COVID-19 brought a seismic shift to corporate volunteering worldwide, halting a wide swathe of in-person programs, stimulating development of alternate online activities and redefining existing partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It remains an open question as to what the field will look like in a post-pandemic world.
Major Takeaways

- Leaders of corporate volunteer programs are demonstrating their ability to respond quickly and creatively to new realities, adapting their volunteering to meet emerging and shifting needs in their communities and in the interests of their workforce.

- The initial volunteer responses to the pandemic were very local, spontaneous, “from the heart,” with particular focus on ensuring neighbors and people in need had food, shelter and COVID-related protective items. Employee volunteers played key leadership roles in organizing drives for tangible goods and funds.

- Moving from in-person to virtual volunteering was critical in sustaining corporate programs. But many NGO partners could not move as quickly to make the transition as companies wanted. As a result a number of companies began using “off the shelf” online volunteer opportunities, such as Missing Maps, Career Village and Be My Eyes. Long term, virtual volunteering will be a complement to, not a replacement for, in-person volunteering.

- Companies are gaining a better understanding of the realities of their nonprofit partners, potentially leading to stronger, mutually beneficial partnerships and increased volunteer and financial support from the company.

- As a result of required lockdowns, many employees have preferred to focus their volunteering “close to home,” often in their immediate locales with members of their family and with neighbors or friends. As many companies embrace some form of long-term “work from home” policies, this focus seems likely to continue, potentially leading to changes in the design and reach of company-sponsored programs.

- Volunteering is helping many employees find balance in a destabilized world through positive actions that helped them feel responsibly engaged contributors to helping others and sustaining their communities. This reinforces the value of volunteering to employee wellness.

- Many companies reported an initial increase in employee volunteering after the onset of the pandemic followed by an overall decrease, as reflected in a May 2021 survey. The initial immediate impulse to “do something” was challenged by the length of shutdowns, disruption in the work-home dynamics and growing “online fatigue.” It remains to be seen where the level of volunteering will settle as whatever the “new normal” will be emerges across the world.
An often-heard response from companies about their volunteer programming during the pandemic has been: “We pivoted!” This effectively means that program leaders found ways to keep employee volunteers engaged, to respond to those who said “we have to do something!” and to address the very real needs of those who had come to depend on the company’s volunteer initiatives. The pivot also meant that new and often innovative ways of volunteering evolved in the process of meeting the needs and overcoming the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Nearly every in-person corporate volunteer program worldwide came to a halt by March of 2020 in response to “stay at home” mandates, formal lockdowns and employee concerns for the health of their families, friends, neighbors and themselves. For those charged with running those programs, it presented the classic combination of an unimagined challenge and a new opportunity.

The task was clear: to plan and execute a “pivot” from what they had been doing, sometimes repetitively for years, to what could work in the new pandemic reality; to move from tried and true volunteer opportunities to innovative approaches that would enable employees throughout the world to participate in meaningful ways under trying new conditions.

The response of companies by necessity has been evolutionary, albeit on a relatively compact time frame, in many cases in support of actions initiated by their employees. They have moved from localized emergency response modes to first-level online opportunities built on some of their most successful and popular pre-pandemic activities to new, sophisticated virtual programs that expanded opportunities for participation. Over the course of that evolution, companies have had to work in new ways with existing partners and to build new programs with new partners.

The result, across the breadth of the global corporate volunteering field, has been:
Validation of the importance of their programs to the companies, their employees and the community.

Emergence of models of virtual volunteering that are likely to outlast the pandemic and redefine the breadth and depth of the field.

The latter, virtual volunteering, has proven to be both boon and bane for the field. On the positive side, it has been a way to keep volunteering active and visible in companies. It also has given people who haven’t volunteered new opportunities to do so in ways that may be more comfortable, more accessible for them. And it has provided an opportunity for people who have only short bursts of time to participate.

From a management perspective, it offers opportunities to more quickly and less expensively launch new initiatives and allows for creation of multinational teams in virtual projects. It also creates an opportunity to reach a wider range of beneficiaries, since proximity does not need to be a factor. For example, companies could offer online consulting for nonprofits involving volunteers and clients on opposite sides of the world. Or, companies with employees worldwide, could offer 24-hour coverage to those seeking online assistance.

On the negative, working virtually can lead to “online fatigue” and can become stressful to do over time. Internet access is not universally or consistently available for all people, either company employees working remotely or those they seek to serve. Many nonprofit partners lacked the in-house expertise or financial resources to transfer existing programs or develop new programs that are appropriate for online implementation, often leading to the need for companies to invest in building that capacity.

The critical importance of the “in-person” dimension became clear for many people who were active volunteers. People are energized by working in person with others; during COVID-19, they miss the team aspect. “Hands-on” projects are important to people because they relieve the tedium of office or intellectual work. They also provide a way to build relationships among people who might otherwise never meet. What had been freeing, spontaneous, fun events with social value were replaced with less personal, even solitary, online activities that were less fulfilling.

Working with NGO partners also proved challenging. Many were greatly stressed: some struggling to survive financially, others serving people with increased or new needs. They did not necessarily have the time, energy, in-house expertise or resources to quickly move programs online or to develop new ones. In many cases, this required additional investment of expertise and money by the companies to support their NGO partners through the transition.

When IAVE convened global companies and humanitarian relief organizations in 2012 to discuss disaster-related partnerships, one of the loudest messages to emerge was that “during a disaster is the worst time to build a partnership.” Building effective, mutually beneficial and lasting partnerships is difficult in the best of times. Doing it “on the run” during a disaster dramatically compromises the process and the end result. This basic premise has been reinforced throughout the COVID-19 period. Among the key challenges for companies both in the present moment and as they look forward to “post-COVID”: How to work closely with their partners to assess how well they have worked together and whether they wish to continue to partner. They also must evaluate how to either phase out or move forward to strengthen the most positive, mutually beneficial partnerships.
Exploring the Pivot

Broadly defined, the pivot has had three definable components, independent of one another but inter-related: responding to immediate local community needs, deepening engagement with NGO partners, and adapting through innovation. This chapter describes how companies made the “COVID-19 pivot,” examining each of these components as well as the innovations and challenges that emerged.

The first impulse, almost across the board globally, was to raise money and in-kind goods, primarily food and other essentials, for local relief activities. In communities around the world there were spontaneous outpourings of “neighborly helping” responding to the immediate needs of people who were isolated, dependent on others. That led directly to local “hands-on” efforts, many spontaneous, often organized by employees themselves, in response to emerging needs beyond the ability of local service providers to meet. There was an expectation by many that their employers would act in support of their spontaneous volunteering as, in fact, happened in many cases. Those first actions often morphed into sustained company-backed efforts.

As companies began to work more systematically with existing or new NGO and public sector partners, new company-organized opportunities to volunteer emerged. Over time, companies added virtual opportunities that allowed more people to return to modified forms of pre-pandemic activities or to launch new online initiatives.

As this report is being written, more and more companies are slowly re-opening to in-person volunteer activities as the countries they are in relax restrictions on in-person activities. A “new normal” seems to be emerging, one shaped by the realities of a pandemic disease that may become endemic and the very human need for people to return to a greater sense of normalcy in their lives and work.
The pandemic offers a unique opportunity for leaders in corporate volunteering to learn from and build on what they are experiencing during the pandemic by:

- Doing full scale assessments of what is working and what isn’t during the pandemic, including what should be sustained, how to document this unique moment in time, and lessons learned that can be applied to the future.
- Using this assessment as a springboard for active discussion “up the chain” with management about how to maximize the contribution of volunteering to employee wellness and development.
- Continuing to experiment with new program models.
- Actively engaging with newer volunteers to build strategies that continue to expand and diversify the volunteer pool.
- Talking honestly and frequently with nonprofit partners about how to best serve their shared communities by building enduring, mutually beneficial partnerships, as well as new collaborative strategies to increase the scope and impact of their volunteering.

Responding to Local Community Needs

While the focus of this research was on volunteering, which does not typically include making charitable donations, it is important to recognize the importance of those voluntary contributions in local communities. For example, at the outset of the pandemic, employee volunteers stepped up, often spontaneously in advance of company action, to provide support to those in need in their communities by organizing and managing in-kind and cash donations. Companies started COVID-specific funds or contributed to existing ones. Employees were given opportunities to contribute funds and sometimes to raise them through online games or activities with their colleagues. A number of companies matched these employee contributions, with some significantly increasing the maximum potential match. For example, Dell Technologies raised the ceiling for matches to $10,000 and Microsoft to $25,000 per employee per year.
MTN Ghana employees donated funds for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that was distributed to frontline health workers.

Schneider Electric created the Tomorrow Rising Fund, a program with discrete response, resilience and recovery plans combining grants and volunteers. Volunteers have been particularly active in the resilience phase, working to coach young people to prepare them for further education and careers, and assisting NGO partners to get back on their feet. Additionally, employees, alarmed by second-quarter 2021’s rapid spread of COVID-19 in India, contributed generously to an additional Schneider Electric fund to support fellow employees in India, enabling them to cover fees for medical care.

FirstRand created a special fund, SPIRE (South African Pandemic Intervention Relief Effort) to support interventions that would help “flatten the curve.” With a special app, the bank’s customers were also able to contribute to the fund.

The earliest volunteer responses from DIRECTV employees were very hands-on, specific to the urgency created by the pandemic. Examples included: collecting and distributing food, making and distributing PPE and also assisting the elderly, fellow colleagues and communities. An active citizenship platform encouraged employees to share their stories of “random acts of kindness” during the lockdown.

Many Fujitsu employees became passionate about helping. An employee in India and her family spent over 100 hours over a period of a few months delivering COVID-19 relief packages around her community. Fujitsu supported these efforts with funding for materials. A group of Fujitsu employees in Poland, who are 3D printer enthusiasts, worked together to print masks and delivered them to local hospitals. Fujitsu employees in China donated 5,000 masks to a children’s welfare home. They also conducted an “epidemic prevention” lecture for the children, teaching them how to self-protect during this period, the correct steps for wearing masks and how to keep social distance in public spaces.

In Saudi Arabia, Alturki employee volunteers put their skills to work developing an online system to detect if people entering a room had sanitized their hands; they then installed it outside hospital emergency room doors. Volunteers also provide on-going technical support for the monitoring devices.

CCC employees in Poland went to work even though their shoe factory was shut down and they were paid to stay home. They designed and produced special extra high shoe protectors for medical personnel in local hospitals.
One of the pillars of Iberdrola’s volunteer program is inclusion of those with disabilities. In collaboration with their partner, Foundation for the Promotion of Development and Integration, employees made masks with a see-through plastic section to allow deaf persons to lip-read. Employee volunteers received materials and instructions mailed to their homes then, once made, the masks were stored in sealed bags to distribute among the deaf population. A total of 700 masks were made and distributed. Other Iberdrola employees developed “pen pals” in local nursing homes, writing virtual letters to help residents feel less lonely and isolated. Some employees donated electronic devices so isolated elders could connect with their families.

CaixaBank employees also volunteered to combat loneliness among the elderly. Their Adopt a Grandmother program engaged employees and their families to interact, both in-person and virtually, with elderly persons living alone. They shared stories to distract from the situation, built rapport and provided a “check-in” on those who lived alone. They intend to continue the program post-pandemic with a mix of in-person and virtual interaction with the elderly.

At the onset of the pandemic, TELUS introduced several virtual volunteer opportunities for employees including the Good Neighbor project, which encouraged employees to check on their neighbors and to pick up groceries and other items for them. Realizing that many more people would be online, they also adapted their existing program about how to remain safe to deliver it virtually for youth, parents and seniors. Another program, Grow a Row, encouraged employees to grow food in their personal yards and then donate it to local food banks.

For three months in early 2020, more than 1,300 Microsoft employees volunteered for more than 9,400 hours at a mass vaccination site in Seattle. It was the largest civilian-led mass vaccination site in the U.S., where 1.5 million residents of the area were vaccinated. Microsoft volunteers managed all
volunteer and staff check-ins, allowing medical personnel to focus on the clinical side. The company matched their hours with a $235,000 contribution to support pop-up clinics around Washington State to help vaccination distribution be as equitable as possible.

By the start of 2022, UPS – in partnership with UNICEF, GAVI and local health ministries – delivered 31 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to low and middle income countries with lagging vaccination rates. UPS volunteers with expertise in health care supplemented these efforts in Asia and Africa with training on ultra-cold vaccine management and vaccine distribution.

Employees of Empresas Polar in Venezuela decided to share important information through their social networks to help their communities cope with the pandemic and its challenges. A team identified the best digital content on critical COVID-19 topics, verifying it with professional experts first. They then developed ways to share the information with videos and micro messages on physical health, mental health, family relations and homeschooling. Five hundred employee volunteers used their social networks to widely share these important messages.

InterCement in Brazil arranged monthly online meetings between volunteers and the company’s local Community Development Committees to determine local needs for assistance and appropriate responses. Through this effort they uncovered gaps in food programs and learned that with a “first-come, first-served” approach, some families were left with no resources at all. They then developed a single registry of beneficiaries they were serving to ensure equitable distribution of food. Employees also established drive-in sites to donate food, clothing and hygiene products for
those in need. For the “price” of a donated item of food, the public was invited to employee-arranged comedy sessions to both collect the items and help raise people’s spirits.

In response to the pandemic, the Telefónica Foundation developed an initiative, #SumaFuerzas, activating significant financial support plus the energy, generosity and skills of employee volunteers. Employees donated their restaurant cards (an employee benefit) to the Spanish Federation for Food Banks who then redistributed the benefits to 54 food banks serving 1.5 million people. This action began in early 2020 and is ongoing today, providing important support to the Spanish Food Banks who have experienced a 50% increase in demand.

Employees became “solidarity influencers”, creating videos in partnership with the Red Cross to share important messages on how to keep safe during the pandemic. Others reached out to isolated individuals through their NGO partners, including the elderly and disabled to provide attention and companionship using digital technologies. Volunteers also packed and delivered care baskets with personal messages for individuals in need.

In Galway, Ireland, Medtronic volunteers made use of a still-open manufacturing facility to package care kits for elderly individuals living in the neighborhood. Kits included food, masks, and hand sanitizers; after each item was carefully wiped down, the kits were dropped off on each neighbor’s porch.

EDP employees helped maintain a COVID-specific online platform in Portugal that identified community needs and volunteer opportunities. Additionally, following the donation of computers to students in need, EDP volunteers helped to repair and service them.

Dell Technologies developed an All for Progress Campaign to allow employees to log onto a platform and identify needs in their communities. They were then able to describe a project and could include other employees from around the world in providing virtual assistance. For example, if a school in Brazil had a need, employees from anywhere in the world could sign up to deploy their skills to help the school. To date the All for Progress Campaign has engaged over 25,000 unique volunteer participants logging over 83,000 volunteer hours.

Overall, the initial response to the realities of the pandemic was exemplified by employee driven acts of kindness and solidarity. Employees at Medtronic China, for example, made and distributed children’s books; employees at Bank of America in San Francisco continued their work providing homemade blankets to unhoused people; InterCement employees observed their annual Do Good Day in 2020 by helping to construct hand-washing stations in public squares and local bus stops.

Employees who engaged in immediate response to the needs of others in their communities, whether through individual acts or creative collaboration to address specific problems, reported feeling grateful for the chance to be part of something important.
Deepening Engagement with Nonprofit Partners

Certainly the pandemic caused companies and their employees to struggle, although to varying degrees depending on their industry, country and situation. However, nonprofit organizations were almost all in crisis mode, facing significant loss of revenue, disruptions as their staffs moved to working virtually and the stress of moving programs and services online, often without access to needed technical support. Some lost both the human capital of corporate volunteers and the revenue generated by corporate sponsorships to support management of their volunteers. Savvy corporate volunteer leaders were quick to pick up the phone and ask about their nonprofit partners’ needs. For most, the first answer was for sustained and increased financial support. But through ongoing discussion, it became clear that noncash resources, led by employee volunteers, also were critical to adapting and sustaining their work in the new COVID-19 reality.

Boston-based State Street Corporation swung into action in early 2020 getting in touch with their State Street Foundation grant partners. In an effort to support their partners through COVID-19, the approach to grantees was flexible as they allowed allocated funds to be used for general operations as opposed to programs. This enabled partners to avoid layoffs and “keep the lights on.” Additionally, they suspended impact reporting to accelerate grant payments, reducing paperwork and allowing for a greater focus on service delivery.

To create a wrap-around support approach, the company went further: through the engagement of skills-based volunteers and with support from their nonprofit technical assistance partner Root Cause. They began to work one-on-one with nonprofit leaders to provide executive coaching, business continuity and financial planning as well as workshops and peer-to-peer consultation sessions. As a result, a more personal connection was established that stimulated ongoing discussions about how to move forward together. Leaders within State Street also became more aware and supportive of the company’s volunteer programs through employee feedback. Paid time off for volunteering increased from two days annually to four days.
Cognizant volunteers saw an urgent need to help nonprofits more easily organize the individual volunteers coming from the company. They responded by developing, in only four weeks, a simple, user-friendly and scalable community-volunteering platform. The result was Cognizant Assist, a cloud-based, open-source platform designed to help volunteer-involving organizations collaborate and communicate with volunteers, donors and beneficiaries to manage relief efforts. The platform has been implemented by numerous organizations across the UK, US and India. Cognizant provided the technology and implementation support at no cost to volunteer-involving organizations anywhere in the world that are supporting COVID-19 needs.

Telefónica Foundation designed Conecta Educación to help NGO partners quickly adapt to the need for remote service during the pandemic. Volunteers designed workshops to train and coach employees from 300 NGOs of all sizes on digital strategies and techniques logging 10,000 hours of assistance. Additionally, volunteers trained those in vulnerable populations (the elderly, the disabled and children) in all aspects of digital technologies – how to use the technologies and how to remain safe on-line.

Building on the success of its virtual volunteering program, which was established in 2011, Credit Suisse supported the development of an online platform, Copalana, as part of its response to COVID-19, to connect employee volunteers with partner organizations. Founded by a Credit Suisse employee, an alumnus of the company’s signature skills-based volunteer program, Global Citizens, the platform enables nonprofit partners to post vetted projects to which employees can apply year-round. It is a family-based nonprofit organization created in specific response to the pandemic. The dynamic nature of the platform allows Credit Suisse to be responsive to its partners’ needs as well as the availability of employee volunteers. Volunteers can register their interests and skills on the site and receive notifications when projects matching their skills become available. Unlike many other sites, there are no pre-defined project templates, so organizations can fully customize the project descriptions to meet their specific needs.

Credit Suisse is the founding and lead corporate partner of Copalana. The company’s support has enabled the service to be available to nonprofits and volunteers free of charge. Organizations as diverse as Caritas, Room to Read and Muddy Paws Rescue have used it. Projects are skills-based and tap into employees’ diverse skillsets, including IT, finance, human resources, marketing, management, communications and more. Once completed, volunteers and partner organizations can share their experience via a designated community page, thereby helping to inspire others.
Innovating to Adapt

EDP in Portugal has a long-standing partnership with Junior Achievement. The program provides mentorships for youth to encourage entrepreneurial thinking. The partners recognized that children would need to keep learning in spite of the pandemic. After consulting with Junior Achievement managers to set direction, EDP volunteers worked in partnership with them to develop alternatives to in-person sessions. For younger children, they designed stand-alone engaging videos. For older children, live online sessions were developed by adapting existing materials.

In Peru, small and microenterprises comprise 85% of the country’s employment, but when the pandemic began in early 2020, six million jobs were quickly lost. Guerrero Emprendedor (Entrepreneur Warrior) was developed, through a collaboration of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the social lab IKIGAI, civil society organizations and companies to remedy the situation. Employee volunteers from Belcorp, AB-InBev subsidiary Backus and other companies provided digital training and mentoring for thousands of micro-entrepreneurs. The focus was on sales and digital strategies plus financial and business continuity planning. Easily accessible and low-cost channels for communicating such as Facebook and WhatsApp were used to connect volunteers and mentees. According to one Belcorp volunteer who advised two businesswomen: “Volunteering has allowed me to support two entrepreneurs who are fighting for their family with a dream. Everything about them motivates me – their effort, their desire to learn and get ahead.”

Corporate volunteer managers realized they needed to work to keep employee spirits up and volunteers engaged. Many designed interactive team events such as the Medtronic Volunteer Power Hour, a day in June 2020, when employees in 44 countries engaged for one hour in one of five virtual volunteer options. These included letter writing for Amnesty International, Love for the Elderly and Save the Children, plus adding geographic detail for Missing Maps and dispensing career advice through Career Village. The event was so successful that Medtronic has since had several more Volunteer Power Hours and plans to make it an ongoing feature of the company’s volunteer program.

Iberdrola transformed its usual Iberdrola International Volunteer Day into a virtual event that was met with tremendous enthusiasm from employees. In a survey of members of IAVE’s Global Corporate Volunteer Council (GCVC), Iberdrola was one of the few companies that reported an increase in volunteering between 2019 and 2021; most saw a decrease. Being virtual also allowed them to engage employees from their smaller offices and countries beyond Spain who had not previously been involved. The focus was on the environment, social inclusion and the societal emergencies created by COVID-19. Eighty-four employees
Iberdrola, Microsoft, and Itau Unibanco collaborated virtually to compose and perform a song about what it means to be a volunteer. The song was performed along with the Iberdrola Volunteer Day band, in Spanish, Portuguese, and English. Iberdrola made a donation to UNICEF, based on video views, specifically to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on children around the world. Employees working together had a shared experience, created a message about volunteering and generated donations in support of a widely known charity.

The Tata Volunteering Week is the company’s largest volunteering program format. In 2020, the biannual event was restructured to adapt to the pandemic. The volunteer leadership team developed new volunteering activities that could be carried out virtually, implemented specific guidelines, do-it-yourself toolkits and a range of ideas that helped Tata employees remain engaged with and give back to their communities.

Employees from Tata Communications recorded over a thousand inspiring stories and poems for the visually impaired. Volunteers from Tata Chemicals created a library of resources including guides, worksheets, quizzes and posters to explain different concepts for NGOs that help women and young adults understand banking and finance. In order to combat malnutrition in India, teams from Tata Consulting Engineers engaged with caregivers and teachers to demonstrate methods to grow nutrient rich micro-greens and other food items in kitchen gardens. Tata Power volunteers worked with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences to conduct needs assessment for migrants stranded in India.

Some companies used lockdown time to educate employees on the social issues their volunteer programs seek to address. “Lunch and Learn”
sessions, for example, were popular among US companies. CaixaBank employees used the opportunity to learn about environmental issues during their first Digital Volunteer Day in mid-2020. Some 150 nonprofit organizations participated, sharing information with 1000+ employees about the environment and how individuals can help to preserve it.

With high COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, many people have been reluctant to go to the hospital, even with serious conditions. Recognizing this, Medtronic employees participated in video training provided by their partner, the American Heart Association, so they would be better equipped to respond to strokes or heart attacks.

Bank of America has had a large and comprehensive volunteer program with a normal participation rate of close to 40% of its 200,000 employees in 41 countries. Although some virtual volunteering was already underway, shifting it to a purely virtual format was a challenge. This came at a time when the company already was considering how to expand their longstanding focus on racial equity and economic opportunity. Working with a key partner, The Smithsonian Institution, Bank of America engaged 6,000 volunteers in 2020 to transcribe historic materials and give voice to marginalized people and communities, including a central focus on the Smithsonian African American collection. Volunteering opportunities with the Smithsonian remain an ongoing and favorite activity of the company’s employees. Additionally, the bank began offering its signature financial literacy program, Better Money Habits®, through virtual volunteer presentations. During the bank’s Global Service Month in April 2021, more than 400 volunteers delivered the presentations to more than 250 nonprofit partners, building the organizations’ financial management capacity.

A significant issue during the pandemic was how to continue children’s education. A number of companies, whose volunteer programs have been engaged in helping to bridge the digital divide with educational content, stepped up quickly to help teachers and students continue learning. Cognizant volunteers coached teachers in digital skills and assisted them in translating their educational content for virtual delivery. Volunteers delivered STEM lessons virtually to students with online coding workshops in Singapore.

When the pandemic temporarily closed Accenture’s NGO-managed skilling centers across India, employees responded by creating DigiClass, an online learning platform run by more than 2,800 Accenture volunteers. DigiClass enables a diverse audience — from children and youth in rural and semi-urban areas to persons with disabilities, the LGBTI community, and NGO staff — to gain workplace and digital literacy skills, including coding. By early 2022, the platform had been used by more than 14,500 people.

Using Kidovation, a product developed by Accenture Interactive, volunteers used a hackathon format to help children in 19 countries learn design thinking and creative problem-solving and apply those skills to social and environmental issues. In 2021, the initiative reached nearly 5,000 children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The program was particularly strong among schools in the UK where they launched the Kidovation Challenge.

Working with their partner, SOS Children’s Villages in the Philippines, Fujitsu employees developed fun, online lessons for children built around Japanese culture including food, origami and the Japanese language. The children in the SOS Children’s Villages live there full time, and during the pandemic, their
teachers could not always be present, so these diversions were particularly important.

In Portugal, Fujitsu worked with their community partner, PIN Academy, in support of neuro-diverse young people. Together they helped the youth gain job skills and experience with an eight-month fully virtual program, delivering skills based on PIN’s needs assessment of in-demand skills. This included: cybersecurity, programming languages, business communication, project management and more. It also included an introduction to Japanese culture and language, highlighting Fujitsu’s heritage and providing some entertainment for the students.

In India, Fujitsu worked closely with their long-term charity partner, School Health Annual Report Programme (SHARP), which provides planned health programs for people from low-income backgrounds across India. Fujitsu worked with SHARP during 2020 to ensure that children were healthy and happy in their homes during lockdown with distribution of books and board games. There were also multiple online classes and events, including hygiene and nutrition lessons, communication skills classes and virtual yoga for children to improve mental and physical health. These online lessons reached over 200 young people.

**Standard Chartered Bank** increased paid volunteering leave days from three to four at the outset of the pandemic to encourage employees to support more community work. For their signature **Futuremakers** programs, volunteers switched to online teaching to work around closed schools. They supplemented this with career sharing, mentoring and coaching sessions. Employees also supported isolated people by making safety masks, packing PPE gear and distributing both to nursing homes or residences for senior citizens.

In Europe 400 **IBM** employees took part in the company’s Adopt-a-School response to COVID-19 and worked closely with teachers in 14 different countries to coach them in remote learning.
Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) employees in Singapore ran a virtual digital clinic for elderly people to help them become more digitally proficient through one-on-one consultation sessions.

Intel recognized the strain on employees working from home while facilitating their children’s remote schooling. They began recognizing the hours a parent spends on assisting children with schoolwork and counts them as volunteer hours, then matches them up to five hours per day at $10 per hour in the form of a donation to the child’s school. While this is not “volunteering,” of course, it illustrates the diversity of ways in which companies sought to move beyond normal approaches to recognize and support the pandemic-required adaptations employees have had to make.

Online mentoring was another popular way of engaging employees and shifting in-person activities to virtual. S&P Global worked with the LinkedIn Network Gap Alliance to mentor young job seekers facing barriers in the Asia-Pacific region.

Many companies turned to existing virtual volunteering platforms to engage employees. Popular platforms include Missing Maps, which allows volunteers to fill in the geographic details of their communities, and Career Village, a program for youth to pose career questions that are answered by volunteers who respond based on their experience and expertise. Zooniverse, another popular virtual platform, is driven by volunteers, making available a huge number of citizen science projects. For example, Accenture employee volunteers served as “citizen scientists” to support environmental research. Using the online platform Zooniverse, they helped researchers track changes in the environment by classifying animal behaviors, such as counting penguins in Antarctica, identifying elusive wildlife species in the Serengeti and classifying Beluga whales in Canada. Through the GLOBE Observer app, they tracked their observations of clouds and helped researchers interpret satellite data that is key to their environmental research.

Be My Eyes is an app that facilitates communication between a sighted person and a visually impaired person to assist with tasks like checking expiry dates, distinguishing colors, reading instructions and navigating new surroundings. These platforms continue to give volunteers new opportunities to serve.