

SPECIAL VOLUNTARY FUND OF UNV REPORTING FOR 2023



National UN Volunteer **Bibiata Doulla Biga Tahirou**, Child, Adolescent and Youth Health Programme Manager with WHO in Niger, during a health education session for women attending antenatal clinics.

The Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) has been supporting the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) since its establishment in 1970 in its role as the system-wide service provider for the United Nations (UN) and in advocating for volunteerism.

The SVF is an open trust fund supported by partners with financial contributions; UNV can then flexibly allocate these funds in support of its mandate and its multi-year Strategic Frameworks.

These resources enable UNV to promote volunteerism and match UN Volunteers with UN entities to help deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

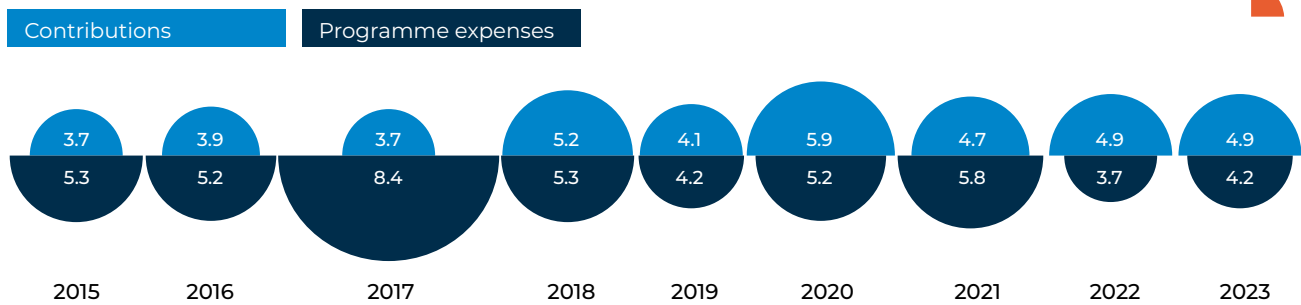
During the current 2022–2025 Strategic Framework period, Bangladesh, China, Czechia, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Spain (as a new partner), Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand and Türkiye contributed to the SVF.

SVF CONTRIBUTIONS (USD)



* India's 2023 contribution (\$19,998) was received in 2024.

SVF CONTRIBUTIONS AND PROGRAMME EXPENSES 2015–2023 (million USD)



IN 2023, SVF FUNDS ENABLED UNV TO:

respond to emergencies and crises

promote volunteerism

“walk the talk” on diversity and inclusion



RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES AND CRISES

UNV used SVF resources to provide immediate support to the UN’s response to emergencies and crises.

In the context of the world’s polycrisis, 2023 was the most challenging year in UNV’s recent history. Wars in Gaza and Ukraine, political volatility and natural disasters, and the drawdowns of UN peacekeeping operations required extra focus on tackling crises and emergencies. Against this backdrop, UNV has continued to provide scaled, community-level volunteer action for sustainable development and grassroots-level response.

Due to the flexible nature of the SVF, UNV has been able to provide immediate assistance to critical activities of UN partners in humanitarian situations, enabling a fast response by UN host entities.

SVF resources have been essential in Gaza, Ukraine and other conflict areas. Those resources also have funded UN Volunteers assisting in the aftermath of the earthquake in Morocco. In Afghanistan, the SVF enabled UNV to continue reassigning Afghan UN Volunteers abroad.

SVF-funded UN Volunteers supported humanitarian operations in Gaza. They served in capacities such as humanitarian coordination, logistics, communications, information management and child protection. At the end of 2023, 18 SVF-funded UN Volunteers were recruited or were under recruitment with six UN entities to support the Gaza crisis response. Several of them were deployed in the neighboring countries of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

Of the 18 SVF-funded UN Volunteers, 17 were national UN Volunteers. Sending national volunteers into the field provided a sense of ownership of the humanitarian operations in Gaza among the affected population. As an example, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) chose a national UN Volunteer to serve as a Humanitarian Field Support Assistant to monitor humanitarian developments, particularly highlighting local concerns.

In the face of the continuing war in Ukraine, UNV also deployed 12 SVF-funded UN Volunteers to support the humanitarian operations of UN entities in Ukraine and the neighbouring countries of Czechia, the Republic of Moldova and Poland.



Namchok Petsaen (left), a National UN Volunteer Specialist serving with UNV's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific as a Communications Assistant (Multimedia & Graphics), participated in co-creation sessions with the local community in Sukhothai province, Thailand to develop appropriate prototypes on the Community-Based Tourism For All initiative led by UNDP Thailand Accelerator Lab.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN ACTION

The SVF enabled UNV to actively champion diversity and inclusion, delivering results in 169 countries worldwide.

Elevating diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion remained a major priority for UNV in 2023. This is evident in the statistics – 187 UN Volunteers with disabilities served in 2023 with 27 UN entities. An additional 127 Online Volunteers with disabilities served with 16 UN entities across six regions.

The SVF-funded “Diversity Mosaic 77 Inspirations” campaign recognized UN Volunteers and Online Volunteers with disabilities serving throughout the UN system. Through this initiative, which included a photo book and accompanying website, UNV featured the stories of 77 volunteers with disabilities. The campaign seeks to inspire partners to engage with UNV on realizing the talents of UN Volunteers with disabilities. These efforts foster a more inclusive and accessible volunteering environment within the UN system.

Serving as a UN Volunteer offers persons with disabilities the opportunity to acquire practical work experience and exposure to the United Nations system. While this is valuable for career learning and development, it also opens up pathways that may previously have been inaccessible. Volunteering boosts the participation of persons with disabilities in political, economic, social and cultural life.

– **Vibhu Sharma**, SVF-funded UN Volunteer



Scan QR code
to see the Diversity
Mosaic 77 Inspirations



Increasing volunteer opportunities for people from under-represented nationalities

In 2023, the first-ever UN Volunteers from the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Marshall Islands were funded from SVF resources. In total, six SVF-funded UN Volunteers were sent to support the capacity of the UN Multi-Country Office in Micronesia.

SVF resources also allowed UNV to recruit five UN Volunteers from under-represented nationalities in the Caribbean. This targeted effort increased the number of UN Volunteers in the region from four in 2022 to nine in 2023. The UN Volunteers supported:

- Joint Climate Resilient Agriculture project, run jointly by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Build Back Equal project, run jointly by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and four Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Reinforcing inclusion of marginalized groups through UN Community Volunteers

Bangladesh is highly prone to climate change, with rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions, and unpredictable water patterns that significantly impact people's livelihoods and communities. Urgent climate action is needed; in 2023, 44 UN Community Volunteers assisted 7,500 people in accessing climate financing grants through local banking systems – thanks to a partnership between UNV and UNDP. Being from and working with the local communities, they are helping to build more climate-resilient and self-reliant households. The SVF supported 14 of the 44 UN Community Volunteers who reinforced the inclusion of people from marginalized groups of ethnic minorities.

This collaboration with UN Volunteers is in line with UNDP's focus of promoting inclusive participation and creating opportunities for women and youth, leaving no one behind. The UN Community Volunteers possess the necessary expertise and technical proficiency to deliver support that addresses the specific needs of their communities.

– **Stefan Liller**, UNDP Resident Representative, Bangladesh

National UN Community Volunteers **Kaya Chakma** (right), supported by the Special Voluntary Fund, and **Vagyo Moni Tripura** serve with UNDP in **Bangladesh**. Their efforts support the inclusion of people from ethnic minorities and marginalized groups.



National UN Community Volunteer **Glenda Joanna Wetherborn**, Gender and Human Rights Expert for OHCHR in **Guatemala**, brings attention to the positive impacts Garifuna and Afro-descendant women have on their communities.



Note: For the full names of UN entities, refer to intern.un.org

PROMOTING VOLUNTEERISM

UNV continued to use the SVF to conduct volunteer research, promote volunteerism and drive innovation for development.

Advancing research and knowledge on volunteerism

The SVF has supported UNV in advancing knowledge on volunteerism and providing guidance on the integration of data and evidence on volunteerism in development policy, knowledge products and research.

Funded by the SVF, UNV's Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism remained a primary source for volunteering data for partner institutions. In 2023, the portal consolidated a wide range of information, including laws, policies, volunteer modalities and knowledge products. It also provided a section on information exchange, encompassing webinars and virtual discussions, and published 23 knowledge products on different volunteering topics.

UNV further provided technical support for integrating volunteerism into Common Country Analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) to 18 UN country teams, two more than in 2022.

There was also a significant increase in the number of countries that integrated volunteerism into their Voluntary National Reviews – from 9 per cent in 2022 to 28 per cent in 2023. In addition, the UNSDCFs that referenced volunteers were also on the rise – at 33 per cent compared to 24 per cent in 2022. The emerging trend pointed to the recognition of volunteerism and UNV's advocacy outreach to Member States and UN entities.

Furthermore, preparations have begun to launch the 2025 *State of the World's Volunteerism Report*. Six regional consultations and two advisory group meetings were organized to ensure comprehensive and well-informed discussions on understanding the impact of volunteerism and developing a global volunteer index.



Facilitating opportunities for Online Volunteers

Online volunteering is an additional resource driven by the SVF and an offer that is complementary to on-site volunteers to support UN partners' work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNV has seen a significant increase in requests for Online Volunteers, underscoring the importance of leveraging technology for volunteer engagement. The cloud-based Unified Volunteering Platform connects UNV partners with skilled and passionate people willing to contribute remotely to the UN's efforts. In 2023, UN entities, Member States and civil society partners posted requests for 14,050 Online Volunteers.

Online Volunteers around the world



Niger

The World Health Organization (WHO) partnered with **125 Online Volunteers** to raise awareness of breast cancer, while an additional **105 Online Volunteers** advocated for women's rights with UN Women.

Ukraine

Emergency response efforts were provided by **392 Online Volunteers** who mapped, translated and provided research support to UN entities.

Peru

The World Food Programme (WFP) called on **647 Online Volunteers** to provide information to refugees and migrants.

China

UNV and UNDP launched **#HerDigitalFuture** with the support of **185 Online Volunteers**, amplifying STEM skills for teenage girls.



International Volunteer Day

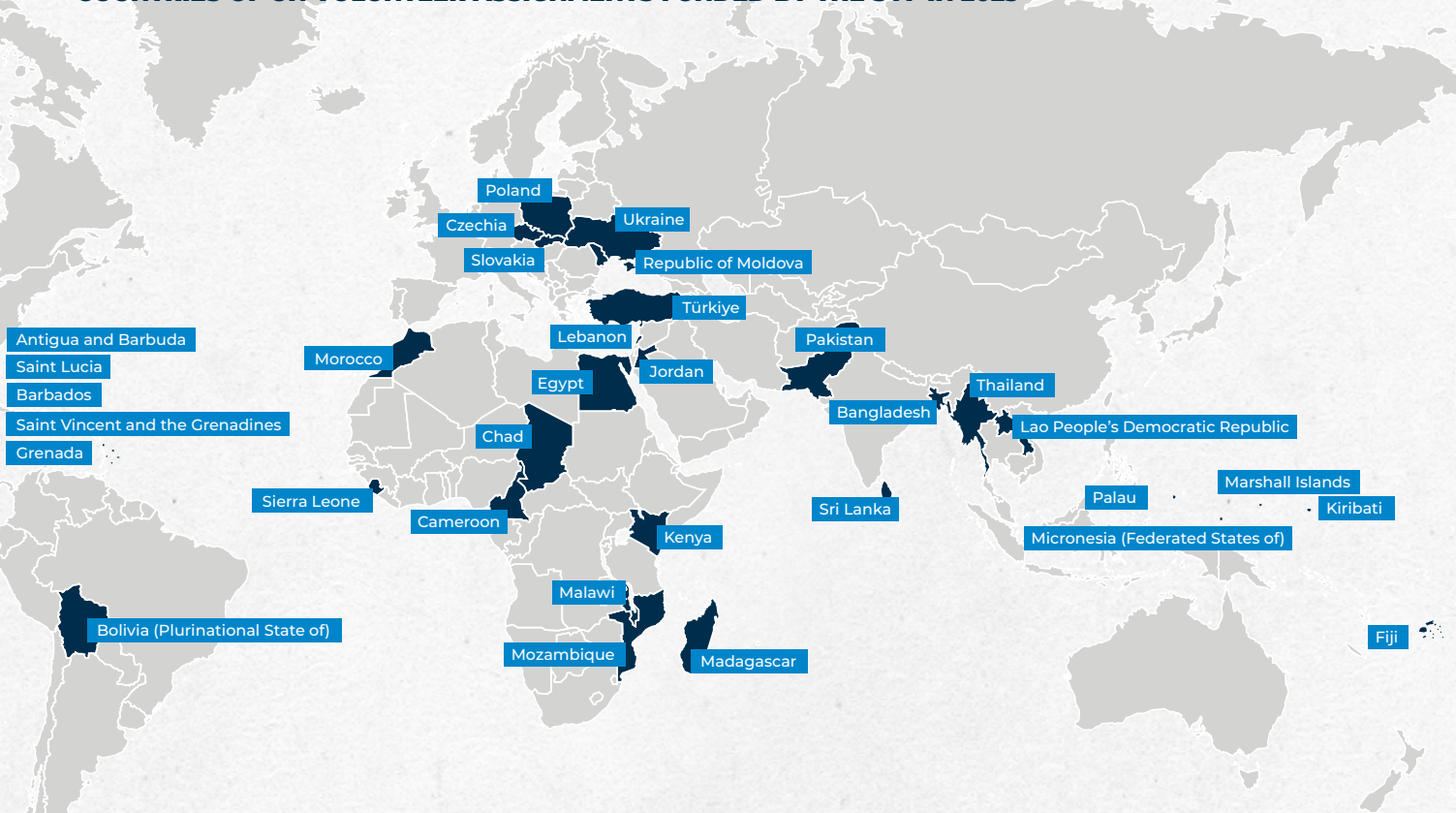
Every year on 5 December, International Volunteer Day (IVD) is celebrated across the world to recognize the contributions of volunteers towards the SDGs.

In 2023, UNV was a co-host for high-level events in Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Iraq, Ireland, Somalia, Tanzania, Thailand and Togo, gatherings that united leaders, influencers and communities to recognize the power of volunteerism. From the national caravan of volunteering in Togo, to the climate-conscious activities of tree-planting in Azerbaijan, to the wheelchair journey of volunteers with disabilities in Thailand, each event amplified the diversity of volunteering around the globe.

In addition, 84 UNV-associated events and activities were organized in 70 countries. Senior government officials in Azerbaijan, Belgium, Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo*, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Türkiye and Ukraine recognized IVD and the contribution of volunteerism.



COUNTRIES OF UN VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS FUNDED BY THE SVF IN 2023



*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).



National UN Youth Volunteer **Reema Alshurafa** is a Procurement Assistant with WHO in the **State of Palestine**. She supports the Supplies and Logistics Unit in managing and tracking medical supplies.



International UN Volunteer Specialist **Iryna Kashova** from Ukraine is a Cultural Mediator officer serving with WHO in **Romania**. She acts as a contact person for the refugee community supporting essential health professionals delivering services in refugee settings. (Frozen Monkeys Media, 2023)

WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2024, UNV will continue to use the SVF to drive implementation of the Strategic Framework 2022–2025. UNV will invest resources from the SVF to support a people-centred United Nations by engaging and integrating UN Volunteers into the UN system, furthering diversity and inclusion and expanding opportunities for persons with disabilities.

In support of this commitment, UNV has allocated resources from the SVF to the evaluation of UNV's *Contribution to Gender Equality* and UN Volunteer opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Building on the experience from recent years, UNV will invest in responsiveness and more quickly send UN Volunteers into the field, making UNV an efficient partner during emergencies and crises. UNV also will intensify its partnership with UN country teams, integrate volunteerism into Common Country Analyses and UNSDCFs, and begin preparations for the 2026 International Year of Volunteers.



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The print run for this annual report has been limited as part of UNV's effort to reduce its environmental footprint.

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