

VOLUNTEER GROUPS ALLIANCE
ACTION PLAN
2017/18

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VGA ACTION PLAN 2017/18

This Action Plan will guide the work of the Volunteer Groups Alliance (VGA) until the end of 2018, and will help the VGA to achieve its objectives in this period. It builds on the [2016 Action Plan](#), [Structure Document](#) and [Strategy Discussion Paper](#) and on past successes and learning, and it aligns with the [Plan of Action](#) for integrating volunteering in the next decade and beyond. Its ultimate aim is to increase the impact and effectiveness of volunteer efforts.

The VGA has three Areas of Focus:

- 1.** National and regional level engagement
- 2.** Global level engagement, focused on the annual High-level Political Forum (HLPF)
- 3.** Documentation, indicator development and telling the story of how volunteers are contributing to sustainable development

This Action Plan also includes actions to strengthen the VGA internally and to expand its membership and mandate, including resource mobilisation.

National and Regional Level Engagement

Between now and 2030, the Steering Group will equip and empower its member organisations to confidently approach decision-makers in their countries and regions, and work with them to achieve the VGA's advocacy goals.

Focus Countries

In advance of the HLPF in July 2017, the Steering Group will focus its attention and resources on five or six of the 43 countries that will deliver Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) this year. These countries are allies of volunteering for development, where the VGA and its members have networks and relationships at national level. VGA links with national level organisations and partner organisations will be utilised, and messages and approaches tailored to the specific country context. For the other countries preparing VNRs, the VGA will take a blanket approach to engagement. A similar approach will be taken for the HLPF in 2018.

For HLPF 2017, the Steering Group will produce a one-page document outlining the VGA's messages. This will address HLPF's priority goals and include text that governments can easily insert into their reviews. VGA members can supplement these messages with their own stories and case studies.

Advocacy Toolkit

The Steering Group, in consultation with the wider membership, will create an advocacy toolkit to support and guide members of the VGA in engaging with their governments. It will be launched at IVCO in October 2017 for use in advance of the HLPF in July 2018.

The toolkit will be a short, accessible document that provides:

- Information on the 2030 Agenda, the HLPF and volunteering for sustainable development
- Resources based on the VGA's advocacy priorities and messages
- Guidance on how to identify opportunities and targets, and how to take action at national level.

The Steering Group will, where possible, provide targeted support to members on a case-by-case basis, giving priority to target countries.

The Steering Group will also keep a watching brief on regional consultations like those scheduled in advance of the HLPF, and engage where it is easy and inexpensive to do so.

Global Level Engagement

The focus of the VGA's global level engagement will be the HLPF in New York each July. Representing Volunteer Groups, VGA members can attend all official meetings of the HLPF, make written and oral contributions at the forum, and organise side events.

Side Event

As long as the resources are in place, the VGA should organise and host a side event at every HLPF, bringing together speakers from the VGA, volunteer voices, UN Missions and the UN system to showcase the role of volunteers in achieving the SDGs. Side event planning will be led by the HLPF Project Group.

It should also be an aim to partner with other organisations on side events, and to have VGA members attend and participate in other complementary side events.

Position Paper

Each year, official sectoral position papers are prepared by Major Groups and Other Stakeholders on the HLPF theme. The VGA Steering Group will prepare and submit the position paper on behalf of Volunteer Groups, an 'other stakeholder'.

The paper will be no longer than two pages, and will address the session theme and

each of the goals to be reviewed in depth at the HLPF in question. It will be drafted by one or two members of the HLPF Project Group and reviewed by two more before being shared with the Steering Group for comment and approval.

Speaker at the HLPF

The HLPF Project Group will nominate a speaker to make an address on behalf of Volunteer Groups at the HLPF each year. This person should also speak at side events and represent the VGA in meetings at the HLPF.

To ensure consistency in messaging, the HLPF Project Group will prepare speaking points for these presentations, and will approve the text of all comments made on behalf of Volunteer Groups at the HLPF. The Steering Group will be actively involved in the development of key messages.

The HLPF Project Group will create an online form for members to nominate speakers, and put in place a selection process. This will be part of a larger effort to build and maintain a list of speakers who can represent the VGA at events. VGA members will suggest people for this list, and the Steering Group will provide them with regular updates and a Skype briefing every six months.

Global Engagement Beyond the HLPF

The Steering Group, supported by the wider Alliance, will continue to build relationships with the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, with Member States and with UN officials, and will build links and engage more actively with the Major Groups on Children and Youth, Women, and Business and Industry.

Telling the Story

The VGA's work to tell the story of how volunteers can and do contribute to the achievement of the SDGs will be centered on International Volunteer Day, volunteer2030.org and efforts to collate and document the impact of volunteering.

Volunteer 2030

The Volunteer 2030 website will continue to be managed by the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) in partnership with the VGA, and the VGA will be responsible for providing high quality content. The site features at least one story per week of how volunteers are contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

VGA members that sign on as Volunteer 2030 partners commit to sharing at least four stories per year for publication on the site, and to share information about the site with their volunteers and networks. There is scope for the site to feature other evidence

such as research and position papers.

International Volunteer Day

Each year, the Steering Group, supported by the wider Alliance, will work with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to inform the theme for International Volunteer Day, and take action on and around the day to demonstrate the breadth of volunteering and its role in sustainable development. VGA members should aim to mobilise their organisation's volunteers in support of this goal.

Each year, Volunteer 2030 will produce a set of stories related to the priority goals for the next HLPF, and share them for use by VGA members. UNV will produce branding, messages, a hashtag and other resources, which can be adapted for use by the VGA and member organisations.

Collating and Documenting the Impact of Volunteering for Development

The VGA will continue its efforts in the field of volunteer impact documentation, including through the collation of measurement of volunteer impact and processes around SDG indicators such as the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG), data collected through monitoring systems and national statistics, as well as from evaluations and research. This evidence base will support advocacy efforts both nationally and internationally.

Evidence Mapping

Building on the work of UNV, in 2017 the Steering Group, with support of the wider Alliance and the Forum Research, Policy, Practice and Learning (RPPL) Group, will carry out an evidence mapping exercise to underpin the VGA's advocacy messages.

The Steering Group will work with the RPPL Group to strengthen the body of evidence and thinking that underpins the VGA's messages.

Structure and Internal Processes

Now that the VGA has a functioning two-tier structure, the Steering Group will work to keep the wider Alliance informed of discussions at Steering Group level, to consult them on significant decisions and to mobilise these members and their networks to take action. The composition of the Steering Group will be reviewed every six months.

The Steering Group will produce a one-page visual aid to explain the VGA's origins, membership, structure and role.

Building a Mandate

The Steering Group will build the membership of the Alliance by supporting VGA members to reach out to organisations in their networks. These efforts will focus on organisations in the Global South, and on national level representative bodies and volunteering platforms. Organisations based in the countries that will be presenting VNRs in 2017 and 2018 will be prioritised, as will those where there are both conducive and non-favourable laws and policies on volunteering, and where there are opportunities for civil society to engage with and influence the outcome of VNRs.

The Steering Group will carry out a mapping exercise to identify organisations that match with the VGA's priorities. The criteria for membership of the VGA are set out in the Structure Document.

To build a mandate at UN level, the VGA will establish a full time representative based in New York.

Measuring Progress

The VGA has identified that it needs to go beyond measuring activities and understand how successful the VGA is in achieving its goals through the activities set out in this Action Plan.

The Steering Group will produce a quarterly narrative report for the wider Alliance on progress against this Action Plan. This report will be signed off by the Steering Group on the last conference call of each quarter. A running update on progress in the form of a spreadsheet will also be implemented as a tool to support measurement of the VGA's activities against objectives laid out in the Action Plan for 2017/18.