# ILO Volunteer Work add-on module

## LFS Integration guide (v1)

### for PAPI and CAPI

July 2020

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# Add-on module objectives

The module was designed to measure volunteer work applying the definition set by the international standards on statistics of work[1]. It contains a set of questions that can reliably detect participation in a wide range of volunteering activities, and their essential characteristics. More precisely, module data can be used to estimate the prevalence of volunteer work and time spent volunteering. Additionally, the module can produce information on the type of volunteering activities (organization-based and direct volunteering), reasons for participation, tasks performed and other essential characteristics.

The module also contains questions on work done in connection with non-financial donations. However, it is not designed to collect comprehensive data on this topic. The main purpose of those questions is to recover unpaid work carried out in the context of making donations (e.g. collection, distribution or preparation of donated goods and products) that may not be captured by the initial questions. No data on the types of goods donated and their value is collected. Therefore, if measurement of donations is one important objective, then additional dedicated questions will need to be included.

Estimates produced using data from this module can be applied in a variety of economic and social analyses. They can also serve as inputs for the *satellite account on non-profit and related institutions and volunteer work*[2] as well. For this purpose, however, module data alone is not sufficient. It has to be complemented with data on wages (to estimate the value of volunteer work) and on employment in the non-profit sector (to account for both paid and unpaid labour inputs), which may come from the LFS, establishment surveys, administrative or other sources. Module and other data may need additional processing[3] in order to be used in the compilation of the satellite account.

## Policy relevance

Volunteering can be a powerful means to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Recognizing this, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on governments to work closely with volunteer groups on its implementation. Additionally, the UN General Assembly resolution on "Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (UN, 2019) encourages countries to "*invest in measuring the scale and contribution of people's voluntary efforts… to support and integrate volunteerism into national strategies and to measure its impact on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*".

Volunteer work statistics offer valuable information on the number and characteristics of the persons willingly working without pay to support others. Such data may be used to identify the geographic areas where large shares of the population rely on volunteer help to access certain services, to identify the range of service needs met through volunteering and to estimate their value in an economy. This information can help plan and target better economic and social policies.

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[1] Resolution I of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 2013
[2] UN Statistics Division, New York, 2018
[3] For example, wages may have to be estimated for groups of occupations or economic activities different from those used usually, as to match the groups for which time worked by volunteers is estimated.

Volunteer work is well known for its role in making communities more resilient through building social cohesion and trust among members. It contributes to the personal and collective well-being. Thus, volunteer work statistics can also be applied to assess the potential to create an enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable development.

## Variables and indicators covered

The module contains questions to identify participation in volunteer work and to collect data on the following characteristics of volunteering activities (two at most) performed by a respondent:

- number of hours worked
- frequency of participation
- type of voluntary activity (organization-based or direct)
- main activity of the organization through/for which organization-based volunteer work was done
- type of the beneficiary of volunteer work
- main reason for engaging in volunteer work
- support or incentives received (monetary and in-kind)

Such data allows calculation of the following indicators:

- Number of volunteers (both organization-based and direct)
- Volunteer participation rate
- Number of volunteer activities performed (total and average, per volunteer)[4]
- Number of hours worked (total and average: per volunteer, per activity)

These indicators can be disaggregated by variables available in the parent LFS and the module itself.

To generate more accurate estimates of time dedicated to volunteer work, data on multiple activities should be collected. The current module collects data on two activities, if more than one reported by the respondent.

## Reference international statistical standards

The module was developed to support countries in applying the latest international standards on statistics of work, established by the Resolution I of the 19th ICLS[5].

Paragraph 37 of the resolution define as volunteers *"all [persons] of working age who, during a short reference period, performed any unpaid, non-compulsory activity to produce goods or provide services for others"*. Paragraph 38 refines this definition by listing particular cases of unpaid work that must not be considered volunteer work. Additionally, paragraph 19 sets the short reference period for volunteer work to *"four weeks or one calendar month"*. Finally, paragraph 39 mentions the volunteer work minimum data items that should be collected as part of a data collection programme.

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[4] Depends on how many activities will be captured for each respondent. The module was designed to collect detailed characteristics of two activities.
[5] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_230304.pdf

## History of use

Historically, time-use surveys (TUS) tended to be the primary source of statistics on volunteer work. These surveys focus on measuring time spent in all human activities over a very short period (e.g. 24 hours). While this approach works well in capturing participation in very frequent activities[6], it is not appropriate to estimate indicators like the number of volunteers and volunteer rates. As most people volunteer much rarely that weekly or even monthly, TUSs usually capture data for a small sub-group of volunteers, those who volunteer very often (at least weekly). Therefore, TUSs are not suitable for comprehensive measurements of volunteer work and its characteristics.

For these reasons, in 2011 the ILO issued the *Manual on the Measurement of volunteer work.* It introduced the first international statistical definition of volunteer work and offered guidance on how to collect data through modules attached to household surveys, mainly Labour Force Surveys (LFS), applying the "4 weeks" reference period .

Since the adoption of the international standards in 2013, an increasing number of countries began collecting data on volunteer work using the approach recommended in the ILO Manual. Differences in its national adaptation, however, have limited the comparability of the data across countries. To address this issue and to promote comparable data collection, between 2018 and 2020, ILO conducted pilot tests in collaboration with UN Volunteers programme (UNV).

The current module combines the good practices and new approaches found to capture efficiently people's participation in organization-based and direct volunteer work in diverse cultural, social and economic contexts. Future updates may be introduced as additional evidence is accumulated based on national implementation.

## Target population

The target population for measuring volunteer work should be the same as the one set for measuring labour force statistics: all persons of working-age (15 years and over for international comparison), regardless of their labour force status or any other background characteristic.

## Sampling considerations

Available national statistics on volunteer work suggest that, generally, LFSs have sufficiently large sample sizes to produce estimates of volunteer work with acceptable precision. In many cases, the volunteer work rate is significantly higher than the unemployment rate, and rarely lower. This observation tends to be valid at both national and sub-national levels. Still, any decision on the sample size should be made after a careful analysis of the existing LFS practice and output objectives.

Most of volunteer work takes place directly and irregularly. This makes it less visible to others, even to persons living in the same households with volunteers. Because of this, the subsample of respondents, for which data is collected through proxy-interviews, is less reliable for estimating volunteer work indicators. Thus, as to avoid self-selection biases and to ensure sample data quality,

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[6] Activities, on which people spend some time each day or a couple of times a week. For example, sleeping, eating, cooking, communicating, shopping, exercising, going to school or working in a job.

all respondents selected for the LFS should be asked to answer module questions personally (i.e. avoid proxy responses).

If achieving a high rate of completed direct interviews (e.g. at least 85-90%) with selected LFS respondents is the usual practice, then it should be applied to the module as well. If it is not, then accomplishing this objective may be challenging and will lead to increased data collection costs. For this reason, this approach should be applied only if the needed resources are available; and the probability of achieving a sufficiently high rate of completed direct interviews in the sample is estimated to be very high. When these conditions cannot be met, as to ensure data quality, an alternative sampling approach should be applied.

One option is to subsample LFS working-age respondents and conduct only direct interviews. This approach offers the option to use resources more efficiently and to increase the chances of producing reliable estimates. Subsampling should be done at the last LFS sampling stage (e.g. within households), so that respondents for the module are selected randomly from the working-age persons that answer questions from the LFS individual questionnaire.

It is not recommended to subsample households or Primary Sampling Units (PSU), as this could lead to significant increase in sampling errors and could generate operational challenges. However, if the number of households in the LFS sample is high (e.g. when the sample is cumulated over several months) subsampling households could be a practical solution. For example, when the monthly LFS sample is composed of random, independent subsamples of households participating in different survey rounds, and one or a couple of subsamples are selected to collect module data. In such cases, all working-age respondents from the households selected for a given survey round could be administered the module. This sampling strategy should be applied when there is a particular need to collect data from all household members (e.g. for intra-household analysis).

The subsampling procedure should be simple and clear to facilitate its application in the field, avoid selection errors and enable calculation of appropriate weights for data produced by the volunteer work module.

## Recommended periodicity

It is recommended to apply the module for the measurement of volunteer work at least once every 3-4 years. Additionally, measurements could be made in years when important events leading to increased volunteer mobilization have taken place. This may include crises triggered by human or natural activity; or cultural, social or sports activities of regional or international importance (e.g. festivals, games, championships, etc.). To measure volunteer work triggered by such events, the LFS operations and the module may need to be adapted accordingly. Some general advice on this topic is provided in the next section of this guide.

## Recommended data collection period

Participation in volunteer work, tasks performed and time worked by volunteers can vary across the year, in response to specific natural phenomena and human activity. To produce indicators that would capture these fluctuations, module data collection should be spread across the year, and when this is not feasible the months to be covered have to be chosen carefully. Additionally, time series of

volunteer work statistics are more robust and reliable when using data collected across the year to calculate average estimates.

As the module is attached to the LFS questionnaire, options related to data collection periods are conditioned by the existing LFS design:

- LFSs collecting data every month offer the widest range of options. Important seasonal variations can be captured; quarterly and yearly average indicators can be produced, pending on the overall LFS sample size.
- LFSs collecting data less frequently[7] offer very limited options to observe seasonal variations. In such cases, only variations between covered months can be measured (when at least two measurements within 12 months are made).

In practice, application of the available options is subject to survey objectives and availability of resources. For example, LFSs collecting data monthly or quarterly may be used to measure volunteer work only in one or some selected months. In such cases, it is recommended to plan data collection for months coming immediately after foreseen periods of increased social, cultural or religious activity; or after expected natural phenomena happening every year (e.g. drought, flood, hurricane, blizzard, etc.) and affecting a significant share of the population.

Measurements could be made also after unexpected crises triggered by human or natural activity, if LFS operations are not disrupted and data can be collected during or immediately after the crisis. In such cases, the module will offer the capacity to estimate the number of volunteers and the key characteristics of the voluntary help provided in the previous 4 weeks/30 days. These indicators, however, will not provide enough information as to explain how exactly people responded to the crisis through volunteer work. In order to achieve this, questions specifically designed to link voluntary activity to the crisis event will have to be added and alternative reference periods may need to be applied.

Overall, LFSs collecting module data each month during a year are the most suitable to capture volunteer work done in relation to unexpected crises (if data collection is not interrupted) as all months (before, during and after the event) are covered and additional questions can be added quickly, at lower costs. The size of the LFS monthly sample, however, may be too low to detect reliably changes in indicators, when making comparisons with previous months. Therefore, to produce robust estimates of the impact of a crisis on volunteering, the sample size may need to be increased for a certain period.

In all other cases (where module data is not collected monthly), survey tools and processes will need to be adapted, as to capture the volunteer response to crises retrospectively.

## Respondent type

To ensure data quality, it is recommended to collect data only through interviews with direct respondents. Reliance on proxy or indirect respondents may impact the overall quality of the data collected (see Sampling considerations).

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[7] For example, one month every quarter, only one quarter each year, or only one month each year.

# Mode of attachment to LFS

The module data should be collected directly from respondents in the same visit when LFS data is collected. If not possible, repeated attempts to conduct direct interviews with selected respondents should be made within 7 days of completing the LFS interview. LFS data collection should not be affected by this process.

# Recommended placement in LFS survey

Module questions should be asked after the LFS core questions (i.e. after questions on employment, job search, previous employment, own-use production work). In cases when LFS data was collected in a previous visit or call to the selected household[8], before asking the module questions (i.e. during repeated second visit), a summary of answers to key LFS questions[9] should be offered to the respondent. By doing this, interviewers will help respondents understand better the scope of the module questions, highlighting the key differences between volunteer work and other forms of work.

# Dependencies with parent LFS

Module administration depends on the age of the respondent and on the results of the subsampling procedure applied, if any. No other additional information is necessary to establish eligibility.

# Special considerations for field operations, field training or supervision

Usual LFS practices should be applied at all stages of the preparation and implementation of the fieldwork. Additionally, implementation of the module may require paying special attention to specific survey processes and eventually making certain adjustments:

- As part of the training, LFS staff must be explained the concepts and definition of volunteer work set by the 19th ICLS. It must be clear that any unpaid work done willingly for others may be volunteer work;
- Staff may initially have difficulties in considering as volunteer work different types of unpaid help given by people directly to others (e.g. to friends, neighbors, strangers), to nature, or community organized unpaid work. To help staff overcome this difficulty, diverse examples of direct volunteer work, traditional community based work, etc. should be offered and discussed during the training;
- Interviewers will have to be trained to apply the subsampling procedure, if any. Supervisors will have to be trained to monitor its application and to support interviewers in difficult cases.

# Other considerations

When using the module for the first time, producers should engage key stakeholders and data users to inform them about the survey, tools and definition and measurement to be applied, at the start of the process to adapt the module to the national context. If volunteer work was previously measured

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[8] For example, in a proxy-interview conducted two days before.
[9] Related to employment and own-use production work, if applicable.

using other survey tools, then the main potential data comparability issues should be identified and explained to data users.

## Minimum recommended tabulations

- **Working-age population** by participation in volunteer work and age groups[10], sex, education level, marital status, place of residence, labour force status;
- **Volunteer rate (%)** by type of volunteer work, age groups, sex, education level, marital status, place of residence, labour force status;
- **Volunteers** by type of volunteer work, intervals of hours worked *and selected demographic, social and economic characteristics of volunteers*
- **Volunteer work activities** by tasks performed (ISCO-08)[11], type of volunteer work, duration (hours) *and selected demographic, social and economic characteristics of volunteers*
- **Organization-based volunteer work activities** by economic activity of the organization (ISIC rev.4)[12], tasks performed (ISCO-08), duration (hours) *and selected demographic, social and economic characteristics of volunteers*

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[10] In all tables containing absolute figures, to facilitate international comparison, age groups should be designed as to make possible aggregation of statistics for the following age groups: 15-24 years, 25-64 years, 65 years and over.

[11] The ISCO-08 is recommended by the *ILO Manual on the measurement of volunteer work* for the classification of volunteering activities (paragraphs 5.11-5.19, pages 26-28).

[12] Volunteer work activities organized by communities are assigned by the SNA to classes 9810 and 9820. An alternative classification approach is described in paragraphs 5.24 - 5.26 (pages 29-30) of the *ILO Manual on the measurement of volunteer work*.