



what
is UNV



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United Nations Volunteers

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CONTENTS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	1
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	7
UNV ACTIVITIES	8
UNV'S GROWTH, CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE	22
APPENDIX: REPRESENTATIVE LISTING OF UNV PROFESSIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES	25

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

FOUNDING OF UNV

The importance of utilizing volunteers in United Nations development activities dates back to 1961 as recognized in resolution 849 (XXXII) by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Several years later, a comprehensive study undertaken in consultation with UN agencies, volunteer services, youth organizations and some developing countries fully documented and supported the creation of a volunteer programme within the United Nations. The idea of creating an international corps of volunteers, as an organ of the United Nations, was officially raised on 31 July 1969 by ECOSOC. In its resolution 1444 (XLVII) ECOSOC requested the UN Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of creating an international corps of volunteers for development.

In his report (No. E/4790) of 14 April 1970 recommending the establishment of a volunteer scheme within the UN system, the Secretary-General defined, for the purposes of this programme, a volunteer as

"a person who gives his services without regard to financial benefit and with the purpose of contributing to the development of the recipient country".

The Secretary-General further elaborated that

"a volunteer may be a person with professional, technical or practical skills who offers his or her knowledge and abilities on a full-time basis for a period of time in return for a remuneration based on immediate need for maintenance".

Meanwhile, within the context of the UN system, a cornerstone definition of a volunteer emerged. This definition described a volunteer as a person who gives his services with modest remuneration and who may be a youth, someone in middle age, or a person recently retired from salaried employment. Such a person is usually strongly motivated to donate his or her energies, skills and time to accomplish those tasks he or she believes in.

On 28 July 1970 the concept of a UN Volunteer scheme was welcomed and adopted through ECOSOC resolution 1539. The UNV programme was officially created by the UN General Assembly at its 25th session through resolution 2659 (XXV) of 7 December 1970. According to the resolution it was decided

"to establish within the existing framework of the United Nations system, with effect from 1 January 1971, an international group of volunteers, the members of which shall be designated collectively and individually as United Nations Volunteers".

The main elements, basic purpose, and structure of UNV were enunciated in this founding resolution. The resolution stipulates that the UNV programme is intended to make a substantial contribution to development assistance activities. Such a contribution would be achieved "by the provision of an additional source of trained manpower" on the understanding that such service is well planned and directed and "utilizes volunteers recruited and serving on as wide a geographical basis as possible, including in particular the develop-

ing countries". The resolution also provides that "the volunteers have the technical and personal qualifications required for the development of recipient countries", and that they be assigned upon the request and with the approval of recipient governments.

To help support several of the programme's activities, governments and member states, members of specialized agencies, international nongovernmental organizations and individuals were invited by the resolution to contribute to a special voluntary fund.

EVOLUTION
OF MANDATE

UNV was created as a programme devoted to the promotion of voluntarism on an international scale. Consequently, UNV's evolution to support national volunteer activities constitutes a logical development of its mandate. Furthermore, the programme's innate affinity with and emphasis on the younger generation lends itself to achieving youth's increasingly effective participation in development.

Therefore, the mandate and activities of the programme have progressively evolved in accordance with various decisions and resolutions of the UNDP Governing Council, ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly. The following key decisions and resolutions define UNV's responsibility for the development and promotion of youth activities, for the support of and cooperation with Domestic Development Service (DDS), and for the coordination of the

use of volunteers within the UN system.

Youth. In relation to the promotion of overall youth activities, it was decided through resolution 31/131 to utilize the potential of UNV "for the advancement of the role of youth in development". This resolution therefore designated

"the United Nations Volunteers programme to be a major operational unit of the United Nations for the execution of youth programmes, especially of pilot projects to increase the participation of youth in development activities and training programmes for youth workers".

Domestic Development Service. The importance of indigenous self-help development efforts through Domestic Development Service, as described in greater detail on page 14, and the usefulness of promoting these through UNV grass-roots activities were acknowledged by the UN General Assembly. Consequently, its resolution 31/166 requested the UNDP Administrator to

"develop further and expand the activities of UNV in the field of Domestic Development Service" and "to ensure that the United Nations Volunteers programme actively promotes the formation of regional advisory groups for Domestic Development Service and subsequently to cooperate to the fullest extent possible with such groups".

Coordination of volunteers. General Assembly resolution 2810 underlines UNV's

responsibility for coordinating all needs for and use of volunteers within development activities of the United Nations system. It requested

"all the specialized agencies and other organizations in the United Nations system to channel all requests for volunteers in development projects executed by them through the United Nations Volunteers programme and to coordinate all volunteer activities within United Nations-assisted projects with the Coordinator of the programme".

Furthermore, resolution 33/84 reiterated the request to

"the executive heads of the organizations concerned within the United Nations system to promote with the agreement of the countries concerned, with a view to coordinating through the Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers programme, the use of United Nations Volunteers in United Nations-assisted projects and activities and to harmonize policies on placement and conditions of employment of all volunteers in the United Nations system, taking into account the development needs at the field level".

ADMINISTRATIVE
AND ORGANI-
ZATIONAL
STRUCTURE

The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme maintains overall responsibility for UNV, which is one of the special programmes placed within UNDP's Bureau

for Special Activities. The Administrator's overall responsibility is in line with the founding resolution. In it the UN Secretary-General was requested "to designate the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme as the Administrator of the United Nations Volunteers" and, in consultation with the Administrator of UNDP, to appoint a Coordinator within the framework of the programme. The responsibilities of the Coordinator, according to item III of the founding resolution, include the overall promotion, coordination and management of UNV activities in cooperation with the UN agencies concerned, with organizations involved in national and international voluntary service and, where appropriate, with relevant youth organizations.

UNV began operations in 1971. A UNV office was established in New York within the framework of UNDP. A liaison office was also subsequently established in Geneva, Switzerland. In July 1972 the main UNV office was transferred to Geneva with a small liaison unit maintained in New York. This liaison office was abolished in 1977. Consequently, UNV activities are now directed from the programme's headquarters and only office, located in Geneva.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

The main purpose and objectives of UNV, following the major resolutions, decisions and consequent development of the programme, can be summarized as follows:

- to contribute to development efforts by providing an additional source of qualified and trained manpower;
- to offer to the UN system and member states the energetic and catalytic contribution of young professionals who are willing to work under volunteer conditions of modest remuneration;
- to promote operational activities to increase youth's effective participation in development;
- to provide assistance to and to cooperate with Domestic Development Service organizations at both national and regional levels;
- to provide an opportunity for young professionals from all nations - particularly from developing countries, in the spirit of TCDC - to contribute to and gain experience in UN-related and national development programmes;
- to increase opportunities for young people to be involved in and to learn about development, and thus to increase international understanding and cooperation.

UNV ACTIVITIES

MAIN
PROGRAMME
ACTIVITY

UNV's main activity is to programme, deliver and administer international technical manpower on a volunteer basis for development projects and programmes. Such volunteer technical manpower consists of UN Volunteers who provide middle and upper-level operational expertise in more than sixty professions. UN Volunteers - whose ranks include engineers, agronomists and agriculturalists, architects, economists, accountants, surveyors, medical doctors, teachers, geologists and other professionals - are assigned in one of the following ways:

- to projects executed and assisted by agencies of the UN system;
- to government departments or services to work with directly-administered government programmes and activities;
- as programme assistants/associates to provide programming, monitoring and administrative support to the field activities of such UN agencies and programmes as UNICEF, UNFPA, UNCDF, UNHCR and WFP.

UNV
EXECUTION
OF PROJECTS

An important aspect of UNV's operations - an aspect closely allied to its programming and delivery of UN Volunteers' services - is its direct responsibility for the execution of

volunteer projects. These are projects whose international personnel are primarily or exclusively UN Volunteers. In such cases, the volunteers are integrated into governments' directly-managed activities and institutional frameworks, and UNV follows the usual reporting and other project implementation procedures established for executing agencies of the UN system. Such placement of UN technical assistance personnel under complete government supervision plays an important role in promoting government self-reliance in the management of technical assistance expertise.

Within its mandate, UNV also executes operational development activities for youth and DDS programmes, as described on pages 13-16.

PROGRAMMING
OF UN
VOLUNTEERS

The services of UN Volunteers are programmed for use in a variety of ways:

- complementarily with other technical personnel inputs to extend the substantive or geographic range of project activities;
- as an alternative to other technical personnel employed on projects executed by UN agencies; this can be done whenever expertise of the level provided through UNV is considered most appropriate for the work to be performed;
- as a short-term technical manpower

input when national manpower is unavailable or is undergoing training.

Identification of UN Volunteer inputs, particularly for projects assisted by agencies of the UN system, is ideally made at the initial, conceptual stage of project formulation. UN Volunteer posts can also be identified, however, during project reviews and revisions. Responsible government officials and agency personnel assist in identifying needs for UN Volunteers within their programmes. Naturally, requests for UN Volunteers for any country must originate from or be approved by the host government.

RECRUITMENT
AND
PLACEMENT

UN Volunteers are nationals of both developing and industrialized countries. The average UN Volunteer is a young professional, from twenty-five to thirty years old, who possesses a masters degree (or above) or a technical diploma, plus several years of work experience; alternatively he or she may have professional experience in a skill or trade.

UNV provides operational expertise in over sixty different professional categories (see appendix). The UNV Sample List of Candidates - published quarterly by UNV headquarters and distributed to UNDP field offices, agency headquarters, and cooperating organizations - is a useful guide to the types and qualifications of volunteers available.

UNV is responsible for recruitment of all

UN Volunteers. In fulfilling this responsibility, UNV headquarters receives, processes and screens candidatures either sent directly or identified by cooperating organizations (primarily in the industrialized countries) or by the UNDP offices (in developing countries). The organizations and the UNDP offices also interview candidates and assist with pre-assignment and travel formalities.

Applicants considered suitable for UNV assignments are placed on UNV's roster. Candidates are then selected from the roster for submission to the field: this involves approval by government and project officials (with technical clearance by UN executing agencies when applicable) for specific UNV assignments for which requests have been received and approved by UNV headquarters. UNV publishes monthly its UNV List of Vacant Posts which is distributed to all UNDP offices and to cooperating organizations assisting in channelling volunteer candidates through UNV. This list indicates posts for which volunteer candidates are not available on the UNV roster.

ADMINISTRATION

UNV assignments last for an initial period of two years, with extensions possible if requested by the host government and agreed to by all concerned.

Overall responsibility for administration of UN Volunteers rests with the UNV Coordinator; at the country level, however, the UNDP

Resident Representative provides appropriate administrative backstopping and other support. UN Volunteers are administered in accordance with the Instructions for Administration of United Nations Volunteers, copies of which are available in all UNDP offices as part of the UNDP/UNV/Field series.

UN Volunteers are paid no salary. They receive instead a monthly living allowance (MLA) adequate to meet their living expenses. The MLA varies by country and with time in accordance with the UN post adjustment (cost of living) index prevailing in each country.

MONITORING

Technical supervision for UN Volunteers assigned to projects executed by agencies of the UN system is provided by the Project Manager, Chief Technical Adviser or other designated project personnel. In the case of UN Volunteers assigned directly to government activities, overall technical direction and supervision is provided by the responsible host country officer under whose direction the volunteer works.

The general progress of each UNV assignment is monitored through a system of periodic performance reports prepared by the volunteer. These reports also bear the comments of the responsible supervisor and of the UNDP Resident Representative.

YOUTH AND
DOMESTIC
DEVELOPMENT
SERVICE

UNV's other major programme activities reflect its responsibility, bestowed by two distinct mandates, for providing assistance and promoting cooperation in the fields of youth and Domestic Development Service (DDS). This involves the development, support and execution of activities in these areas.

Youth. In accordance with its mandate, UNV promotes operational activities to increase youth's effective participation in development. UNV's approach emphasizes the particular relevance of youth's involvement in certain kinds of development activities.

Several important elements can be underlined concerning UNV's involvement in the youth field.

- UNV youth activities are operational and are geared to practical development activities at the field level.
- The programme collaborates with youth organizations and youth service agencies and does so under the auspices of concerned governments.
- In designing and executing operational development activities, UNV seeks to maximize the value of youth both as a participatory and a beneficiary agent within society.

UNV's current programme of support to youth activities - within the framework of regional, national and special projects -

includes the development of youth enterprises and cooperatives, integrated rural development youth workcamp projects, and on-the-job training exchange schemes.

Domestic Development Service refers to the activities of indigenous organizations or groups promoting social and economic development. This is accomplished principally by mobilizing self-help efforts at either the local or national levels to further national development. In most cases, DDS activities rely on local resources and involve manpower receiving either no salaries or modest allowances. DDS organizations reflect a variety of structures and backgrounds. They include, for example, such programmes as national volunteer or obligatory services and development youth schemes, and are usually either nongovernmental or government-supported. While the goals and programmes of DDS and similar organizations may vary widely according to the different needs they answer and the various contexts within which they operate, each shares a common denominator: each organization seeks to promote self-reliance by mobilizing local resources - both human and material - for social, economic, and cultural development.

As stated by the UNDP Administrator in his report (DP/330) to the 25th session of the UNDP Governing Council,

"the role of UNV in this field is to serve as a catalyst by establishing contacts with as many Domestic Development Service and youth programmes as possible; to develop mutual technical

assistance and joint programmes among such services; and to encourage and assist such services to extend their scope and programmes by the judicious placement of UN Volunteers experienced in social and community development work and youth leadership and generally expected to serve under similar conditions and terms as national volunteers".

In line with the Administrator's statement, the level of remuneration for DDS volunteers is generally more modest than for regular UN Volunteers. The level of DDS remuneration, established in consultation with the concerned DDS organizations, reflects a desire to maintain the normal DDS atmosphere which de-emphasizes financial concerns. In this way sharp distinctions between DDS/UN Volunteers and national DDS volunteers are minimized; furthermore, the entire project experience - including living conditions and the volunteer status - is shared. The successful experience of DDS activities proves that there are among national DDS organizations young men and women fully prepared to participate in this approach to development.

UNV-executed or supported DDS programmes are helping to:

- further the institutional development of and cooperation among DDS organizations at the local, national and regional levels;
- provide needed technical assistance through the services of UN Volunteers;

- promote and facilitate on-the-job training of local DDS volunteers in appropriate technology, slum health work, and other fields;
- encourage exchanges of national volunteers and the sharing of information.

PUBLICATIONS

UNV produces a quarterly newsletter and publishes biennially the World Statistical Directory of Volunteer and Development Service Organizations. (Publication of the directory was one of the activities passed on to UNV following termination of the International Secretariat for Volunteer Services (ISVS) in 1976.) In addition to such publications as the UNV List of Vacant Posts, the UNV Sample List of Candidates and special reports, UNV periodically issues publications on particular aspects of the programme.

FUNDING

ADMINISTRATIVE
AND SUPPORT
BUDGET

UNV's administrative and support budget is part of the regular UNDP administrative and programme support budget.

SPECIAL
VOLUNTARY
FUND (SVF)

Following the creation of UNV, governments and other potential donors were invited "to contribute to a special voluntary fund" in support of the UNV programme. The original purpose of this fund, which was described in ECOSOC resolution 1618 of 27 July 1971, was to meet external costs of volunteers recruited from developing countries.

During UNV's earlier years, the UNDP Governing Council permitted temporary use of the SVF to finance UN Volunteer assignments in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Currently, in line with the Council's decision at its 24th session of June 1977, the in-country costs of such volunteers should be met from the Indicative Planning Figures (IPF), related funds, and other resources. Use of the SVF in such cases is to be discontinued, except for the financing of UNV programme assistants in LDCs and Newly Independent Countries (NICs) and for the transitional funding in LDCs and NICs of some UNV assignments. Such SVF funding is to be undertaken at a declining rate and should be terminated by the end of 1981, leaving the SVF to serve its other major purposes.

While safeguarding the use of the SVF

primarily for its original purpose, the fund's overall terms of reference have subsequently been enlarged by various decisions and resolutions of the governing UN bodies. Thus, the SVF is now also to be used for financing programmes and activities related to youth and Domestic Development Service.

The purposes of the Special Voluntary Fund can currently be summarized as follows:

- to meet external costs of UN Volunteers from developing countries;
- to finance activities and programmes in the fields of DDS and youth;
- to finance publication of materials on the UNV programme;
- to meet in-country costs of UNV programme assistants in the LDCs;
- to temporarily, and until the end of 1981, meet some in-country costs in the LDCs and NICs;
- to provide general support to UNV.

The widening scope of UNV activities and the growing number of assignments of UN Volunteers from developing countries increasingly tax the meager resources of the Special Voluntary Fund. Consequently, both the General Assembly and the Governing Council have reiterated in various resolutions an appeal to governments and other potential donors to consider contributing or increasing

their contributions to the SVF.

FINANCING
UNV
ASSIGNMENTS

Types of Costs. The cost of a UN Volunteer assignment comprises two major components: external costs and in-country costs.

- External costs include travel and related expenses from the home country or country of recruitment to the duty station and return for the volunteer and his dependants; a resettlement allowance at the end of the volunteer's assignment; and recruitment and other related costs.
- In-country costs include a settling-in grant, a monthly living allowance, accommodation, basic furniture and utilities, and other similar in-country expenditures, including language training when feasible.

Meeting External Volunteer Costs. UNV assumes overall responsibility for meeting external costs. These costs are met in three ways.

- For UN Volunteers who are nationals of developing countries, external costs are financed from the UNV Special Voluntary Fund.
- For UN Volunteers who are nationals of industrialized countries, external

costs are met through co-sponsoring funding arrangements between UNV and cooperating organizations in these countries.

- In special cases (including UNV regional projects and cases where the funding arrangements described above are unavailable) arrangements are made for external costs to be met from within the project budget.

Financing In-Country Costs. General provisions for meeting in-country costs can be summarized as follows:

- through project budgets funded from Indicative Planning Figures (IPFs), the UNDP Special Measures Fund for LDCs, and other UNDP resources;
- within project budgets funded from regular agency funds or from contributions made to the project by bilateral donor organizations;
- through special funds-in-trust or OPAS-type payment arrangements negotiated with the host governments or donor countries in order to cover all or part of the in-country costs;
- through exceptional and limited use, as a temporary measure, of the Special Voluntary Fund as explained on pages 17-19.

The financing of UN Volunteers assigned directly to government ministries and depart-

ments, or to projects where no specific funding provision had initially been made for UN Volunteers, generally involves one of the following procedures:

- earmarking IPF or related resources in order to establish special UNV umbrella or sectoral support projects; funding provisions are made within the project documents to cover the volunteers' in-country costs and other components, such as equipment;
- in the case of OPAS-type assignments of UN Volunteers directly to government services and ministries, arranging for host governments to contribute, for use towards payment of in-country costs, the local salary equivalent of the posts filled by the UN Volunteers; the government cash contribution in this case could be sufficient to cover either part or all of the in-country costs;
- arranging for and utilizing government funds-in-trust and cash counterpart contributions to establish special UNV umbrella or sectoral support projects as indicated above.

UNV'S GROWTH, CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE

**PROGRAMME
GROWTH**

With about forty-one UN Volunteers in the field by January 1972, the number rose slowly to 283 by August 1977. Thereafter, UNV has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of its activities in terms of the number of volunteers in the field, the number of countries in which UN Volunteers are being used, the diversity of volunteers' nationalities, the development of DDS and youth activities, and the consolidation of procedures for the programming and delivery of the services of UN Volunteers. The following points serve as indicators of the programme's development:

- as a result of the greater awareness and increasing use of UN Volunteers, the overall level of requests from developing countries for UNV inputs has increased significantly and currently remains high;
- by mid-1980, the number of UN Volunteers in the field had risen to 800, representing some seventy-five different nationalities and serving in over eighty developing countries and territories in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia;
- a large proportion - over seventy-five percent by June 1980 - of the total number of UN Volunteers consists of volunteers who are themselves nationals of developing countries. This constitutes a concrete expression of one of the

practical aspects of technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC);

- since UNV began operations in 1971, over seventy percent of all UNV assignments have been in the Least Developed and Newly Independent Countries;
- to meet the rising level of requests, UNV has built and maintains an active roster of some 1500 candidates.

THE FUTURE

Having attained in June 1979 - ahead of schedule - the target level of assistance set by the General Assembly of 500 volunteers in the field, UNV is now moving towards a new assistance target. The UNDP Governing Council and the UN General Assembly have recommended a higher level of UNV assistance involving some 1000 volunteers in the field by 1983 in order to meet the increasing needs of developing countries for middle and higher level operational expertise.

While the need continues for sophisticated and high-level specialized expertise - expertise predominantly of an "advisory" nature - current experience confirms a growing need in today's technical cooperation programmes for UNV-type expertise. Such expertise is not necessarily "advisory" nor is it that of the traditional expert; it is instead "operational" at the middle and upper-levels, involving

technical assistance manpower willing to share its experience at the working level as operational experts. Such operational experts are able to work and live where they are most needed. They are, furthermore, generally willing to experience the difficulties encountered by the national counterparts themselves because of insufficient economic and administrative infrastructures. Herein lies the particular relevance of UNV's technical personnel assistance.

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APPENDIX: REPRESENTATIVE LISTING OF UNV PROFESSIONAL AND
FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES

Accounting
Administration
Agriculture
Agriculture Economy
Agricultural Engineering
Agricultural Extension
Agronomy
Air-conditioning/Refrigeration
Animal Husbandry
Appropriate Technology
Audio-visual Arts
Business Management
Cartography
Chemical Engineering
Civil Engineering
Communication (Radio/TV)
Computer Programming/Data Processing
Construction Trades (Electricity/Carpentry/
Plumbing)
Cooperative Work
Dental Technicians
Draftsmanship
Economics
Education (Adult, special, counselling)
Electrical Engineering
Electronics
Entomology
Farm Machinery
Fisheries
Forestry
Geology
Graphic Design
Handicrafts
Horticulture

Home Economics
Hydrology
Irrigation
Journalism
Laboratory Technicians
Librarianship/Documentation
Marketing/Trade Promotion
Medical Doctors
Mechanics
Mechanical Engineering
Metal Work
Natural Sciences
Nursing/Midwifery
Nutrition
Pharmacy
Plant Science
Printing/Book Binding
Public Health
Sanitary Engineering
Social Work
Soil Science
Statistics
Surveying
Teaching
Technical Trades (Workshop, Woodwork, etc.)
Topography
Urban and Regional Planning
Veterinary Science
Vocational Training
Well Drilling
Youth Work