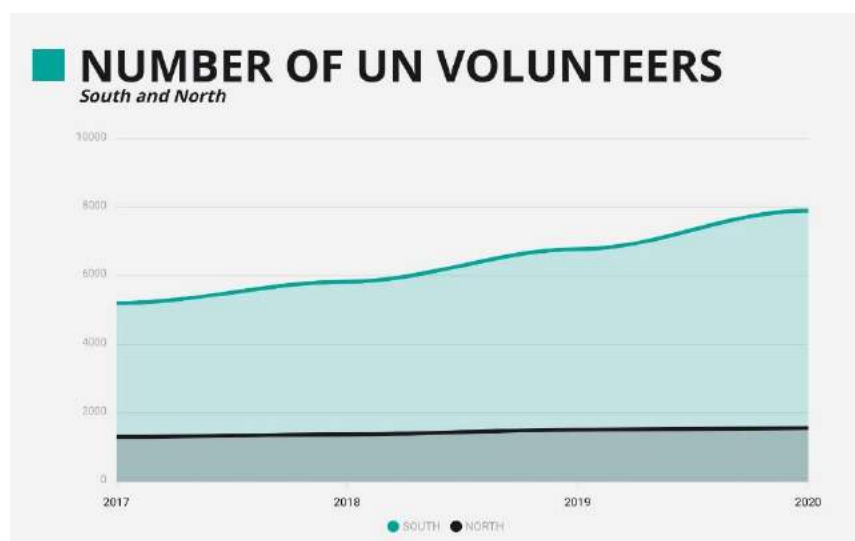
¹⁴⁰ In brackets data from BI vs. data from EB reports.

Figure 5: Number of UN Volunteers National/International (Power BI)



164. The current SF's clear focus on mobilisation has been highly effective, as evidenced by the fact that in December 2020, the number of UN Volunteers reached an all-time high of 9,459. It is also the first time in UNV's history that national volunteers outnumber international volunteers, partially due to the impact of COVID-19 (see 5.2) but primarily to UNV's work in the field, maintaining a clear upward trend in number of national volunteers since the beginning of this SF. As shown in Figure 5, the number of international volunteers has increased slightly by 10% since the baseline in 2017. Although in the last year there has been a stabilization trend and even a slight decrease. In contrast, the number of national volunteers has almost doubled, reaching a 96% increase.
165. As Figure 6 indicates, during this SF the number of UN Volunteers from the North has increased only very slightly, while opportunities for citizens from the South have clearly increased, mainly due to the increase in national volunteers.

Figure 6: Number of UN Volunteers (South/North) (Power BI)



166. The predominant presence of UN Volunteers from Southern countries is of crucial importance for how the programme is perceived. According to the majority of sector experts, this gives UNV an exceptional added value on two fronts, showcasing how South-South volunteering can be done: and leveraging the kind of local knowledge and trust that National Volunteers command in their communities. organisation
167. An analysis by region indicates that all regions in which UNV operates consistently increased the number of UN Volunteers during the SF period, with Africa being the region that has seen the largest increase and also the one that deployed the most UN Volunteers in absolute terms¹⁴¹.
168. During this SF, UNV has expanded its learning and career development support to all UN Volunteers, mainly through the UNV e-campus¹⁴². This platform is an extensive repository of thousands of learning tools (such as coaching sessions) and online courses developed by UNV, by other UN entities, or by other platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, Coursera and Rosetta Stone. UNV has continued working to improve the quality and relevance of the learning possibilities available to users of the platform. For example, increasing the delivery of the UN Youth Volunteer Workshops and Career Transition Workshops. Additionally, in 2020 it revamped its own resources to adapt them to the new pandemic situation¹⁴³ and made official UN language exams available to UN Volunteers. In 2020, the platform reached 52,208 registered users including serving and former UN Volunteers, in addition to candidates registered in UNV's Talent Pool¹⁴⁴ (which constitutes 27,268 users more than in 2019 according to EB reports).
169. As part of the activities developed under Outcome 2, UNV has launched the UN Partner Toolkit¹⁴⁵ to guide host entities through the stages of the UN Volunteer experience (recruitment, on-boarding, management, and transitions). During this SF, UNV has revised the Conditions of Service (CoS) for all UN Volunteer modalities and is expected to start implementing them shortly. It is important to note that although the CoS are crucial for UN Volunteers, the main drivers behind the revision, as expressed by UNV staff and in public communications, have not been related to increasing or maintaining the quality of UN Volunteers' personal development and/or their satisfaction¹⁴⁶ but rather to increase the efficiency of the UNV Programme by streamlining "*the administration of UN Volunteers, with minimal changes to the proforma and entitlement packages*" and by strengthening "*equity across UN Volunteer entitlements*"¹⁴⁷.
170. Related to this, the evaluation notes that the material the organisation is working on under Outcome 1 is rarely used to inform the policies governing the mobilisation of its own UN Volunteers under Outcome 2. For example, the toolkit "*Promoting gender equality through volunteering*" could have been used to build additional value around the work of female UN Volunteers¹⁴⁸ (additional information is presented in section 5.1). Correspondingly, the majority of UNV internal sources consulted agreed that there is a lack of interlinkage between the volunteerism promoted by Outcome 1 and the volunteers that are mobilized under Outcome 2¹⁴⁹.

141 Source – UN Volunteer Data Power BI

142 <https://learning.unv.org>

143 Pre-deployment, youth and other onsite training sessions for volunteers were made into virtual workshops, featuring emerging topics such as remote work and mental health

144 EB Report 2020

145 <https://toolkit.unv.org/home>

146 i.e. related to indicators 2.2.1. and 2.2.2. under this SF.

147 <https://www.unv.org/Changes-to-UN-Volunteer-Conditions-Service-UVP-updateIt>

148 See Promoting gender equality through volunteering toolkit (January 2021), page 25

149 The separation between Outcomes was also identified in the UNV Management Retreat 2020 by Group 4 in Task 1 – retrospective of SF 2018-21 Planning and design.

What has been achieved?

FINDING 38 - Under Outcome 2, UNV has exceeded most of its targets consistently and incrementally during the SF period, bringing financial stability. Partners are highly satisfied with how UNV manages provision and deployment of UN Volunteers. UNV has a reputation as a responsive and flexible organisation. However, the wide variety of roles covered by UN Volunteers, coupled with the perceived dilution of their commitment to the inherent values of volunteerism, means that the common denominator of the UN Volunteers is perceived to be that they are more cost-effective when compared with other contractual modalities. This risks devaluating UNV's brand.

171. Although UNV's financial sustainability was not one of the indicators of success for this Outcome, the achievement that was most frequently highlighted by consulted UNV staff under Outcome 2 was the financial sustainability it was bringing to the organisation. UNV earns a percentage of the cost of each UN Volunteer in management fees. The significant increase in the number of UN Volunteers deployed has meant a significant (and critical) boost to the organisation's revenues (see Efficiency section). While the focus on increasing volunteer numbers has had a significant positive impact on the organisation's finances, it has also brought with it tensions that UNV should consider.

Meeting stakeholders' expectations – Outcome 2

Host entities

172. The emphasis on mobilization of UN Volunteers has developed a culture at UNV that is primarily client-oriented as opposed to primarily volunteer- (including UN Volunteer) oriented. UNV staff in KIIs and FGDs have spoken candidly of “competition” with other UN Agencies and VIOs, of “decommissioning services” when referring to certain projects, and of being a “sales organisation” in urgent need of a “robust marketing unit”¹⁵⁰. This client-oriented culture is well accepted in different UN Entities and brings well established benefits¹⁵¹. However, in the opinion of the evaluation team, in the case of UNV, this seems to have been over-emphasized and financially orientated. That is, shifting from the original logic of the outcome in the SF that UNV deploys UN Volunteers in order to support *United Nations partners in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda*¹⁵²; to focusing on a more commercial approach that drives UNV to mobilize as many UN Volunteers as possible with the aim of making the organisation financial sustainable.
173. This focus is evidenced for example by the use of managerial tools and instruments that are largely oriented towards planning and measuring the deployment of UN Volunteers; and of how these deployments relate to the actual and potential income of the organisation which in turn informs the planning. This aspect is dealt with in more detail under section 3.4. of this report. This commercial approach is also used by UNV in strategic documents. For example, in its Partnership Strategy 2018-2021 UNV speaks of “*its world-class quality volunteering services and products, including the mobilization and recruitment of highly-qualified, experienced and motivated UN Volunteers*”.
174. UN partners consulted expressed mixed sentiments about this approach. On the one hand, this client-oriented approach is one of the key factors behind UNV having a reputation as an effective, responsive and flexible organisation, which are qualities that

¹⁵⁰ Each of these words in quotes are taken verbatim from different KIIs and FGDs. Documents such as the UNV Partnership Strategy also use this kind of language.

¹⁵¹ https://careers.un.org/lbw/attachments/competencies_booklet_en.pdf

¹⁵² Text in italic is used in the UNV Strategic Framework Document 2018-2021, page 6.

were celebrated by the majority of UN partners consulted in FGDs and in the open-questions of the partners survey. In contrast, these same sources equally expressed that the over-emphasis on the commercial approach is also perceived to be reducing UNV's value proposition to a mere provider of cost-effective human resources¹⁵³, with a perceived devaluing of UNV's brand.

175. It is important to note though that this tension is not new to UNV and therefore has not been a result of this SF. The evaluation of the Strategic Framework 2014-17 noted that "While overall partners have a positive image of UNV and a number of interviewed partners perceive UNV's value beyond the mere provision of human resources, there is a perceived gap among partners between UNV's value-driven communication about volunteerism, on the one hand, and UNV's business model, on the other" (Finding 3, page 18, SF evaluation 2014-2017).
176. As early as 2014, an assessment of the use of non-staff personnel in the UN System carried by the UN Joint Inspection Unit also states: "The significant use of UN Volunteers raises the unavoidable question whether this is in line with the main purpose of the UNV programme. During field missions, the information gathered from interviews reflected that, in many cases, the assignment of UN Volunteers was considered more of a job opportunity than an act of volunteerism. Managers interviewed stated that UNV positions could be established relatively easily by the country office without struggling to get regular staff positions from headquarters. UN Volunteers were considered part of the professional workforce but with fewer entitlements. This might risk creating a dual workforce with different entitlements, rather than promoting volunteerism" (page 31 UNJIU 2014¹⁵⁴).
177. Since UNV's main emphasis is on increasing numbers of UN Volunteers, what UNV is mainly monitoring is volunteer provision and deployment¹⁵⁵. On these aspects, the feedback received suggests a high level of satisfaction. This has been confirmed by different evaluation sources including the survey to partners where 107 of 115 (93%) of UN respondents¹⁵⁶ agreed with the statement "*recruitment processes were always conducted in an effective and timely manner*". The story voted most likely by UN Volunteers in ParEvo also recounted the effectiveness of recruitment (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: ParEvo storyline 71 (ParEvo)



¹⁵³ In the two FGDs with UN Partners terms were used related to UNV's emphasis on cost-effectiveness, such as "they have become a cheap UN recruitment agency", "it is just sales and production" or "it is only about cheap-labour".

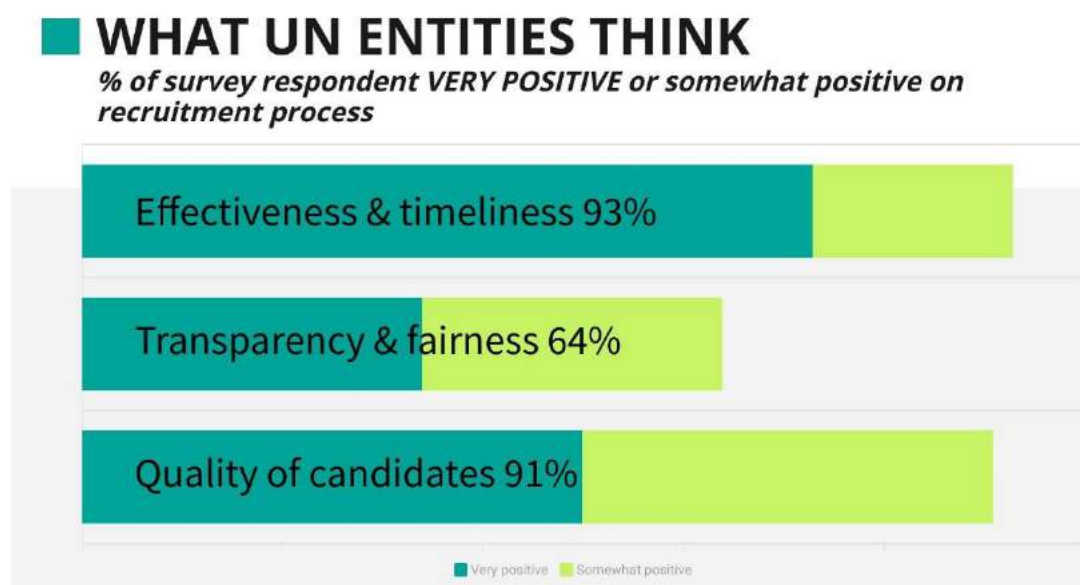
¹⁵⁴ (2014) UN Joint Inspection Unit, Assessment of the use of non-staff personnel in the UN System

¹⁵⁵ IBID

¹⁵⁶ Partners that hosted UN Volunteers.

178. A more granular analysis of recruitment provides valuable information for UNV to consider. As figure 8 shows, although some aspects of the recruitment process are positively valued, including effectiveness and timeliness and the profiles of the UN Volunteers identified and deployed, perceptions are somewhat more mixed on issues such as the transparency and fairness of the process.

Figure 8: Partners say (Survey to partners)¹⁵⁷



179. On the profile of candidates, whilst positive in the survey data, was more nuanced in discussion with some concerns noted from a number of data sources¹⁵⁸. These were mostly linked to the apparent lessening of an intangible characteristic that respondents referred to as “*citizen engagement values*”, “*volunteer spirit*”, “*value of volunteerism*”, or “*commitment to volunteerism*”. This intangible is what consulted stakeholders believe constitutes a unique added value of UN Volunteers and what is potentially at risk in the pursuit of increasing numbers of UN Volunteers mobilized. UNV staff members from HQ and from the field, donors and UN host agencies have consistently raised this issue during the evaluation.

¹⁵⁷ A total of 115 partners replied to this question.

¹⁵⁸ This issue was raised in a FDG with UNV donors, and in both FDG with UN Partners. A qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions in the survey to partners the evaluation team found the following 12 references on the *detrimen*t of this volunteer spirit in UN Volunteers; 1. You should look very well in the selection that they are for their taste to serve and contribute as UNV and be clear about what it means and not just for a well paid job option; 2. It seems to me that Volunteers in general seek more just a livelihood (and) to gain experience in their area; 3. National volunteers appear less familiar with the mandate and organisational ethos and raison d’etre of the UNV; 4. National volunteers have brought with them a mindset of privilege which fits poorly with the ethos of the UN and the 2030 commitments of leaving no one behind; 5. (in reference to UN Volunteers) More teeth needed to promote the spirit of volunteerism; 6. (in reference to UN Volunteers) A challenge is to have a double function, including promotion of volunteerism, and functions a per job description; 7. Misunderstanding on what a UNV is about; 8. Misunderstanding on UN Volunteers being volunteers; 9. Weakness in the capacity of (UN) volunteers with regard to volunteer work; 10. UNV could improve more its distinctiveness as not to be regarded as a mere hiring modality; 11. UN Volunteers are essential to [redacted] in [redacted] in order to promote a wider range of perspectives into our work with specific skill sets that the XXX team lacks. There is much to do on the voluntary side of the work though, including the promotion of the culture of volunteerism; 12. UN Volunteers need to be oriented on the purpose of their volunteerism. On many occasions, they find themselves earning less than other contract holders, and they lose their motivation.

180. On the fairness of the recruitment process, a minority of UN partners consulted identified the practice of “direct recruitment” in particular as a concern in relation to ensuring ethical standards as well as quality. Nonetheless, it has to be noted that the policy at UNV contains provisions for checking conflicts of interests. Additionally, it is noted that this practice is not exclusive of UNV in the UN System¹⁵⁹.

UN Volunteers

181. 96% of all UN Volunteers¹⁶⁰ reported a very high degree of overall satisfaction, with some variations between the satisfaction reported by UN Volunteers from the South and North¹⁶¹. This data, however, does not directly correlate with the degree to which the UNV experience has met their expectations. 18% of all UN Volunteers indicated in the same survey that being a UNV has not met their expectations. This proportion rises in the case of UN Volunteers from Northern countries to 23% (see figure 9).

Figure 9: UN Volunteers expectations (Survey to UN Volunteers)



182. The results on the expectations met question in the survey to UN Volunteers are more aligned with the information that the evaluation has obtained through other sources which the evaluation has labelled as “voices of UN Volunteers”; these are the stories and recommendations provided by serving UN Volunteers through their Volunteer Reports¹⁶², the open questions of the two UN Volunteer surveys¹⁶³, and the contributions of the UN Volunteers to ParEvo's qualitative exercise. Findings from these sources are likewise mainly positive, although areas for improvement and a minority of complaints about aspects of being a UN Volunteer that provide useful insights.

183. The analysis of the qualitative sources suggests that there are three non-exclusive determining factors that motivate people to become UN Volunteers. Two of them emerge as main reasons to volunteer in the UN Volunteers survey; “to help others and make a difference” (96%) and “to gain new skills abilities” (96%). The third reason that came up very strongly in the partners survey, where 108 of the 109 (99%) of responses coming from UN entities agreed with the statement that UN Volunteers deployed in their

¹⁵⁹ UNICEF and UNDP for example also have such practices in place. UNV provided documentation evidencing this.

¹⁶⁰ SF Evaluation survey to UN Volunteers

¹⁶¹ UN Volunteers from the Global South report 98% satisfaction with 77% of them very satisfied. UN Volunteers from Northern countries, although still overwhelmingly satisfied (87%), presented a more mixed response (49% very satisfied and 38% somewhat satisfied).

¹⁶² 4256 recommendations of UN Volunteers (all VRA reports available for 2018-2020)

¹⁶³ A general survey to all UN Volunteers (as per 15/017/2021) and a validation survey of the ParEvo storylines to all UN Volunteers (as per 15/017/2021).

organisation “aspire to advance their career at the United Nations” (see also Figure 10 from ParEvo exercise).

Figure 10: ParEvo storyline 71 (ParEvo)



184. The majority of people consulted¹⁶⁴ are in agreement that most UNV placements help volunteers follow their career paths, as they get exposed to interesting assignments that will help them to gain experience, widen their networks and grow personally and professionally. The UNV e-campus reported that in 2020 UN Volunteers (or potential UN Volunteers) completed 35,481 courses. This suggests that UN Volunteers also acquired knowledge and skills through the Platform, although it has not been possible to determine to what extent these were relevant to their performance and/or professional development during their placements¹⁶⁵. This development occurs without substantive input from UNV (other than the e-campus) as UNV placements are not selected in relation to their development potential for UN Volunteers, and volunteers do not receive any substantive accompaniment from UNV in this regard.
185. Multiple sources¹⁶⁶ indicate that once UN Volunteers are in their placement, UNV adopts a *no hand-holding* approach which consists in referring any learning or other needs of UN Volunteers to the UN agencies that host them. This trend is corroborated by the new CoS, which override the training allowance and refer any such needs to the UNV e-campus. The contributions made by UN Volunteers to the ParEvo exercise likewise indicates a similar pattern in which UNV disappears from UN Volunteers' stories once they are on assignment (see Figure 11).

¹⁶⁴ UN Partners were consulted on this through two FGDs. This issue also came up in several KIIs with UNV Staff and one volunteer sector expert.

¹⁶⁵ In fact, the UNV online platform has not been explicitly mentioned in any of the evidence streams categorized as the voices of UN Volunteers.

¹⁶⁶ FGDs with RO and FUs; Analysis of UNV UN75 UNV Q&A sheet June 2020; ParEvo contributions; Analysis of 4256 recommendations of UN Volunteers from VRA (2nd theme emerging is on need for more support from UNV and/or host agency; 1st theme emerging is need to acknowledge and clarify the role of UN Volunteers); Analysis of 1170 open-ended responses in survey to UN Volunteers (2nd theme emerging under weaknesses is lack of support and guidance during UNV placement).

Figure 11: Word cloud from ParEvo contributions (ParEvo)



186. Partners in general perceive that this level of support is adequate and have a positive view of UNV's role during UN Volunteer placements, although slightly less so than during the recruitment phase. 107 of 113 (92%) of survey respondents agreed that *"UNV lends effective guidance, mentoring and support to the UN Volunteers serving in my organisation at all times"*: 62% strongly agreed, compared to 73% who highly rated UNV's effectiveness in the recruitment phase. Donors of FF in the FGD welcomed the role played by UNV as an *"intermediary organisation"* that looks after their nationals throughout their assignments as UN Volunteers. FF donors pointed to this as one of the added values of UNV compared to other talent-programmes such as the JPO programme. A more mixed response from UN Volunteers ¹⁶⁷ suggests that UNV should take a more active role during the entire placement, particularly in ensuring the well-being of UN Volunteers (see 5.1).
187. From a gender perspective, the survey also indicates that women are not as positive about the level of support they receive from UNV¹⁶⁸¹⁶⁹ and their level of well-being during the placement.

¹⁶⁷ An analysis of the open-question responses of the UN Volunteer survey reveals that four of the five categories under weakness of UNV were related to this issues: number 1 - issues related to situations of unfair treatment without a satisfactory resolution for the UNV; number 2 - issues related to general lack of support from both host agencies and UNV; number 4 - issues related to lack of "career development" and number 5 - issues related to "wellbeing".

¹⁶⁸ "UNV lends effective guidance, mentoring and support during the placement duration" (60% men completely agree; 45% women completely agree)

¹⁶⁹ "I have/had a high level of wellbeing in my placement as a UN Volunteer" (62% men completely agree; 50% women completely agree)

3.2. How have different UNV partnerships and stakeholder relationships contributed to the outcomes of the SF?

Who are UNV's strategic partners in delivering the SF?

FINDING 39 - There are apparent differences between the levels of investment and effort that UNV puts into its implicit partnership strategies for the two Outcomes of the present SF, with Outcome 2 receiving much more attention. This has meant that UNV is largely focused on nurturing partnerships with organisations with the capacity to host UN Volunteers to the detriment of partnerships with the greatest potential (and/or legitimacy) to promote volunteerism and volunteer action.

188. Under the current SF, UNV has succeeded in strengthening partnerships and developing new relations with organisations including academic institutions and private sector companies.
189. It was apparent from discussions with the regions and with UNV HQ and from the analysis of UNV documentation that the institutional emphasis on increasing the number of UN Volunteers has meant that the energies of UNV staff have been more focused on nurturing partnerships with the capacity to host UN Volunteers than on partnerships with the greatest potential (and/or legitimacy) to promote volunteerism and volunteer action¹⁷⁰. Illustrative of this is the number of contacts UNV has for partners under Outcome 1 and for partners under Outcome 2. At the beginning of the evaluation, UNV compiled a comprehensive list of partners and other stakeholders. The list of contacts included 250 contacts for partners that were specific to Outcome 1 divided into two broad groups, VIOs (at global, regional and country level) and Member States from Southern countries with which the Field Units mostly engage to promote volunteerism at the country level. For Outcome 2, the list consisted of 828 contacts of UN entities that host or have hosted UN Volunteers during this SF, including 31 contacts specific to UNDP which is the agency with the highest volume of UN Volunteers¹⁷¹.
190. In addition to the partnerships that are unique to one or the other Outcome, UNV also engages with a small number of donor governments (see efficiency) with which it has excellent relationships.

Strategic partnerships for Outcome 1

FINDING 40 - Under Outcome 1, UNV has engaged with the most strategic actors at the global level, at the national level partnerships could be increased especially with Civil Society.

191. Based on documentary evidence, FGDs and the KIIs, the evaluation finds that under Outcome 1, UNV has engaged with a wide range of partners at two main levels: global and country level. UNV has also established few but important partnerships with organisations at the regional level, such as the African Union Commission (AUC)¹⁷², and most relevantly with the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions, with whom

¹⁷⁰ This was discussed with most FGDs with UNV Regional Offices and Field Units and with volunteer sector experts. In the open-ended questions in the partners survey there are 45 references to UNV as a provider of UN Volunteers as opposed to 14 highlighting its function of promoting volunteerism.

¹⁷¹ Draft Contacts List for 2020 Partner Surveys Evaluation (final)

¹⁷² <https://www.unv.org/Press-releases/Promoting-Volunteerism-and-Exchanges-Africa-Context-2030-Agenda-and-Agenda-2063>

UNV organised regional consultations during 2019, under the banner of the regional fora on sustainable development, and as part of the run up to the 2020 GTM.

192. At the global level, UNV has historically¹⁷³ engaged with all key players in the international volunteer community, including close partnerships with the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (FORUM), of which UNV is an active member; and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), with whom UNV jointly organized the GTM in 2020 on the theme “Reimagining volunteerism for the 2030 Agenda”. During the GTM and in the three-year process of multi-stakeholder consultations that UNV attracted a significant number of partners, displaying significant convening power. All consulted sector experts who attended the GTM¹⁷⁴ unanimously praised the breadth of participation and the technical quality of the participants during the evaluation.
193. Globally, UNV has established contact with the main volunteer networks, such as, IAVE (International Association for Volunteer Effort), a network of individuals as opposed to organisations who actively participated in the consultations leading up to the GTM; World Scouts with whom a MoU was recently signed¹⁷⁵, CIVICUS, who are in a similar bracket as IAVE, and the VGA (the Volunteer Groups Alliance), an advocacy focused organisation based in New York that came together in 2013 following a United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) stakeholder meeting to advocate for the support and recognition of volunteerism in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
194. Under Outcome 1, partnerships have often been established on evidence and knowledge creation on the theme of volunteerism with bilateral governmental and non-governmental VIOs such as France Volontaires, JICA, KOICA, Peace Corps¹⁷⁶, and most notably with VSO, with which a long-standing cooperative relationship has been strengthened during this SF to promote national volunteering. At both the global and national level UNV has also established or strengthened relationships with various universities and other academic institutions, although to a lesser degree.
195. In relation to the creation of knowledge and evidence, the partnership that has been established with ILO and others to investigate the measurement and valuation of volunteer work, has been a welcome initiation by the wider sector.
196. At the national level, UNV has primarily partnered under Outcome 1 with two types of organisations; firstly, with VIOs from Southern countries that have a national coverage: some with an extensive outreach, such as the aforementioned “Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development” from India¹⁷⁷; and Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF) or the Chinese Young Volunteers Association (CYVA) from China. Secondly, UNV partners with relevant government bodies, among these, according to information gathered from the regional teams, youth ministries and departments clearly stand out.
197. The evaluation finds that UNV has engaged with the most strategic actors at the global level. At the country level, the responses to the survey and consultations with the regions suggest that partnerships for promoting volunteerism can be increased, especially with key civil society organisations¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷³ Dating back to 2001, International Year of Volunteers

¹⁷⁴ All volunteer sector experts, several UN Partners and several donors.

¹⁷⁵ In October 2020, the MoU has been provided.

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.unv.org/Press-reviews/VSO-and-Peace-Corps-sign-agreement-promote-volunteer-service>

¹⁷⁷ Other contacts provided in this category include, Association of Volunteer Centers (AVC) in Russia, Agence Nationale du Volontariat from Togo, Volunteers Involving Organisations Network from Sierra Leone, VIO Society from Kenya, Collectif Marocain du Volontariat from Morocco - Draft Contacts List for 2020 Partner Survey_SF Evaluation (final)

¹⁷⁸ In a qualitative analysis of the open-ended in the partners survey there are 11 references, under suggestions, to this issue.

198. In addition to the strategic orientation of the organisation in Outcome 2 (and precisely because of this institutional focus), the evaluation finds that the capacity (number of staff) the organisation devotes to partnership-building under both Outcomes has been uneven from the beginning of the SF and has been decreasing for Outcome 1 (see 2.3).

Strategic partnerships for Outcome 2

FINDING 41 - Under this outcome, UNV has successfully strengthening and diversified relevant partnerships to achieve the objectives set out in this SF.

199. As previously noted, under Outcome 2 the partnerships are much more numerous than under Outcome 1, but less diverse. Under this Outcome, partners can be grouped into two main categories: UN entities that host UN Volunteers and the organisations that fund these UN Volunteers (a small proportion of which may not be the same entities that host them). This is the case for governments that fund FFs (see 2.1.) or private entities, specifically Mount Kenya University Foundation which in 2019 became the first African private entity to fund UN Volunteers¹⁷⁹ (see chapter 4 in this report for more details on partnerships with academia and the private sector).
200. Within the UN entities, the partnership with UNDP has maintained its top position in terms of the number of UN Volunteers hosted with 31% of all UN Volunteers from 2018 to 2020 hosted by UNDP¹⁸⁰. The evaluation notes a decrease in the number of UN Volunteers in Peacekeeping Missions and an increase in the numbers hosted by UN Programs and Funds¹⁸¹. UNV's partnership with UNICEF has significantly strengthened under the current SF, in terms of the volume of UN Volunteers it hosts. This is relevant both because of the magnitude of its operations (and growth potential for UNV), and because of the prominent role that this Fund is playing in promoting volunteerism in the United Nations System.
201. In 2020, 635 of the 9,459 UN Volunteers were classified in the Fully Funded (FF) category; an increase from previous years. This category is used by Member States to fund UN Volunteer opportunities predominantly for their own nationals. Although this modality is still mostly used by Northern countries¹⁸², UNV has sought to diversify this type of partnership during this SF by signing agreements with other countries such as Bangladesh (in 2020), China, Kazakhstan and Thailand (in 2019), (see 2.2), thereby providing the organisation with an additional tool to promote South-South exchange.
202. Outcome 2 is formulated as supporting the UN system through the engagement of UN Volunteers and the integration of volunteerism. The evaluation finds that UN partners expect UNV to lead the way in the integration of volunteerism within the UN¹⁸³ beyond the deployment of UN Volunteers. Agencies such as UNICEF and UNFPA already have their own volunteer schemes through which they are piloting and advocating for different ways to engage people in the work of the UN on a voluntary basis.
203. UNV is partnering in a meaningful way at HQ-level with some of the departments and divisions within the UN entities that are working to promote volunteerism within the UN system. However, at the regional and country level, there is still little effort devoted to

¹⁷⁹ <https://www.unv.org/News/Mount-Kenya-University-pioneer-deploying-UN-University-Volunteers-East-and-Southern-Africa>

¹⁸⁰ UN Volunteers Data Power BI

¹⁸¹ UN Volunteers Data Power BI

¹⁸² Australia, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sweden and Switzerland

¹⁸³ As such was explicitly recognised by UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNDP during this evaluation. Other UN Agencies such as IOM indicates in their webpage that "UNV is the focal point for volunteerism in the UN System".

these endeavors¹⁸⁴ and often volunteer schemes in other UN entities are seen as competitors rather than as partners.

Partnership with donors

204. UNV has strengthened (and diversified) partnerships with a small group of donor countries that are contributing to UNV funds, particularly the Special Voluntary Fund (SVF). The evaluation finds that these partnerships are strategic for achieving the objectives set by the organisation under this SF as outlined in section 2.1. of this report. However, it has also been noted that these partnerships could be widened. Consulted stakeholders from both UNV and from the donor community have indicated that there is a clear expectation that UNV will expand its pool of donors.

How effectively has UNV managed these relationships in pursuit of the SF?

FINDING 42 - Under Outcome 1, partners see UNV as a strategic organisation that plays a key and unique role within the wider sector. Among partners there is also the sentiment that UNV's approach to this Outcome was too "product-oriented" and consequently UNV has had the tendency during this SF to nurture partnerships to the extent that they were useful for the delivery of these outputs.

205. As already noted, according to the survey, what partners value the most about the alliance with UNV is its effectiveness in "*advancing on the volunteerism agenda; in generating knowledge products on volunteerism and in introducing and/or elaborating policies on volunteerism*" ¹⁸⁵. The partners consulted also recognise and value UNV's convening capacity and, its potential as a knowledge broker and agenda setter (see section "meeting stakeholders' expectation – Outcome 1 under 3.1).
206. The majority of sector experts likewise express that UNV's approach under Outcome 1 was too "product-oriented" and that consequently relationships were managed effectively in pursuit of output targets as opposed to in pursuit of more meaningful alliances guided by shared - long term strategies around the promotion of volunteerism¹⁸⁶. On a related aspect, while a majority of stakeholders consulted praised the technical quality and commitment of UNV staff in promoting volunteerism, a minority were critical and questioned whether UNV staff have the kind of substantive stewardship that would be expected of such a critical organisation for the sector.

FINDING 43 – Under Outcome 2, both the increase in the number of UN Volunteers and the positive assessment of the recruitment service offered by UNV is the result of intensive partnership efforts carried out by UNV under this SF. However, not all agencies are comfortable with UNV's approach as a service provider.

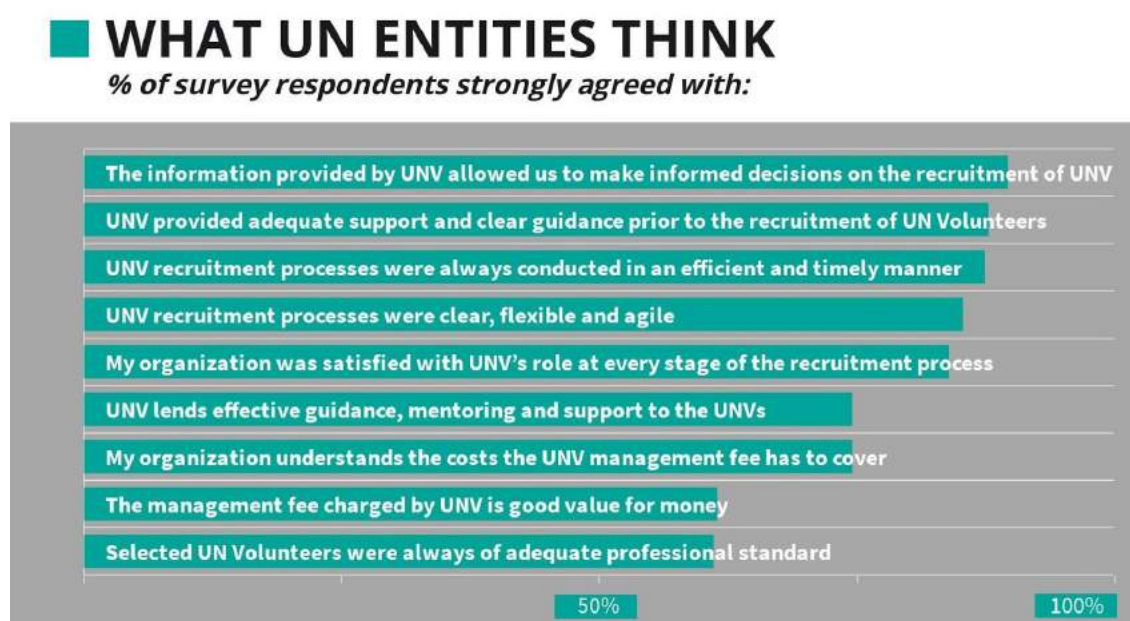
¹⁸⁴ 184 FGDs with Regions and FUs and with UN partners.

¹⁸⁵ 28 out of 30 respondents agree that UNV have contributed to putting volunteerism on the political agenda; 27 out of 31 respondents agree that UNV is contributing to elaborating volunteer policies; and 22 out of 28 respondents agree that the partnership with UNV has allowed them to access cutting-edge research on volunteerism.

¹⁸⁶ 100% of the 31 partners responding to this question in the survey agreed that "UNV should engage with VIOs more meaningfully" (77% strongly agree). One volunteer sector expert also questioned whether these outputs pursued by UNV carry the agenda of the wider sector or merely UN Volunteers.

207. As described under 3.1, UNV has successfully enacted a client-oriented approach, which is actively pursued and widespread in UN entities¹⁸⁷. From this perspective, the UNV service under Outcome 2 is highly rated by UN Entities: 113 of 114 (99%) of UN partners replying to the survey agreed with the statement “my organisation will continue to recruit UN Volunteers in the future”; of which 80% strongly agreed. As illustrated in Figure 12, the other indicators related to quality of service were equally positive. Alongside this, not all partners are comfortable with this perceived commercial/ business-orientated approach with a minority of UN Entities expressing discomfort during the FGDs and through the open-ended responses in the survey with some of the terminology used by UNV and is relevant while considering how partnerships are managed.

Figure 12: Partners say (Survey to Partners)



208. Both the increase in the number of UN Volunteers and the positive assessment of the recruitment service offered by UNV is the result of intensive efforts carried out by UNV under this SF. Consulted stakeholders¹⁸⁸ highlighted the work that had been possible thanks to the strategic shift of the New York office, which changed its focus from concentrating on work with Member States to placing more emphasis on partnerships with agencies, such as UNFPA or UNICEF, conducting detailed market analysis, and obtaining better intelligence of UN Agencies to improve their understanding of their business models, and to be better prepared to know how UNV could effectively support¹⁸⁹. While recognizing these efforts at the HQ level, regional UNV staff have expressed that more strategic work is still needed to realign with UNDP and have pointed to a perceived lack of clarity in the existing relationship, as discussed under 1.1.

¹⁸⁷ https://careers.un.org/lbw/attachments/competencies_booklet_en.pdf

¹⁸⁸ UN Partners in one of the two FGDs and KIIs.

¹⁸⁹ This information was provided by documents share by UNV and in KIIs and FGDs with UNV Staff and with UN partners.

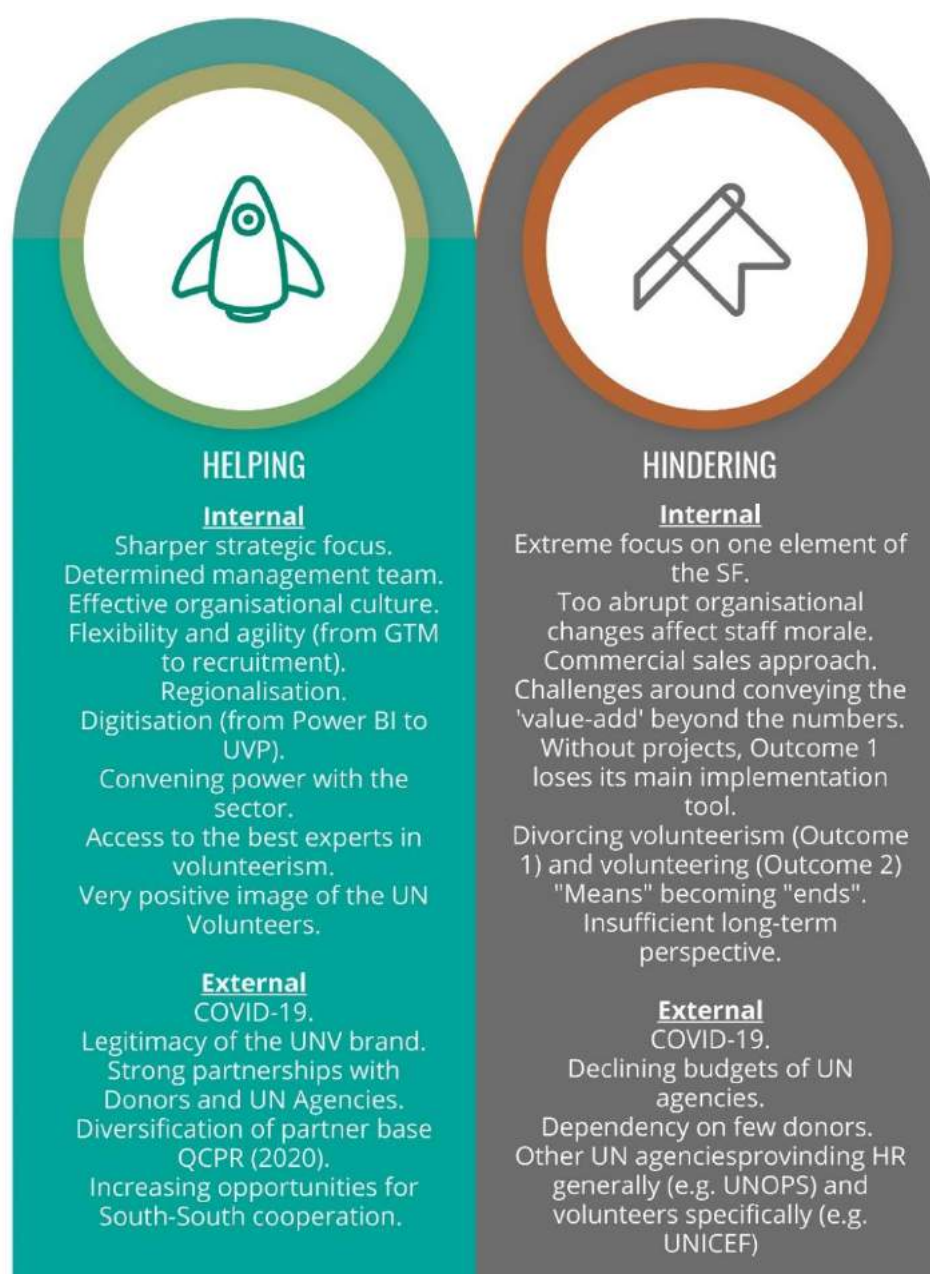
FINDING 44 - UNV has been highly efficient at the management of donor relations.

209. All donors consulted during the evaluation unanimously praised their relationship with UNV. Many aspects of this relationship were highlighted, ranging from UNV's flexibility accommodating different reporting requirements, or anticipating issues, to effective and proactive communication, and capacity to bring innovative ideas for projects to the table.

3.3. What are the major factors (both internal and external) helping (enabling) or hindering (constraining) the implementation of the SF?

The following infographic summarizes the factors that have facilitated and hindered the implementation of SF. These factors are discussed in detail in different sections of this report.

Figure 13: Helping and hindering factors (analysis of evaluation team)



3.4. What strategies and mechanisms have supported the implementation of the SF?

FINDING 45 - From a strategic planning and implementation perspective, the SF has brought to UNV a clearer and more focused approach. The vertical planning from corporate level to field level/departments and back has proved to be an efficient implementation mechanism of the SF. Additionally, the digital transformation has been a significant step forward for UNV in terms of operational coherence (linking budget with work; and work with outputs and outcomes); in terms of effectiveness and speed of implementation; and above all in terms of transparency and accountability.

210. The SF has brought to UNV a clearer and more focused approach. In this sense, the majority of UNV Staff consulted agree that the present SF is easier to understand, easier to communicate, and therefore (a priori) simpler to implement than previous Strategic Frameworks. Another important difference with other SFs is that only a few sectoral strategies were developed as needed but without a strict connection with the SF framework, i.e., a brief communication strategy¹⁹⁰ and partnership strategy focused mainly on donors¹⁹¹, a gender Action Plan 2019 and 2020¹⁹² or the digitalisation strategy¹⁹³. This has given UNV much more agility in its planning processes. UNV managers consulted on this issue agreed that sector strategy development processes in previous SFs had become Kafkaesque, since it sometimes took several years for strategy documents to be finalised and approved, and they immediately became obsolete as a result. In contrast, during the present SF, the planning process is carried out through annual work plans (AWP) that are regionalized through bottom-up planning, with Field Units and Regional Offices feeding into the overall corporate and strategic targets as set in the SF. UNV has a comprehensive approval process to ensure quality and consistency with the overall strategic directions, as detailed in section 2.1.

211. At the individual level, all UNV personnel connect their work objectives with the goals of their department or regional office's annual work plans through the Performance Management and Development (PMD) process, i.e., the appraisal system of the organisation. Vertical planning from corporate level to field level/departments and vice versa has proved to be a highly efficient implementation mechanism of the SF. UNV has designed and updated several useful instruments at the operational level to assist this planning process¹⁹⁴. Several of these instruments have already been outlined under section 2.1; what follows is a brief description of the functionality of those used to plan and implement the annual plans derived from the SF.

1. Business Intelligence Dashboard – The business intelligence dashboard, commonly known in the organisation as Power BI, is UNV's primary tool for real time monitoring of UN Volunteer mobilization, recruitment, cost recovery and work planning. This instrument is fed by other systems such as Atlas, the Volunteer Management Application (VMAM), the Volunteers Reporting Application (VRA), VMF, and the set up for on-line volunteering (Drupal).

¹⁹⁰ UNV Communications Strategy 2018-2021

¹⁹¹ UNV Partnerships Strategy 2018-2021

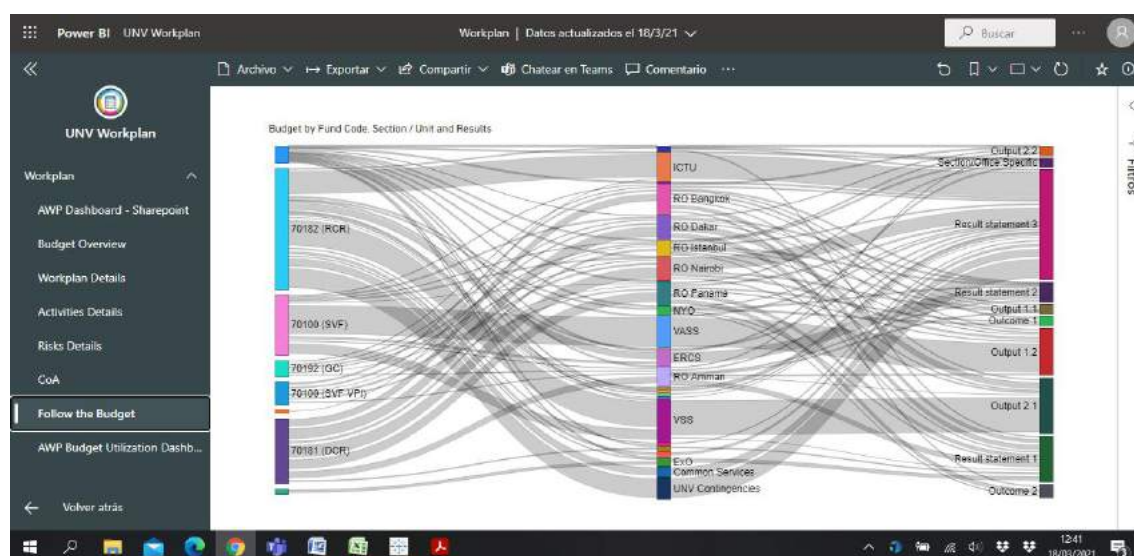
¹⁹² UNV 2019 and 2020 Gender Action Plans

¹⁹³ (in DT Board meeting PPT - November 20th - slide 21)

¹⁹⁴ This sentiment was expressed by the majority of UNV Staff who were consulted on this matter both from UNV HQ and from the Field.

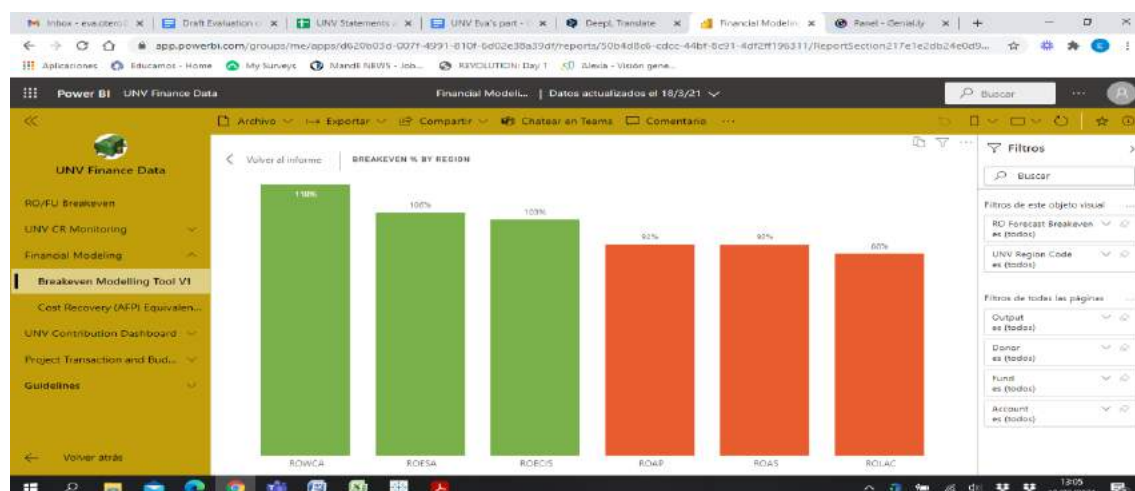
2. The Volunteer Mobilization Forecast (VMF) provides systematic real-time forecasting of UN Volunteers assignments by country & regions, by UN agencies or Missions, by modality, and by duration of assignment. It also differentiates between hard and soft pipelines. UNV uses these forecasts to inform its budget allocations.
3. The Volunteer Reporting Application (VRA) provides monitoring information from UN Volunteers themselves on the type of contributions they make to the UN System results and the 2030 Agenda, as well as their satisfaction with the assignment and their learning needs. The VRA has an innovative system called "Call for Action" in which UN Volunteers can make actionable suggestions to UNV. The same system allows the concerned UNV departments to see and acknowledge the recommendations or ideas from UN Volunteers and take action. Although the system looks very promising, it is still too new for the evaluation to be able to assess its practical impact on the UNV planning process.
4. The Annual Work Plans and associated monitoring Dashboard provides a detailed overview of all the work plans approved by each department or region. From the dashboard, users can review the outline of each work plan; the detail of all planned activities; the budget associated with each work plan; the associated risks that have been identified, their potential impact and the team's response to each of them. It also includes a section called "follow the budget" which directly links the financial resources to each of the elements of this SF (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Follow the budget (UNV Workplan Power BI)



5. The UN Volunteers Data Dashboard provides information segregated by month since 2008 on the number of active UN Volunteers. It offers very detailed information by sex, modality, region, nationality of the UN Volunteers, and by the entity that hosts them, among other variables.
6. The UNV Finance Dashboard contains detailed information on UNV's budgets including the breakeven modelling tool, which relates the number of UN Volunteers mobilized in each region (as income) and the budget spent by each region (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: UNV Finance data (Power BI)



212. The evaluation finds that the digitization work has been highly effective which, together with the process described under the Efficiency section of this report, has meant a significant step forward for UNV in terms of coherence (linking budget with work; and work with outputs and outcomes); in terms of effectiveness and speed of implementation; and above all in terms of transparency and accountability.
213. The focus on Outcome 2 and specifically on increasing the number of UN Volunteers is also reflected in the SF implementation mechanisms and has meant shortcomings in the mechanisms supporting implementation. As noted previously in this report, these instruments are largely geared to planning and measuring the deployment of UN Volunteers and to how these translate into actual and potential revenue for the organisation. A consequence of the focus on Outcome 2 is that Outcome 1 has a limited set of instruments to enable its implementation. Although a clear effort is being made to incorporate the ideas implicit and explicit in Outcome 1 into instruments such as the AWP, the main instrument for its implementation has traditionally been projects and programmes. On the other hand, the achievements and lessons learned from the 33 projects that have still been implemented during this SF, called in the organisation "legacy projects" (see annex 10), have no obvious place through these instruments in informing the work plans for the coming years.

What risks and risk mitigation strategies have been deployed?

FINDING 46 – The most relevant risks have been identified and realistic and balanced mitigation measures have been developed.

214. UNV conducted a risk assessment to inform the drafting of the SF with a clear bias towards the assessment of financial risks (i.e., UNV's financial stability). As part of the digitization process the organisation has introduced a specific module linked to AWP on risks. In this module, the different departments and regions of UNV can identify the risks that the implementation of their AWP may have and classify them according to their potential impact and likelihood of occurrence. Additionally, mitigation strategies are formulated for each of them.

215. A detailed analysis of the risks identified for the year 2021 indicates that although the type of risks contemplated is varied, there is still a critical mass of risks related to circumstances that could jeopardize the mobilisation of financial resources and/or the mobilisation of UN Volunteers, be it risks related to communication, staff capacity and those arising from operational failures. Risks related to lack of capacity for certain functions are also identified in a high proportion, particularly in the FU and ROs. Contextual risks such as political crises or those arising from the incidence of the pandemic are equally identified.

3.5. To what extent has UNV contributed/is expected to contribute to the SDGs at the country and regional and global levels through the achievement of the SF outcomes?

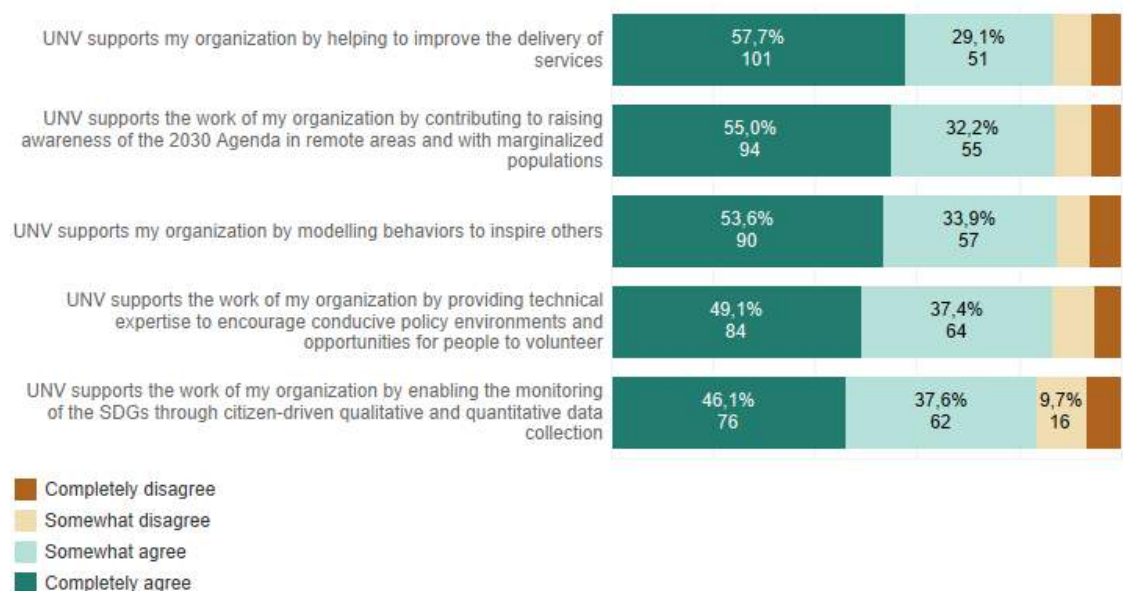
FINDING 47 - The fact that almost all of the assignments take place in UN Entities supports the assertion that UN Volunteers are contributing to the SDGs through the mandate of their host organisations. UN Volunteers report contributing the most to SDG 16 and SDG 5.

216. Accurately measuring the contribution of volunteerism to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda constitutes a major challenge, since the concept of volunteerism does not fall clearly within the 232 global indicators introduced to measure progress towards the achievement of the SDGs. UNV's main channel for contributing to the SDGs is through the deployment of UN Volunteers who support the work of UN host agencies¹⁹⁵. Since the work of UN agencies is aligned with the SDGs, it can be reasonably asserted that UN Volunteers are contributing to these efforts. Nonetheless, the exact value of that contribution and what part of UN agencies' achievements can be attributed to UNV remains a challenge that the organisation has been trying to address through the SF, with limited results in the absence of factual evidence of this contribution.
217. Whilst challenging to measure, consulted partners have positively rated UNV's contribution to the SDGs, mainly through the following actions¹⁹⁶: i) by raising awareness on the 2030 agenda (87%); ii) by enabling citizen-driven SDG monitoring (83%), and iii) by contributing to partners' programmatic implementation of the 2030 Agenda (96%). The VRA shows that UN Volunteers contribute the most to SDG 16 and SDG 5. As mentioned in section 1.1 above, the SF narrative describes how UNV intends to contribute to the SDGs in 5 major areas: (1) raising awareness on the 2030 Agenda in remote areas and with marginalized populations; (2) enabling SDG monitoring through citizen-driven qualitative and quantitative data collection; (3) providing technical expertise to encourage policy environments and opportunities for people to volunteer; (4) helping to improve service delivery; and (5) modelling behaviours to inspire others.

¹⁹⁵ According to the UN Volunteers survey conducted within the framework of this evaluation, "to contribute to the SDGs and 2030 Agenda" is one of the main reasons for becoming a UN Volunteer (76.1% completely agree).

¹⁹⁶ Survey to UNV partners: 124 out of 129 respondents to this question.

Figure 16: Partners say (Survey to partners)



218. The evaluation surveyed partners to assess the level of UNV's achievement in these five areas of contribution. As Figure 16 illustrates, according to the partners, UNV has highly contributed under all categories, ranging from 88% who agreed that UNV supported their organisation by helping to improve service delivery (highest score) to 84% who thought that UNV supported the work of the organisation by enabling SDG monitoring through citizen-driven qualitative and quantitative data collection (lowest score).
219. Through the VRA, UNV monitors the contribution that UN Volunteers believe they are making to the various SDGs through their assignments. 15,226 UN Volunteers have given feedback on this aspect during 2018, 2019 and 2020. UN Volunteers reported contributing primarily to SDG16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions"; secondly, to SDG 5 "Gender equality"; and thirdly, to SDG 3 "Good health and well-being". A more detailed analysis of UN Volunteers' reports gives a more granular indication of the targets within the SDGs to which UN Volunteers believe they contribute the most (See Figure 17).

Figure 17: UN Volunteers contributions to SDG (VRA)



220. The evaluation also included this question in the partner survey, with results consistent with those reported by the VRA. In the evaluation survey, SDGs 3, 5 and 16 emerged as the top SDGs to which UN Volunteers contributed the most, although according to the partners, SDG 5 came first.

Sustainability

221. In the section on sustainability, the evaluation considers the extent to which the contributions of the Strategic Framework will be sustained into the future. This section addresses 2 key evaluation questions: (1) To what extent is the SF conducive to the long-term sustainability of UNV?; (2) To what extent can the concrete results obtained through the SF (under both outcomes) be sustained into the future?

222. Overall, the evaluation finds UNV's contributions to the outcomes of the SF are likely to be sustained in the future and have served to strengthen UNV's sustainability prospects. The generation of knowledge and evidence, coupled with support to policy development on volunteerism, and increased mobilisation are effectively contributing to the sustainability of SF results. Under the current SF, UNV's high-quality knowledge products have strengthened its credibility and positioning in research on volunteerism, bringing to the forefront its potential to play a stronger role as knowledge broker on volunteerism for the SDGs. The focus on mobilisation under the current SF has succeeded in strengthening the organisation's short-term sustainability. However, strengthening UNV's long-term sustainability will require a more ambitious, strategic and less financially focused approach beyond 2021 that is also crucial for preserving the relevance of the organisation.

4.1. To what extent is the SF conducive to the long-term sustainability of UNV?

Sustainable by design

FINDING 48 – UNV’s contributions to the outcomes of the SF are likely to be sustained in the future¹⁹⁷ since the SF has successfully guided UNV in restoring the organisation’s financial health, thereby significantly improving its sustainability prospects.

223. The SF was developed in an institutional context marked by diminishing reserves, downward trends in core contributions and a negative recovery forecast, and the implementation of the SF has served to restore UNV’s financial health. Considering the positive results achieved since 2018, the SF has provided a solid base on which to build UNV’s economic recovery and ensure its short/medium-term sustainability.
224. Financial sustainability has been a key driver not only for the design but also for the implementation of the SF. Since 2018, UNV has focused its financial and human resources on the mobilisation of UN Volunteers (under Outcome 2) with the objective of increasing cost-recovery and securing more income through institutional incentives for mobilisation and fundraising, with positive results. This strategy has proved successful and provided a clear route for addressing the organisation’s key issues of concern (namely reductions in funding and declining numbers of UN Volunteers).

Longer-term Sustainability

FINDING 49 – While recognizing the value of the SF as an effective solution that served its immediate short- to medium term purpose, its service-oriented focus does not lend itself to significant scaling up and therefore poses a risk to longer-term sustainability.

225. UNV’s approach must seek to ensure that now that the organisation has restored its financial health, it operates in a more ambitious and holistic manner that considers the organisation’s expanded mandate beyond the HR-related focus of recent years. This is crucial for UNV to remain relevant in the current context and preserve the value of its brand.
226. Three aspects can inform UNV’s way forward to strengthen its sustainability: firstly, UNV has achieved encouraging results under both outcomes of the current framework, thereby creating a series of solid building blocks (sound partnerships, record UN Volunteer mobilisation figures, contributions to the work of Members States in the realm of volunteerism, knowledge products, etc.) that the organisation can build on. Secondly, consulted stakeholders inside and outside UNV have identified areas of added value (such as knowledge brokering) that require resources in order for existing opportunities to be maximized (as described in the Relevance section). Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world of the value of volunteerism and provided evidence of its importance, thereby creating favorable conditions for a bold promotion of volunteerism (see section 5.2). A minority of consulted UNV staff noted that COVID-19 has enhanced UNV’s sustainability by increasing demand for UN Volunteers. Taken together, these factors create an enabling environment for UNV to develop a more ambitious approach for the upcoming SF.

¹⁹⁷ 89% and 88% of partners believe that the partnership with UNV has brought about benefits that will continue beyond the collaboration for Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, respectively.

FINDING 50 – Although the focus on mobilisation has been fundamental for achieving a financially restorative effect, UNV could undermine its sustainability prospects if it continues to focus on its role as HR provider without embracing its full mandate with adequate resources.

227. In the long run, primarily focusing on volunteer mobilisation is likely to be detrimental to the sustainability of UNV, since it risks diminishing UNV's relevance and comparative advantage vis-à-vis other cost-effective talent providers (such as UNOPS, volunteer programmes managed by other UN agencies, private HR providers, etc.). In this regard, a minority of consulted UNV staff¹⁹⁸ stressed that in order for UNV's so-called "market proposition" related to the mobilisation of UN Volunteers to be sustainable, it needs to be backed by a strong value proposition that frames the promotion of volunteerism and builds on a solid understanding of what volunteerism is and what it can offer partners beyond cost-effective talent in the form of UN Volunteers. Articulating the value proposition of volunteerism in a way that was not completely distanced from its market proposition under this SF was described as a challenge by consulted UNV staff. They expressed doubts about whether UNV had the right set of skills as an organisation to address this issue, given the limited presence of volunteerism experts, coupled with the limited resources dedicated to activities under Outcome 1.

FINDING 51 – UNV's convening power is widely considered one of the key strengths of the organisation and constitutes a strategic positive factor for its long-term sustainability. UNV also plays a leadership role in the volunteer sector that is positive for the organisation's sustainability prospects.

228. Under the current SF, UNV was able to showcase its capacity to bring together a wide range of actors and promote multi-stakeholder and multi-level engagement, when it successfully led the impressive GTM (despite COVID-19 related challenges), providing an excellent illustration of the unique role that UNV plays in the sector. Furthermore, partners also valued how their partnership with UNV had facilitated access to strategic partners and stakeholders, as a result of UNV's convening power.
229. Ensuring that the post-GTM momentum is maximized requires considerable efforts, since partnerships need to be constantly attended to, nurtured and strengthened. There was a mixed response from those interviewed, with some noting that beyond the success of the meeting, more clarity was needed on how to effectively leverage the platform provided by the GTM and the resulting "Call to Action: Volunteering in the Decade of Action". It was also noted that partnerships in the sector were not always substantive but more based on "one-off" events (such as IVD) and this aspect should also be strengthened (as noted under 3.2.).
230. UNV plays a leadership role, and the volunteer sector looks to UNV on key issues¹⁹⁹ such as advocating with governments on the introduction of adequate duty of care legislation for the creation of safe spaces for volunteers, where their value can be recognised, and their well-being guaranteed. In this regard, it is also worth noting that the majority of partners consulted through the survey also believe that their partnership with UNV has contributed to advancing on the volunteerism agenda (68.8% completely agreed; 25%

¹⁹⁸ KIIs with UNV staff in HQ and FGDs with ROs and FUs.

¹⁹⁹ As confirmed by all consulted VIOs and sector experts.

somewhat agreed²⁰⁰). Furthermore, partners also valued how their partnership with UNV had facilitated access to strategic partners and stakeholders, as a result of UNV's convening power.

FINDING 52 – Decentralization has built UNV's capacity at the country level through professionalization and an increased field presence in a manner that has improved the organisation's sustainability prospects by making UNV more relevant and better adapted to the needs of partners, even if the capacity of FUs remains limited.

231. Decentralization has built UNV's capacity at the country level through professionalization and an increased field presence, in a manner that has served the organisation's sustainability objectives, by effectively strengthening mobilizing efforts under Outcome 2 and supporting Member States under Outcome 1. It has also helped UNV to align its work with the recommendations of the QPCR 2016 and UN reform, and there is widespread consensus inside UNV that these efforts to decentralize and move the organisation closer to the field should continue, with a greater delegation of authority that brings certain decisions closer to the partners and UN Volunteers, and strengthens UNV's community-based approach.
232. As discussed in the section on Effectiveness, UNV has succeeded in strengthening partnerships and developing new relations with organisations including academic institutions and private sector companies. According to the majority of consulted UNV staff in ROs and FUs, the decentralization process has created a sound base on which to continue expanding and deepening relations with partners beyond mobilisation, to embrace the promotion of volunteerism initiatives under Outcome 1.
233. The majority of consulted UNV staff²⁰¹ noted that UNV Regional Managers are well-placed to advocate for volunteerism at a high political level given their senior (P5) positions in the UN system and their access to high-level government staff. Given the liaison role that UNV Regional Managers play in their respective regions, they are also expected by governments and civil society actors to define in concrete terms what it is that UNV will do to help promote volunteerism for the SDGs through these partnerships. The majority of UNV staff consulted on this issue agreed that this response must go beyond providing cost-effective talent to UN agencies, but also inspire and promote volunteerism initiatives in partnership with other actors in the volunteer sector. In some countries, it was noted that the focus on mobilisation had been detrimental to building wider partnerships with CSOs, since partnerships had focused on UN entities while other forms of collaboration were put on hold.
234. The importance of continuing to support the efforts of the volunteer sector through stronger partnerships with VIOs was also highlighted by UNV staff as a strategic way of ensuring the sustainability of acquired results. It was also noted that existing links with CSOs are greatly valued by UN agencies, who often see UNV as a bridge that connects them with civil society at the field level.
235. Beyond CSOs, a minority of UNV staff members highlighted the importance of expanding partnerships to more universities and private sector companies. This point was also raised by participants at the webinar co-hosted by UNV and UNDP held on 24.03.21 ("21st Century Reset: Human Development, Volunteering and the New Social Contract") in relation to the importance of building collective agency with multiple stakeholders.

200 A total of 179 partners responded to this question.

201 As evidenced in FGDs with RO and FU staff.

FINDING 53 – UNV’s service-oriented approach risks diluting the spirit of volunteerism at the heart of its mandate, thereby affecting its original “brand”.

236. The evaluation has found evidence of this risk through interviews with a wide range of stakeholders both inside and outside UNV. The majority of UNV staff consulted on this issue acknowledged the need to improve the understanding of UN Partners on what a UN Volunteer is and to ensure that there is clarity on what UNV brings to UN host entities, beyond cost-effective talent. Inside UNV, there is a sense that although the focus on mobilisation was necessary due to the economic context, it has also been detrimental for other aspects of UNV’s work, and this can affect sustainability prospects (see 3.1).
237. A related challenge is to ensure that UNV’s talent pool remains relevant to the current rapidly evolving context, while remaining aligned to the essence of the UNV programme²⁰². Efforts to include a wide range of technical expertise in demand by the UN partners, combined with the resultant increase in mobilisation and cost-recovery, have led to an extensive range of profiles qualify as “UN Volunteer assignments”. It will be important for UNV to ensure that the volunteerism promotion dimension remains present to ensure that UN Volunteers are differentiated from other UN contractual modalities, and not solely placed driven by cost effectiveness. The evaluation notes that whilst UN Volunteer’s job description should always have a volunteer promotion as one component, alongside the main technical area of work, this is not universally the case²⁰³.
238. In various countries, the promotion of volunteer management profiles for UN Volunteers served to strengthen collaboration with VIOs and to play a bridging role with CSOs. It was also noted that UN Volunteers can work more on assignments that seek to amplify the work of others in the realm of volunteerism, since many organisations are promoting volunteerism at the grassroots level but have no leverage. Hence, effectively protecting the UNV brand to sustain results into the future requires consideration of both the coherence of UNV assignments (i.e., what characteristics should be a requirement for an assignment to be right for a UN Volunteer) and understanding motivation factors (i.e., what filters should be in place to ensure that the right type of candidates continue to be attracted in the future²⁰⁴). The third aspect that deserves attention in relation to the brand concerns the quality of the support lent to UN Volunteers and their level of satisfaction and well-being during assignments.

FINDING 54 – UNV’s sustainability prospects will benefit from continued efforts to identify opportunities to strengthen the relationship with UNDP with a view to identifying opportunities for more strategic engagement under UN Reform.

239. This evaluation finds that certain disconnect in the relationship between UNDP and UNV exist at the field level, leading to a situation where opportunities for the promotion and inclusion of volunteerism in UNSDCF processes are not maximized. The evaluation acknowledges ongoing efforts to strengthen this relationship, as evidenced by recent OPG documents, which requested “*RBx to continue to facilitate UNV participation and to guide COs/RRs on issues of (i) representing UNV in UNCTs; ii) integrating volunteering efforts in CDPs and prodocs; and (iii) creating enabling environment for UNV staff or focal*

202 On the 20th April 2021 only 3 of the 10 Descriptions of Assignment (DoAs) posted on UNV’s website included a reference to volunteerism and/or UNV’s mandate (<https://www.unv.org/special-calls>).

203 Ibid.

204 According to the UN Volunteers survey conducted within the framework of this evaluation, the top reason for becoming UN Volunteers was “to help others and make a difference” (88.5% completely agreed; 10.5% somewhat agreed).

points at country level"; "OHR to further integrate UNV in appropriate corporate talent management mechanisms" (among other requests) ²⁰⁵.

240. As discussed under the Relevance section, UNV field staff noted that the introduction of the new Resident Coordinator system brought about changes for UNV in terms of the location of the FU (which in the past had always been under UNDP as RC) but has not clarified important issues, such as UNV's role vis-à-vis UNDP or the participation of UNV in UNCTs. Other colleagues describe working under the UNDP umbrella as "*a grey area*", in reference to the perception that the work of UNV is often diluted as part of UNDP (for example, when only UNDP signs a project document drafted in collaboration with UNV, or when UNDP represents UNV at UNCTs). Analysing current arrangements and clarifying roles and expectations would serve to identify mutually beneficial ways of operating in the new context of UN reform and to consider collaboration opportunities emerging in relation to COVID-19.
241. Regarding UNV-UNDP collaboration, a positive initiative worth noting is the collaborative process launched through the recently held webinar "21st Century Reset: Human Development, Volunteering and the New Social Contract", which provides an opportunity for UNDP and UNV to join forces in the co-creation of SWVR 2021 with "*a coalition of like-minded partners*"²⁰⁶. UNDP highlighted the key role to be played by volunteers as agents of change who can provide the missing link between agency and action for change, since volunteering provides "*a platform for collective agency that allows people to be empowered to act upon their values and change social norms*"²⁰⁷. This process has the potential to provide a strategic channel for UNDP-UNV collaboration to be maximized during the remaining implementation period in the run-up to the publication of SWVR 2021.

4.2. To what extent can the concrete results obtained through the SF (under both outcomes) be sustained into the future?

FINDING 55 – The SF has generated important results under both outcomes and the contribution of these concrete results is likely to continue beyond SF implementation. UNV has produced a series of high-quality knowledge products, generated relevant evidence for the volunteer sector (with a focus on contribution to SDGs), and has supported policy development in several countries. However, metrics on outreach and uptake of knowledge products are limited and it is therefore difficult to have a detailed picture of how the evidence and knowledge generated under the SF are being used.

Knowledge generation and uptake

242. UNV has produced knowledge products and generated evidence on the contribution of volunteerism to peace, development and the SDGs. Volunteer sector experts highly rated the 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: The Thread that Binds – Volunteerism and Community Resilience. The knowledge products generated within the framework of the Plan of Action included a global synthesis report reviewing progress made against the three Plan of Action objectives (ownership, integration and measurement), an updated framework of the dimensions and categories of volunteering practices in the 21st century,

²⁰⁵ See "Action Brief for the Organisational Performance Group" (17.02.21) and OPG Decisions (17.02.21).

²⁰⁶ Opening remarks by UNV's EC, "21st Century Reset: Human Development, Volunteering and the New Social Contract" webinar, 24.03.21.

²⁰⁷ Presentation by Dr. Christina Lengfelder (Human Development Report Office, UNDP), "21st Century Reset: Human Development, Volunteering and the New Social Contract" webinar, 24.03.21.

a toolbox and an anthology of papers proposing different analytical approaches for measuring volunteering and its contributions to sustainable development, a toolkit on promoting gender equality through volunteering and a knowledge portal. Consulted VIOs praised the caliber of the experts hired by UNV to produce research and knowledge products and highlighted the excellent reception of the 2018 SWVR across the volunteer sector.

243. Results derived through knowledge generation are likely to be sustained in the future, since resources will remain available and accessible for the development sector at large through the Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism for Development Practitioners and Policymakers; though continued investment in staff and infrastructure, alongside continued updating will be necessary. Policy development efforts have contributed to the passing of volunteerism legislation and to the introduction of volunteer programmes that are also likely to continue with UNV's support in the future.

FINDING 56 – UNV's work in the realm of knowledge generation is greatly appreciated inside and outside UNV and its agenda-setting role has also been highlighted as a positive factor for UNV's sustainability.

244. The widespread recognition of UNV's work in the realm of knowledge generation was illustrated by the fact that 100% of the partners who participated in the survey believed that UNV should continue to generate knowledge products on volunteerism for the SDGs (94.1% completely agreed; 5.9% somewhat agreed²⁰⁸). Furthermore, partners noted that their partnership with UNV had allowed them to access cutting-edge research on volunteerism and other key knowledge products (39.3% completely agreed; 39.3% somewhat agreed).
245. UNV's agenda-setting role was also highlighted by the majority of consulted sector experts, and it was noted that "the SWVR has a knock-on effect that influences the conversations people have. When UNV picks the theme of the reports, this has an impact on the direction that is set for the conversations that we have as a sector". In this regard, UNV's decision to devote the upcoming 2021 SWVR "to explore emerging forms of collaboration between people and states in order to drive more equitable and sustainable norms, decisions and actions" has been welcomed.
246. A related aspect that has been highlighted as a positive result and is also likely to be sustained beyond 2021, is the increased inclusion of researchers and knowledge from the global south²⁰⁹. This move is part of ongoing sector-wide efforts to overturn a situation where research on volunteerism is primarily led by the northern-dominated/based VIOs. Consulted VIOs and volunteerism experts positively acknowledged this move and noted UNV's alignment with similar efforts on the part of other leading volunteer sector actors.

FINDING 57 – The comprehensive Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism for Development Practitioners and Policymakers launched in 2020 can be expected to play a pivotal role in promoting the uptake and use of knowledge and evidence generated under the current SF beyond 2021.

²⁰⁸ A total of 32 partners replied to this question.

²⁰⁹ The research team responsible for SWVR 2021 includes researchers from the University of Malawi and Kathmandu University School of Education and the collaborative co-creation approach seeks to ensure there is extensive engagement.

247. This knowledge platform includes a volunteering database of country profiles with facts and figures on laws, policies, schemes and measurement data, an evidence library and a knowledge exchange channel. The Knowledge Portal serves as a tool not only for disseminating knowledge and compiling knowledge, but also for encouraging the volunteer sector to engage through the interactive “be an editor” channel. Furthermore, UNV seeks to use this knowledge portal to showcase research that is led from the global south and is engaging new academic partners with a view to taking a more inclusive approach and give more visibility to other actors and experiences from the global south. This tool has been well received by consulted stakeholders inside and outside UNV and can be expected to play a pivotal role in promoting the uptake and use of knowledge and evidence generated under the current SF, as already evidenced by online discussions and knowledge exchanges taking place in relation to SWVR 2021.
248. On the issue of knowledge generation, the majority of consulted UNV staff acknowledged that more evidence is needed on the following aspects: the contribution of volunteerism to the SDGs, UNV’s contribution to both volunteerism and the SDGs, and UN Volunteers’ contributions to volunteerism and the SDGs. Generating this evidence is important for supporting the sustainability of results achieved under the current SF.
249. At the same time, UNV staff also pointed to the importance of balancing the need for evidence with other actions in the current context. It is also important to disassociate the need for evidence from UNV’s mobilisation focus and to avoid seeing it only as a means for informing UNV’s “market proposition” with the objective of increasing the number of UN Volunteers. The generation of evidence on the contribution of volunteerism (and UNV) to the SDGs should serve more strategic interests and purposes.

FINDING 58 – The Global Technical Meeting (GTM) held under the Plan of Action for the Next Decade and Beyond has given impetus to ongoing efforts to generate evidence on the contribution of volunteerism. Ensuring this momentum is not lost is key for the sustainability of its results but requires strategic guidance and dedicated resources.

250. GTM knowledge materials resulted from three years of evidence generation and validation in coordination with stakeholders and the quality of the synthesis reports and key thinking pieces is very good. However, consulted UNV staff and sector experts expressed their concern about the perceived lack of guidance on how to capitalise on these knowledge products (particularly since governments expected concrete steps), and how to leverage them at the global, regional, national and local levels. Two online consultations launched through the knowledge exchange channel of the Knowledge Platform have followed the GTM and have served to provide UNV with a valuable set of inputs for future action.

FINDING 59 – UNV is uniquely placed to play a stronger knowledge brokering role in the volunteer sector. This knowledge brokering role is also relevant for UNV internally, since it can serve to strengthen the organisation’s learning approach if adequate resources are allocated.

251. The evaluation finds widespread consensus inside and outside UNV on UNV’s unique position to play a stronger knowledge brokering role (see 3.1). Knowledge brokering builds on networks, credibility and trust. It involves being well-informed and updated on information of relevance. It is often described as a cognitive bridge that can take many forms and does not only fill the gap between research and policy, but also seeks to link different types of knowledge (local, scientific, grassroots), knowledge cultures, languages,

formats and types of content²¹⁰, and is defined by “*its functions, namely adapting, translating, connecting, acting as an intermediary, match-making, convening networks and professional learning, connecting supply and demand for knowledge, catalyzing and facilitating*”.²¹¹

252. UNV has a long history of producing and gathering knowledge of relevance and use to the sector, as well as convening networks and events like the GTM. The knowledge products generated under the current SF have further strengthened UNV's credibility and positioning in research on volunteerism. These positive results (coupled with the renewed attention to volunteerism resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic) have brought to the forefront UNV's unique potential to serve as a key knowledge broker on volunteerism for the SDGs. However, further enhancing its current knowledge brokering role will necessarily require strengthening relevant skills and capabilities in the organisation.
253. The latest knowledge products have strengthened UNV's credibility and positioning in research on volunteerism. However, no comprehensive analysis of the reports' use and uptake has been conducted. Although information is gathered on aspects such as social media engagement on consultations and learning events, metrics on outreach and uptake are limited and no indicators linked to this aspect of knowledge management have been included in the SF.
254. UNV staff also noted that the work plan that was initially approved for the development of the SWVR included the translation of the report into policy tools and products in 2019 after its publication but that these activities were cancelled. This type of translation/adaptation of research results is crucial for maximizing uptake and for ensuring that knowledge is adapted to a wide range of audiences and is precisely the type of action that would be expected from an effective knowledge broker.
255. This knowledge brokering concept is also relevant for UNV internally, since it can serve to strengthen the organisation's learning approach and break the existing perception that “*UNV is data rich but knowledge poor*” (see section 1.3). VASS has been mandated with developing evidence and knowledge on all forms of volunteerism. However, a mixed response from UNV staff acknowledge that the evidence and knowledge that is being generated is not effectively informing mobilization efforts, the development of new UNV modalities or consideration of optimal volunteerism solutions for the SDGs. This raises important questions on what type of knowledge is relevant to UNV and what should be the internal use of this knowledge. During this evaluation, several UNV staff members in HQ and from the regions referred to the limitations of VASS (in terms of both capacity and capabilities), while there was widespread consensus on the importance of having a dedicated team (with presence in the regions) for sustaining the results achieved under Outcome 1 into the future.²¹²

FINDING 60 – UN Volunteer assignments have contributed to important changes in the personal and professional lives of UN Volunteers that can be expected to be sustained beyond the current SF.

256. Under Outcome 2, UN Volunteers who responded to the survey noted changes in their personal and professional lives that covering a wide range of areas, including benefits

210 See S. Cummings et al, “The future of knowledge brokering: perspectives from a generational framework of knowledge management for international development”, *Information Development*, vol. 35 (5), pp. 781-794, 2019.

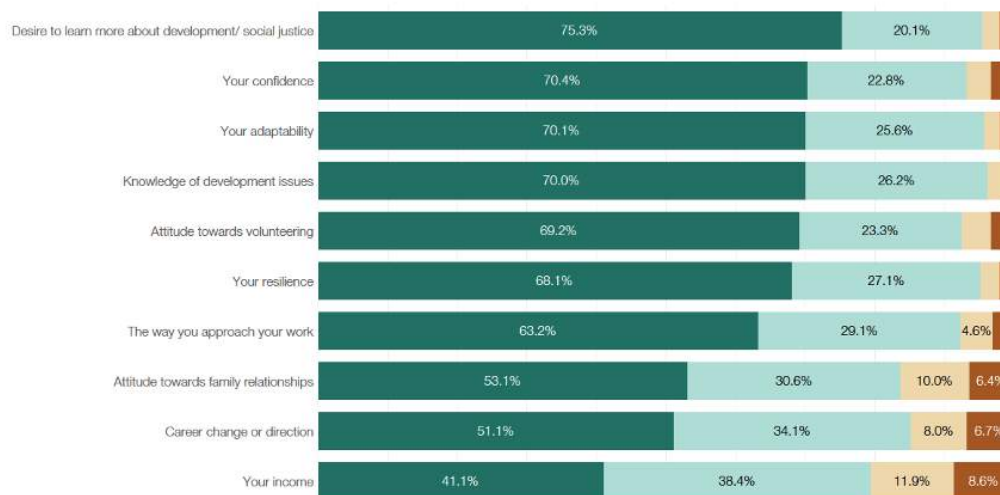
211 *Idem*, p. 785.

212 This issue was also raised during the MTR of SF 2018-21, which noted that “knowledge sharing is a two-way process and VASS has found it challenging to perform the role of knowledge broker and facilitator”.

related to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, capabilities but also covering areas linked to confidence and resilience as detailed below.

Figure 18: UN Volunteers survey

Do you think that your UNV placement has influenced/will influence any of the following?



257. The above-mentioned aspects constitute intangible results that are not easily measurable, but which provide evidence of valuable contributions to transformative change achieved under the current SF that will stay with UN Volunteers beyond their assignments. Not only are these positive personal changes likely to be sustained in the future: former UN Volunteers who have strengthened their capacities can also be expected to have a positive multiplier effect on their families, communities and in the organisations, they work with after their UN Volunteer assignments.

258. In this regard, other positive contributions emerged in relation to UN Volunteers' civic participation and engagement *after* their UN Volunteer assignments, since the survey also targeted former UN Volunteers. In this regard, the majority of respondents stated that they were more involved with community/social/political action after their UN Volunteer assignments (54.1% completely agreed; 31.3% somewhat agreed); or stated that they were involved at a similar level but doing different things (33% completely agreed; 40.3% somewhat agreed); or were involved at a similar level doing similar things (25.8% completely agreed; 37.2% somewhat agreed). In fact, only a minority of UN Volunteers reported being less engaged than before their UNV assignments (7.6% completely agreed; 13.5% somewhat agreed).

FINDING 61 – The partnerships that have been built and/or strengthened under both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 during the SF period are likely to be sustained in the future.

259. Partners working with UNV under Outcome 1 on issues linked to policy development and volunteer infrastructure believe that their partnership with UNV has brought about benefits that will continue beyond their current collaboration (51.1% completely agreed; 33.1% somewhat agreed); while partners working under Outcome 2 (namely UN agencies hosting UN Volunteers) believe that their partnership with UNV has brought about benefits that will continue beyond their current collaboration (46.7% completely agreed; 43.3%

somewhat agreed). In terms of future UN Volunteer mobilisation, the majority of consulted partners also expressed their intention of continuing to recruit UN Volunteers in the future (80.2% completely agreed; 17.6% somewhat agreed).

Cross-cutting issues

5.1. To what extent has the SF been conducive to the incorporation of core principles such as human rights, gender equality, equal opportunities for people with disabilities and marginalized groups, resilience and leaving no one behind?

FINDING 62 - The SF does not have sufficient mechanisms to be able to trace the resources that were being devoted to cross-cutting issues. Gender indicators developed for both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 were replaced or dropped, thereby omitting the gender and social inclusion dimensions from the formal framework. Nonetheless, UNV has continued to offer gender disaggregated data on how many women and how many men had been UN Volunteers in the narrative of the EB reports. The wording of gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in the formal SF instruments does not fully reflect to the considerable efforts the organisation has made in this regard during the SF.

260. The evaluation recognizes the significant efforts made by UNV during the implementation of this SF to incorporate core principles related to human rights and equality across its activities, with a view to ensuring the inclusion of different population groups in a balanced and fair manner. The incorporation of these principles has borne results in both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, as well as in the area of institutional effectiveness.
261. In this regard, it should be noted that the wording of the SF does not fully reflect the subsequent endeavors made by the organisation in this area. For example, in the SF, there is no specific mention of the intention to involve people with disabilities as UN Volunteers, yet under Outcome 2, a major effort has been made to increase the integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities as UN Volunteers. Furthermore, in 2018 UNDP-UNV launched the Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities, with the commitment of leaving no one behind while engaging talent in the work the UN is doing to deliver on the SDGs.
262. During the present SF the number of people with disabilities registered in the UNV talent pool and the number of UN Volunteers with disabilities has been growing, reaching a total of 88 UN Volunteers deployed in 2020 and 4,590 people with disabilities registered in the UNV talent Pool (and increase of 38% over the previous year). These efforts have been appreciated both inside and outside the organisation. For example, in 2019, UNV and UNDP won the CDR²¹³ award for Innovation in Recruitment. Additionally, the EB report 2019 showed how 4% of all UN online volunteers were people with disabilities, this proportion grew to 5% the next year. During the course of the evaluation, stakeholders consulted²¹⁴, especially UNV donors, praised these initiatives and encouraged UNV to continue in the same direction.

²¹³ International Organisations Career Development Roundtable (CDR) brings together International Organisations across the multi-lateral sector, in particular from the United Nations System, the European Union, International Financial Institutions, as well as the national public sector, academia and private institutions.

²¹⁴ Other stakeholders consulted on this issue were UNV Staff and UN partners through FGDs.

263. The original SF text also fails to adequately capture gender mainstreaming. The narrative of the document does not contain a gender analysis that could determine what were the gaps and the potential of UNV in this regard. It should also be noted that the gender perspective was not entirely absent from the original formulation of the SF, since gender indicators were developed for both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2²¹⁵. However, as early as EB 2018, the original indicator "*Number of Member States partnering with UNV to integrate social inclusion and gender equity in their policies on volunteerism*"²¹⁶ was replaced with "*Number of Member States partnering with UNV to develop their policies and legislation on volunteerism*" under Outcome 1, thereby dropping the gender and social inclusion dimension.
264. In Outcome 2, gender disaggregation was also omitted from the EB reports in the indicator tables referring to the number of UN Volunteers deployed and the percentage of UN Volunteers reporting positive professional development (even if disaggregated data on how many women and how many men had been UN Volunteers was included in the narrative).
265. In 2020, the indicator "*Percentage of personnel who are female: a. At all levels b. At P5 and above*" was incorporated under the institutional effectiveness chapter following a recommendation of the MTR. It should be noted that there is no clear explanation as to why this is the only indicator of those contained in the UN SWAP that has been incorporated into the SF. The actual recommendation of the MTR in this regard was that UNV "*should revise or add indicators on gender and promoting volunteerism (outcome 1) to better reflect current UNV efforts (current SF)*".²¹⁷
266. The analysis of the UNV SWAP reports does not provide a clear rationale either. In these reports, the indicator number 12 (on equal representation of women at all levels) that was included in the SF, is not where UNV is furthest behind. In fact, consistently the number of women in senior positions (P5) during this SF has exceeded the number of men²¹⁸, although it is not until March 2021 that a woman was represented on the senior management team. This addition will be welcomed by UNV stakeholders who have reiterated during the evaluation that the face of UNV at the helm has been too male dominated²¹⁹.

FINDING 63 – Two achievements stand out in relation to impacting excluded and disadvantaged populations. Firstly, the fact that in 2019 and in 2020, UNV reached gender parity among UN Volunteers, with women representing 52 per cent of volunteers in 2020. Secondly, the growing proportion of citizens from the Global South being deployed as UN Volunteers. Major effort has been made to increase the integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities as UN Volunteers. UNV has signed several partnerships with United Nations agencies and donors to work on different aspects related to gender equality and social inclusion.

215 UNV Strategic Framework 2018-2020

216 UNV EB Report 2019

217 UNV MRT 2019, Recommendation 1

218 Although this point is outside the scope of this evaluation, for clarification purposes only, the evaluation would like to note that although the target of this indicator is to achieve equity, i.e. 50/50, it is debatable whether having more women in senior positions means that UNV is falling short of the requirement. The spirit of SWAP is gender equality and women's empowerment.

219 This was brought up by donors and by volunteer sector experts.

267. The fact that the gender perspective and social inclusion have not been adequately reflected in the SF does not mean that UNV has not invested considerable efforts in this area, which in turn have translated into tangible results.
268. In 2020, as part of its effort to generate evidence around issues relevant to volunteerism UNV produced a toolkit on promoting gender equality through volunteering²²⁰. In 2019, UNV published a research paper on the role of gender in volunteerism for community resilience²²¹. In addition, through the partnership with ILO, research was conducted that included insights on women's unpaid work using volunteering data. Those consulted by the evaluation consistently praised the inclusiveness of the GTM²²².
269. According to the 2020 evaluation of the legacy project "*Gender Promotion Initiative of the Peacebuilding Fund*" UN Volunteers have significantly "helped increase the number of women participating in peacebuilding dialogues and strengthened their capacity to do so"²²³. As noted above under 3.5. a significant percentage of UN Volunteers deployed during this SF reported working towards achieving SDG 5.
270. Several partnerships have been signed with United Nations agencies and donors to work on different aspects related to gender equality and social inclusion. For example, in 2020, the partnership with UNFPA resulted in the engagement of 419 UN Volunteers, contributing to gender-responsive sexual and reproductive health. As noted under 3.2. in 2020, UN Volunteers serving with UN Women, have been rising during the present SF. In 2020 there were 282 UN Volunteers serving in UN Women.
271. Additionally, in 2020, 15 people with disabilities were deployed as UN Volunteers through a partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Also noteworthy are the results achieved with the BMZ funded project 'The UNV Talent and Capacity Development Programme for an Inclusive UN System for Persons with Disabilities' implemented from 2017 to 2020²²⁴.
272. Among all these achievements two have stood out according to UNV staff and external sources²²⁵. Firstly, the fact that in 2019 and in 2020, UNV reached gender parity among UN Volunteers, with women representing 52 per cent of volunteers in 2020. Secondly, as noted under 3.1, the growing proportion of citizens from the Global South being deployed as UN Volunteers. The evaluation commends these achievements, noting there are opportunities for further data disaggregation and analysis that would allow for a more nuanced understanding of issues around discrimination and how UNV can strengthen its strategy and approach. For example, sector experts noted that, in the case of community volunteerism, women, as traditional carers, are the ones who carry out most of the informal volunteer work. UNV is fully aware of this and has researched it in several publications during this SF²²⁶ noting also that "*informal volunteering receives much less support*" (hence are more vulnerable) and that it is through formal volunteering (like UN Volunteers) that it is more "*likely to challenge traditional gender norms through socializing/ networking, seeking skills and training and collective action*"²²⁷. However, even if the vast majority of community volunteer work is done by women, women are not more represented than men among Community UN Volunteers²²⁸. This indicates that existing

220 <https://knowledge.unv.org/theme/gender-and-volunteering>

221 EB Report 2020

222 This came up in KII with sector experts; in FGDs with donors and in KII with UNV Staff.

223 EB Report 2021

224 See Independent Evaluation of the UNV Talent and Capacity Development Programme for an Inclusive UN System for Persons with Disabilities, April 2020.

225 This was discussed in FGD with donors and with UN partners; and in KII with UNV Staff and volunteer sector experts.

226 https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/SWVR_role%20of%20gender_2019.pdf

227 <https://knowledge.unv.org/theme/gender-and-volunteering>

228 UNV Data, Power BI

discriminatory trends are being perpetuated, also through UNV, since men are more readily accessing formal volunteer work. Another example was identified about the gender ratio in FF positions, with women overrepresented in UN Volunteer FF positions. Donor governments were not concerned about this on the premise that the more women entered the UN system, the more likely they would be to reach leadership positions in the system. UNV conducted research²²⁹ under this SF to determine the retention rate in the UN system for UN Volunteers in the FF category. The findings of this study were not disaggregated by gender in the final document, although it was made explicit that 70% of all FF were women. In a more extensive analysis of this survey that was shared with the evaluation in draft, there is some segregation of data by gender in which it is evidencing that men were 9 points more likely to be retained by the UN system than women²³⁰. A more detailed analysis of the dataset reveals that although women represented 70% of the respondents, they accounted for only 52% of those who were retained by the system and reached a P4 position²³¹. As in the previous example, this indicates that the discriminatory trend of overrepresentation of women in more precarious, more junior, or less valued working conditions is also reproduced within the UN system and that UNV may be serving as a vehicle to perpetuate it. Additionally, not including the full gender analysis in the final document meant missing an opportunity to engage with donors and other stakeholders in a deeper reflection on how UNV can prioritize gender equality and promote equal opportunities²³².

FINDING 64 - UNV attributes to itself a "residual duty of care" that may translate in liaising with host agencies "to ensure that policies and practices are being properly applied and that UN Volunteer's wellbeing and safety is assured". However, the evaluation finds that issues around well-being and fair treatment remain a concern for UN Volunteers.

273. Emerging strongly in the majority of FGDs and KIs, UNV is often seen as the entry point into the UN system for people with less privileged backgrounds (including citizens from Southern countries). At times during the evaluation, a minority of respondents referred to UNV in a dismissive manner as "*the back door of the UN System*". However, as previously noted, this aspect was most often celebrated as one of the UNV's strengths; insofar as it contributes to democratizing and diversifying the UN System.
274. Although the access opportunities granted by UNV to vulnerable population groups entail an important responsibility for UNV, its position on the issue of duty of care is non-committal, as can be read for example in the new guidelines for host agencies, where UNV attributes to itself a "*residual duty of care*" that may translate in liaising with host agencies "*to ensure that policies and practices are being properly applied and that UN Volunteer's wellbeing and safety is assured*"²³³. The evaluation finds that issues around well-being and fair treatment remain a concern for UN Volunteers and partners. An analysis of the open-question responses of the UN Volunteer survey reveals that four of the five categories²³⁴ identified as "the key weaknesses of being a UN Volunteer", were related to feeling unfairly treated and to a perceived lack of support from the host agency

²²⁹ UNV FF Retention Survey Key Findings

²³⁰ UNV Full Funding Programme Retention Survey: Results and Analysis (April 2020)

²³¹ Survey data set

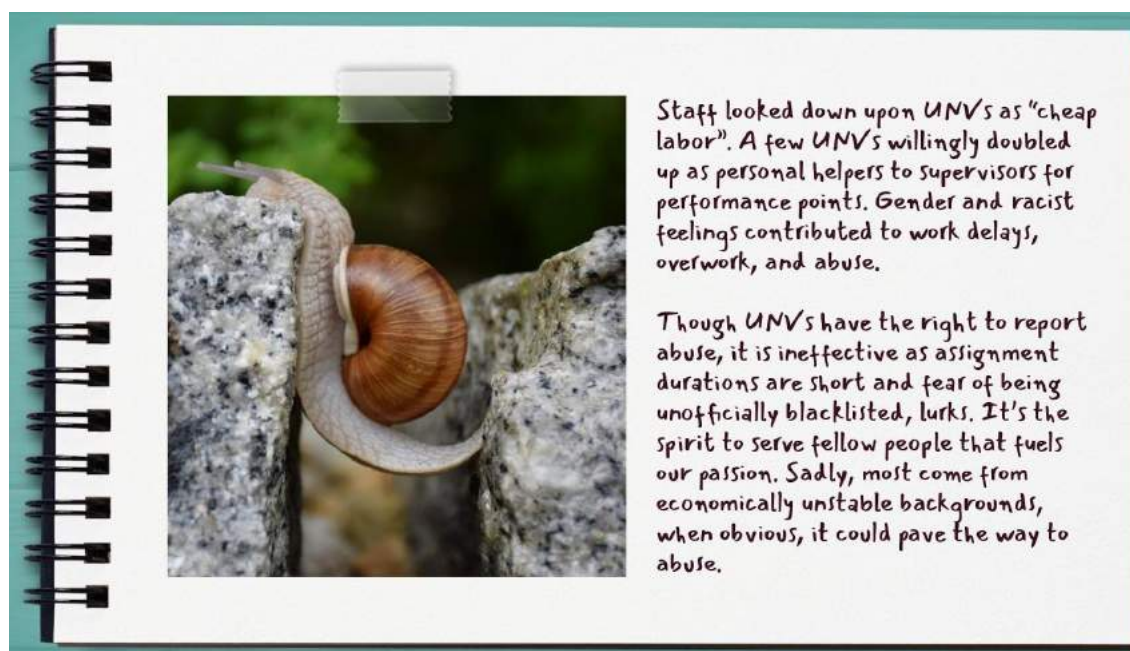
²³² Prioritizing Gender Equality is captured as one of the descriptors of UNV added value in its UNV Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Strategy 2018-2021

²³³ <https://toolkit.unv.org/managing/overview>

²³⁴ number 1 - issues related to situations of unfair treatment without a satisfactory resolution for the UNV; number 2 - issues related to "lack of support" from both host agencies and UNV; number 4 - issues related to lack of "career development" and number 5 - issues related to "wellbeing".

and from UNV. Additionally, the evaluation has identified, through the UN Volunteers survey and through the FGDs, that in cases where the host agency does not assume these responsibilities it does not appear that UNV holds them accountable. In the ParEvo exercise, the story that the UN Volunteers voted as the most realistic also contained clear allusions to these issues (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: ParEvo Storyline 71 (ParEvo)



Staff looked down upon UNVs as "cheap labor". A few UNVs willingly doubled up as personal helpers to supervisors for performance points. Gender and racist feelings contributed to work delays, overwork, and abuse.

Though UNVs have the right to report abuse, it is ineffective as assignment durations are short and fear of being unofficially blacklisted, lurks. It's the spirit to serve fellow people that fuels our passion. Sadly, most come from economically unstable backgrounds, when obvious, it could pave the way to abuse.

275. In this regard, the evaluation identifies that the protection and wellbeing of volunteers is a key part of UNV's mandate²³⁵ and an aspect that UNV should continue to monitor closely, as recommended by other evaluations during this SF²³⁶. The measurement of volunteers' wellbeing is one of the points that the Call-to action says requires urgent attention²³⁷.

5.2. To what degree was the UNV SF robust, flexible and adaptable to address the challenges caused by the global COVID-19 crisis?

Finding 65 – UNV applied comprehensive risk management and mitigation process during the SF which, whilst not specifically accounting for a global health pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19, set out contingencies for responding to disruptive global events which have allowed UNV to respond robustly and with flexibility to address the challenges caused by COVID-19. The speed and adaptability of UNV's response was noted as highly efficient by partners; with the SVF-COVID 19 Mechanism receiving overwhelming positive

²³⁵ "Requests Member States and the United Nations system to work together with volunteer-involving organisations, including from civil society, to support efforts to enhance the protection, security and well-being of volunteers, calls upon States to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for volunteers, and encourages the adoption of good practices in the promotion, facilitation and, where applicable, management of volunteerism"

²³⁶ "More attention may be needed in terms of provision of well-being support, transport and safety equipment for UN Volunteers on the ground (48% reported they did not receive well-being support and 52% reported they did not receive adequate transport or safety equipment" (Evaluation of UNV's support to UN Peacebuilding Fund's Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI), July 2020.

²³⁷ <https://www.unv.org/News/GTM2020-closes-clarion-call-supercharge-ideas-solutions-volunteering-Decade-Action>

feedback from donors on the flexible and responsive use of the fund. 947 UN Volunteers on COVID-19 related assignments have so far been deployed²³⁸. At an organisational level, flexible institutional arrangements and increased tele-commuting have allowed UNV to continue to deliver effectively.

276. The SF applied a comprehensive risk management and mitigation process (including corporate annual risk log detailing impact of political and global public health dynamics; financial risk analysis of impact of COVID-19) which, whilst not accounting for a global health pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19, did set out contingencies for responding to disruptive global events which have allowed UNV to respond robustly and with flexibility to address the challenges caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The speed and adaptability of UNV's response was noted as highly efficient by partners, with UNV staff noting: "We were fast, even if IUN Volunteers could not come quickly: partners appreciated the speed. HQ supported well, and based on lessons learned, we are now looking at remote-working arrangements to support our partners."
277. Notable responses and adaptations highlighted by donors include the deployment of SVF-funded UN Volunteers. The SVF-COVID 19 Mechanism received overwhelming positive feedback from donors on the flexible, adaptive and responsive use of the fund; allowing 105 volunteers to be deployed efficiently to support the COVID-19 response). The SVF has made a notable contribution to the COVID-19 response through the SVF-COVID 19 Mechanism with an initial allocation of \$1million targeting UNDP, WHO, OCHA and RCOs and focusing on 3 profiles: UN Coordination Officers, Information Management Officers and Public Health Specialists. Data on 21st April 2021 shows 105 volunteers deployed in total.
278. Clarity of purpose for the \$1Million allocation of SVF was detailed: "In line with the UN Secretary General humanitarian appeal, WHO's COVID-19 UN Country Teams Guidance, and the UNV Strategic Framework, the SVF response mechanism positions UNV in the center of UN system response through strategic placement with lead entities and/or in inter-agency joint programmes with the view of: helping to address the UN system's gaps in commencing Covid-19 response initiatives and for creating a leverage for additional volunteer mobilization that is commensurate with the challenges faced by Member States."²³⁹
279. Recognizing the importance of the role of volunteers in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Secretary-General recently said, "As we gradually recover from the pandemic, volunteers will have a key role to play in accelerating the transition to green, inclusive and just economies"²⁴⁰. This resurgent focus on the importance of volunteers in responding to global crisis, UNV staff members note that 2020 has seen the resurrection of volunteerism and solidarity with COVID-19: *"We have seen everyone suddenly coming back to us to discuss volunteerism and to ask us to share knowledge about other initiatives. We have been sharing information across countries on volunteer-based responses to COVID-19. We have learned how to operate in a pandemic."* Driven by demands in-country, UNV has developed guidelines and an analysis of the role of volunteerism in COVID-19 recognizing the amplifier effect of COVID-19 to enhance sustainability through increased demand. Outreach material was also produced, detailing UNV's available support and capacity solutions for the COVID-19 response; including the

²³⁸ UNV's PowerBI, 21st April 2021

²³⁹ Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) Response Mechanism for COVID-19, 1st April 2020; www.unv.org/UNVs-COVID-19-pandemic-response

²⁴⁰ UN Secretary-General António Guterres, International Volunteer Day on 5 December 2020.

comparative advantage of UNV's solutions alongside transparent pro forma costing schedule.

280. Data analytics from PowerBI notes UNV's response to COVID-19 includes the deployment of 947 UN Volunteers on COVID-19 related assignments: with 780 National and 167 International UN Volunteers deployed from 117 nationalities to 108 locations internationally supporting 27 UN agencies.
281. The importance of online volunteering (OV), in UNV's response to COVID, has also gained prominence, and the recent evaluation on OV²⁴¹ findings provide valuable insights and learning on this particular modality, considering how relevant it is in the current evolving situation with COVID19. The evaluation found that UNV's OV services project²⁴² were relevant to the strategic direction of its main financial partners and its clients and the project's volunteering component responded to the expressed needs of the UNV online volunteers; though there were instances when the project did not fully meet the online volunteer expectations. Based on the aim of enhancing the capacity of host organisations, the evaluation found the project supported efficient service delivery though it was not designed to facilitate the long-term enhancement of organisational capacity. In terms of strengthening inclusion and citizen engagement, the evaluation found UNV's OV products were innovative and designed to increase access to volunteerism by marginalized/ underrepresented social groups.
282. UNV's efforts to facilitate inclusion were crowded out, however, by a parallel focus on cost recovery. While UNV's cost recovery modality contributed to declining partnerships with host entities, this situation was also influenced by UNV's structural response to the end of German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) funding, in particular, the dissolution of the OV Project Team. UNV's cost recovery modality responded directly, however, to the need for self-sustaining, best value OV. Yet, as the cost recovery model was inadequately assessed for risks, it contributed to a decline in the added value of the project's volunteering element. The cost recovery model was conceptually viable; though in the evolving market for volunteerism, its underlying assumptions had low feasibility. As a result, client uptake of UNV's OV products, combined with the revenue that was generated, was lower than expected. The mainstreaming of the project, followed by the OV function, was conducive for sustaining project results. The mainstreaming process has benefited from UNV's regional and country presence. Its success is further dependent, however, on OV ownership across UNV, supported by ongoing communication and collaboration.
283. At an organisational level, flexible institutional arrangements and increased tele-commuting have allowed UNV to continue to deliver. Data from the 2020 UNDP/ UNV Global Staff Survey notes that 69% of UNV staff perceive working virtually (e.g., through webinars, on-line meetings, virtual consultation, etc.) during the COVID-19 pandemic increased their sense of engagement with a broader group of colleagues across the organisation; this is 7% lower than the global data set. 19% UNV staff responded neutrally, with 12% holding negative perceptions.

²⁴¹ Evaluation of UNV Online Volunteering, 2020

²⁴² UNV corporate project, A global multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development: Online Volunteering and Innovation. Implemented over the period 2015 – 2019

Conclusions

284. Based on the key findings identified, the evaluation team have developed the following conclusions.

Relevance and coherence

Conclusion 1 (based on findings #1-10; 12²⁴³)

285. **SF 2018-21 has been instrumental for providing strategic focus and guidance and has served to consolidate UNV's position as a key actor that is uniquely placed to integrate volunteerism in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

286. The SF is highly relevant to the needs of key stakeholders; is coherent, responsive and explicit in relation to the 2030 Agenda and clearly aligned with the resolutions that have shaped UNV's mandate. The SF is highly relevant to UNV's needs, aligning the organisation's work with QCPR 2016, alongside successfully addressing a challenging financial situation and strengthening institutional effectiveness. UNV's comparative advantages are manifold, including: i) its capacity to directly contribute to the work of UN agencies by providing flexible, timely, cost-effective human resources through a comprehensive range of volunteer modalities that are effectively delivered at country, regional and/ or global levels; ii) its unique convening power and distinction as the only UN entity with a mandate related to volunteerism; iii) its ability amplify globally the value of volunteer actions led by the global South and effectively support South-South cooperation. Key external partners note, however, further opportunities for UNV to leverage its unique position to play a stronger knowledge brokering role in the volunteer sector.

287. The internal logic and coherence of the SF could be strengthened, since in the absence of explicit interlinkages between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, their implementation has operated more in parallel, rather than in a coherent and complementary manner.

Conclusion 2 (based on findings #11-14)

288. **The SF has brought about positive results for UNV under both strategic outcomes and has successfully introduced innovative measurement mechanisms that have contributed to strengthening UNV's results-based approach. However, outputs are not fully adequate in scope and number to cover each outcome, and the indicator basket does not fully capture all the richness and complexity of UNV's results and achievements.**

289. Overall, the SF is logical, coherent and has brought improved organisational focus and clarity to the work of UNV. However, there remains room for improvement at two levels: the inter-relatedness between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, and indicator formulation. Whilst the strategic outcomes provide organisational focus, this has also resulted in elements of siloed implementation. Measurement mechanisms developed under this SF, through growing maturity of the RBM culture in UNV, are innovative and constitute a significant improvement compared to the systems in place prior to 2018. Nonetheless, challenges remain in terms of the limitations of the indicator basket (i.e., what is being measured), since the indicators used to measure progress towards each output do not adequately capture all the results achieved and the difference they are making. Targets

243 Findings statements are presented in the main section of the evaluation report, in clear coloured boxes, sequentially numbered with supporting evidence and analysis present below each.

were set realistically, based on an assessment of external factors, though opportunities for further ambition are possible in the next SF.

Efficiency

Conclusion 3 (based on findings #15-33)

290. **The implementation of the SF has been accompanied by an ambitious organisational transformation process that has been efficiently delivered. Decentralization has brought UNV closer to its partners with positive results reflected both inside UNV (operational efficiency) and outside UNV (mobilization); while digital transformation is likely to result in significant efficiency gains during the remaining SF implementation period. However, FU capacity requires strengthening and staff capabilities have not fully kept pace with the organisation's shifting demands and the rapidly evolving context.**
291. UNV has invested significant effort and resources to enhance its operational efficiency over the SF period through well planned and effectively implemented organisational improvement initiatives. This has included enhanced decentralisation to RO and FU levels and increased professionalization/ nationalization of key field-based roles; revisions and extensions to delegations of authority; the establishment of a new Internal Control Framework; delivery of digital transformation initiatives and streamlined business processes. These initiatives have resulted in more effective, decentralised delivery with improved institutional memory; strengthened national capacity and ownership, even if FU capacity still requires strengthening. Multiple levels of highly effective financial stewardship has stabilized UNV's financial health; with the principles of results-based budgeting and breakeven modelling tools effectively applied, aligning financial resources with the strategic objectives/ intended results of the SF. Clear gains are evident in delivery efficiency and, following the full implementation of digital transformation and the resulting benefits being fully realised, opportunities to create more cost-efficient service provision delivery to the benefit of UNV and the wider UN system are present.

Effectiveness

Conclusion 4 (based on findings #34-38 and #45-47)

292. **UNV has implemented the SF as planned, achieving important results under both strategic outcomes and exceeding most targets to date. However, while focusing efforts on Outcome 2 has allowed UNV to restore its financial situation, recognizing resources contributing to the financial sustainability of UNV are generated mainly from the cost-recovery for the volunteer management services (Outcome 2), this approach risks fully leveraging the potential of Outcome 1. This may constitute a risk for both the organisation's long-term relevance and sustainability.**
293. UNV has been highly effective in achieving the intended outputs and outcomes. It has performed highly effectively in both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 and for Institutional Effectiveness measures, exceeding most targets consistently over the SF period. Overall, UNV has implemented the SF as planned. Under Outcome 1, UNV has contributed to the increasing number of countries including references to the role of volunteerism in their VNRs; engaging more than 1,000,000 local non-UN volunteers across all regions in 22 countries; supporting policies and legislative development with Member States; and supporting the General Assembly's adoption of the resolution on Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (73/140). Under Outcome 2, partners are highly satisfied with UNV's provision and deployment of UN Volunteers. In this regard, UNV has

galvanised its reputation as a responsive and flexible partner organisation. However, there is a strong perception expressed from donors and partners that UNV should focus more on Outcome 1, which is where UNV's unique added value is perceived to lie. Recognising the symbiotic, rather than competing, nature of promoting volunteerism and mobilising volunteers, UNV risks disproportionately gearing operational resources in the pursuit of funding (cost-recovery); rather than promoting volunteerism (revenue rather than value driven). Although the focus on volunteer mobilisation has been fundamental to improving UNV's financial position, UNV risks its sustainability prospects if it continues to over-focus on its role as "HR provider" without embracing its expanded mandate with adequate resources. In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world of the value of volunteerism and provided evidence of its importance, thereby creating favourable conditions for a bold promotion of volunteerism. UNV attributes to itself a "residual duty of care" that may translate in liaising with host agencies "to ensure that policies and practices are being properly applied and that UN Volunteer's wellbeing and safety is assured". Whilst the vast majority of UN Volunteers noted their satisfaction with their experience (97% positive satisfaction); the evaluation finds that issues around well-being and fair treatment remain a concern for a minority of UN Volunteers who responded to open questions in the surveys. Concerns related to support and well-being were particularly noted for female UN Volunteers which provides useful information for UNV as it updates its Conditions of Service.

Conclusion 5 (based on findings #39-44)

294. **UNV has strengthened existing partnerships and succeeded in establishing new ones. However, the focus on UN Volunteer mobilization appears to have led UNV to prioritize partnerships that contribute to mobilization efforts to the detriment of partnerships with a stronger potential to promote volunteerism (such as VIOs and CSOs), that could support ongoing efforts to diversify UNV's partnership base. UNV has also focused more on output-oriented partnerships instead of investing in long-term outcome-orientated partnerships. UNV's resource mobilisation has been effective in meeting contribution targets.**
295. UNV engages with its partners effectively. It has highly productive engagements with partners and is highly efficient in the management of donor relations. Delivery of the SF has responded to the needs of donors and partners, particularly in relation to the mobilisation of UN Volunteers (Outcome 2), though the response to the volunteerism-promotion needs of partners (under Outcome 1) could be strengthened. UNV's reliance on the same small basket of donors remains a perennial challenge requiring further diversification. UNV has nurtured partnerships with organisations with the capacity to host UN Volunteers, although likely to some extent to the detriment of partnerships with the greatest potential (and/or legitimacy) to promote volunteerism and volunteer action. Both the increase in the number of UN Volunteers and the positive assessment of the recruitment service offered by UNV are the result of intensive partnership efforts carried out by UNV and are testament to the hard work of staff and senior management. UNV's resource mobilisation has been effective in meeting its contribution targets, both through the Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) and Fully Funded (FF) volunteer contributions, which have both increased under the SF.

Sustainability

Conclusion 6 (based on findings #48-61)

296. **UNV is widely recognised as a global agenda-setting organisation with unique convening power that generates high-quality knowledge and evidence on**

volunteerism and has the potential to play a stronger knowledge-brokering role in the volunteer sector.

297. UNV's knowledge generation is recognised and appreciated inside and outside the UN system, including the production of a series of high-quality knowledge products (global and regional in scope) and the generation of relevant evidence for the volunteer sector (with a focus on contributions to SDGs), illustrating UNV's agenda-setting role in the sector. While partners perceive that UNV 'does what it does well', partners were equally strong in the perception that UNV could strengthen its role in terms of promoting volunteerism and enhancing its role in the evidence generation → knowledge brokering → setting the global agenda cycle. The comprehensive Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism for Development Practitioners and Policymakers launched in 2020, which constitutes one of the main outcomes of the Plan of Action process, has been well received and can be expected to play a pivotal role in promoting the uptake and use of knowledge and evidence generated under the current SF beyond 2021. The latest knowledge products have strengthened UNV's credibility and positioning in research on volunteerism. However, no comprehensive analysis of use and uptake has been conducted, since metrics on outreach and uptake are limited, and no indicators linked to this aspect of knowledge management are included in the SF results framework.

Cross-cutting issues

Conclusion 7 (based on findings #62-64)

298. **UNV has made significant efforts to incorporate core principles related to human rights and equality during implementation of the SF with positive results to date. However, additional efforts are required to provide a more granular analysis of issues affecting gender and inclusion, in order to improve UNV's understanding of these issues and better reflect the SF's contribution to these themes, and to address issues related to the well-being of UN Volunteers.**
299. Reporting on cross-cutting issues continues to evolve, with gender disaggregated data on UN Volunteers presented in the narrative of the EB reports. Nonetheless, there are opportunities for further integration through systematic data disaggregation, analysis and reporting that would allow for a more nuanced understanding of issues around gender equality, provide learning opportunities for how UNV can strengthen its strategy and approach to gender and women's empowerment, and showcase the full range of achievements. Important milestone achievements have been reached in 2019 and 2020, with UNV reaching gender parity among UN Volunteers, with women representing 52 per cent of volunteers globally in 2020. UNV has several signed partnership agreements with UN agencies and donors to work on different aspects related to gender equality and social inclusion. Major efforts have been made on inclusion, as evidenced by the growing proportion of citizens from the Global South being deployed as UN Volunteers and the integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities as UN Volunteers, which have received significant praise from partners and donors. The inclusion of an increasing number of UN Volunteers from vulnerable population groups requires UNV to further prioritize equality and well-being issues, and points to the need to ensure that duty of care and safeguarding is adequately understood by host agencies.

Conclusion 8 (based on findings #65)

300. **UNV has responded robustly to address the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating agility and speed both externally with partners and operationally. The pandemic has provided a timely reminder of the value of**

volunteerism and has generated valuable evidence of the importance of volunteer action in responding to and recovering from crisis and for the achievement of the SDGs, thereby creating an enabling environment for UNV's work to continue to evolve and expand. In this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world of the value of volunteerism and provided evidence of its importance, thereby creating favorable conditions for a bold promotion of volunteerism and the utilization of online volunteering modalities.

301. UNV's response to COVID-19 includes the deployment of 947 UN Volunteers on COVID-19 related assignments: with 780 National and 167 International UN Volunteers deployed from 117 nationalities to 108 locations internationally supporting 27 UN agencies. Furthermore, the rapid deployment of SVF-funded UN Volunteers has been an effective response, positively acknowledged by donors and partners, allowing 105 volunteers to be deployed rapidly to support the COVID-19 response. Internally, flexible institutional arrangements and increased tele-commuting are in place allowing UNV to continue to deliver; with staff perceiving working virtually to have further increased their sense of engagement. Whilst not accounting for a global health pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19, UNV's comprehensive risk management and mitigation processes (including corporate risk logs detailing impact of political and global public health dynamics; financial risk analysis of impact of COVID-19) responded successfully, allowing response contingencies to disruptive global events to be enacted. Favorable conditions are present for UNV to adopt an even bolder and ambitious promotion of volunteerism in this new context.

Recommendations

302. The evaluation recommendations are derived from the findings in this report and conclusions presented above.

Relevance and coherence

Recommendation 1 – strategy (based on conclusion 1)

303. **UNV should rebalance its strategic focus** by strengthening actions on promoting volunteerism developing appropriate mechanisms, either programmatically or otherwise, that promote volunteerism role in the 2030 Agenda, ensuring continued organisational relevance and deploying its comparative advantage in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda whilst continuing to respond to UN partner needs.
304. **UNV should ensure the inter-relatedness and complementarity of promoting volunteerism and volunteer mobilisation** is comprehensively articulated and embraced to reduce the risk of a split in strategic focus and operational siloing as well as to provide consistency in strategic messaging externally.

Recommendation 2 – results measurement (based on conclusion 2)

305. **UNV should develop a comprehensive results framework with gender sensitive, composite indicators** to strengthen outcome-level reporting and ensure the full range of outputs and outcomes are accurately captured, monitored and reported. **UNV should include social inclusion indicators** (for example People Living with Disabilities and marginalized groups).

306. **UNV should develop more comprehensive measures of results beyond the current limited basket of indicators**, across a broader range of indicators for management information and accountability purposes. Measurement mechanisms need to remain consistent for the duration of the SF and where any review of indicators is undertaken, clearly documenting the approval.

Efficiency

Recommendation 3 – organisational structure, capacity and capability (based on conclusion 3)

307. **UNV should review the balance of financial and human resource distribution to the delivery of strategic outcome results**; ensuring the current structure is fit for purpose and geared towards implement the next SF through a gradual re-alignment and adjustment of its operating model and structure geared to strategic requirements. **UNV should continue to enhance decentralisation** by strengthening its field presence to meet current and future demand, in alignment with the QCPR (2020).
308. **UNV should seek to identify opportunities to foster further collaborative working practices** to ensure the full value of the inter-linkages between promoting volunteerism and volunteer mobilisation are harnessed, both horizontally between the organisation's sections and vertically through the global structure. This may include increasing opportunities for multi-disciplinary working on key strategic and operational issues and strengthening internal organisational learning mechanisms.
309. **UNV should ensure UNV's operating structure is fit for purpose and geared towards implementing the next SF** by conducting a periodic needs assessment of required skills to meet the next SF period and accompanying skills audit. **UNV should ensure tailored learning and development opportunities to meet future need are available and taken up**, with impact assessed. Where additional skills are not present and cannot be developed internally, UNV should proportionately invest in securing those skills externally to meet future need.
310. UNV should ensure that all staff can clearly articulate the different elements of its work across all strategic outcome areas in a consistent and coherent manner.

Effectiveness

Recommendation 4 – engagement with UN Volunteers (based on conclusion 4)

311. **UNV should strengthen the engagement with UN Volunteers throughout their placement and beyond**, with the aim of further improving the UN Volunteers' experience matched to their expectations through the ongoing review and revision process of the Conditions of Service in order to leveraging the network of UN Volunteers to contribute to UNV's strategic objectives.
312. On the 'UN Volunteer experience', **UNV should improve the coordination between the host agencies and UNV field units in order to ensure the duty of care is discharged appropriately to ensure the wellbeing and career development** of UN Volunteers. UNV should ensure consultations with host agencies balance the needs of UN Volunteers with the demands of the agencies, as defined by UNV and its partners, to hold UN Volunteers and host agencies to account.
313. **UNV should utilise the untapped resource of former and current UN Volunteers** developing opportunities to further engage the network of UN Volunteers as a route to i) increase opportunities for learning; ii) exert influence; and iii) access the networks of its

constituency of UN Volunteers. This serves dual purposes - awareness raising on the value of volunteerism and in the promotion of the UNV brand.

Recommendation 5a – partnerships (based on conclusion 5)

314. **UNV should develop strong value-propositions** that allow for consistent communication of its comparative advantage; demonstrate the uniqueness of partnering with UNV and articulate its added value to partners' medium- and longer-term strategic and people objectives.
315. **UNV should ensure flexibility in its approach to customization** by (balancing standardised and tailored products and services) with recruitment measures that ensure a commitment to volunteerism in order to maintain and protect UNV's reputational brand. **UNV should strengthen outreach and awareness raising on the importance of the UN Volunteers in the host agencies**, increase the visibility of the UNV brand through its UN Volunteers; communicate the advantages of UNV and informing host agencies about the role of UN Volunteers.
316. **UNV should maximise its unique convening power to connect partners and expand and deepen its partnership strategy** for the promotion of volunteerism to support longer-terms forms of collaboration.
317. **UNV should make efforts to diversify and broaden its work with other UN agencies**, while maintaining the efficacy of its partnerships with core UN partners. **UNV should ensure its partnership engagement is both strategic and tactical in nature** (HQ, regional and field level engagements), by aligning UNV propositions with UN agencies' global strategic planning processes and people strategies. This should include continued efforts to identify opportunities to strengthen and jointly capitalise on the relationship with UNDP.

Recommendation 5b – Resource mobilization (based on conclusion 5)

318. **UNV should diversify its financing partnerships and review its tools and mechanisms for resource mobilisation**, and associated conditions, to facilitate increased contributions to UNV focus areas (for example, COVID-19, digital transformation, policy work).
319. **UNV should adopt a two-pronged approach on SVF both to increase SVF contributions and further diversify SVF partners**. In pursuit of diversification, UNV should pursue (soft) earmarking of contributions to attract new partners. UNV should explore further diversification strategies to increase the number of Member States contributing to Fully-Funded or providing other sources of funds to UNV.

Sustainability

Recommendation 6 – Knowledge development, management and organisational learning (based on conclusion 6)

320. **UNV should strengthen the links between knowledge development, knowledge management and organisational learning**, allowing UNV to maximise the use and uptake of data in a more systematic and strategic manner. This will help UNV to bridge the advocacy/ policy-making gap; ensure that volunteering policy is informed by high quality research; and strengthen the inter-linkage between promoting volunteerism and mobilisation of UN Volunteers.

- 321. **UNV should seek to play a stronger knowledge brokering role in the volunteer sector** by building on its recognised convening and leadership role in the sector, by strengthening relevant research, evidence and knowledge generating capacities in the organisation.
- 322. **UNV should develop a dissemination, outreach and usage strategy for knowledge production** in order to maximise efforts and achieve greater impact. This would involve adequately measuring outreach and uptake of knowledge products through appropriate monitoring efforts and indicators.

Cross-cutting issues

Recommendation 7 – Gender, inclusion and South-South cooperation (based on conclusion 7)

- 323. **UNV should conduct more granular analysis of issues affecting gender discrimination and social inclusion** as part of the SF development process, to improve UNV's understanding of how discrimination dynamics work and to inform future strategies not to perpetuate them.
- 324. **UNV should maintain efforts to ensure gender parity at a global and regional level**; providing concerted efforts to address current regional disparities and disparities across different volunteer modalities that may be contributing to perpetuate discriminatory dynamics.

Recommendation 8 – enabling environment for future SF (based on conclusion 8)

- 325. **UNV should be ambitious in the next SF.** The current positive environment for volunteerism, extending from COVID-19 and aligned with the 2030 Agenda, coupled with the renewed recognition on the part of Member States on the value of volunteerism, are generating valuable evidence on the importance of volunteer action for bringing about transformative change, in responding to and recovering from crisis and for the achievement of the SDGs.

UNV, and its key constituencies, should take advantage of this context to further promote volunteerism and the role of UN Volunteers in crisis responses; strengthening and expanding the use of the Online Volunteer modality, where global travel restrictions remain in place, as this modality is highly relevant in responding to the evolving situation with COVID-19 and aligns well to the UN future of work agenda UNV should identify further opportunities to respond through innovative practice and special initiatives. Given the improved financial and organisational health, and increasing relevance of volunteerism, UNV is in a strong position to respond to this call.



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