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NEWS RELEASE

Shaping the Future of Volunteerism: UP and UNV Partner to Develop the First-Ever Global Volunteer Index



UN Volunteers interview community members to assess basic health services in the rural areas of Rwanda. ©UNV, 2023

Pretoria – The Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria (UP) is partnering with United Nations Volunteers (UNV) to develop the first-ever Global Volunteer Index, which will become part of the 2026 State of the World Volunteerism Report.

The Report will benefit from the expertise of UNV partners — Northumbria University, under the umbrella of its Centre for Global Development, will lead research, writing, and analytical work, along with vital inputs of researchers from the Global South. The University of Pretoria will lead the development of a framework for a global volunteering index, and UNV's longstanding partner, the International Labour Organization will contribute updated data on global estimates of volunteer work.

The initial phase of this project focuses on developing a framework and methodology for calculating the Global Volunteering Index (GVI). This index will be featured in the upcoming edition of the State of the World's Volunteerism Report, scheduled for release in December 2025.

The Global Volunteering Index will provide a timely and standardised measurement of volunteerism across its critical multiple aspects. It will be a valuable analytical tool to assess people's voluntary contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. [Prof Samuel Manda](#), from UP's Department of Statistics, will lead the project as Project Director. Professor Sollie Millard, the Acting Head of UP's Department of Statistics, will serve as Senior Researcher. The project collaborates closely with Dr Tapiwa Kamuruko, Chief of the Voluntary Advisory Services Section, United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and his team.

By partnering with UNV, this project will anchor the University's standing as an international leader in translating cutting-edge statistical sciences research excellence into volunteering settings and practice.

[Toily Kurbanov](#), Executive Coordinator, UNV, highlighted "There is a scarcity of data on the value that volunteers play for sustainable development. To address this, UNV is collaborating with the University of Pretoria to generate data and create a Global Volunteering Index as part of the 2026 State of the World's Volunteerism Report. We hope the index will assist the Members States and all other stakeholders in the continuous fine tuning of national priorities for volunteer action and inform the required investments in volunteerism."

[Prof Barend Erasmus](#), Dean of the [Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences](#) at UP, echoed these sentiments. "Collaboration between UNV and UP is another example of how UP's deep expertise and international profile support scientific outcomes for impact. In this case, the effect is twofold - not only do we partner with the UN to bring our expertise to bear on a shared problem, but the research itself is on how volunteers have a global impact.

According to Prof Manda, "The project will provide a valuable tool for measuring volunteer work and its impact on individuals, their personal development, communities, and national economies worldwide. I am thrilled that UNV has partnered with us on this initiative, which holds significant national, regional, and international relevance. This collaboration will enhance UP's reputation as a world-leading university in research innovation and translation, positively influencing communities nationally and globally. Furthermore, this project will support the development of the methodological framework and applied research in the field of volunteerism," Prof Manda said.

A first of its kind, the project aims to develop a framework for the construction of the GVI. The framework will be an essential first step moving towards measuring global volunteering. The framework will contain background and concept, methodology, variations, and practical steps for constructing the GVI. The framework will be based on similar global initiatives, volunteer work indicators, and data sources. Extensive consultations with index developers and researchers, national and international volunteer work practitioners, stakeholders and policymakers will be conducted for the validation of volunteerism indicators, dimensions and measuring instruments. It will be pretested in several countries to assess its validity and usability, provide context and reflect gaps within the data collected in countries.

Tapiwa Kamuruko, Chief, Volunteer Advisory Services Section at the UNV shared: "United Nations Volunteers is very excited to partner with academia for the next State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2026 – aimed at offering insights and approaches to measure the contributions and value of volunteering. We look forward to the research that will help answer important questions centring on linkages between volunteering and the

wellbeing of an individual, and the value of volunteers to the economic and social development of their communities and societies."

Every three years, UNV produces the State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR), a flagship UN publication designed to strengthen the understanding of volunteerism and demonstrate its universality, scope, and reach in the twenty-first century. [Click here](#) to read previous editions of SWVR.

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Media enquiries can be directed to Mr Sashlin Girraj - Public Relations & Events Manager

Email: sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za | Cell: +27(0)72 447 3784

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the [Gordon Institute of Business Science](#) (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#), which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2025 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of [Accounting and Finance](#); [Architecture](#); [Electrical and Electronic Engineering](#); Law; Sport Science; and Veterinary Science. UP's Faculty of Law has been ranked as the top law school in Africa for a remarkable eighth consecutive year.

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their [2024 World University Rankings \(WUR\)](#). UP was the only South African university featured in the [2023 World University Rankings for Innovation \(WURI\)](#), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za

ABOUT UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. We work with partners to integrate qualified, highly motivated and well-supported UN Volunteers into development programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism. In 2024, more than 14,500 UN Volunteers were deployed in some 170 countries. UNV is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and reports to the UNDP Executive Board.

For more information, please go to www.unv.org