



International  
Association for  
Volunteer  
Effort

# VOLUNTEERING **TOGETHER**

*Making a difference to  
people and communities*

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**YOUTH RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**THE RISE OF VIRTUAL &  
INFORMAL VOLUNTEERING**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF AGILITY  
& BUILDING RESILIENCE**

**...AND MORE**

**SOLIDARITY THROUGH  
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# FOREWORD

**B**y now, we can safely assert that the coronavirus pandemic has raised the profile and value of volunteer action globally – action undertaken by skilled corporate employees going above and beyond, volunteering done within organizations to sustain and expand services, and volunteering done spontaneously by individuals who wish to help their families, neighbors and communities emerge from this crisis.

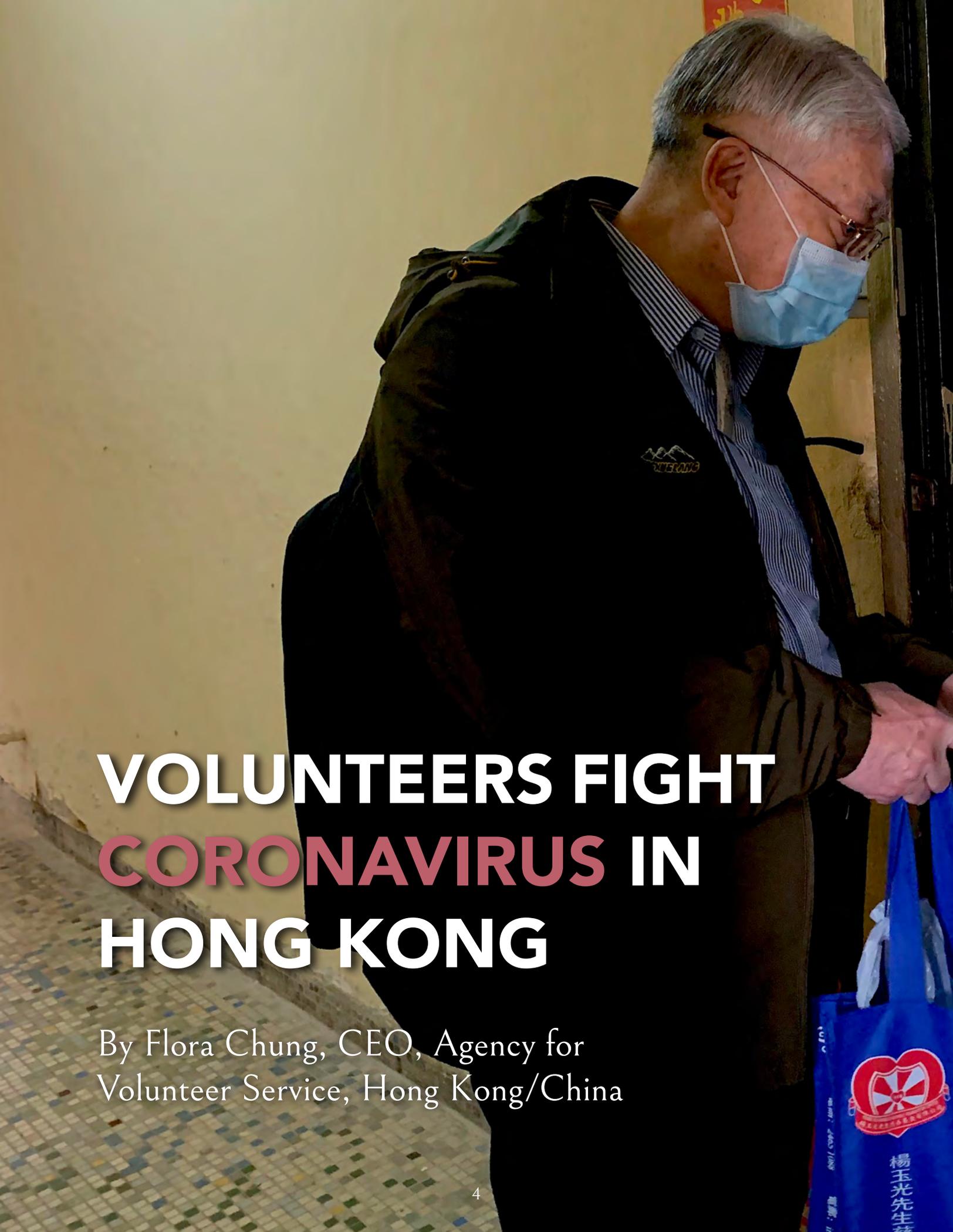
Everywhere, volunteers have responded to the challenge of coronavirus, finding new ways to deliver service in the midst of a crisis. Here, in this magazine, we have captured just a few of these stories. From Tata, who have opened up a virtual learning platform free of cost to all educational institutions globally, to the Agency for Volunteer Service in Hong Kong, who – because they were on the frontlines of this crisis, provided an essential framework for early response.

At IAVE, we feel a sense of urgency to not only capture the impact volunteers have made but also the innovation behind it, documenting not only actions taken, but the inspiring practices, and agents of change that have evolved from this crisis. This information will help grow the capacity of volunteer leaders (leadership organizations, governments, etc.), and will also help build the resilience needed to weather the next inevitable crises.

You continue to inspire us in how you have responded to this global crisis. We hope these stories help you evolve to build an even stronger, more resilient future for volunteering globally.



Nichole Cirillo  
Executive Director, IAVE



# VOLUNTEERS FIGHT CORONAVIRUS IN HONG KONG

By Flora Chung, CEO, Agency for  
Volunteer Service, Hong Kong/China



**C**COVID-19 broke out in Hong Kong in late January this year and the government subsequently declared the outbreak as the highest state of emergency. To prevent the spread and infection of the pandemic, schools were closed, classes were suspended, and close social contacts and gatherings were discouraged. Panic buying for protective masks, sanitization products, food and daily necessities was seen everywhere. The general public was exhausted from taking care of family members and relatives. The underprivileged groups who did not have access to proper information and resources became the most vulnerable.

## **FIGHTING THE CORONAVIRUS TOGETHER**

Amid the viral outbreak, Agency for Volunteer Service (AVS), Hong Kong's volunteer leadership organization, has actively called for volunteer action to care for the underprivileged, both in formal and informal ways. We endeavored to locate and provide service opportunities, facilitating volunteering with practical advice and resources. Three levels of actions were undertaken.

### **Level 1: Emergency action**

In early February, in response to the urgent request from the government, we rolled out a volunteer recruitment program within a single day. Volunteers were required for nonmedical and logistical services, to care for people who were quarantined at home or at quarantine camps. Approximately 200 volunteers have signed up so far and most are engaged in packing and distributing protective supplies for vulnerable groups or arranging delivery of daily necessities to people who are under compulsory quarantine.

## Level 2: District-based service

In partnership with a group of volunteers with a medical background, our elderly center organized visits to 200 elderly people who were living alone. We deployed volunteers to deliver masks, sanitization products, and food. During the visits, volunteers also provided information on transmission prevention. The reactions to our visits were incredibly humbling. During the house calls, many of the beneficiaries were greatly moved and expressed deep gratitude for the warmth and care shown by the volunteers. Some even broke down in tears. The elderly need emotional support and socialization to overcome the feeling of loneliness and insecurity during this crisis.

To meet the pressing needs of the elderly who are living in public housing communities, we mobilized our youth volunteer group to launch the "Mask-Raising Campaign" in late February. While their classes were suspended, 300 secondary students took part in soliciting mask donations through social media. Volunteer mentors undertook the task of packing and delivering the donations. Over 11,000 masks were collected within 5 days and were distributed to 2,150 elders.

## Level 3: Territory-wide project

With an emergency fund of approximately \$45,000 USD granted by a charities trust, we were able to launch an antivirus project. The project aimed to encourage and facilitate NGOs and volunteer groups to organize volunteer services that focused on caring for the underprivileged, who are one of the most vulnerable during the pandemic. We also solicited donations for protective supplies and produced leaflets on transmission prevention. Leaflets were designed in multiple languages for people of different ethnicities. Moreover, youth members of our Family Volunteer team were encouraged to craft cards with words



of encouragement. Altogether, the project allocated 96,000 masks and 20,000 units of hand sanitizer to over 20,000 needy people — including chronically ill patients, frail elderly, the disabled, recent immigrants, and ethnic minority groups.

## CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Taking on the challenge of mobilizing volunteers to fight the virus requires strong determination and commitment. Undoubtedly and inevitably, we have to be creative and open to a multiplicity of strategies.

There was a serious shortage of masks and sanitization products during the early stages of the outbreak. Public appeals for donations was a way which proved to be effective. More than 60,000 masks and 10,000 hand sanitizer products were collected from the community.

Avoiding duplication of resources was another challenge. We collaborated with NGOs and



public housing managements to make sure the protective supplies were going to the people with real and pressing needs. Criteria were set for allocating the antivirus care packages. Most of the resources went to NGOs that did not have adequate funding or support, and to elderly residents living in public housing estates, who have limited access to protective materials.

Donors often focus their attention on the needs of the underprivileged, but not the volunteers. It is our role urge them to recognize the safety needs of volunteers, strongly encouraging an allocation of protective materials for volunteers working in the frontlines.

As mentioned above, the safety of volunteers during service is very important. To minimize social interaction, we arranged volunteers to work in smaller groups. We also adopted a new virtual volunteer program, which allowed people to volunteer via social media, email,

telephone etc. The antivirus care packages were delivered by post and home visits were confined to meetings at the doorway. Volunteers were provided protective supplies, adequate briefings, service tips and transmission preventative guidelines.

Another big challenge we faced is the lack of health insurance for volunteers. In order to mitigate the risk, we provided all necessary preservice infection control and service briefings. We made sure volunteers were well informed of the risks and we respected their freedom to choose whether they were willing to volunteer under the circumstances. Regardless of the risks, a large number of volunteers still chose to join us in the fight against COVID-19.

## OUR REFLECTIONS

What have we learned from fighting the coronavirus? It could be concluded into three words: Calm, Collaboration and Change.

First and foremost, we learned to stay calm while facing this unprecedented and extraordinary challenge. Secondly, it became clear that cannot accomplish things alone. Collaboration with different organizations is important. NGOs, healthcare professionals, volunteer groups, businesses, donors and the government all have a unique role to play in the response effort. With everyone's contribution, we can see the full beauty and potential of the power of volunteering. The ability to change and adapt enables us to respond more effectively to the ever-changing nature of a global pandemic.

Volunteering is the key to unlocking the power of the community. Volunteers are more important than ever amidst these challenging times.

# BORN TO CHALLENGE THE IMPOSSIBLE

By Vicente Schulz, Director of  
Communications, América Solidaria, Chile

*This is a story about a network of youth volunteers capable of mobilizing thousands of others to promote social and environmental mitigation initiatives in their communities. They challenge themselves to overcome tough barriers, ready for anything, including confronting a global pandemic.*



It is well known that the most disproportionate region of the globe, in terms of income, is Latin America<sup>1</sup>, a continent where the poverty rate of its indigenous population reaches almost 50%, two times that of the non-indigenous<sup>2</sup>.

In 2016, a network of young volunteers, between the ages of 14-17, formed to challenge inequality in communities throughout South America. This network does not let cultural barriers get in their way. Instead, they embrace our differences and promote intercultural learning. Based on the principle of promoting equal opportunities for all, these young people do not discriminate others based on their gender or socioeconomic status. They represent the generation that understands that collective work is the driving force in achieving the impossible – to change the face of Latin America.

CONCAUSA is the name of this program, developed by ECLAC, UNICEF and the América Solidaria Foundation, supported by Caserta Foundation and Preuniversitario Pedro de Valdivia. The program seeks to promote youth-led social and environmental mitigation initiatives throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, following the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



<sup>1</sup> According to the 2019 human development report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

<sup>2</sup> ECLAC, 2020: "El desafío social en tiempos del COVID-19". [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45527/5/S2000325\\_es.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45527/5/S2000325_es.pdf)

*"To save the planet, the first thing we need to do is raise awareness. We cannot ask people to do something if they are not clear about the value of their actions."*

Catalina Silva, Chile

The initiative trains youth on global citizenship, team building, leadership development, communications and project management, among many others. Currently, CONCAUSA has mobilized more than 6,000 adolescents from 18 countries on throughout the continent, serving in over 2,000 self-conducted projects.

As a result of their experience and the relationships formed amongst the participants, the young people created their own network, self led and managed, with an aim to develop joint initiatives, such as the *1000 Actions for Change* project. This initiative seeks to identify a thousand actions to combat the environmental crisis in Latin America and around the world.

"To save the planet, the first thing we need to do is raise awareness. We cannot ask people to do something if they are not clear about the value of their actions," said Catalina Silva, a young Chilean activist, during a discussion panel with Guillermo Passeggi (Uruguay) and Maria Esperanza de la Cruz (Ecuador), at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Madrid last December.

The three of them were representing CONCAUSA's youth network in both COP25 and COY15. Previously, they also had the chance to talk about *1000 Actions for Change* at Pre COP Costa Rica, FiiS Festival Chile and the UN Secretary-General's Youth Climate Action Summit in New York. "We're calling for a different perspective. We're tired of making demands and being at odds with the authorities. We want to spearhead an intergenerational effort," Maria Esperanza added.

Today, this network faces a new challenge: COVID-19 and its impact on the poverty crisis in Latin America. Although they had to learn to adapt to a new set of challenges posed



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by pandemic, they have now doubled their efforts, even reaching out to communities where internet connection is scarce or nonexistent.

This is how PLAN 12 was born – a program co-created by the youth network, Unicef, América Solidaria, Fundación Caserta and Generation Unlimited. This initiative builds on the 12 skills outlined in the UNICEF Conceptual Framework on Transferable Skills, with a strong emphasis on active participation, reflection and implementation of these skills during this unprecedented time.

The final goal is to grow and develop skills that will prepare our communities to face the new set of challenges that have arisen since the outbreak. These skills are: creative thinking, critical reasoning, empathy, problem-solving, cooperation, negotiation, decision-making, self-management, resilience, communication, cultural diversity and participation.

How do they implement these skills? Each week, they introduce a “Skill of the Week”, with a series of corresponding challenges that are shared via social media. Afterwards, the set of challenges become a focal point in a weekly podcast. During the podcast, two members of the network interview international experts, along with a representative of a CONCAUSA project that focuses on the particular skillset.

In order to reach every adolescent in the Americas, the podcast is distributed on social media, YouTube, WhatsApp, and most importantly, played on local radio stations throughout Latin America. This allows individuals without internet connectivity to access the podcast through their local radio broadcast.

PLAN 12 began sharing its content on the first week of May, and it is now available to be shared in a variety of formats. While the world is paralyzed by the pandemic, this network of youth volunteers does not stop! What will be the new reality for young people after this devastating health crisis? It is too early to say, but whatever the outcome, these teens will be willing to face it.

Watch the first chapter of PLAN 12's podcast at  
[youtu.be/1a8IDAuCTKw](https://youtu.be/1a8IDAuCTKw).

# VOLUNTEERING IN TIMES OF COVID-19

By Kinjal Jain, Deputy Manager of Community  
Services, Tata Group, India



The Tata group is a large 'salt-to-software' conglomerate consisting of more than 100 companies and with a market valuation of \$160 billion. Volunteering is said to be part of a Tata employee's DNA and has been undertaken since the group's inception more than 150 years ago. The group's mission statement is 'To improve the quality of life of the communities we serve globally through long term stakeholder value creation based on Leadership with Trust'. Volunteering channelizes the group's most valuable asset, its 700,000+ employees spread across the globe, towards societal good and thereby contributes towards this mission.

Today, Tata is among the largest corporate volunteering programmes in the world – with 1.44 million volunteering hours in FY19. We are looking to increase this to 2.8 million hours by 2025, or about 4 hours per capita per year, and have developed a strategy that would enable this. This consists of: enabling individual companies to develop their own volunteering programmes, increasing the scope of volunteering programmes managed by the group centre, using technology to connect volunteers, and creating an adequate supply of relevant volunteering opportunities.

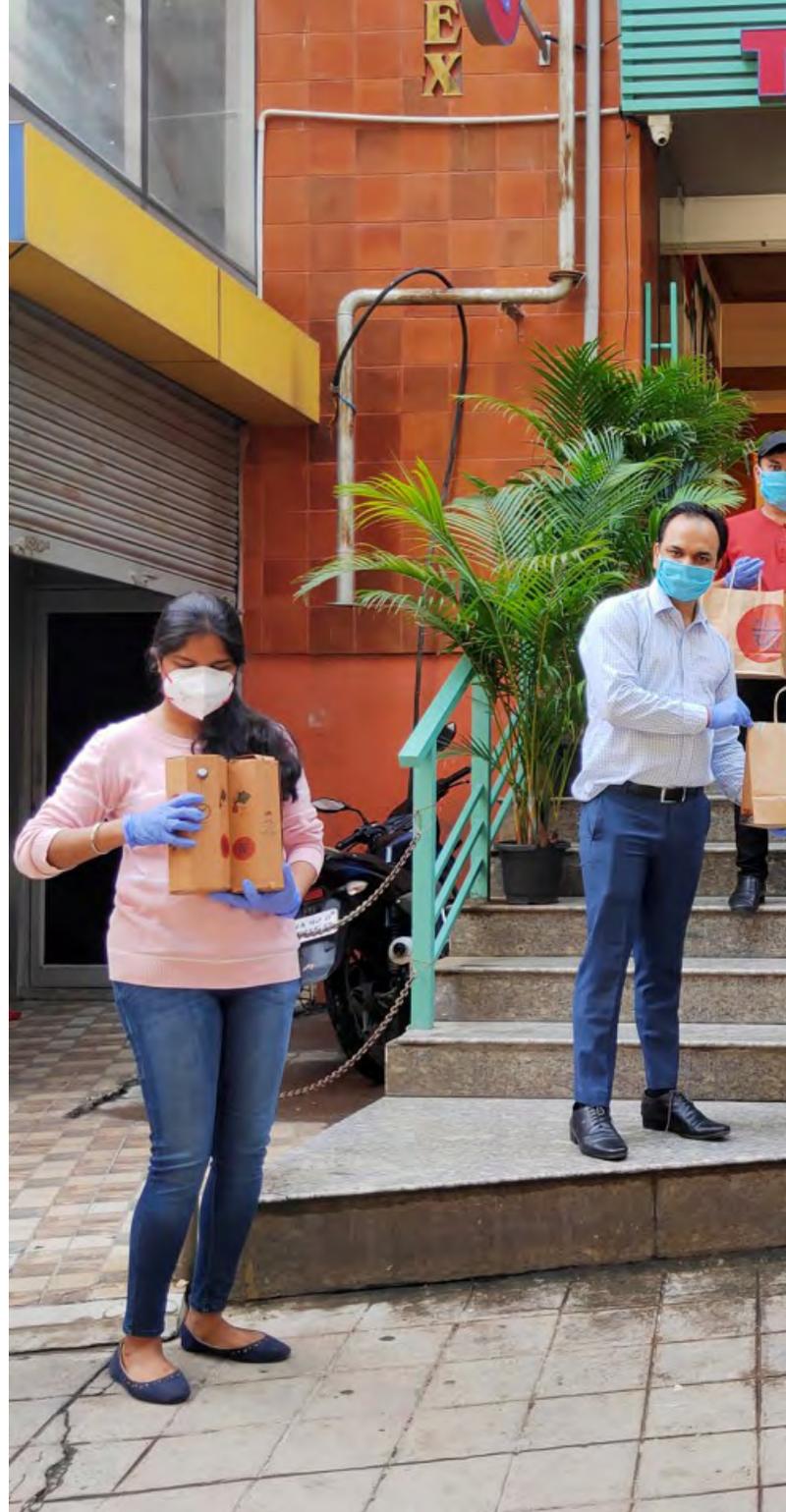


The COVID pandemic will require us to recalibrate the volunteering programme and the broad strategy. On the one hand, there are large numbers of people in immense distress (especially senior citizens, PWDs, migrants, refugees, the poor) and requiring a package of services that include voluntary support, as well as pressure on companies to help communities cope during and in the aftermath of the crisis and fill in gaps in the state's aid packages. On the other, there are constraints around movement and anxiety/paranoia regarding the risk of infection volunteers face while being in close proximity to the communities that need volunteering support.

The Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is placing significant strains on health systems, essential public services and communities globally. There is a growing pressure on companies to do something to help communities cope during and in the aftermath of the crisis. We need to modify the ways of responding to the emerging social needs in this context, and to do so without posing health risks for our volunteers or the beneficiaries. These require the exploration of innovative ways to volunteer in order to create a meaningful impact.

A reality is that, despite the power of the on-site volunteering experience, this will be a challenge in the near future. We expect that remote volunteering will be a new-normal, and are designing virtual or online volunteering programs to meet the inherent need to make a difference through volunteering. This includes designing orientation modules, setting up platforms to deliver volunteering, tracking both quantitative and qualitative indicators and tying it back to impact on beneficiaries.

Our employees are straining to do something in spite of these constraints and risks,





and many individuals and companies are responding to emergent needs in their own respective areas of operation by rallying funds, time and effort.

Jaguar Land Rover has deployed over 2,500 vehicles in 20+ countries including United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Russia, South Africa and Spain. These are being used to support frontline services including those organized by the Red Cross and local charities. Volunteers are also delivering prescriptions, equipment and belongings to patients and their relatives. United Kingdom volunteers are working closely with the government to provide research and engineering expertise: digital engineering and design, printing of 3D models and prototypes, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI) and data science.

Tata Consultancy Services has opened their virtual learning platform, TCS iON Glass Room, free-of-cost to all educational institutions globally to empower students to continue learning. Their volunteers are manning the phones to support struggling parents and educators through TCS Edu Virtual Assist. Their rapidly developed initiatives include a digital platform that allows Indians from rural locations to assess their flu-like symptoms at home, an e-pass system to seamlessly allow essential vehicles to move through checkpoints and restrictions, a mobile tracking application to aid healthcare workers in Maharashtra track quarantined patients, and AI-driven image analysis to help hospitals differentiate between COVID-19 and other common pathologies. They have also offered their proprietary technology, services, and skilled staff, in support of the 33 million Americans who are relying on their unemployment insurance as a safety net.

Over 900 Tata Steel volunteers are engaging 11,000 women, children and men in 15 states and 24 cities in India through online sessions on topics like Spoken English, Career Counselling, etc.

A Tata Communications team has curated a wide range of activities to engage employees, including raising funds for migrant workers, creating DIY masks and donating them to those in need, recording awareness videos on hygiene practices and more.

Tata Consumer Products coined the Iss Baar #BadonKeLiye (This time for the elders) campaign under the umbrella brand of Jaago Re (Wake up) to draw attention to the plight of the elderly in India and to encourage citizens to support and protect them. It partnered with HelpAge India and donated over 5,000 grocery kits to senior citizens. It is also serving breakfast to them through its Tata Cha stores in Bangalore.

Indian Hotels opened its hospitality services to

the doctors and healthcare workers who are catering to those affected by the virus. They are also providing 25,000 meals per day to the doctors and medical staff, police, catering over 1.5 million meals, so far.

Tata Chemicals volunteers have created local networks to help directly connect farmers to families as part of a Farm-to-Home initiative. Tata Power has provided over 5 lakh meals to migrant workers in coordination with local governments.

In Thailand, Tata Steel has trained community youth to make cloth masks, hand sanitizers and liquid soap in Rayong, Chonburi and Ayutthaya Province.

There is no doubt that these efforts are commendable and are addressing immediate needs. Yet we need to put on our thinking hats and adapt to the new normal by focusing on building strong partnerships with communities and address upcoming challenges, while also channeling our workforce to create a lasting impact.



# HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE DURING COVID-19

By Stuart Garland, Training &  
Programmes Manager, Volunteer  
Ireland, Ireland



**V**olunteer management is a busy and varied role at the best of times, but it is even more important during times of a pandemic. The requirements of the role may change a lot during these periods but the health, safety and welfare of you and your volunteers is of the utmost importance above all else. Virtual Volunteering roles will increase and other volunteering, like society and culture as we know it, will fundamentally change. Volunteering needs to change and so too does the way we look after the health and safety of our volunteers during these challenging times.

While some volunteer programmes are not currently operating, others are operating in new and innovative ways. Whichever you are, now is the time to carry out a risk assessment for these roles that are operating in a very different environment.

### **BALANCE OR REBALANCE YOUR WORKLOAD**

If you are working from home, make sure you plan some downtime and, where possible, get some physical exercise outdoors while practicing social distancing – it is important to be able to switch off. Update your voicemail or email signature to tell people your revised working hours. Let your volunteers know they are supported and appreciated.

### **PRIORITISE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE ABOVE ALL ELSE**

You may not have collected personal data from your volunteers in the past in relation to them being in one of the “at risk” groups for COVID-19, but you might need to ask that question now. This may seem intrusive but remember that the health of us all is everyone’s primary concern.

### **REVIEW YOUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME RISK ASSESSMENT**

It’s unlikely that you have a pandemic listed in your risk assessment. Now is the time to include it and to reassess all elements of your work on this basis. Have a contingency plan in place. The risks have changed and increased. Talk to our volunteer managers about what they are doing, link in with your local or national volunteer infrastructure organisation and see what supports they have. Link in with webinars and resources provided by IAVE. Whereas normally volunteering is at different stages worldwide, in a time of pandemic we are all in this together.

### **CONTINGENCY PLAN**

Volunteer managers can be a “one man/woman” show, so make sure you have a contingency plan in place, in case you need to



self-isolate or restrict your movements. Upskill a colleague to run your volunteer programme in your absence, if you have not previously done so. Think about how the programme would operate without you.

### LOOKING AFTER NUMBER ONE

Do not work/volunteer if you are ill. If you are sick and showing any coronavirus symptoms, you should withdraw immediately, following the guidelines from the Health Authorities in your home country.

Do not let anyone volunteer if they are ill. If a volunteer is feeling unwell, make sure that they can disengage promptly without concern or guilt. Sometimes volunteers feel guilty that they are letting the organisation down. Make sure that they know the health and wellbeing of the volunteers and beneficiaries are your top priorities.

### ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION

Encourage your volunteers to reach out to you if they have a question or concern about their volunteering, as one volunteer's concern could be the concern of 20 volunteers. Be honest with your volunteers. As a Volunteer manager you may be your volunteer's "shining light" and wear many hats, but you are not expected to be a scientist or doctor. Don't bluff your way in an answer to a question from a volunteer. There is no shame in saying "I don't have the answer to that question right now, but I will find out and come back to you". Volunteers will respect you for your honesty.

### FUTURE VOLUNTEERING

If volunteering is to continue, you need to adopt a physical distancing policy at your organisation. Volunteers are usually friendly people so encourage waving or verbally greeting people instead. Health regulations differ from one country to another. Check with your fellow members of IAVE who may be at a different stage of the pandemic and see how they have adapted during the pandemic.

If continuing interaction between volunteers and vulnerable persons, take all recommended precautions, including but not limited to PPE, gloves, eye and face masks, frequent hand-washing, and use of sanitiser. You may need to adapt your volunteer policy or procedure. Make sure you include volunteers in the decision-making process. This will ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed. Explore virtual volunteering.

If your facility has closed and volunteers can no longer volunteer there, explore if it is possible for them to carry out these tasks remotely.





## RETURNING TO VOLUNTEERING

Be prepared that some people may not be able to continue volunteering. What if one of your volunteers tested positively for coronavirus (COVID-19)? What if a number of volunteers had to self-isolate as a precaution? Would your volunteer programme continue? Would it have an impact on services? Think about which of your services is a priority. You may need to move and upskill volunteers from one area to another to maintain capacity to deliver your priority services. Mind the mental health of your volunteers.

Volunteering at a time of a pandemic can be stressful for everyone. Ensure that volunteers are taking shorter shifts and longer breaks and encourage them to not push themselves. Think about training. If you have to train or upskill volunteers, think about how you are going to do this. Can you have social distancing

in a training setting or do you need to offer e-learning instead? What might be some pitfalls of this and do you need to have an enhanced buddy scheme in place for new volunteers?

*Stuart Garland is Training & Programmes Manager with Volunteer Ireland and has responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of staff and volunteers engaged in their programmes.*

*One of the largest volunteer programmes they run is for the KBC Dublin Marathon, which engages over 1,230 volunteers each year. Stuart holds qualifications in health, safety and welfare, as well as event management.*

# RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING IN RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

By Benjamin J. Lough, PhD,  
School of Social Work at  
University of Illinois at  
Urbana-Champaign, USA

Over the past couple months, many communities across the globe have demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to cope with the unprecedented challenges arising from the coronavirus pandemic. A community's capacity to cope with shocks and stresses reflects its resilience or its "ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events".<sup>1</sup> Across each of these phase – from preparation to adaptation – volunteers play a critical role. Unfortunately, while volunteers assume a lion's share of the burden during crisis, they rarely receive equitable support to sustain their efforts.

To strengthen the value case for voluntary action in crises, this article provides a brief summary of global research conducted for the *State of the Worlds Volunteerism Report 2018*. This flagship UN report communicated the distinct value that volunteers provide within resilient ecosystems. It drew from field research completed in 15-countries and spoke to the importance of organization-based and direct forms of "informal" voluntary engagement common in the Global South, including mutual aid and self-help.<sup>2</sup>

As a jumping off point, what qualities are associated with resilient communities? While the list below is far from exhaustive, a broad review of published studies found that resilient communities can be described as:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Research Council. (2012). *Disaster resilience: A national imperative*. Washington D.C.: The National Academies Press.

<sup>2</sup> Lough, B. J., Carroll, M., Bannister, T., Borromeo, K., & Mukwashi, A. K. (2018). *2018 State of the Worlds Volunteerism Report*. "The thread that binds: Volunteering and community resilience". Bonn, Germany: United National Volunteers (UNV).

<sup>3</sup> Lough, B. J. (2017). *Literature Review for the State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2018*. Bonn, Germany: United Nations Volunteers.



1. **Connected:** robust social networks, weak to strong social ties, and active partnerships
2. **Participatory:** people feel empowered, self-organize, and display organic leadership
3. **Socially cohesive:** solidarity, shared values, people work together well
4. **Able to learn:** strong systems are in place for information and regulatory feedback
5. **Diverse:** members have different and complementary qualities, clear system redundancy

It is easy to appreciate how volunteers contribute to each of these qualities. Community-based volunteers are relational, ubiquitous, comparatively spontaneous, and can respond in scale over a short-time and at low-cost. They possess indigenous knowledge of local customs and geographies. Thus, they can inform real issues and culturally appropriate solutions at the ground level. Given the critical importance of immediate response, these community-based volunteers can bring significant value to crisis as first responders. As informal actors, they can also provide more flexible solutions than would otherwise be possible with top-down technical organizations. What are the other advantages (and disadvantages) do volunteers encounter as

complementary actors within a crisis response and management ecosystem?

**1 Firstly, community-based volunteers are highly effective connectors.** They provide avenues for social interaction while also increasing networks of social support. In addition, much of the aid and relief provided by nonprofit organizations is distributed through community-based volunteer groups. This advantage is especially important for isolated individuals and groups; in many cases, relief agencies find it difficult to access the most vulnerable people within a community. Drawing upon relationships of trust, volunteers are often described by nonprofits and humanitarian organizations as indispensable partners in relief efforts. Volunteers occupy a distinctive space by linking community-based groups with higher-level organizational actors. Acting as go-betweens and intermediaries, volunteers can relay important information from technical agencies to community-based groups (top-down), while also raising and representing issues of concern from community groups to higher-level agencies (bottom-up). On the other hand, connection also has its drawbacks; higher levels of connection can also spread risk, disease, and fear at faster rates—particularly when volunteers are acting autonomously. In addition, informal volunteer groups are typically free to exclude others, and in many cases, they serve those in their ‘ingroup’ while excluding

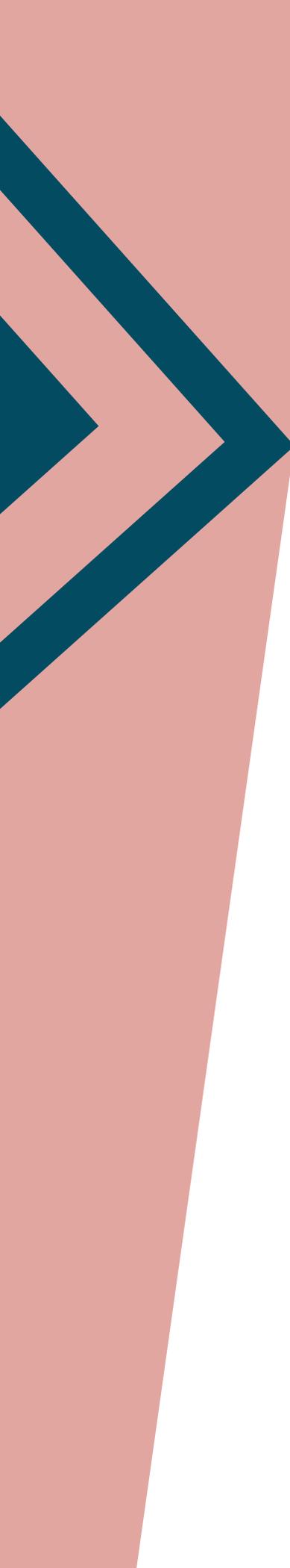
those in their 'outgroup'—thereby potentially weakening collective responses to crisis.

**2** **The second way volunteers bring added value is through self-organized cooperation,** with little reliance on centralized authorities—particularly when these volunteers are unaffiliated. Volunteers on the ground are comparatively effective at recognizing early warning signs and organizing quickly at scale—responding rapidly on the front lines during emergencies. With relative independence from organizational policies and procedures, community-based volunteer groups tend to adapt quickly to sudden and unexpected changes, thus being comparatively flexible and responsive to local needs. That said, volunteers often respond first because they are the only people available, not necessarily because they are preferred. In fact, organizations repeatedly find it hard to put large numbers of spontaneous volunteers to effective use. In addition, to the degree that volunteering is an unregulated practice, self-governance does not always protect the interests of the most vulnerable. Furthermore, organizational protocol has a purpose, and flexible and innovative responses by unaffiliated volunteers may not follow standards of good practice.

**3** **Thirdly, volunteers can enhance social cohesion** within communities by assisting others on location, leveraging philanthropic motivations to create virtual circles of mutual trust and solidarity. Because community-based volunteers are part and parcel of their communities they are often motivated by a sense of shared challenges and mutual concern. When these concerns are matched with proximity, people tend to respond with “a human impulse” to

relieve the suffering of those they know and interact with. Actions of mutual support tend to create virtuous circles of helping, while also reducing feelings of alienation and isolation as people give and receive. On the other hand, responding to communal and reciprocal forms of volunteering such as mutual aid can be a burdensome expectation. Thus, while volunteering as mutual aid has a high potential to enhance social cohesion, it is also tied up in survival strategies in many communities that disproportionately burden those with less to give in return. This challenge can be greatly intensified in crisis situations.

**4** **Fourth, volunteers can participate in bottom-up systems of learning and feedback.** The massive scale and wide distribution of community-based volunteers offer clear advantages for the learning and feedback mechanisms that exist in resilient communities. Volunteers are well positioned to understand local systems and can draw on indigenous knowledge. Exercising their role as connectors, volunteers can tap into diverse and isolated knowledge networks to stretch the depth of information and feedback provided to stakeholders. New forms of digital volunteering provide further points of entry. Despite these advantages, systems for managing crises often fail to take advantage of the wealth of local knowledge that community-based volunteers can provide. Critics express concern that untrained or unaffiliated volunteers may provide poor quality, or even wrong, information; while for their part, volunteers rarely have access to technical information sources that could aid in their efforts. Overall, the value of volunteers for feedback and learning is often undervalued and underutilized in ecosystems for crisis management.



**In a complex ecosystem with many actors, volunteers bring distinctive strengths and perspectives.**

The principle of diversity applied to community resilience emphasizes that governments, corporations, nonprofit aid agencies, and volunteers all have distinctive roles in crisis response and management. When times are hard, volunteering is often portrayed as a way to reduce costs. Indeed, even people with highly-stretched time and resources tend to volunteer in hard times—often drawing down their own scarce resources to help. However, it is very difficult, and perhaps unethical, to assume sustained voluntary engagement over the long-term without ongoing complementary support. For many people, volunteering can come at a high price—particularly when sustained over long durations. The thorny challenges that volunteers deal with can stretch them beyond their capacity to tackle these issues on their own. In situations where voluntary action becomes a necessity, such as during crisis, volunteers can easily be exploited. Ironically, the unique qualities that characterize volunteering are often the very source of their exploitation; qualities that could otherwise be leveraged to enhance community resilience.

To optimize community resilience, decision-makers need to better acknowledge the added value that volunteers contribute beyond cost reduction and cheap labor. Volunteers have the ability to self-organize around self-identified priorities; to leverage interpersonal and collaborative relationships for cohesive action; to use their local knowledge to inform and meet the needs of vulnerable groups; to respond with immediate speed and front-line availability; and to match this response with creativity, flexibility, and innovation. On the other hand, volunteering is not a cure all. Partnerships that acknowledge and leverage the comparative advantages of diverse actors are essential for long-term community resilience. Without adequate preparation and capacitation, an overreliance on voluntary action can inhibit community resilience. Stakeholders must recognize that volunteering is more than effort freely given in the absence of reliable provisions from the state or nonprofit and humanitarian agencies. Better recognition and integration of the many added values of volunteering can be used to design strategies for more innovative, experimental and co-creative solutions to manage risk.



ÚNETE

como

VOLUNTARIO  
VIRTUAL

# THE VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING PLAN IN ECUADOR

By Julio César Benítez,  
President, VOLUNTAR, Ecuador

The Virtual Volunteering Plan, (Plan de Voluntariado Virtual – PVV), is a joint project between 35+ NGOs in Ecuador. The program has mobilized more than 1,500 volunteers to provide virtual support and companionship to highly vulnerable households, totaling 15,000+ hours of service per week.

The project has yielded interesting results, due to several factors mentioned below:

### **CONTEXTUALIZING A CREATIVE MODEL OF RAPID ADAPTABILITY**

We have always responded to disasters as volunteers, being the first in line to help those impacted, but this time it was different. For one, the pandemic has affected the lives of everyone around the world. In one way or another, we all suffered the consequences of confinement, the economic crisis, feelings of fear and anxiety, etc. On the other hand, government recommendations on avoiding the spread of the virus were clear – "Stay at home". How can we find solidarity under these circumstances? Staying at home is a necessity for the sake of the public's health, but is it enough? The answer: Providing virtual and over the phone support for those who are most vulnerable. We developed a completely virtual volunteer management system, with volunteer opportunities to assist and provide support from a distance. These projects all have the underlying objective to strengthen resilience of our beneficiaries. Inadvertently, it also builds up the resilience of our volunteers. We all need each other – we all support one another.

### **COMPLEMENTING, NOT SUPPLANTING**

We made the decision to not dedicate ourselves to collecting and distributing donations. Not only was it unsafe to mobilize

volunteers for face-to-face interactions, but we also did not want to supersede the role of the government and the state. We aim to complement the efforts organized by the government. Through their programs, they are providing the basic needs – food, shelter and healthcare. Our purpose is to provide support for people's socio-emotional needs. With this in mind we chose to focus on virtually supporting people through the emotional, mental and educational ramifications of the pandemic.

### **TEAMWORK BETWEEN VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS**

In such a short period of time and with zero external financial support, none of the organizations in Ecuador would have been able to put together a complete virtual volunteer management system and to mobilize 1,500 volunteers on their own. We did it together. NGOs, universities and companies, each contributed their expertise, without seeking any recognition and with great generosity. More than 35 organizations, all equally important and integral for this to work, each led the charge to make this program a reality.

### **SYSTEMATIZATION OF INFORMATION TO SERVE AS A REFERENCE MODEL**

We have been carefully recording each meeting, method, process, testimony, and even errors that we have had to rectify or adjust for. Our entire process was organized and made completely available to volunteer organizations around the world. The idea is not only to inspire other organizations, but to give them a reference model to emulate, including information on what worked and did not work for us.



# Voluntariado Virtual Ecuador

#VoluntariadoVirtual #LaUniónEsElCamino

Organizado y Ejecutado por:



Con el Respaldo de:



Universidades que apoyan con voluntarios:



## ADAPTING TO THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE CRISIS

The model has been constructed in a way where we can provide varying levels of support, depending on the current stage of the crisis. For instance, during the first stage of our education support initiative, we worked to assist parents who had to cope with homeschooling their children without the pedagogical tools that are typically used in schools. In the second stage, as more people were pushed into social distancing, we offered support to families who were struggling to manage their households under these new circumstances, giving them guidance on how to maintain a healthy home environment. Lastly, when the society begins to open up again with people returning back into the workforce, we will focus on the reorganization of the home, as well as new income strategies for the most vulnerable.

## THE PARADIGM SHIFT OF VOLUNTEERS

We promote the idea that the role of the volunteer is not a quick-fix patch. It is not a raft that only allows the most vulnerable families to stay afloat temporarily. We hope to produce life changing experiences so that when we leave, we do so with a new vision on life, society, humanity and justice – prevailing over profit and individualism. Every PVV volunteer today will be the builder of a new and more humane society of tomorrow. None of this would have been possible without the generous and courageous hearts of the 1,500 volunteers who, despite having needs of their own, chose to dedicate themselves in helping others.

You can learn more about PVV via our pre-recorded webinar session with Julio, "Nuevos Caminos de Solidaridad: El Caso del Voluntariado Virtual" at [youtu.be/kgfeKpvi9Lo](https://youtu.be/kgfeKpvi9Lo). To request more information on the project please contact VOLUNTAR at [volunarear@voluntar.org](mailto:volunarear@voluntar.org).

*“Antes de salir afuera debemos regresar adentro”*

Residente



# YOUTH SERVICE IN THE TIME OF COVID

By Steve Culbertson, CEO,  
Youth Service America, USA

When any of us first heard the Chinese Proverb, “May you live in interesting times”, I don’t believe we expected life to include a global pandemic wreaking havoc all over the world.

We have little context for how to respond to the COVID-19 virus. We know the Spanish Flu in 1918 (which most likely started in Kansas) spread around the world and killed 50 million people. We also know that in 1918, as with our current pandemic, children were largely spared. Schools were also closed back then, but there was no online learning like we have today. Young people were much more isolated; yet many had jobs, delivering newspapers, working in factories, or helping on the farm. In most of the USA, school was only required through the 8th grade.

With so many young people having early and ongoing youth service opportunities in primary and secondary school, higher education, and in after-school or faith-based settings, it’s no surprise that the 2020 pandemic would only increase young people’s resolve to keep serving their communities and the planet.

At Youth Service America (YSA) we acted quickly in response to young people's demand to be contributors, not spectators, to the pandemic, creating a special landing page on our website that provides 15 ways to be helpful: [YSA.org/Covid](https://www.youthserviceamerica.org/covid).

The YSA model for youth engagement is nicknamed "Youth ASAP". As Soon As Possible implies the world cannot afford for young people to become adults before they start contributing. We invoke Martin Luther King's famous adage: "The Fierce Urgency of Now". Nothing could be more fierce or urgent than a pandemic.

ASAP is also shorthand for the four strategies young people are using to impact their communities:

1. **Awareness** raising about an issue or a problem;
2. **Service** of your time and talents to people and the planet;

3. **Advocacy** that connects your project and passion with elected officials and public policy;
4. **Philanthropy** to underwrite and sustain solutions to problems.

Youth service in the time of COVID-19 is no different. Awareness about dealing with the virus and human health has never been more important. Service for those in need, especially those with underlying conditions, is important in every community. Advocacy on behalf of those most affected, including the jobless, the isolated, the vulnerable, and, of course, the support personnel on the front line. Philanthropy for those whom the virus has disproportionately affected economically.

Here are nine project examples launched as part of YSA's [Global Youth Service Day 2020](#) activities:



While people are isolating at home, **Family Service of Roanoke Valley** (Virginia) encouraged children and teens to do at-home community service activities.

Hawaii's **2020 Keiki Rainbow Run**, scheduled for March 28th at the University of Hawaii, was held virtually this year instead.



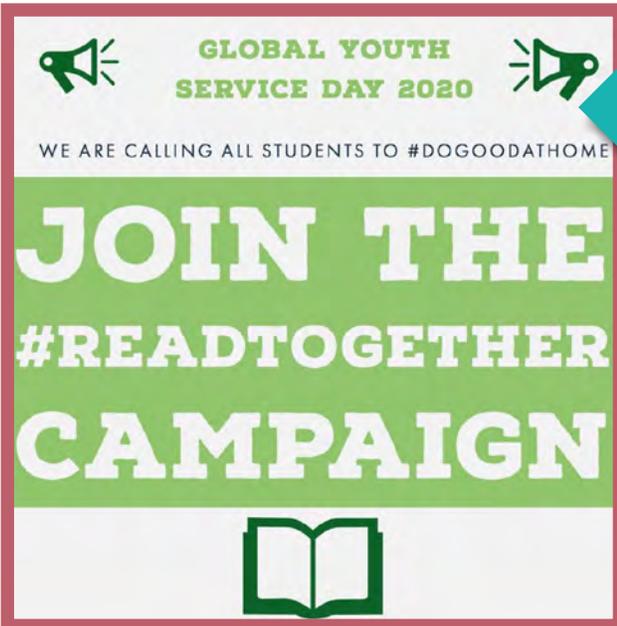


Across the country, **Katie's Krop's Growers** are working to provide fresh food to those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

**No One Left Unhelped Inc. (NOLU)** in Baltimore aims to provide overall community support, strategies for improvement of family units, and awareness of low-income families impacted by violence.



**Give More HUGS (Help.Unite.Giving.Souls)** in Canyon, Texas provide the tools to students in need to inspire a lifelong love for learning, reading, and creativity.



When the COVID-19 crisis shuttered **Ball4Good's** planned event, student leaders reorganized to host a different fundraiser called **Music4Good**.





Students from **VolunTEEN Nation** had already made 3,500 masks and delivered them to nursing homes in St. Louis, MO prior by mid-April. For GYSD, they made more masks and wrote letters to military personnel on the Navy hospital ships.

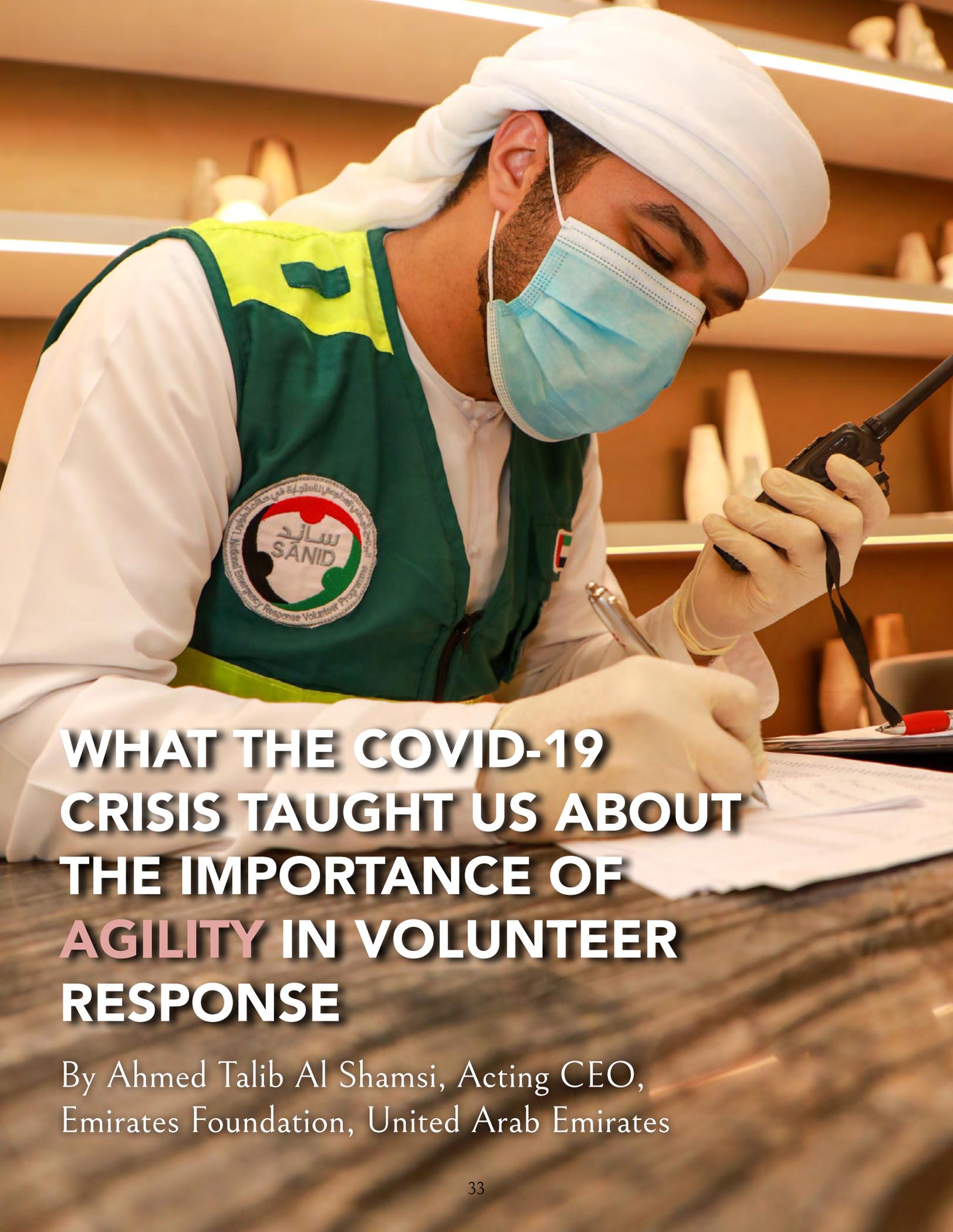
The Teen Leaders in Training from **Boys & Girls Club** of San Marcos, CA launched the Ask a L.I.T. Virtual Mentoring Program on Global Youth Service Day.



The world will survive through COVID-19, but the pandemic is revealing more disparities in our communities than any of us would have imagined. Too much of our health, education, human services, human rights, and the environment rest on fragile ground. I have great faith that a whole new generation of young people will be inspired by the needs they see locally or read about globally. Hopefully, the Roaring 20s that followed the pandemic of the last century will be replaced by the Soaring 20s, rich with plentiful, youth-led strategies that lead to a better world and "truth and justice for all".

The **Bellefonte Lions Club** was joined by youth and adult volunteers from **Zakat Foundation** of Delaware to provide food for 130 people who are currently homeless and taking shelter in a hotel.

*Steve Culbertson has been the President and CEO of YSA since 1996. He may be reached through email [steve@ysa.org](mailto:steve@ysa.org); and on Twitter [@Culbs](https://twitter.com/Culbs).*



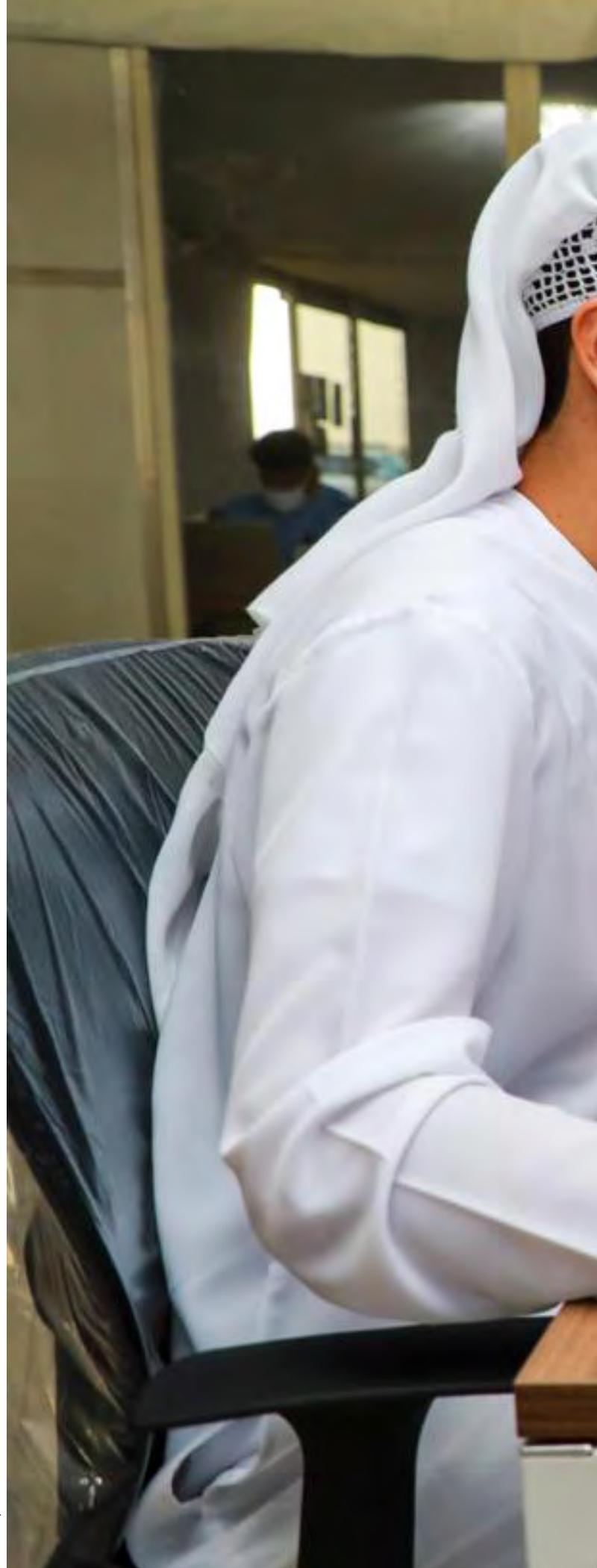
# WHAT THE COVID-19 CRISIS TAUGHT US ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF **AGILITY** IN VOLUNTEER RESPONSE

By Ahmed Talib Al Shamsi, Acting CEO,  
Emirates Foundation, United Arab Emirates

It is evident that the unfolding coronavirus crisis has hugely impacted life as we know it. No crisis in recent history has swept almost every part of the globe in such a radical and disruptive way. From the immediate medical threat posed by COVID-19 itself, to the myriad of social and economic ramifications whose full extent is still evolving and unclear, governments and civil societies are scrambling to put together rapid response plans on all fronts. What is equally evident however, is that the agility of response has been a key factor in its effectiveness. At the *Emirates Foundation*, the crisis called upon us to think fast, to quickly identify existing resources and key partners that would work together under a nationwide “UAE Volunteers” campaign to ensure maximum impact nationally in these unprecedented circumstances.

Central to our united response was to leverage technology by tapping into the capabilities of [volunteers.ae](https://volunteers.ae), an existing online platform we have had since 2017, which we revamped to fit the needs of the National “UAE Volunteers” Campaign. It quickly became the main go-to portal for any resident in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) wishing to volunteer, however, with a new quarantine-supportive twist: volunteers could now offer their services virtually from the safety of their home, in addition to traditional field volunteering opportunities we had been listing for years. The UAE government and civil society organizations whose crisis response initiatives require volunteers, use the platform to find qualified and capable volunteers. To date, over 17,000 volunteers have registered on the platform, from which close to 10,000 have been deployed physically across multiple fields (~75%) and virtually (~25%) across multiple initiatives.

It is worth noting that around 3,200 of





these volunteers are specialized medical volunteers who have been able to apply their experiences and expertise, to support the medical authorities and hospitals on various elements of their response. This includes medical checks, testing, patient support, etc. Other field volunteers from our *Takatof* and *Sanid* volunteer programs have supported efforts at our borders and airports, helped with disinfection campaigns, and distributed nearly 10,000 safety kits containing gloves, masks and awareness materials, providing valuable support on the frontline.

The pandemic also added a new dimension of challenges in the restrictions imposed by stay-at-home and social distancing orders. This called upon all of us to think of creative ways to navigate what could be considered the 'physical' limitations, and in doing so thinking outside the box to come up with a range of non-traditional volunteering formats and opportunities. Whilst volunteers are still very much needed on the frontline, there are now major segments of society that need support with life under these new movement restrictions. Thus an entire new line of virtual volunteering has come to life as a response to these challenge-based needs.

Through identifying key areas where virtual volunteering can play a role, we launched multiple virtual volunteering opportunities on our platform, [www.volunteers.ae](http://www.volunteers.ae). One such area is live webinars where individuals can teach a workshop or give a talk to help those confined at home hone a skill or develop an interest, in anything from cooking to life coaching to digital design. We invited notable personalities to a virtual 'majlis' where they take a deep dive into hot topics on everyone's mind. Other volunteers provide support for organizations that are struggling to keep up with increased workload during the pandemic, such as



manning health hotlines or call centers. In fact, in partnership with government entities, Emirates Foundation has set up a redirect link from the platform to two special national hotlines to help those in need: the 'Stay Safe Hotline' for vulnerable or elderly populations who are especially affected by the crisis, and the 'Mental Support Hotline' for anyone experiencing mental or emotional anguish during these challenging times.

The unprecedented volunteer response to this pandemic owes its success to several important factors; perhaps the most important of which has been the *agility* of all major stakeholders in maintaining and creating private-public partnerships and unifying countrywide efforts under the umbrella of the newly formed Higher National Committee for Regulating Volunteering during Crisis. Key partners



in this regard have been ministries and government agencies, the private sector, as well as community care centers capable of working directly with vulnerable and underprivileged populations in need of the support of the various initiatives and volunteer efforts. Private sector institutions have also been crucial in providing support under community and social responsibility programs targeting those in need, as modeled by the recent Ramadan Food Aid Initiative which supplied 16,000 food baskets to those affected economically by the crisis during the blessed month of fasting and charity, sponsored in part by a private sector partner.

As the crisis still unfolds, it is important that we continue to learn as we go when it comes to our understanding of the best ways to respond. Organizations leading

volunteer responses must be agile in how they plan and deploy efforts in line with standard operating practices. In addition, given the uniqueness of the crisis we find ourselves in, our role must also be to gather feedback from frontline volunteers who have faced a myriad of new challenges; thereby providing invaluable insight in adjusting our operational models of relevant intervention as we go. Agility and responsiveness are key. Our volunteers are paramount in this regard as they are best placed to complement our programs with bottom-up feedback which can be transformed into lessons learned and applied both immediately and in the future in response to crises.

One such example that has emerged is the need for mental health support for COVID-19 frontline workers. As a response, with our campaign partners, we are training and preparing volunteers for the upcoming launch of our helpline dedicated to medical staff, police and security personnel, as well as patients and families upon whom the crisis is taking an especially heavy toll. In response to the increased need for support for nurses in the field, we are liaising requests for fast-tracking a new training program to prepare over 1,000 volunteers with vital skills to assist nurses where they are needed the most.

As we cautiously but optimistically look to the future, with societies everywhere gradually lifting restrictions on movement and economic activity, volunteer efforts must be ready to act swiftly to support this process. If there is anything this pandemic has revealed, it is how much we need each other and what a powerful impact we can make when we serve others with *agility*. Let us carry this feeling forward with us as we rebuild a world that is kinder, more inclusive, and more aware of its need for unity.

# TOGETHER WE TAKE CHARGE

By Vanessa Vasquez, CEO of Sustainability and Value Creation & Maria Claudia Augusto, Editor, Juguete Pendiente, Peru

“Intense, exhausting and heartbreaking”, says Melina Funes, a 41-year-old Juguete Pendiente volunteer, when asked how she would describe her work. As head of logistics, she drives daily throughout Lima, delivering food and water to the poorest families in order to help them get through the quarantine. “It is painful to witness the inequality, but it also the only way to understand how privileged we are”, she adds before planning her next visit to Villa El Salvador, one of the poorest districts in Lima before the pandemic.

On the March 14, 2020, the Peruvian government decreed a state of national emergency that has now lasted for more than sixty days. Though based off scientific evidence, with the aim to prevent the spread of the virus, the decision is drastically affecting the vulnerable in a detrimental way. In a country where around 7 million people lack access to drinking water and in which informality reaches 72% of the population (according to the National Institute of Statistics and Information) staying home for some is a statement of hunger. While the government has approved cash transfers for specific parts of the population and a universal bonus that will benefit 75% of Peruvian families, the delays in implementation are leaving many at the edge of desperation.



Photo credit: RunaFoto

## TOGETHER WE TAKE CHARGE

As an NGO committed with the design and management of projects that improve living conditions of vulnerable communities, we didn't take long to act. We launched the campaign "Juntos Nos Hacemos Cargo" (Together We Take Charge), a solidarity movement that united more than 10 organizations under the same objective: to provide high impact and efficient support to the poorest communities in Lima. We have done so through fundraising and donations, providing food and hygienic goods to those living in human settlements, asylums and children's shelters, securing their needs until the quarantine ends. Moreover, worried about the conditions of the medical staff attending to positive COVID-19 cases, we have also helped our healthcare professionals by delivering personal protective equipment in the most critically impacted hospitals in Lima.

At present, our campaign has raised more than 3 million soles and benefited nearly 55,000 people, with the help of from 70 organizations located in 19 districts within Lima. The support has been incredibly amazing, showing the potential of articulated work. From big companies and local brands, to artists, opinion leaders and average citizens, we have shown that in front of a crisis, solidarity is our best ally – becoming trustable intermediaries to deliver help. Furthermore, our methodology, which prioritizes accountability and the empowerment of local leaders, has led us to respond effectively to the main necessities identified by the organizations we work with.

But we haven't stopped there. In front of an uncertain scenario, Juguete Pendiente has redefined its programs to address the





Photo credit: RunaFoto

challenges of the new norm. Recently, we have launched a virtual tutoring program for youth, led by undergraduates and retired professionals, in alliance with a Peruvian startup. Soon we will be inaugurating our own children's shelter that will tend to vulnerable children, in collaboration with other organizations in the community. All these actions are aligned to a public agenda which recognizes that the response to COVID-19 and the necessity to diminish the inequality gaps demand a coordinated work that actively involves the government, the private sector and civil society, to maximize our reach.

### **A LOVE MISSION**

In 2017, I visited Caropongo, an area affected by the overflow of the Rimac River that destroyed 30 houses off the river bank. There I met Zara Zamora, a woman that was able to survive and rescue her neighbors when the disaster occurred. I was so touched by her story that we offered our help without hesitation. Our expertise, her commitment and funding from an international company that also provided employee volunteers, allowed us to convert temporary tents to permanent houses. Once again, a full dream came true.

Volunteering allows us to respond to real challenges with actions that can improve living conditions in short- or long-term ways. It also helps people to abandon their individuality when they connect with different realities – humanizing us. In a time in which the pandemic is spreading in unbelievably rates and affecting people in need, it is time for us to stay home and open our hearts. At the end, as I like to say, Juguete Pendiente is a mission of love and with love we will always endure.



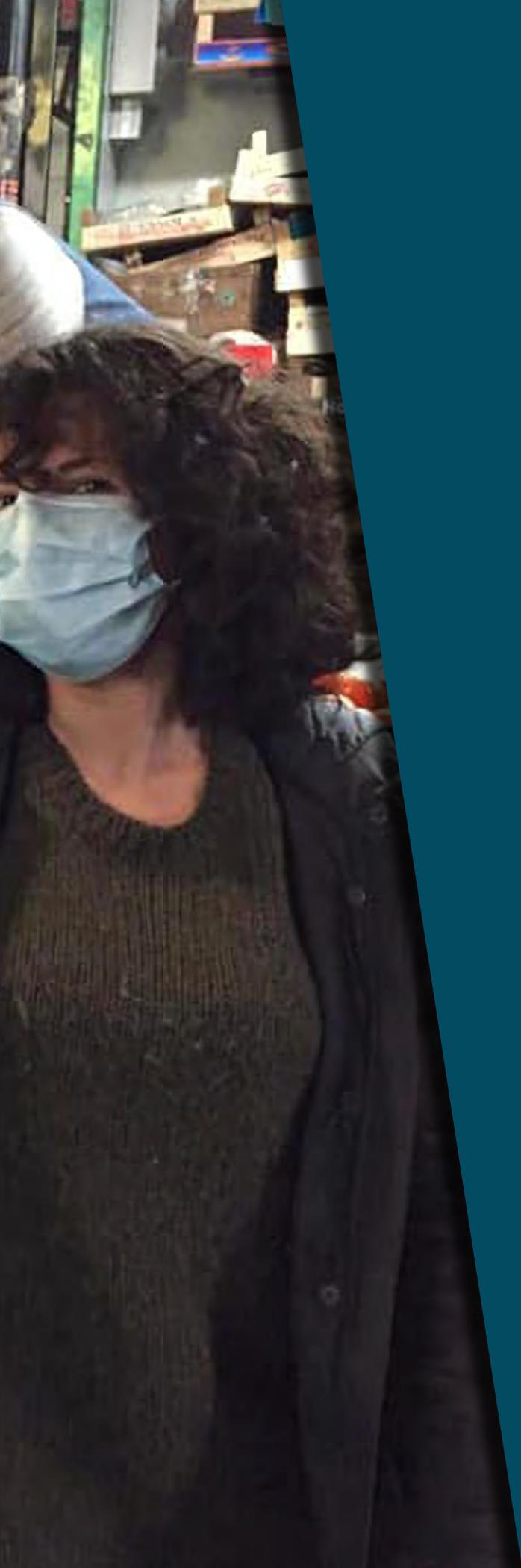
Photo credit: RunaFoto



# YOUNG, DIGITAL, SOLIDARY

**The Wave of Informal Volunteers  
During the COVID-19 Crisis in Rome**

Ksenija Fonović, CSV Lazio, Italy



With a drastic lockdown that happened overnight, volunteering organizations in Rome were flipped upside down. The first challenge was to make sure food and basic provisions were provided for the most vulnerable groups – the homeless and the refugees. These individuals and families do not have homes to quarantine in and a large number of them depend on soup kitchens and food banks for survival. In Italy, the backbone of our organized volunteer movement consists of mature adults. Overnight, the pandemic rendered the most resourceful and engaged members of society powerless, as they fell into a category most at risk for the virus. This presented the second challenge: ensuring the health and safety of *nonne e nonni* – grandmothers and grandfathers – the pillars of Italy, both in our private lives and in the public sphere. We had to take care of our elderly community, making home deliveries with daily groceries and medicine to protect them from the virus. The third challenge was the economic crisis, that spilled like ink. People didn't work, children were at home for months without school, families were separated, all kinds of organized services for beneficiaries, including daily care centers, were closed. Everything became more difficult. Situations that were already precarious before the pandemic, had plunged into even greater depths for many, leaving them dramatically in need. For the first time in their lives, many people, especially the elderly, needed somebody else to provide them with basic needs. All this happened within a couple of weeks, creating a somber atmosphere of uncertainty and fear.

Volunteers reacted immediately. The network of volunteers organizing food provisions became the safety net that prevented the economic crisis from causing a complete societal breakdown. Along with the food, volunteers bring vibrancy, words of encouragement and smiles into the lives of the beneficiaries. The hashtag *andrà tutto bene* – all will go well – exists because volunteers have managed to transform the motto "no one left behind" into

everyday practice. But “ordinary” volunteers from organizations would not have been enough, simply through their own forces. The great news is that large numbers of young people immediately took action. They are often in their 30s (which is young in Italy), well-educated, and savvy with both technology and politics. They became ideal informal volunteers during the COVID-19 crisis in Rome. These informal volunteers fell right in the middle, in terms of citizen engagement. Their work was a cross between organized volunteering and direct one-off volunteering. This type of informal volunteering most often involves a group of people who act together for their community, in pursuit of a common goal, all without forming or associating with formal entities. During the COVID-19 crisis, informal volunteers were making home deliveries of groceries, medicine and hygiene products for at-risk members of the community. There was an upsurge of this type of non-formalized and self-organized volunteering, which complemented and sustained local networks of community solidarity.

Locality is key in this type of engagement – the neighborhood, a micro territorial dimension. Under the conditions of the pandemic, where mobility was vastly reduced to safeguard the public’s health, organizing successful volunteering opportunities heavily relied on the physical proximity between the volunteers and beneficiaries. As a result, informal volunteering was most successful when it was done within the local communities, coordinated by the local government to ensure collaboration between the third sector and the informal volunteers. The community response to the COVID-19 crisis has shown, once again, that the backbone of the community’s capacity for resilience is the joint effort of local multi-stakeholder partners. During a public health crisis, the role of the local municipality is irreplaceable. It provides the necessary infrastructure, and the administrative and legal frameworks for mobility and action.

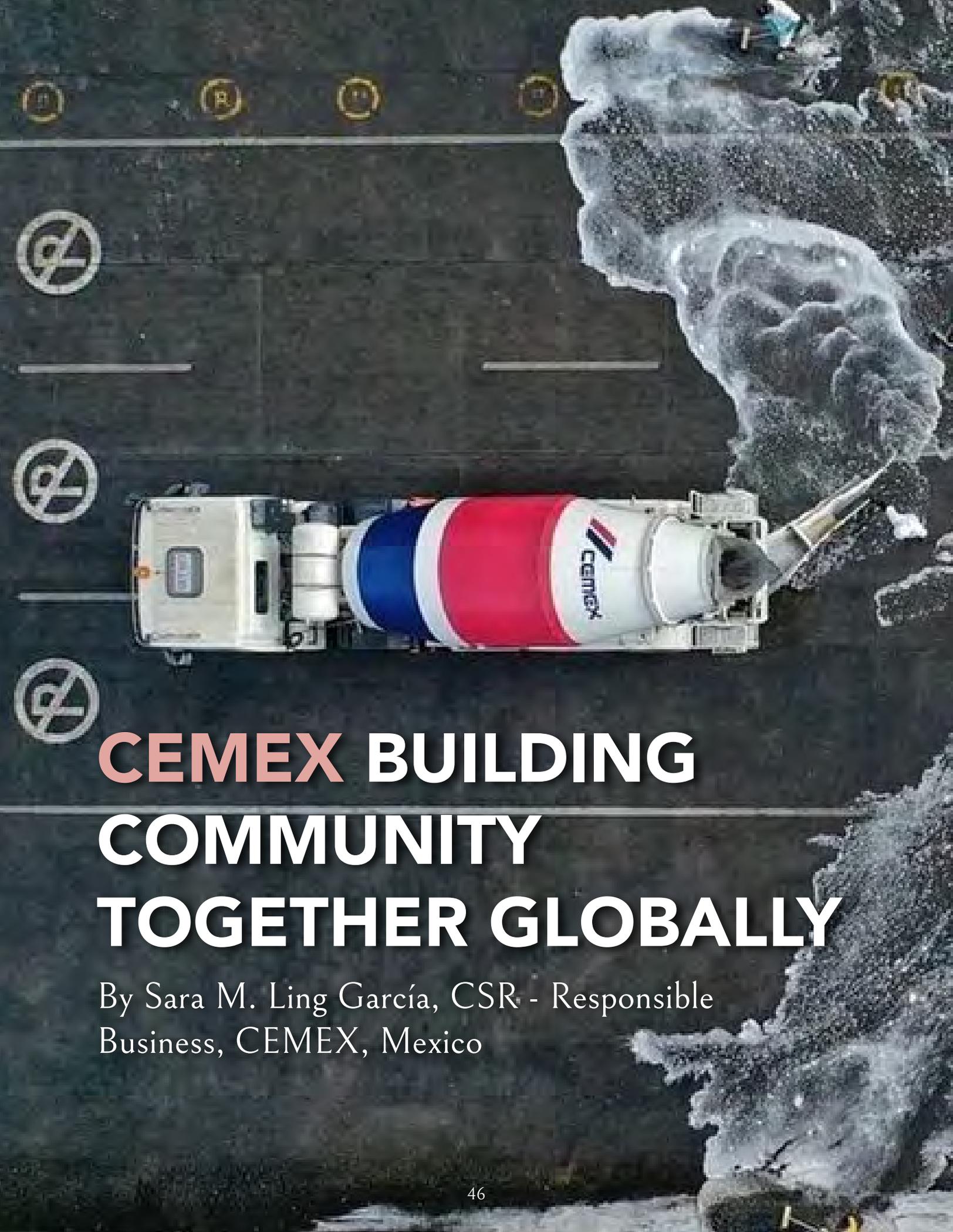




It allows us to identify needs and potential opportunities through their overarching sectoral knowledge. They have the institutional capacity to act in critical situations and garner credibility in the public arena. An active presence of public institutions attracts general interest and ensures equity. It provides a platform for a diverse array of actors to contribute and coordinate their efforts.

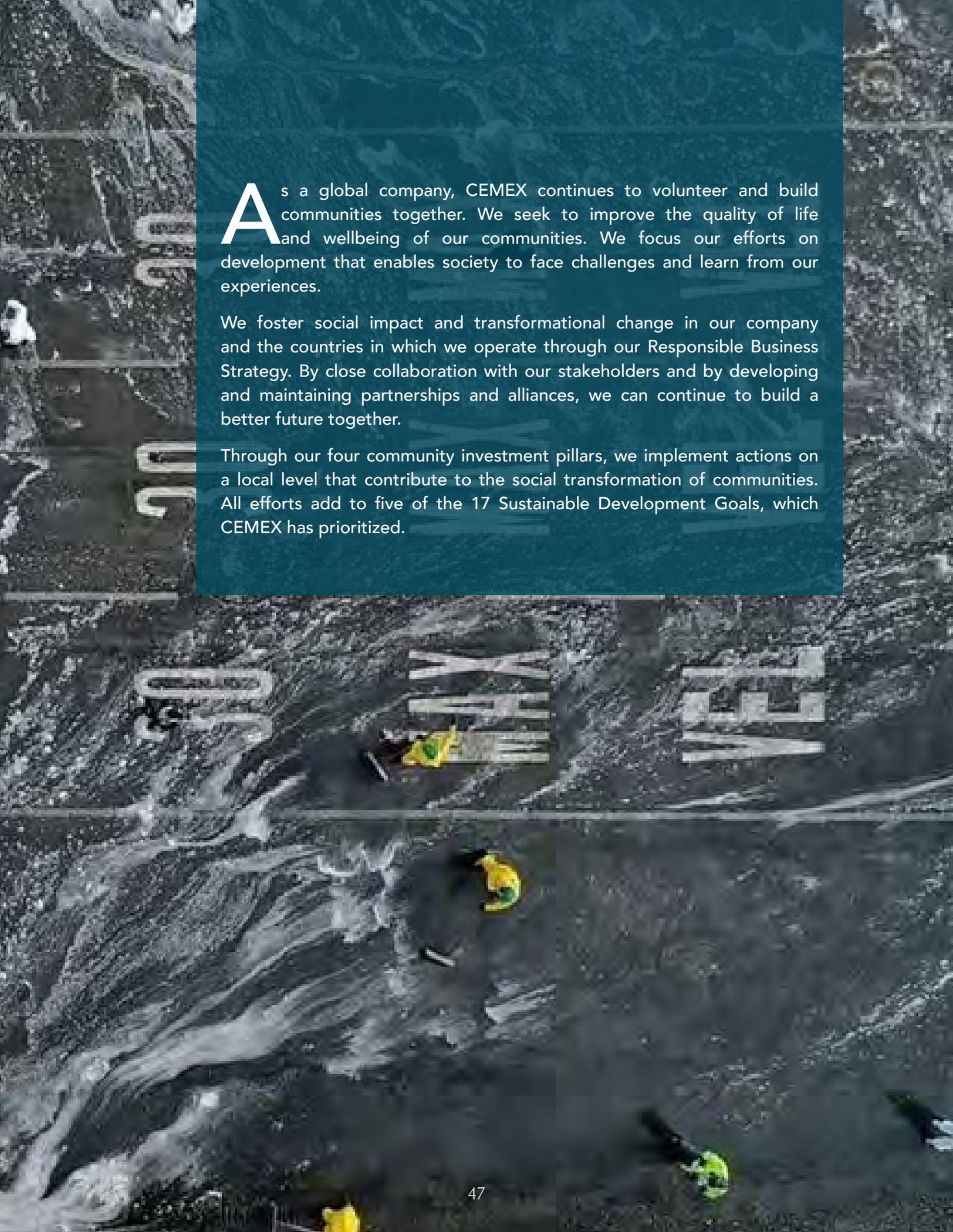
Volunteering organizations and informal volunteers are not the only ones responding to the pandemic. Businesses and individual citizens have done their part as well. A good example is the initiative "*Spesa sospesa*" – "suspended groceries". People can buy food or other essential items and leave it in collection carts at the supermarkets. Volunteers would collect and distribute the donated items to food banks, home deliveries or associations. Many small businesses are helping out in the same way. People from all backgrounds have contributed, in their own little ways. This group effort only works with the assistance of public institutions that exist to stimulate an open dialogue and structured co-programming with third sector organizations. Unfortunately, this is often not the case and much more work remain to be done.

The other major issue that remains is the question of whether this upsurge of informal volunteering carries on once the pandemic is over. Will informal volunteers be able to persevere and continue in their efforts, or give up due to long periods of economic instability and social frailty in the aftermath of the pandemic? In the local context, where communities have rose together in collaboration and partnerships during this unprecedented time, we have reason to believe that this surge of young, informal volunteers can sustain itself. Informal volunteers activated by COVID-19 are offering us the chance to see a generational shift in volunteering. It is a new challenge for volunteer centers, who need to grow and adapt their services for this new generation of volunteers.



# CEMEX BUILDING COMMUNITY TOGETHER GLOBALLY

By Sara M. Ling García, CSR - Responsible  
Business, CEMEX, Mexico

An aerial photograph of a construction site, showing a large, dark, rectangular area of earth being excavated or prepared. The site is marked with white lines and various pieces of equipment and materials. A large, semi-transparent teal text box is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing white text. The background image shows the intricate patterns of the construction site, including roads, foundations, and structural elements.

**A**s a global company, CEMEX continues to volunteer and build communities together. We seek to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of our communities. We focus our efforts on development that enables society to face challenges and learn from our experiences.

We foster social impact and transformational change in our company and the countries in which we operate through our Responsible Business Strategy. By close collaboration with our stakeholders and by developing and maintaining partnerships and alliances, we can continue to build a better future together.

Through our four community investment pillars, we implement actions on a local level that contribute to the social transformation of communities. All efforts add to five of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which CEMEX has prioritized.

Volunteering activities are powerful and fulfilling experiences. Through our Responsible Business Strategy, we invite employees to share their values, interests, technical expertise, and leadership skills with the community, generating a positive and meaningful impact. This effort is only possible with the collaboration of a wide variety of partnerships, alliances, and community stakeholder dialogues that allows us to develop volunteering activities according to local needs and the company's strategy.



*Pictured above: Community Investment Pillars - All volunteering actions, both hands-on and skilled, are developed with the pillars and SDGs as a foundation, seeking to create shared value.*

*"During difficult times, connecting and helping others contribute to our emotional health and wellbeing while positively impacting others."*

Martha Herrera, Responsible Business  
Global Director

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, we have developed strategies to continue building community through our CEMEX UNITE digital volunteer offer. Employees can continue to volunteer their skills while keeping social distance. We developed social and economic models of cooperation between regions, strengthened alliances to scale up the efforts, and leveraged our leaders to innovate volunteering solutions to support those in need.

Facing the challenge of the digital gaps, CEMEX focuses its efforts in two ways:

1. **Digital volunteering:** Employees can share their skills and expertise globally by volunteering online.

## 2. Community volunteering actions:

Employees can give their time and hand-on support for local causes or needs, all with health and safety protocols that the company has established.

Among the most popular digital actions we have available through our volunteering platform, employees are participating in opportunities like TED Translators, Career Village, Learning Alley, Translators Without Borders, and Coursera.

Some highlights of local actions are, for example, in Spain, they have implemented caregiving distance support for the elderly in confinement due to the health crisis in hospitals and residences. In Poland, "CEMEX Virtual School" has been applied to provide support for schools around CEMEX plants in the organization of remote learning. Currently, eight schools are involved in the project, while 291 teachers have been trained to use MS Teams, and 1,987 students receive their remote lessons daily.

"We received full support from CEMEX volunteers and the Office 365 experts... We have implemented the application and used it ever since. Thanks to this project, after a long time, we were able to "meet" virtually - see the faces of students on the screens of our

computers and talk to them", said Katarzyna Karamać, Director of the ZSEiT in Chełm, Poland.

Employees are also summing up by volunteering their time to social actions that the company is implementing. For example, employees volunteer to drive the ready-mix trucks, which, in collaboration with local governments, are sanitizing key areas, an effort that is part of our response to COVID-19.

Meanwhile, as humanitarian efforts, in México, as a response to the needs of our value chain, we are supporting with food supplies to construction workers and their families. Before the contingency, CEMEX volunteers taught technical skills to construction workers to

ensure their basic education and employability skills. We continue to work with them at a distance and donate food supplies to support them during these challenging times. Also, in the USA and Mexico, employees and their families volunteer by sewing face masks to donate to the most vulnerable people in their local communities.

CEMEX UNITE has allowed us to contribute and reinforce our core value of operating as One CEMEX, providing the means for every employee to continue bettering their cities and communities by Building Community Together to face the global challenges of today and tomorrow.



# MANAGING VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING DURING THE CORONA PANDEMIC

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<sup>1</sup> The Israeli Volunteering Network - is a joint venture of government agencies, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and corporations, forming a network to assume shared responsibly and collective action, and to maximize collaboration across sectors for nationwide volunteer infrastructures in Israel. The Israeli Volunteering council - a well-established infrastructure NGO, was chosen as the backbone organization to facilitating the networks' main actions.



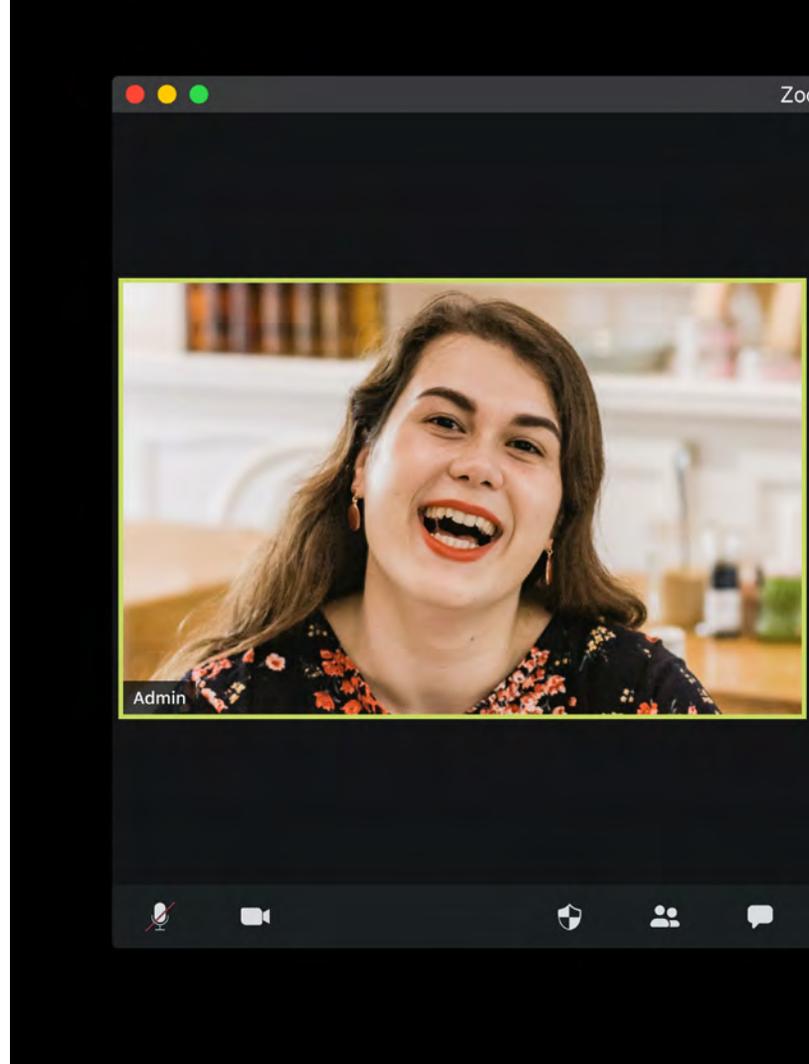
The coronavirus required us to think creatively about ways to engage volunteers who were limited in their mobility due to the new health guidelines and constraints. During the first few days of the crisis, many Israeli NGOs approached us, asking us to provide them with training and knowledge, regarding the necessary shift to different, more adaptable forms of volunteering. This article summarizes both the knowledge and the experience and practices we accumulated during these special and challenging times.

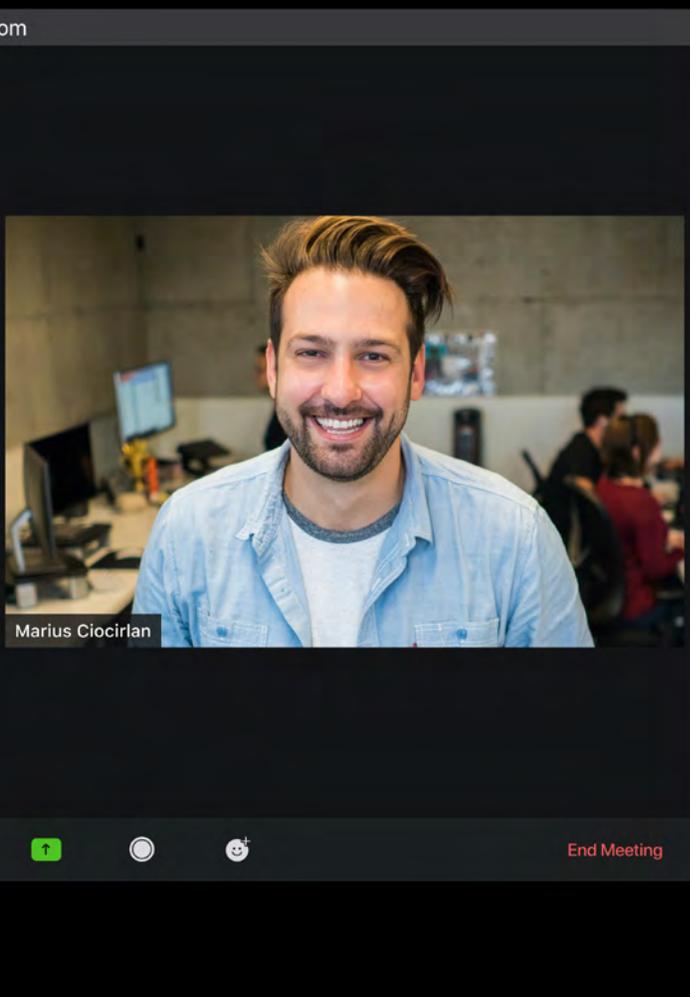
The new constraints required many volunteers to stay home, but the state of emergency and the huge social needs that arose from this crisis made most volunteers want to stay involved. Even more so, we witnessed a surge of new volunteers who wanted to help from home. Volunteer managers, from their point of view, wanted to continue to engage volunteers who have been active in the routine and saw the potential for growing their volunteer workforce.

Managing virtual volunteers requires us to adapt our volunteer management operations to more remote practices. Although this shift might be challenging, the key is remembering that all volunteers, whether online or offline, need role design, screening, training, support, feedback, guidance, and recognition. The basic components are similar, but the execution might be different, due to the remote nature of the work.

#### **HOW WE DESIGNED VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING ROLES**

Virtual volunteering roles are tasks performed from home, over the internet via a computer or smartphone. Virtual volunteering has been around for many years and many organizations promote this type of volunteering, but the pandemic created the need to design more diverse, relevant, and innovative tasks





volunteers can perform from home.

Some volunteer managers chose to transform routine roles that the volunteers performed into virtual roles. In order to maintain the organization's functional continuity, they enabled volunteers to perform at least some elements of their preexisting roles via online channels. For example: switching from face-to-face mentoring or teaching, to online mentoring, or switching from weekly home visits for elderly people, to phone calls or online chats.

Others volunteer managers chose to create new roles and tasks specifically designed for these challenging times. These new tasks divided into two categories. One group includes pandemic-related tasks, such as: assisting beneficiaries with online shopping, providing online workshops or emotional support, or providing technical support to other volunteers. The second group includes routine-related virtual tasks, as they recognized the opportunity to tap into volunteers' special skills, such as: translation of documents, writing articles, blogs or website posts, data mining, and so on.

Change is not easy, especially in periods of uncertainty, therefore we found it important to ensure that the adapted roles that have been designed were suitable for the volunteers, that they had the knowledge and tools required, and that they knew how to use the relevant technology.

## **TRAINING FOR VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING**

As with any new or adapted role, it is also important to train the volunteers. We recommend using an online platform to provide training. The training should provide a detailed description of the role, expectations, and its special attributes as compared to the routine role; training in the use of technological tools to be used in virtual volunteer tasks; and the rules, regulations, procedures, ethics of the role.

## Case Study: Insights in Education

*Insights in Education* is a venture that engages corporate volunteers in order to advance the academic achievement of students at risk. During COVID-19, volunteers wanted to continue supporting their students, through online channels. The fact that the organization's volunteers all work in high-tech companies, allowed them to adapt to online volunteering relatively easily. The fact that volunteers and beneficiaries already knew each other, was also helpful.

The organization needed to adapt to online volunteering: shifting from routine morning volunteering schedule to a more flexible framework suitable for both volunteers and youth recipients. Since volunteers were not working, they could give more hours, and therefore "Insights in Education" offered more intense tutoring, to current and new beneficiaries.

The volunteer manager kept in close contact with the volunteers and gave closer supervision than usual. She conducted regular training and online supervision sessions with the volunteers. It was important to her to maintain the existing order, while exhibiting flexibility and accessibility to all volunteers and to show leadership and clarity. Within the chaos and uncertainty, she exhibited control, knowledge, and skilled management.

Through this experience, the organization discovered the advantages of blended volunteering – combining online and offline tutoring that might help them to harness the involvement of even more busy corporate volunteers.

## THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN MANAGING VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING

When performing volunteer tasks from home, boundaries between regular home activities and volunteering may become blurred since the volunteer does not "go out" to volunteer, on a specific day or time and can volunteer at any time. This issue can cause one of two situations: either burnout from volunteering all the time, or the opposite: the volunteer might have difficulty performing the task, because there is no specified "volunteer time". To deal with this challenge, we found it helps to formulate a clear written definition that includes the amount of time needed to perform the task and to organize volunteering in shifts, in order to maintain their framework, timetables, and commitment.

Another challenge we encountered was the fear of "role loneliness" that some volunteers expressed. This fear was based on the fact that there was no physical meeting with other

volunteers or with the volunteer manager. Volunteers felt no one can see what they are doing, or they are not sure they will be recognized for their contribution. To deal with this challenge we found that these following tools helped:

- **Creating an interactive workspace and meeting space for the volunteers.** If volunteers cannot arrive at the office or community center, create an online platform to enable them to continue meeting, share experiences, and consult with each other.
- **Providing technical support.** It is recommended to have on-call tech-savvy volunteers who can provide support to others in these new endeavors.
- **Opening and closing shifts.** Begin and end each shift with a briefing via video conference, including a time for a dialogue on expectations, ventilation, task

orientation and getting to know other volunteers who are sharing shifts.

- **Managing the ongoing communication.** Structure the ongoing communication. Schedule a weekly online group conversation or a weekly phone call with each volunteer. Notify volunteers of the communication process and expected times.
- **Creating a platform for volunteers' reports.** These can be created with

basic tools such as Google Forms/questionnaires, joint documentation, and Excel files.

- **Offering online support and rewards.** Remember to celebrate birthdays, and other happy occasions. Convey to volunteers your appreciation for what they are doing and the impact they make. Send messages of thanks and support, such as specially designed WhatsApp stickers.



The COVID-19 pandemic helped the Israeli Heritage Council to leverage their volunteer program. Most of the Council's volunteers are senior citizens that were required to stay home, but this did not stop their willingness to volunteer! Most volunteers saw the time at home as an opportunity to advance the Council's goals, through online means.

The volunteers invested their time performing online research, producing heritage content on digital platforms, developing technologies for accessing heritage sites and preserved buildings, and more.

The Council shifted all volunteer training to online platforms, combining task-related training with technological usage training and maintained a close contact via phone calls, on a weekly basis with every volunteer.

A few days ago, the Council held an online recognition event, via Zoom, including a lecture, sharing volunteer stories and showing volunteers how appreciated they are for their efforts during these difficult times.

# NEWS FROM THE WIDE WORLD OF IAVE

## CORPORATE RESEARCH PROJECT

In 2010-11, IAVE undertook the first comprehensive global research on corporate volunteering. The research included six regional “state of health” reports rolling into an overall global view. It provided an assessment of how 46 global companies organize and manage their programs, identifying “inspiring practices” from throughout the world. It was an affirmation of impact and value to community, employees and company. *The research, Global Companies Volunteering Globally*, was widely read in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Much has changed since the initial research. There has been a steady emergence of new companies with new priorities, along with new models to fit new ways of working. We decided it was time for new research that embraces, understands, and describes these changes and the new realities and innovations of corporate volunteering worldwide.

New research exploring the future of corporate volunteering is now underway. The research aims to analyze the changes over time in the nature and scope of corporate volunteering. It also seeks to examine critical challenges and issues as identified by practitioners in the field. Finally, we aim to identify and describe emerging innovations.

## GNVL UPDATE: 50+ MEMBERS IN 40 COUNTRIES

Since the launch of the Global Network of Volunteering Leadership (GNVL) last month, we have accrued over 50 members from 40 countries around the world. Over the past month, we have been working with GNVL members to help them respond to COVID-19. Several members of the network were awarded COVID-19 Response micro-grants, to help fund their organizations' response efforts to the pandemic. To learn more about the network, please visit [networks.iave.org](https://networks.iave.org).

Expert researchers in Africa, the Arab nations, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America are now busy interviewing companies, NGOs, academics, business associations, volunteer councils and other experts in order to contribute to the research.

Special reports within the main research will explore the rise in humanitarian and disaster volunteering, the use of technology in volunteering, the role of the Sustainable Development Goals and adjustments to corporate volunteering resulting from the pandemic.

The research will conclude in early 2021 with a final report available online and in print. Before then we expect to host forums and dialogues to share and discuss the findings.

The research as been made possible with the support of generous sponsors including: BD, CEMEX, Iberdrola, Laudes Foundation, Marriott International, Merck & Co, Inc., The Philadelphia Foundation, S&P Global, State Street Foundation, Inc., Fundación Telefónica, the Walt Disney Company, and UPS.





## HELPING VOLUNTEER LEADERS RESPOND TO GLOBAL CRISIS

In response to the coronavirus outbreak, IAVE launched the COVID-19 Response Fund to support volunteer-led preparedness, containment, response and recovery activities. We are happy share that, so far, we have awarded grants to 8 volunteer leadership organizations in Mozambique, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Togo, Georgia, Niger, Zimbabwe. The grants have been used to collect and distribute PPEs, build sanitization stations, spread awareness on preventing the spread of the virus and deploy healthcare workers. Volunteers around the world need your help to continue their response efforts! To donate to the fund, please visit [www.iave.org/covid19/response-fund](http://www.iave.org/covid19/response-fund).



## COVID-19 VOLUNTEER AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Over the past few months, we have organized a series of webinars to help volunteer organizations respond to the pandemic. This series covered a wide range of topics such as informal volunteering, safety and health, virtual volunteering and much more. Now it's time to test what you've learned! The COVID-19 Volunteer Ambassador Program is a way for attendees to test what they've learned and receive a certificate of completion for each session. To become a COVID-19 Volunteer Ambassador, please visit [www.iave.org/covid19/volunteer-ambassador/](http://www.iave.org/covid19/volunteer-ambassador/).

## 26TH IAVE WORLD VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE POSTONED

Over the past several months, IAVE and the Emirates Foundation have been closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and have come to the decision that it is no longer advisable to go forward with the 26th IAVE World Volunteer Conference (WVC) in October 2020 as planned.

Thus, we have decided to postpone the WVC to October or November of 2021 with a specific date to be announced by July of this year. This was a difficult decision, but the health, safety and well-being of our partners, presenters, and attendees requires that we take this action.

However, while we are postponing our conference, we are definitely not pausing our work. In the coming year, we will be holding events, webinars and virtual sessions to engage our global community, stakeholders and build momentum for the 2021 WVC. Stay tuned for announcements and further details!

In addition, we would like to thank our sponsors, partners and networks for their continued support as we navigate through this unprecedented time. We look forward to seeing everyone in the UAE in 2021, strengthened and reinvigorated.





International Association for Volunteer Effort

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**TOGETHER**

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*Making a difference to  
people and communities*

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