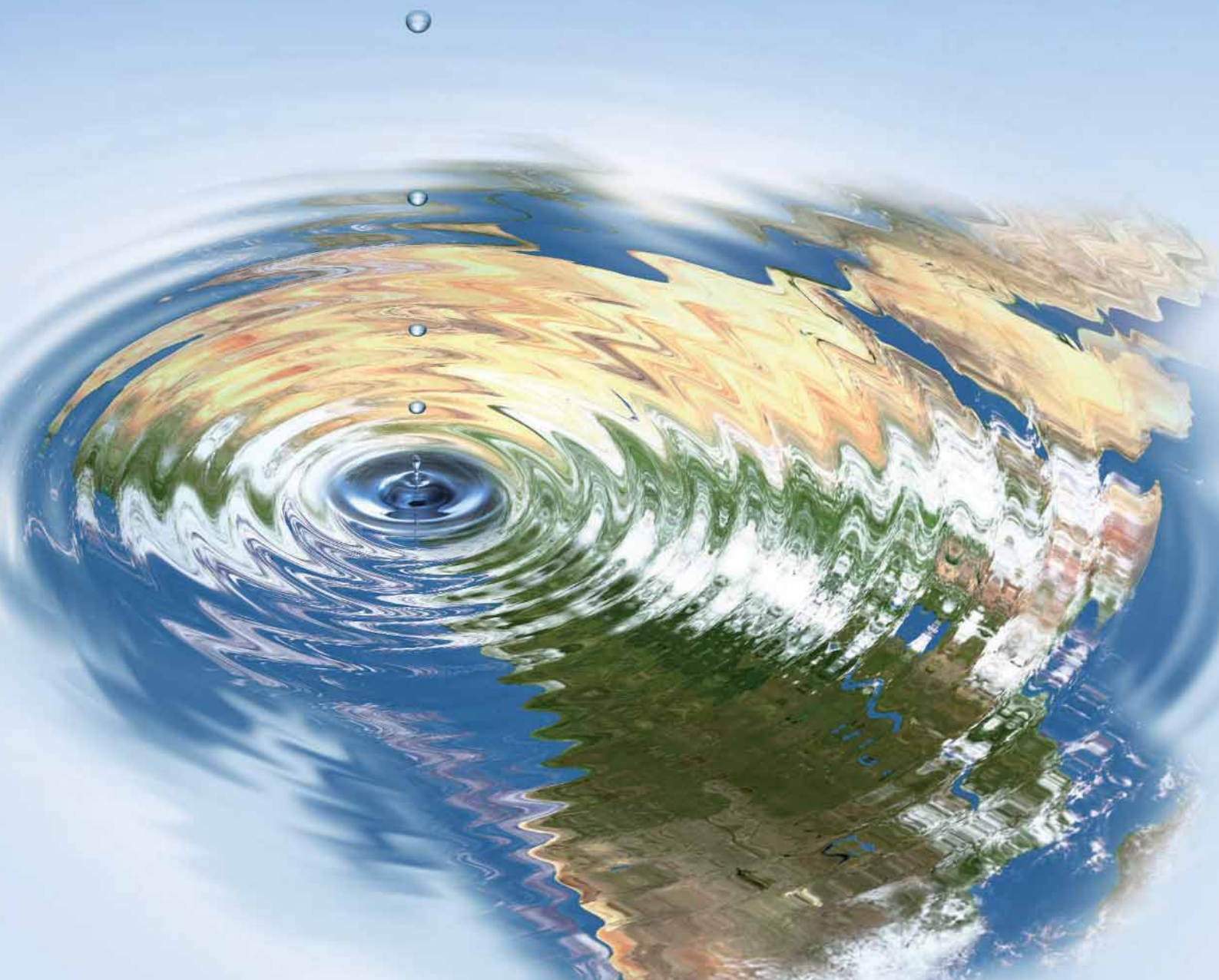


2011 | V State of the World's Volunteerism Report

● Universal Values for Global Well-being



UN

Volunteers

inspiration in action

The **United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme** is the United Nations organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced United Nations Volunteers, throughout the world. UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity as well as the values that sustain it: free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity.

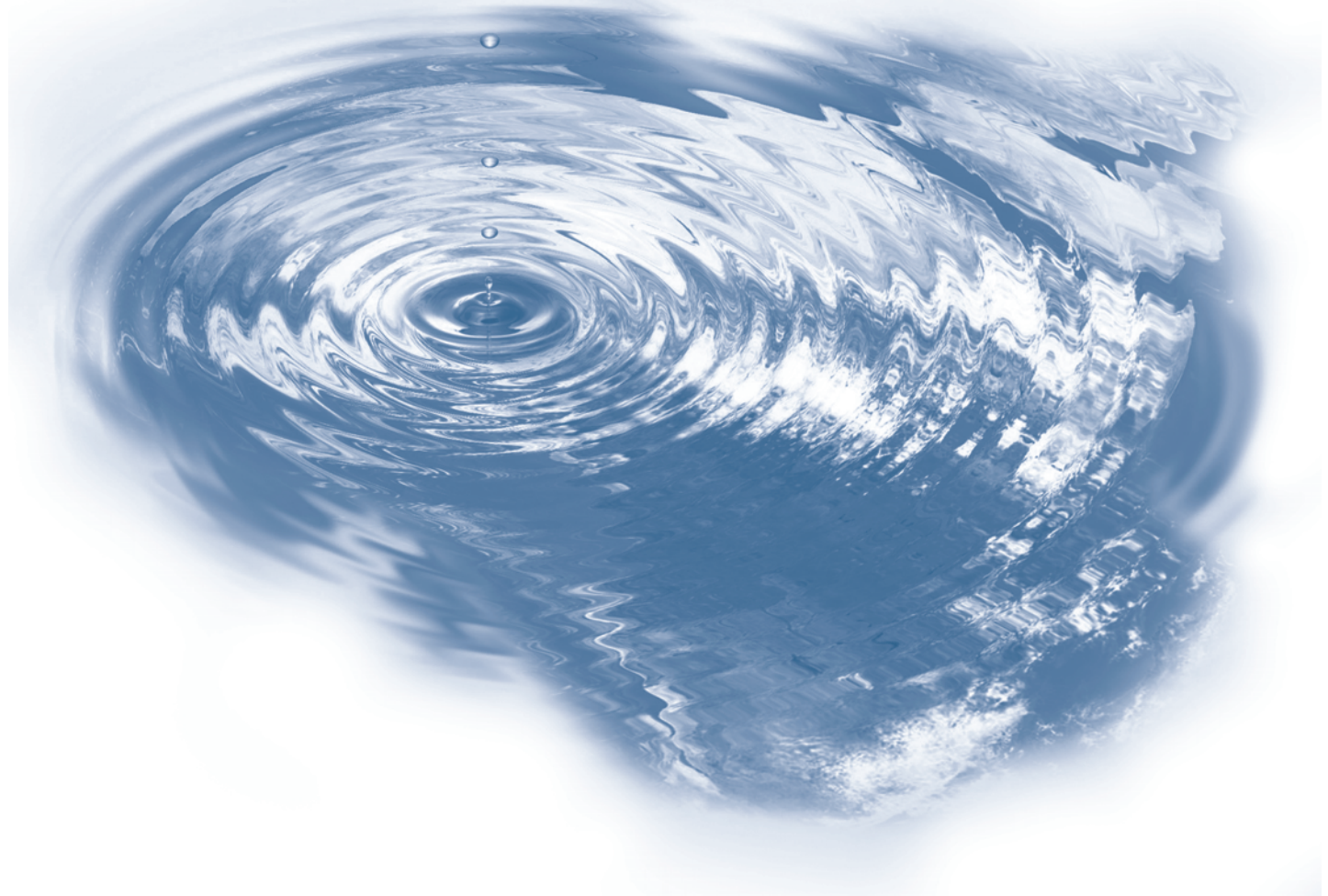


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2011

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The analysis and policy recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Development Programme. The research and writing of the report was a collaborative effort by the State of the World's Volunteerism Report team and a group of eminent advisers led by Flavia Pansieri, Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers.

Citing of trade names or commercial processes does not constitute endorsement.

Foreword

Volunteering occurs in every society in the world. The terms which define it and the forms of its expression may vary in different languages and cultures, but the values which drive it are common and universal: a desire to contribute to the common good, out of free will and in a spirit of solidarity, without expectation of material reward.

Volunteers are motivated by values like those of justice, equality and freedom as expressed in the United Nations Charter. A society which supports and encourages different forms of volunteering is likely to be a society which also promotes the well-being of its citizens. A society which fails to recognize and facilitate the contributions of volunteers deprives itself of contributions to public well-being which could be made.

In proclaiming the International Year of Volunteers ten years ago, the international community recognized the essential contributions which volunteers make to the progress, cohesion and resilience of communities and nations. Yet, as we strive to accelerate progress to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, the contributions of volunteers are not always factored into development strategies and often remain at the margins of development debate.

The United Nations Volunteers programme took the initiative to commission this first-ever United Nations report on volunteering as a way of marking the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers. By emphasising the untapped potential of volunteering, the report shows that the current development architecture is incomplete where it omits to include the contributions volunteers can make.

Over the past two decades, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has advanced the concept of human development, calling for expanding people's choices and freedoms and increasing their ability to live long and healthy lives, to be educated, and to enjoy

a decent standard of living. As the *Human Development Reports* have shown, development effectiveness needs to be measured not only by GDP per capita, but also by the extent to which people's choices have expanded and improved their quality of life.

The human development concept puts people at the very centre of development. UNV's report embraces that too, recognizing the importance of non-material attainments to the well-being of individuals and the entire society. Material improvements – health, education and decent work – remain essential; but also vital are participation, empowerment and active citizenship of which volunteering is such a powerful expression.

The *Global Human Development Report 2010* stated: "Putting people at the centre of development means making progress equitable and broad-based, enabling people to be active participants in change." UNV's report shows volunteering to be a highly effective way of building on people's capabilities in all societies and at all levels.

At UNDP, we believe in supporting countries to build the institutions, capacities and policies which will drive transformational change. To be effective, policies need to bring about change at the grassroots level. Strategies nurtured by community-level action can help achieve that.

This report should trigger a discussion on, and promote a better understanding of, the contributions of volunteering to peace and development.



Helen Clark

Administrator, United Nations Development Programme

Preface

The focus of this report is on the universal values that motivate people the world over to volunteer for the common good and on the impact of volunteer action on societies and individuals. We believe in the power of volunteering to promote cooperation, encourage participation and contribute to the well-being of individuals and of society as a whole.

Volunteerism was recognized as an important factor in development ten years ago in 2001 when 126 Member States co-sponsored a General Assembly resolution at the end of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV). This resolution provided numerous policy recommendations to governments, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and others on ways to promote and support volunteerism.

Since then, encouraging progress has been made in implementing some of these recommendations. At the same time, as we mark the tenth anniversary of IYV, the contribution of volunteerism is still only partially recognized. It is an afterthought rather than an organic component of programmes designed to promote citizen participation and societal well-being.

With this report, we hope to make the case for the recognition of volunteerism as an essential component for the sustainable, equitable progress of communities and nations. In a rapidly changing environment, volunteerism is a constant. Its forms of expression may vary but the central values of solidarity and commitment that lie at its core remain strong and universal. They are found in all cultures and societies and are a true expression of our common humanity.

There is growing recognition of the need to modify our unsustainable production and consumption patterns. This will require political will. Equally, it will require the buy-in and active participation of citizens. Volunteerism is not a panacea to the problems of the world today. It is, however, an essential component of

any strategy that recognizes that progress cannot be measured solely in terms of economic return and that individuals are not motivated by self-interest alone but also by their deeply held values and beliefs.

In the chapters that follow, we provide numerous examples of the transformational changes that volunteers experience and produce. We show why volunteerism is crucial to human development. More importantly, we argue that a truly human society needs to be driven by the values of trust, solidarity and mutual respect which inspire all volunteers.

In preparing this first United Nations report on volunteerism, we address numerous definitional and methodological issues. We are well aware that further study and research are needed to refine our understanding of the nature and extent of this expression of human endeavour. This report represents the starting point for a broader debate, not a definitive answer. In future years, we intend to deepen our understanding of the motivations, scope, value and impact of volunteerism worldwide.



Flavia Pansieri

*Executive Coordinator, United Nations
Volunteers*

Acknowledgements

This report is the result of a truly participatory effort. The sincere thanks of UNV go to all who contributed their time, knowledge and experience. As befits a report on volunteerism, most of the contributions took the form of voluntary engagement. The report was prepared by a core team, coordinated by Project Manager Aygen Aytac, under the general guidance and supervision of Flavia Pansieri, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. The research and writing team, led by Senior Writer Robert Leigh, comprised the founder of ARNOVA, David Horton Smith from the Boston College, Benjamin J. Lough from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Jacob Mwathi Mati from the University of Witwatersrand, Debbie Haski-Leventhal from Macquarie University, and Independent Consultants María José León, Cornelia Giesing and Sabine Strassburg. Project and administrative support was provided by Vera Chrobok and Johannes Bullmann. Lothar Mikulla led the communication and advocacy activities and Paul Hockenos edited the report. Thanks also go to Shubh Chakraborty for suggestion of the cover page design.

A Technical Advisory Board was actively involved in identifying the issues addressed in the report and in outlining its content. We thank the Technical Advisory Board members: Jeffrey Brudney, Anabel Cruz, Lev Jakobson, Amany Kandil, Thierno Kane, Jeni Klugman, Lucas Meijs, Maureen Nakirunda, Justin Davis Smith and Rajesh Tandon.

The High-Level Advisory Board contributed its broader vision and helped to contextualize the report. We thank the High-Level Advisory Board members for providing invaluable insights and suggestions. They are: Soukeyna Ndiaye Ba, Liz Burns, Marian Harkin, Bruce Jenks, Rima Khalaf, Bernardo Kliksberg, Justin Koutaba, Miria Matembe, Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese and Erna Witoelar.

An internal UNV Readers Group comprising UNV management and technical staff was established to provide feedback on the draft SWVR. The report benefited greatly from their advice and suggestions. Thus we would like to thank: Kwabena Asante-Ntiamoah, Mahamane Baby, Manon Bernier, Elise Bouvet, Mae Chao, Simona Costanzo-Sow, Peter Devereux, Olga Devyatkin, Francesco Galtieri, Kevin Gilroy, Naheed Haque, Moraig Henderson, Ibrahim Hussein, Ghulam Isaczai, Allen Jennings, Tapiwa Kamuruko, Donna Keher, Svend Amdi Madsen, Yvonne Maharooof, Robert Palmer, Jan Snoeks, Robert Toe, Marco van der Ree, Oliver Wittershagen, Kawtar Zerouali and Veronique Zidi-Aporeigah. An internal reference group also assisted. Thanks go to Alba Candel Pau, Fabienne Copin, Romain Desclos, Rafael Martínez, Marguerite Minani and Amina Said.

UNV commissioned 19 background papers on a range of thematic issues related to volunteerism and seven regional papers. We would like to thank the authors for providing us with rich information and data: Jody Aked, Emmanuel Asomba, Denise Bortree, Carol Carter, Kathryn Dinh, Christopher Einolf, Sharon Eng, Snezana Green, Jürgen Grotz, Celayne Healon-Shrestha, Nicole A. Hofmann, Benedict Iheme, Osama Kadi, Alina Meyer, Kimberly Ochs, René Olate, John Robinson, Sigfrido Romeo, Lester Salamon, David H. Smith, Lars Svedberg, Rajesh Tandon, Rebecca Tiessen and Ying Xu (see Bibliography for a full list of commissioned papers).

In preparation for the SWVR, nine consultative meetings were held between October 2010 and February 2011 to draw on the expertise of volunteerism researchers, academics, civil society leaders and development practitioners from around the globe and to discuss issues related to volunteerism. These consultation meetings included a civil society consultation meeting in Germany and sev-

eral regional consultation meetings covering Latin America, North America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe/CIS, Middle East and Northern Africa, Francophone Africa, Anglophone Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. We thank all participants for sharing valuable insights, suggestions, case studies and their own research findings. We would also like to thank associated universities and organizations for supporting the participation of their staff in our consultation meetings (see the full list of consultation meetings and participants on the following pages).

UNDP Country Offices in Turkey, Senegal, Kenya, Thailand and Argentina, and the UNV Office in New York supported the organization of regional consultation meetings. The Comisión Cascos Blancos (White Helmets Commission) from Argentina and research institute TUSIDE from Turkey gave support to the organization of meetings in Buenos Aires and in Istanbul respectively. The multi-regional consultation meeting in Turkey was funded by the European Commission. We are grateful for the financial support.

The UNDP Network Groups generated a range of useful ideas and examples through online discussions on various topics related to volunteerism. The UNDP Network Groups on Gender, Disaster Risk Reduction, HIV/AIDS, Environment, and Conflict Prevention and Recovery deserve special mention.

The data and statistics used in this report draw significantly on the databases of other or-

ganizations to which we were allowed generous access. In this context we would like to thank Richard Harrison, Research Director of the Charities Aid Foundation in London, and Andrew Rzepa of GALLUP for giving us this access.

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CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Multi-Regional Consultation Meeting (Western Europe, Eastern Europe/CIS, Middle East and Northern Africa), Turkey 29-30 October 2010

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Civil Society Consultation Meeting, Germany

8-9 November 2010

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North America Regional Consultation Meeting, United States

20-21 November 2010

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Francophone Africa Regional Consultation Meeting, Senegal

7-8 January 2011

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Anglophone Africa Regional Consultation Meeting, Kenya

17-18 January 2011

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Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting, Thailand

31 January – 1 February 2011

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Latin America Regional Consultation Meeting, Argentina

8-9 February 2011

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Acronyms

BwB	Bankers without Borders	IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
CEPAL	La Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe	IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
CHW	Community Health Worker	IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States	ILO	International Labour Organization
CNP	The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project	IOM	International Organization for Migration
CSI	Civil Society Index	ISO	International Organization for Standardization
CSO	Civil Society Organization	ITU	International Telecommunication Union
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	IVS	International Volunteer Service
CUSO	Canadian University Service Overseas	IYV	International Year of Volunteers
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)	MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
EAC-EA	The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency	MRU	Mano River Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
EU	European Union	NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
EVP	Employee Volunteer Program	NVM	National Volunteer Movement
FBO	Faith-Based Organization	OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
FOCSIV	Federazione Organismi Cristiani Servizio Internazionale Volontario	SADNET	The Southern Africa Drought Technology Network
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SIF	Singapore International Foundation
GWP	The Gallup World Poll	SMS	Short Message Service
HDR	Human Development Report	SWVR	State of World's Volunteerism Report
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome	TICA	Thailand's International Development Cooperation Agency
IAVE	International Association for Volunteer Effort	UN	United Nations
ICNL	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law		
ICNPO	International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations		
ICT	Information and Communications Technology		

UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	UN IANWGE	United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs	UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme	UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UPS	United Parcel Service
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly	VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas
		WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
		WHO	World Health Organization

Contents

STATE OF THE WORLD'S VOLUNTEERISM REPORT TEAM	iii
FOREWORD by the Administrator, UNDP	iv
PREFACE by the Executive Coordinator, UNV	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
CONTRIBUTIONS	viii
ACRONYMS	xiii
CONTENTS	xv
OVERVIEW	xix
Volunteerism in the world today	xxii
New faces of volunteerism	xxii
Volunteerism and the development paradigm	xxii
CHAPTER 1 · Volunteerism is universal	1
Volunteerism and traditional values	2
Volunteerism flying under the radar	3
What is volunteerism?	3
How is volunteerism expressed?	5
Common misperceptions about volunteerism	8
Conclusions and discussions	12
CHAPTER 2 · Taking the measure of volunteering	13
Why take the measure of volunteerism?	14
Diverse measures of volunteering	15
National volunteer studies	17
Pursuing a global measure: highlighting international measuring initiatives	18
European Commission Study	18
The Gallup World Poll (GWP)	19
World Values Survey (WVS)	20
The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP)	20
CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI)	20
The Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work	22
Conclusions and discussions	23

CHAPTER 3 · Volunteerism in the twenty-first century	25
Introduction	26
Volunteerism and technology	26
Volunteerism and mobile communication technologies	26
Volunteerism and the Internet	27
International volunteerism	29
Volunteerism and the private sector	33
Conclusions and discussions	36
<hr/>	
CHAPTER 4 · Sustainable livelihoods	39
Introduction	40
What are sustainable livelihoods?	40
Volunteerism and social capital	41
Volunteerism and human capital	42
Volunteerism and natural capital	45
Volunteerism and physical capital	46
Volunteerism and financial assets	47
Volunteerism and political assets	48
Conclusions and discussions	49
<hr/>	
CHAPTER 5 · Volunteering as a force for social inclusion	51
What is social inclusion?	52
The levels of social inclusion	53
Social inclusion of groups through volunteerism	54
Women	54
Young people	56
Older persons	58
People with disabilities	58
Migrants	59
People living with HIV/AIDS	60
Conclusions and discussions	61
<hr/>	
CHAPTER 6 · Volunteerism, cohesion and conflict management	63
Introduction	64
Social cohesion and violent conflict	64
Volunteerism in the prevention of conflict	65
Volunteerism during conflict	66
Volunteerism in the aftermath of conflict	67
Volunteerism and the promotion of peace	68
Women	68
Young people	69
Conclusions and discussions	71

CHAPTER 7 · Volunteerism and disasters	73
Introduction	74
Disasters and development	74
Multiple roles of volunteerism in disasters	74
Before a disaster	74
Prevention and mitigation of disasters	74
Preparing for disasters	76
Responding to disasters	77
Volunteerism and recovery	80
Conclusions and discussions	81
<hr/>	
CHAPTER 8 · Volunteering and well-being	83
Introduction	84
Volunteering and individual well-being	86
Volunteering and community well-being	86
Well-being and policy	88
Conclusions and discussions	89
<hr/>	
CONCLUSION · The way forward	91
Introduction	92
The time is right	93
<hr/>	
NOTES	95
<hr/>	
REFERENCES	99
<hr/>	
BOXES	
O.1 Volunteerism as a valuable component of development plans	xx
O.2 Volunteerism as an anchor in the face of global changes	xxi
1.1 Traditional forms of volunteerism	2
1.2 Volunteers in weather forecasts	3
1.3 Teaching the poor in India	5
1.4 Farmers' cooperatives help Zambian farmers survive and thrive	6
1.5 Arab spring – Egypt in Colors	7
1.6 Public and community partnership against poverty and tuberculosis	9
1.7 African philanthropy – a strong tradition	9
1.8 From house building to active citizenship	10
1.9 Promoting laws and policies that support volunteerism	11
2.1 Volunteer values	14
2.2 Using community calendars to measure the value of volunteering	15
2.3 Beyond the economic value	16
2.4 African Union youth volunteers	16
2.5 First-ever volunteerism survey in Bangladesh	17
2.6 From house building to active citizenship	22
2.7 Best Practices in the measurement of volunteering	22
3.1 Election monitoring through SMS	27
3.2 Online volunteering	28

3.3	Open-source online volunteering	29
3.4	Kraft Foods Micro-Volunteering	29
3.5	Friends from Thailand in Bhutan	30
3.6	JICA Senior Volunteers	31
3.7	The Ethiopian Diaspora Volunteer Programme	32
3.8	Need for values and principles in business	34
3.9	Employee volunteering and the MDGs	34
3.10	Corporate volunteering	35
3.11	Bankers without Borders	36
3.12	Bringing together people and causes	37
4.1	Cambodian taxi drivers help fight malaria	43
4.2	Education for building human capital	44
4.3	The Tongan giant clam sanctuaries	45
4.4	Community volunteers taking the lead	47
4.5	Cross-border volunteering in Mexican Hometown Associations	48
4.6	Volunteering for gender equity in Latin America	49
5.1	Volunteerism is a social behaviour	52
5.2	Retired and engaged	53
5.3	Traditional help in Brazil – <i>mutirão</i>	54
5.4	Political participation of indigenous people	55
5.5	Maasai Pastoral Women's Council	56
5.6	Increasing youth employability in Bosnia and Herzegovina	57
5.7	Have wheels – will volunteer	59
5.8	Immigrant volunteering: New Zealand	60
5.9	Talking Positive about HIV: China	60
6.1	Creating bridges across ethnic borders	66
6.2	Muslim Volunteering Organization in the Philippines	67
6.3	Community volunteering for peace	68
6.4	Women struggle to be heard	69
6.5	Youth promote post-conflict recovery in Liberia	70
7.1	Good practices for community resilience	74
7.2	Volunteer early warning to save lives	76
7.3	Christchurch earthquake: volunteers of all types	78
7.4	Early response in Haiti	80
7.5	Disaster recovery and the <i>gotong royong</i> spirit	81
8.1	Gross National Happiness in Bhutan	85
8.2	Volunteering and individual well-being	86
8.3	Well-being through volunteering in Brazil	87
8.4	Living well	88
C.1	Recognizing the contribution of volunteerism	93

FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1	If volunteers were a nation	20
FIGURE 2.2	Value of volunteer work as share of GDP	21
FIGURE 2.3	CIVICUS Civil Society Diamond	21



Overview

People are the real wealth of a nation.

UNDP Human Development Report (1990)

Volunteerism is a basic expression of human relationships. It is about people's need to participate in their societies and to feel that they matter to others. We strongly believe that the social relationships intrinsic to volunteer work are critical to individual and community well-being. The ethos of volunteerism is infused with values including solidarity, reciprocity, mutual trust, belonging and empowerment, all of which contribute significantly to quality of life.

People the world over engage in volunteerism for a great variety of reasons: to help to eliminate poverty and to improve basic health and education, to provide a safe water supply and adequate sanitation, to tackle environmental issues and climate change, to reduce the risk of disasters and to combat social exclusion and violent conflict. In all of these fields, volunteerism contributes to peace and development by generating well-being for people and their communities. Volunteerism also forms the backbone of many national and international non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations as well as social and political movements. It is present in the public sector and is increasingly a feature of the private sector.

While recognition of volunteerism has been growing in recent times, especially since the United Nations proclaimed 2001 the Interna-

tional Year of Volunteers (IYV), the phenomenon is still misconstrued and undervalued. All too often, the strong links are overlooked between volunteer activity on the one hand and peace and human development on the other. It is time for the contribution of volunteerism to the quality of life, and to well-being in a wider sense, to be understood as one of the missing components of a development paradigm that still has economic growth at its core. However, as the first UNDP *Human Development Report* noted, people are the real wealth of a nation. Development is about expanding the choices available to people so that they may lead lives that they value. Economic growth is only one means of increasing people's choices.¹

Alongside criteria such as health and education, another element has been added to human development: the freedom of people to use their knowledge and talents to shape their own destinies. This expanded definition of development has informed 20 years of global *Human Development Reports* (HDR) and over 600 national HDRs. This first United Nations *State of the World's Volunteerism Report* emphasizes how volunteerism is a means by which people can take control of their lives and make a difference to themselves and to those around them.

Volunteerism is a sphere of human endeavour of which the significance has not been fully understood and articulated in the development debate, particularly in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. This is not to deny that considerable progress has been achieved since IYV, especially in the developing world, in responding to the four major themes identified for the year, namely greater recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism. Governments have developed an extensive list of recommendations for actions to support volunteerism. These are contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/38 adopted in 2001 and have been supplemented by subsequent resolutions from the United Nations General

BOX O.1 : Volunteerism as a valuable component of development plans

Extend the notion of volunteerism as an additional valuable component of national development planning to development cooperation policy. Recognizing and building strategically on rich, local traditions of voluntary self-help and mutual aid can open the way to building up a new constituency in support of development efforts. Forging a link in the mind of the general public in countries providing development assistance between domestic volunteering in those countries and volunteering in countries receiving assistance can also help enlist public support for development cooperation.⁴

Source: UNGA. (2002b).

Assembly.² These recommendations are also emphasized in successive reports of the United Nations Secretary-General.³

The timing of this report, a decade after IYV, is crucial as it coincides with an intense debate about the type of societies that we wish to see, for ourselves and for future generations. Globalization is rapidly transforming cultural and social norms, bringing benefits to some but exclusion and marginalization to others. Many people feel a loss of control over their lives.⁵ Volunteerism is one way for people to engage in the life of their communities and societies. In doing so, they acquire a sense of belonging and inclusion and they are able to influence the direction of their lives.

At no point in history has the potential been greater for people to be primary actors, rather than passive bystanders, in their communities, to affect the course of events that shape their destiny. In Latin America in the 1980s, in Eastern Europe in the 1990s and, most recently, in the Arab world, aided by the rapid expansion of digital communications, people have articulated their desire for participatory democratic processes through volunteer-based campaigning and activism.

Volunteerism needs to be brought to the fore in the development discourse at global, regional and country levels. Interest in many aspects of volunteerism has grown considerably in recent years. This is evident from the burgeoning academic work on the topic, the diverse forums for discussing volunteerism and the considerable media coverage, especially in connection with natural disasters and major sporting events such as the Olympic Games and the football World Cup. There are also increasing signs of government support for volunteerism as a form of civic engagement, not only to enhance delivery of services but also to promote the values that underpin social cohesion and harmony. While this interest in volunteerism did not begin with IYV in 2001, many new volunteer-related initiatives can be traced back to it.

BOX O.2 : Volunteerism as an anchor in the face of global changes

“People often feel powerless in the face of globalization; like flotsam and jetsam on the waves with no stable anchor. Volunteerism can be an anchor for people as they effect change in their own community of place.”

Source: Maria Harkin, [Member of the European Parliament, UNV High-Level Advisory Board]. (2011).⁶

This report does not intend to duplicate the existing body of scholarly work on volunteerism (see bibliography). Instead, we present a vision of volunteerism and examine how it relates to some of the principal peace and development challenges of our times. The examples cited are predominantly from developing countries, thus correcting a pronounced imbalance in scholarship to date. However, the SWVR is intended to be global in application.

The groundbreaking resolution 56/38 of the United Nations General Assembly contains explicit recommendations on ways in which governments and the United Nations system can support volunteering.⁷ Among the key considerations were:

- Neglecting to factor volunteering into the design and implementation of policies could entail the risk of overlooking a valuable asset and undermine traditions of cooperation that bind communities together.⁸
- There is not one universal model of best practice, since what works well in one country may not work in another with very different cultures and traditions.⁹
- Support for voluntary activities does not imply support for government downsizing or for replacing paid employment.¹⁰

VOLUNTEERISM IN THE WORLD TODAY

An ethic of volunteerism exists in every society in the world, albeit in different forms. Since 2001, wide-ranging research has added greatly to our understanding of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, fundamental misperceptions remain widespread in the Western world and beyond as to its nature and contributions. There is no agreed methodology for measuring the extent of voluntary engagement. However, most studies attest to the universality of volunteerism, its universal spread, massive scale and impact.

NEW FACES OF VOLUNTEERISM

Opportunities for people to engage in volunteer action have been expanding in recent years as a result of factors such as globalization, the spread of new technologies and initiatives associated with corporate social responsibility from the private sector. The advent of mobile communication technologies and online volunteering, for example, has enabled many more people to participate for the first time. Mass short message service (SMS) communication is one form of "micro-volunteerism" that contributes to the production and sharing of information. It is frequently used by people to raise awareness, inform choices and monitor public services.

Online volunteering, i.e. volunteer work done via the Internet, has eliminated the need for volunteerism to be tied to specific times and locations, thus greatly increasing the freedom and flexibility of volunteer engagement. The sharing of information through social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Orkut has helped people to organize around issues ranging from the environment to democratic change, most recently in some Arab states. The Internet facilitates volunteerism by matching the interests of people who seek to volunteer with the needs of host organizations, through programmes such as the UN Volunteers Online Volunteering

service. Membership of virtual, Internet-based communities can also engender feelings of belonging and well-being.

While international volunteering is not new, it has manifested itself in new forms and has taken on new dimensions in an age of globalization. "Voluntourism" or student "gap-year" volunteerism, often undertaken for short periods, are new manifestations and their impact is open to question. Corporations, NGOs, universities and faith-based organizations have become increasingly engaged in facilitating internationally based volunteer placements. Furthermore, there is diaspora volunteerism in which experts from emigrant communities undertake short-term assignments to transfer knowledge to their countries of origin.

Another relatively new phenomenon is involvement of the private sector. Today, roughly one in three large companies offers some type of employer-supported volunteerism. There is a growing trend of long-term collaboration between private sector enterprises and local NGOs.

VOLUNTEERISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

The contribution of volunteerism to development is particularly striking in the context of sustainable livelihoods and value-based notions of well-being. Contrary to common perceptions, the income poor are as likely to volunteer as those who are not poor. In doing so they realize their assets, which include knowledge, skills and social networks, for the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities. The values of volunteerism are extremely relevant in strengthening the capacity of the most vulnerable to achieve secure livelihoods and to enhance their physical, economic, spiritual and social well-being. Moreover, volunteering can reduce the social exclusion that is often the result of poverty, marginalization and other forms of inequality.

Fundamental misperceptions remain widespread in the Western world and beyond as to the nature and contributions of volunteerism

Volunteerism is one path to inclusion among population groups that are often excluded such as women, young and older people, people with disabilities, migrants and people living with HIV/AIDS.

There is mounting evidence that volunteer engagement promotes the civic values and social cohesion which mitigate violent conflict at all stages and that it even fosters reconciliation in post-conflict situations. By contributing to building trust, volunteer action diminishes the tensions that give rise to conflict and can also contribute to conflict resolution. It can also create common purpose in the aftermath of war. Indeed, people bound together through active participation and cooperation at local level are in a better position to resolve differences in non-confrontational ways.

Volunteer action in the context of natural disasters has long been one of the most visible manifestations of volunteerism. It is also one of the clearest expressions of the human values underpinning the drive to care for others. Despite the tendency of the media to focus on international volunteers, neighbours and local residents are often the first to respond. The role of volunteerism in this field has become even more prominent as the incidence of disasters increases owing to climate change, rapid urbanization and other factors. There is growing international awareness that nations and communities can and should build resilience to disasters through a “bottom-up” process in the form of volunteer initiatives rooted in the community. Indeed, the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction declared that the most effective resources for reducing vulnerability are local community self-help, local organizations and local networks. “Putting people at the centre of development is much more than an intellectual exercise”, notes the HDR 2010. “It means making progress equitable and broad-based, enabling people to be active participants in change”.¹¹ Volunteerism can be a

highly effective and practical means of building on people’s capabilities in all societies and at all levels. It also provides a channel through which these capabilities may enhance the well-being of individuals, communities and nations.

In order to meet international development targets, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the voluntary efforts of countless millions of ordinary citizens are needed to bolster the efforts of governments and international actors.¹²

We want to bring about a greater recognition of the rich and manifold expressions of volunteerism as a powerful force for progress. We truly believe that volunteerism goes far beyond merely completing a given task. It creates and sustains bonds of trust, societal cohesion, and helps to forge a common sense of identity and destiny. Volunteer action by which people unite in shared endeavours towards a common purpose is a feature of most societies. As such, it touches the lives of vast numbers of people all over the world.

The SWVR is both a description and a celebration of the positive impact of volunteerism, especially on the large numbers of people experiencing income poverty, insecurity and exclusion. We hope to awaken an interest in volunteerism beyond the practitioners and scholars already engaged in the subject. We want to inform future policy debates on peace, development and well-being that will lead policymakers to take into account this massive but largely invisible and untapped resource.

A central thesis running through this report is that the values inherent in volunteerism endow it with far-reaching potential for human development. This notion of development includes factors such as solidarity, social inclusion, empowerment, life satisfaction and individual and societal well-being.

The values inherent in volunteerism endow it with far-reaching potential for human development

The well-being of individuals is intrinsically linked to their contributions to the lives of others.

These values have long been close to the work of the United Nations. Yet, despite all that it offers, volunteerism remains largely absent from the peace and development agenda. This must change. Volunteerism should be recognized as a powerful and

universal renewable resource and a vital component of the social capital of every nation. It has a huge potential to make a real difference in responding to many of the most pressing global concerns. We expect this report to contribute to a better appreciation of this potential and to encourage greater strategic thinking and action to incorporate volunteerism into mainstream policies and programmes for peace and development.



CHAPTER 1

Volunteerism is universal

Volunteering is an expression of the individual's involvement in their community. Participation, trust, solidarity and reciprocity, grounded in a shared understanding and a sense of common obligations, are mutually reinforcing values at the heart of governance and good citizenship. Volunteering is not a nostalgic relic of the past. It is our first line of defence against social atomisation in a globalising world. Today, maybe more than ever before, caring and sharing are a necessity, not a charitable act.

UNV (2000, November)

VOLUNTEERISM AND TRADITIONAL VALUES

Volunteerism is one of the most basic of expressions of human behaviour and arises out of long-established ancient traditions of sharing and reciprocal exchanges. At its core are relationships and their potential to enhance the well-being of individuals and communities. Social cohesion and trust, for example, thrive where volunteerism is prevalent. Volunteerism is not only the backbone of civil society organizations and social and political movements, but also of many health,

education, housing and environmental programmes and a range of other civil society, public and private sector programmes worldwide. It is an integral part of every society.

At the heart of this report are values. Deeply ingrained in many communities around the world are systems characterized by solidarity, compassion, empathy and respect for others, often expressed through the giving of one's time. Volunteering also expresses the desire to act on one's feelings about justice and fairness in the face of inequality and to foster social harmony based on a shared interest in the well-being of one's community. In most languages, there are words to express the concept of volunteerism. Often inspired by indigenous traditions, they describe the principal ways by which people collectively apply their energy, talents, knowledge and other resources for mutual benefit. The act of volunteering is well known throughout the world, even if the word as such is not.

BOX 1.1 : Traditional forms of volunteerism

In many countries, volunteerism is deeply rooted in traditional beliefs and community practices. In Norway, for instance, the term *Dugnad* describes collective voluntary work: a traditional scheme of cooperation within a social group such as family, neighbourhood, community, geographical area, professional sector or nation. An example is outdoor spring cleaning in urban areas. *Dugnad* is about contributing time or money. It is also about creating a sense of community and building relationships between neighbours and community members.

In the Arab world, volunteerism has been associated with helping people in celebrations or at difficult times and is considered as a religious duty and charitable work. Volunteerism in Arabic is (*tatawa'a*) (تَوَاعُظَات) which means donating something. It also means to commit to a charitable activity that is not a religious requirement. It originates from the word (*al-taw'a*) (تَوَاعُظَات) which means compliance, smoothness and flexibility. The concept is taking new forms as a result of modernization and the development of governmental and non-governmental institutions.

In southern Africa, the concept of *Ubuntu* defines the individual in relation to others. In Nelson Mandela's words: "A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of *Ubuntu*, but it will have various aspects. *Ubuntu* does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?"

Sources: Haugestad. (2004, July 25-30); Leland. (2010, August 29); Mandela. (2006, June 1); Nita Kapoor, [Director General, Fredskorpset (FK Norway)], Personal Communication. (2011, July 27); Shatti. (2009).

For example, elements of the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, common throughout southern Africa, are found in many traditions around the world.¹ *Ubuntu* values the act of caring for one another's well-being in a spirit of mutual support. It is based on recognition of human worth, communal relationships, human values and respect for the natural environment and its resources.² As an official South African government paper explains it: "Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others. *Ubuntu* means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being."³

VOLUNTEERISM FLYING UNDER THE RADAR

Volunteerism still flies largely under the radar of policymakers concerned with peace and development, despite a decade's worth of intergovernmental legislation adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Yet volunteer engagement is so important that many societies would be hard-pressed to function without it. A telling illustration is provided by weather forecasts. We may not give much thought to how they are produced, yet they impact greatly on our lives, our health, our leisure and productive activities. Moreover, they reflect the efforts of people acting on a volunteer basis. This is because satellite and weather radar data are most useful when they are matched with what is happening on the ground. Volunteers measuring and reporting local precipitation data are essential to calibrate information collected through remote sensing and to make it more accurate. In many geographic areas, volunteers provide more data points on a daily basis than official observation networks.⁴ Similar examples of volunteerism flying under the radar can be found across the broad spectrum of United Nations work.

Volunteerism is universal and immense, representing an enormous reservoir of skills, energy and local knowledge for peace and development. Yet no comprehensive, comparative study of worldwide volunteerism exists. Most developed states have country studies of their own. Initial efforts to map volunteerism, largely supported by UNV, have been made in a limited number of developing countries. Among the challenges of researching volunteerism, three stand out. Firstly, there is no common agreement on what volunteerism is and how it is manifested; secondly, there are widespread misperceptions, contradicted by empirical data and anecdotal information, that obscure the nature and extent of volunteerism; and, thirdly, there is no agreed methodology for assessing the volume and value of volunteer action.

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERISM?

This question appears simple but scholarly literature and national legal frameworks reveal a multitude of definitions. In parts of the developing world, the term "volunteer" is a recent import from the North and refers essentially to expressions of international volunteering. However, this fails to appreciate that forms of mutual support and self-help, which are included in this report, also fall under the definition of volunteerism and deserve to be studied and recognized as such. Our working definition is that adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001.

Firstly, the action should be carried out voluntarily, according to an individual's own free will, and not as an obligation stipulated by law, contract or academic requirement. The decision to volunteer may be influenced by peer pressure, personal values or cultural or social obligations but the individual must be able to choose whether or not to act. "Mandatory volunteering," such as community service as an alternative to military duty or

Volunteerism still flies under the radar, yet many societies would be hard-pressed to function without it

BOX 1.2 : Volunteers in weather forecasts

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) chose "Volunteers for weather, climate and water" as the theme for World Meteorological Day 2001 to give broader recognition and greater prominence to the contribution of volunteers to meteorology and hydrology. Indeed, since the early days of these sciences, volunteers, both individuals and institutions such as schools and religious groups, are known to have assisted meteorologists and hydrologists, especially in their operational work and in the promotion of the sciences. In this field, volunteers are known for their perseverance and commitment and for sharing a fascination for meteorological and hydrological phenomena. In some countries, especially in the event of natural disasters, volunteers are often called upon to take measurements and communicate near-real-time data, such as on precipitation, temperature and river levels, for use in early warnings to the populations under threat. Volunteer storm spotters provide on-the-ground and up-to-date information that often complements the information provided by weather radars and satellites.

Source: WMO. (2001).

The three criteria of free will, non-pecuniary motivation, and benefit to others can be applied to any action to assess whether it is volunteerism

custodial sentences for criminal offenders, falls outside of this report. There is no value judgment here on such forms of service. Under certain circumstances, they can be positive, even sowing the seeds for future volunteering.

Secondly, the action should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward. Some reimbursement for expenses or stipend-type payments, or payments in kind such as provision of meals and transport, may be justified. Indeed, these kinds of payments are often regarded as good practice as they make opportunities for volunteer action more accessible and inclusive. Actions undertaken on full pay, such as when the volunteering takes place on company time, are also recognized as volunteerism, provided that the employee receives no additional financial incentive. It is understood that, in such instances, the company is voluntarily forgoing the employee's work time, an aspect of corporate social responsibility. The parameters of our definition also include full-time volunteer placement programmes, both domestic and international, which may pay allowances, normally calculated on the basis of local expenses. They take into account costs associated with living away from one's home environment and the absence of one's normal source of income.

Thirdly, the action should be for the common good. It should directly or indirectly benefit people outside the family or household or else benefit a cause, even though the person volunteering normally benefits as well. In many cultures, a volunteer is often described as "someone who works for community well-being".⁵ The notion of what constitutes the common good may be contentious. For example, when people participate in peaceful activism for or against animal research or the building of a dam, both sides seek what they consider beneficial outcomes. They are included in our definition. Activities involving, or inciting, violence that harm

society and actions not corresponding to the values attributed to volunteerism are not included in our definition.

The three criteria of free will, non-pecuniary motivation, and benefit to others can be applied to any action to assess whether it is volunteerism. The United Nations applies a "big tent" approach by recognizing the many and varied manifestations of volunteerism found in very different social and cultural settings. A further parameter of volunteerism which is sometimes mentioned is an element of organization.⁶ Most empirical studies are concerned with volunteering undertaken in the context of formal organizations. However, focusing only on this aspect of volunteerism overlooks a large amount of volunteer action. Our definition is broader. It includes many acts of volunteerism that take place outside of a formal context. This wide-ranging definition reflects what we strongly believe to be the universal nature of volunteerism.

There are, of course, countless individual acts of kindness that people undertake, such as taking care of a sick person, helping a neighbour's child with school work, or providing food and lodging to a stranger. We recognize that "volunteering" is often applied in general speech to acts where time, energy and skills have been expended freely and without a charge. Such acts are a vital part of caring and supportive societies in which high levels of well-being are recorded and most surveys indicate a positive correlation with volunteering. This report focuses largely on volunteer action undertaken on a regular basis. The main exception is the spontaneous and unorganized outpouring of volunteerism commonly encountered following natural disasters or other types of emergencies when individual acts coalesce into a critical mass with significant impact. These tend to be quite well documented.

HOW IS VOLUNTEERISM EXPRESSED?

The first, most commonly understood expression of volunteerism is formal service delivery, meaning the provision of a service to a third party. It normally takes place through existing structures encompassing a broad range of social, cultural and development fields. Such organizations, whether formally registered or not, can help to deliver a plethora of services, including the building of low cost houses; care and support for people with HIV/AIDS; the spread of information about using bednets against malaria; the teaching of basic literacy skills; and participation in school-parent associations. This form of volunteering may involve delivering a service or raising and administering funds to support the service. Usually there is an agreement about the terms of engagement between the person volunteering and the organization concerned which includes an element of training. Recognition schemes may exist as may some form of stipend or reimbursement of expenses.

A second form of volunteerism is mutual aid or self-help when people with shared needs, problems or interests join forces to address them. In the process, members of the group benefit. Examples are youth-led youth clubs, women's associations and natural resources user groups. In many cultures, entire communities engage in collective endeavours such as planting or harvesting, building flood defences, collecting firewood for communal use or organizing weddings or funerals. In some societies, volunteer activities are organized at community level. Mutuality also takes the form of self-help groups where people come together to address common concerns, often covering mental, emotional or physical problems. In addition to holding face-to-face meetings that provide moral support and offer space for the sharing of information, they can also be engaged in advocacy. This is often the case, for example, with HIV/AIDS support groups. Mutual aid is also found in professional affiliations such as trade

unions. While protecting the interests and promoting the welfare of members, they also address social concerns in the community. Similarly, volunteerism is found in professional and scientific bodies and business and trade associations. Such bodies normally have officers and governing bodies elected by the membership who carry out functions on a volunteer basis.

There are also many volunteer actions that can best be labelled as "civic participation". For example, there is advocacy and campaigning that aim to effect or prevent change. Civic partici-

BOX 1.3 : Teaching the poor in India

Teach India in 2008 was the largest literacy campaign ever led with volunteers teaching disadvantaged children and adults in the cities of India.

The initiative was launched by *The Times of India* newspaper with the support of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. Its aim was to facilitate progress towards achieving primary education for all, one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations.

The Times of India held a high-profile media campaign with the slogan: "What you teach here isn't something that will help a child get to the next class. But to a future free of poverty and deprivation".

Within days, the campaign mobilized active and retired professionals, men and women, as well as students who committed to three months of teaching with one of over 60 NGOs involved. Recruitment of volunteers began with the launch on 6 July. By the close of applications, 83,000 men and women had registered.

Piyush Dhawan, a student in business economics at Delhi University, joined a not-for-profit organization teaching underprivileged children in the capital. He says: "*Teach India provided a perfect platform for like-minded people to combat social and educational inequities within India. I had the chance to engage students at multiple levels in computer literacy and inculcating basic knowledge of English which also helped me grow personally. Teach India has the potential to catalyze and develop a nationwide movement which can provide opportunities to many of India's underprivileged children.*"

Sources: *itimes*. (2008); *Times of India*. (2008, July 6); UNV. (2008a).

BOX 1.4 : Farmers' cooperatives help Zambian farmers survive and thrive**Radio Script 8 (Excerpts):**

Presenter: The agricultural sector in Zambia is faced with several challenges, including the climate becoming harsher, destabilizing crop and livestock production . . . Farmers' cooperatives provide a crisis mitigation strategy in many rural communities in Zambia . . . Cooperatives have a voluntary and open membership; they are democratically controlled by their members; their members participate economically in their activities; they are independent of control by government or industry; they offer education, training and information to members; and they are concerned with their local community.

Why did you form the Nakabu Cooperative?

Farmer: *In 2006, I cultivated two hectares of land and planted maize with a view to selling it to sustain my family. But, unfortunately, that year Mumbwa was hit with a drought and I ended up harvesting very little, too little to even eat at home, let alone to sell and get my six children to school. Life became difficult for me and my family.*

I sat down with four of my friends who were also farmers in my area and we discussed the idea of forming a farmers' cooperative in order to do farming seriously and find ways to survive.

Presenter: How many members did you have at first?

Farmer: *There were a total of 49 members . . . All members have an equal vote – one member, one vote, so everyone is equal in the cooperative. After putting our money together, we bought maize from farmers in nearby villages then travelled to Lusaka and sold the maize to a milling company. It was easy for us to sell the maize because we were a group and had a large volume when we combined our harvests.*

Presenter: What differences have you seen in your lives from the time you started this cooperative?

Farmer: *There has been a lot of progress in my life as an individual as well as in the lives of other members. Speaking for myself, all my six children are in school now.*

...

There are so many cooperatives with different skills. We are visiting each other to learn from one another . . . We have learned new techniques to reduce damage from flooding and to conserve water in times of drought.

Nakabu Cooperative is doing fine, even with all the challenges in the agricultural sector in this country, because we are united and because we work together to secure the future of our families.

Source: Banda. (2008).

pation includes local, small-scale campaigns of limited duration. Examples might include lobbying local authorities to provide street lighting, waste disposal or safe drinking water or campaigning to prevent a private company from building a pollution-spewing processing plant in the vicinity.

In other cases, small-scale volunteer action can build momentum and blossom into na-

tional campaigns such as the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa or the Chipko movement in India. The latter began in the 1970s with a small group of peasant women in the Himalayas of Uttarakhand fighting for the protection of their forest. It grew into a national movement that succeeded in having bans imposed on tree felling in many parts of the country.⁷ Most recently, some Arab states have seen large numbers of pro-

testers actively seeking democratic change through street demonstrations and other forms of protest. Social movements can go global when a constellation of organizations, campaigns, networks and individuals coalesces around major social issues such as advocating for the rights of women or indigenous people or for eliminating land mines. In all of these cases, people provide the hands-on support, enthusiasm and ethos that transform the status quo. In addition to the direct benefits of such volunteerism, there are more intangible benefits for society. Volunteer action gives people a sense of controlling aspects of their lives about which they feel strongly.

Volunteerism as an expression of civic participation is often associated with religion which, like volunteerism, is strongly value-based. All major religions acknowledge the benefits of giving in terms of justice, humanity and kindness, as well as self-fulfilment. Studies show that religious people are, generally speaking, more engaged than non-religious people.⁸ For most religions, community work is a feature of their congregations, either in helping with worship-related activities or encouraging members to use their knowledge, skills and energy to benefit the larger community. The kind of volunteer action promoted can range from direct services to disadvantaged people, education and health services, supporting community based activities such as neighbourhood associations, and advocacy for changing social situations in areas such as the environment and civil rights.⁹ In Latin America, for example, churches play a significant role in supporting volunteer-based programmes and organizations that promote social and economic development. They provide volunteers with a strong sense of community belonging.¹⁰

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) involve large numbers of volunteers. Many focus on people living in extreme poverty such as the Chilean Hogar de Cristo, a Jesuit organization that pro-

BOX 1.5 : Arab Spring – Egypt in Colors

After 25 January 2011, a day of peaceful protests by hundreds in Cairo, five fine art graduates decided to speak to the crowd in their own language: art.

On 11 February, the five young women created simple graffiti on a wall with motivational messages: "With science and hard work, nations progress", "Tafa'al" (be optimistic). Inspired by the positive response to their initiative, the young women realized that they could reach out to the Egyptian community with a creative message to make a difference in their day using art and colour in the streets.

The young artists decided to paint a huge wall in Maadi, a suburb of Cairo. They announced it on Twitter and Facebook, inviting people to join them. They were surprised to find enthusiastic engagement from the local community. Eighty-five volunteers joined them in painting, including dozens of interested kids. Community members not only witnessed the walls taking on bright new colours, they also engaged in the process by volunteering to clean the area.

Thrilled by this experience, the young women decided to create a group and called it "Egypt in Colors". The group now has 25 young members, women and men, with one thing in common: their love of Egypt and art. They have moved on to projects in different schools and communities of Cairo and aim to take their inspirational and motivational messages across Egypt.

Source: Teen Stuff magazine. (2011, August).

motes the social inclusion of the poor.¹¹ In Thailand, the Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS mobilizes volunteers from Buddhist, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant communities across the country to organize home-based care activities for people with AIDS living in remote areas.¹² International FBOs such as World Vision and Islamic Relief involve significant numbers of volunteers. Caritas, with its focus on reducing poverty and injustice, helps some 24 million people a year with 440,000 paid staff and around 625,000 volunteers worldwide.¹³

According to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, FBOs are the critical providers of rural health care and care of or-

A proper understanding of the universality of volunteerism requires that the fog enveloping volunteer action be dispersed to reveal the true extent of its contours

phans in many parts of the developing world: "A critical component of the world's response to these diseases is the work of faith-based organizations (FBOs). Historically, FBOs have been at the forefront of the fight against disease in the developing world. They provide life-changing prevention, treatment and support to those who need it the most. This is particularly relevant in rural and isolated areas around the world, where the work of FBOs directly impacts the lives of millions of children and families."¹⁴

The many and varied categorizations of volunteerism pose serious challenges for assessing the size and extent of volunteerism and contribute to the misperceptions that surround volunteering. They do, however, reflect the richness and very broad based nature of volunteer action. "Words such as 'volunteering' are folk concepts as well as scientific concepts ... Often their meaning is contested. People do not agree on what should count as volunteering. Sometimes they use words like 'volunteering' as labels to pin on people and their actions in order to denigrate them; at other times, these same words are used to indicate approval."¹⁵ Taken together, the perceptions described fall into what has been termed the "dominant paradigm"¹⁶ of volunteerism. A proper understanding of the universality of volunteerism requires that the fog enveloping volunteer action be dispersed to reveal the true extent of its contours. Once the scale of volunteerism is truly appreciated, it will be possible to move on to examine its contributions to global issues.

The remainder of this report uses the United Nations framework of free will, non-pecuniary motivations and benefit to others as the defining parameters of volunteerism. Formal service delivery, mutual aid and self-help, and civic participation are used to define its expressions. However, it is important to note that the expression of volunteerism is also influenced by local cultural and social circumstances.

COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT VOLUNTEERISM

There are a number of misperceptions that cloud a proper understanding of the universality of volunteering, despite being largely contradicted by a growing body of empirical and anecdotal evidence. These illusions need to be erased in order to reveal the true extent of volunteerism and make it possible to analyze its contributions to global issues.

Misperception 1: Volunteering occurs only through legally recognized, formal and structured NGOs, usually in developed countries, with some type of agreement between the volunteer and the organization. As such organizations are predominantly located in developed countries, this contributes to the notion that volunteerism is found largely in such countries. In reality, much of the volunteerism described in this report takes place through small local groups, clubs and associations, which are the bedrock of a civil society in industrialized, as well as developing, countries. Furthermore, empirical evidence in developing countries paints a different picture. To cite just one example, research from Mexico found that most volunteer activity there happens outside of formal organizations. This is because legal and fiscal circumstances in Mexico do not encourage the creation of formal civil society organizations. Moreover, there is a limited culture of participation in formal groups.¹⁷

Misperception 2: Volunteerism takes place only in the civil society sector. This is false. Volunteer action is universal; it does not happen exclusively in one "sector" but rather it permeates every aspect of life. Many public sector services, for example, rely on volunteers: schools and hospital care services, neighbourhood policing, coastguards and fire services all rely on volunteers. Volunteerism is also found in nationwide government social programmes in such fields as immunization and literacy. Since 1988, the

Global Polio Eradication Initiative, spearheaded by national governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and Rotary International, has immunized more than 2.5 billion children against polio, thanks to the unprecedented cooperation of more than 200 countries and 20 million, mostly local, volunteers, backed by an international investment of over 8 billion US dollars. By 2006, only four countries remained in which polio transmission had not been halted and annual case numbers had decreased by over 99 per cent.¹⁸

Moreover, the private sector's volunteer engagement has grown steadily since the mid-1990s, much of it under the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The sector employs a significant proportion of the world's population, many of whom volunteer. Volunteerism is an important expression of CSR with over 90 per cent of Fortune 500 companies having formal employee volunteer and giving programmes.¹⁹

Misperception 3: Volunteerism is the preserve of the well-off and well-educated, those who have disposable time and income. In fact, an expanding body of empirical research indicates that volunteerism is prevalent among the income poor who undertake voluntary work to benefit themselves and their communities. Their assets, including local knowledge, skills, labour and social networks often play a critical role in surviving stresses and shocks, as discussed in Chapter 4 on Volunteerism and Sustainable Livelihoods.

A World Bank study focusing on the poorest of the poor highlighted the need to uncover "existing networks of solidarity" and stressed that the "mobilization of local communities often begins with the detection of local groups such as community centers."²¹ Another study from the United States on transforming distressed, low income neighbourhoods concluded: "Among the most undervalued of [community] assets are the

BOX 1.6 : Public and community partnership against poverty and tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease associated with poverty and low incomes. In Karakalpakstan, a semi-autonomous region of Uzbekistan, the disease has reached epidemic proportions and exacerbates poverty there. The Uzbek health ministry is tackling the high incidence of poverty and tuberculosis together with the United Nations, local civil society, district government and the Mahalla, traditional local volunteering committees which support welfare and improve livelihood. Since 1994, the Mahalla has been given ever more responsibility for the channelling of social assistance from Central Government. Through the Mahalla Committees and local authorities, 32 Community Volunteer Trainers were trained. They in turn recruited and trained 30 more volunteers. After three training cycles, there are close to 3000 volunteers raising awareness on TB, assisting in enhancing health-care systems and water supply, supporting successful treatment of TB patients and supporting household-based income generation activities among TB patients and their immediate family.

"Thanks to the Community Volunteers and their hard work, now more people are coming to see doctors and visiting them in time which is extremely important in treating TB" (N Orazimbetova, 2011).

Sources: UNDP. (2011); Nesibe Orazimbetova [Chief Doctor, Karauzyak district], Speech at the opening ceremony of TB dispensary. (2011, January 14).

naturally occurring networks through which neighbors and residents volunteer to address and resolve common problems. Strategic attention to, and more intentional nurturing and use of, these networks could be a major contribution to sustainable, resident-driven community transformation."²²

Misperception 4: Volunteerism is the domain of amateurs who are unskilled and inexperienced. This misunderstanding arises

BOX 1.7 : African philanthropy – a strong tradition

African philanthropy isn't something that needs to be introduced by anybody because Africans have strong traditions of self-help, self-support, voluntary institutions, and rotation credit and associations like South African stokvels. But, we haven't been able to tap into this tradition and don't usually think of its various expressions as development tools.²⁰

Source: Wilkinson-Maposa, Fowler, Oliver-Evans & Mulenga. (2005).

from the perception that professionalism, both in knowledge and behaviour, is exclusively associated with a paid job. It may also be influenced by the impression that most volunteers are young people. Throughout this report there are references to professionally qualified women and men motivated by the values that drive volunteerism. They range from lawyers working pro bono to community fire fighters to medical doctors, who chose to bring their know-how and many years of experience to volunteer action.

Misperception 5: Women make up the bulk of volunteers. Wrong again. While studies indicate that women are slightly more likely to volunteer, men and women volunteer for about the same number of hours. The perceived predominance of women in volunteering stems in part from the association with social service provision and health care in particular. The feminist movement in the 1970s depicted volunteering as an extension of women's domestic work outside the home.²³ While women are predominant in

areas such as volunteer care of children and older persons and hospice work, men appear to dominate in sports, the environment, fire and sea rescue.²⁴

A more cogent case can be made that volunteering reinforces gender roles and that women's volunteer work occurs in areas which, in the paid labour market, are assigned lower status. Men's volunteer work is typically in the "public domain", in civic and professional activities including serving on the boards of organizations. Conversely, women volunteers are found in the "private domain", helping others in need. A study of women volunteer health workers in Lima, Peru, demonstrated how health-care work was viewed as an extension of their maternal role. A study from South Africa and Zimbabwe of women caregivers in HIV/AIDS came to a similar conclusion.²⁵ Among activists, men are more involved in national campaigning while women are more likely to participate in local campaigns.²⁶ The United Nations recognized the need to avoid gender stereotyping when it highlighted the need to ensure "that opportunities for volunteering in all sectors are open both to women and men, given their different levels of participation in different areas."²⁷

BOX 1.8 : From house building to active citizenship

In 1997, a group of Chilean young people concerned with extreme poverty in their country set out to build 350 basic houses for families living in slums. The programme has since expanded to 19 countries in Latin America and mobilizes more than 50,000 young volunteers every year between the ages of 17 and 28. They have not only improved the housing situation of thousands of families in the region. Through direct contact with poverty, the experience has changed the way that they see their country. They are now raising awareness about poverty through campaigns and lobbying for adequate housing for all. From building houses, young volunteers become active citizens and leaders in their communities.

"As a volunteer, I understood that each and every one has an important role to play to fight poverty. We come together as, for us, there is no other way to denounce poverty if this is not through our collective involvement. Ansanm nou kapab (Together we can)"

Donald, volunteer from Un Techo in Haiti.

Source: J. Serani, [Director Mexico and Caribbean Region, Un Techo para mi País], Personal Communication. (2011, July 21).

Misperception 6: Young people do not volunteer. On the contrary, young people are not a passive group waiting for resources and opportunities to be handed to them. They are actively engaged in the development of their societies in a vast range of actions. One well-known example from Latin America is the organization Un Techo para mi País (A Roof for my Country).

It is also the case, however, that many young people find participating through formal organizations less appealing than in the past. These opportunities are themselves decreasing as the global economy and social and political institutions undergo major change.²⁸ However, the commitment of young people to civic engagement remains strong even though there

appears to be a shift towards participation in non-formal, and less-structured, situations. For young people, political and social activism that offers informal, non-hierarchical ways to engage is more appealing. An example is the Ukraine youth-led “Irpinskyi velorukh” (Irpın town movement for cycling). This is an informal group promoting cycling and a car-free lifestyle which organizes annual Car-free Day events in the community. In 2009, 56 people participated. Twenty media covered it and local officials and community members participated in the music, speeches, poster making, cycling parade and cross-country competition.²⁹

Misperception 7: Volunteering takes place face-to-face. Significant new developments in digital technology mean that volunteerism is not limited to activities that entail face-to-face contact. The new technologies with which people connect are possibly the most significant development in volunteering. Rapidly evolving mobile phone technologies and the spread of the Internet are enabling larger numbers of people from broader cross-sections of the population to engage on a volunteer basis. As such, these technologies are contributing to its universal nature. This is discussed in Chapter 3.

Misperception 8: Volunteerism should be off-limits for state intervention. This view is far less widespread than a decade ago, as is evident by the growing number of policies and laws adopted by governments, especially since 2001. Most are aimed at encouraging volunteer action by citizens and/or safeguarding the rights of volunteers. However, there are instances of states trying to control volunteer action and use it for their own political purposes. Volunteerism, for example, can be a means of compensating for insufficient services, making up for the inability of the state to deliver services. These cases need to be monitored and exposed wherever they arise.

Policies can inadvertently stifle the driving forces behind volunteerism. Governments

are well-placed to contribute to an environment in which all types of volunteerism can flourish. However, the intention is certainly not to pursue the notion of the self-reliant community with the state neglecting its responsibilities for ensuring that the basic needs of citizens are met. The challenge is how to integrate volunteer action by citizens with action taken by governments and other stakeholders in a mutually reinforcing way, emphasizing cooperation and complementarity. Ultimately, this can increase the efficiency and outreach of government programmes while strengthening people’s confidence in their abilities to affect the well-being of their communities.

BOX 1.9 : Promoting laws and policies that support volunteerism

South Korea’s first national law on volunteering, the Basic Law on Promoting Volunteer Services (2006), established the National Committee on Volunteer Promotion. This committee comprises government and civil society representatives and has been working to encourage public participation in volunteering.

Through the law, national and local governments are mandated to ensure that voluntary service is performed in a safe environment, and that the government provides insurance to guarantee against physical and economic injury to volunteers.

Volunteering continues to grow in the Republic of Korea, also promoted through the government commitment to support volunteers. Of particular note was the extensive citizen involvement in cleaning up oil spills in Taean County on the west coast of the country in 2007.

In July 2008, the Hyundai KIA Automotive Group founded a volunteer organization, Happy Move Global Youth Volunteers. Since then, the organization has been sending around 1000 Korean university students every year to contribute to humanitarian, cultural and other volunteer efforts in India, Brazil, China, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Turkey and Thailand. This programme helps young Koreans to understand the true meaning of volunteer work and develop their own identity with first-hand experience of a new culture and close cooperation with the people.

Sources: The International Centre for Not-for-profit Law. (2010); UNV. (2009).

With this first SWVR, we hope to clarify views as to what volunteerism is and what it achieves, in keeping with realities on the ground

Misperception 9: Volunteerism is free. There is an old adage that while volunteers are not paid, they do not work for nothing. Applied to more formal types of volunteering, this relates to infrastructure required to ensure effective contributions. It includes the establishment and running of volunteer centres, volunteer management, training and recognition, and costs associated with the proper functioning of volunteers such as transportation, meals and stipends. In terms of governments, this might include the establishment of appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks, national volunteer corps, and youth and older persons volunteer schemes.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Misperceptions obscure the universality of the values and actions associated with volunteerism. They are obstacles to understanding

the breadth and depth of volunteer action around the world. With this first SWVR, we hope to clarify views as to what volunteerism is and what it achieves, in keeping with realities on the ground.

Research on the topic is at an early stage and needs to be intensified. Governments clearly have a role in encouraging more empirical study that will result in a more accurate picture of the universal nature of volunteerism. The academic community has to question fundamental assumptions about volunteer action. The United Nations system and other development actors, including civil society, have a responsibility to ensure that this research reaches all of the stakeholders. Establishing robust data on volunteerism is the surest route to develop strategies which take into account the powerful and universal force that volunteerism represents.

2

CHAPTER 2

Taking the measure of volunteering

If you can't count it, it doesn't count.
Anon.

WHY TAKE THE MEASURE OF VOLUNTEERISM?

The sheer size of the worldwide contributions of volunteerism calls for some measure of its magnitude. This is no different from other areas of human endeavour that play important roles in the functioning of societies. Interest in understanding the scale of volunteerism has grown in recent years, as evidenced by various studies at national, regional and global level.

In this chapter, we attempt to take the measure of volunteerism, looking also beyond the numbers. Calculating the dimensions and value of volunteerism, including economic value, is obviously important. Yet numbers are not the whole story. Some argue that putting a figure on volunteering detracts from its intrinsic values in terms of its impact on communities and causes and on the volunteers themselves. Others would say that the main contribution of volunteerism, its true value, lies in creating harmonious societies marked by high levels of social cohesion

and well-being, also factors which are very hard to quantify.

The human values that reside in people and communities run throughout this report. Better methods need to be found to recognize these values. There are sound reasons to measure volunteerism, the actions it inspires and the economic benefits derived from those actions. The principal arguments in favour of measuring volunteerism are considered below.

It is important for the volunteers themselves that the impact of their actions be recognized. Documenting the time and efforts expended by many millions of volunteers helps to provide recognition and to stimulate the desire to engage. In the process, others may be motivated to participate when they see the contribution of volunteer action and appreciate that volunteering is a normal part of civic engagement.

For volunteer involving organizations, measuring helps them to gain new perspectives on their programmes. Moreover, with facts and figures at hand they can enhance their public relations efforts, increase accountability, expand their options for resource mobilization, and provide volunteers with an overall picture of the sum total of their efforts.

On another level, if national governments are to take volunteering into account in national policy, they have to be convinced of its value, including its economic value. Too often, governments are unaware of the extent of volunteering, the different segments of society that it includes, and the value it creates. Once they are convinced of the benefit of factoring volunteerism into decision-making, governments need reliable data to develop appropriate strategies. This ensures that this resource is properly nurtured and harnessed for the overall well-being of the country.

BOX 2.1 : Volunteer values

Volunteers are essential to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IFRC). But exactly how many volunteers are there and how much value do they offer? A 2011 IFRC study provides answers. Around 13.1 million active Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers donated nearly 6 billion US dollars worth of services that reached about 30 million people in 2009. Volunteers extend the IFRC paid workforce by a global average of 20 volunteers to every paid staff member. In sub-Saharan Africa it is 327 volunteers for every staff member; in South East Asia, 432 volunteers to one staff member; while the lowest ratio is in the United States and Canada with 11 volunteers to one staff member.

The survey, based on figures from 107 National Societies, not only provides the value and numbers behind the volunteering contingent but also describes the many social contributions that they make in their communities in the fields of health, poverty reduction and response to emergencies.

Source: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). (2011).

BOX 2.2 : Using community calendars to measure the value of volunteering

Municipal expenditure, provincial government allocation, corporate social investment and other forms of development assistance are captured in numbers and financial records. However, there are no figures that assign a value to the contributions that citizens make to local initiatives. The many ways in which community members participate, such as mothers' unions, men's associations and youth clubs, are such a routine part of people's daily lives that they tend to overlook the benefits that they bring to the development of their communities. One approach to creating awareness in communities of the value added by such volunteer action is to use community calendars. To empower a community to recognize its own contributions, an action research study in Jansenville, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, mapped the amount of volunteer time, skills, goods in-kind and money that community-based, non-governmental and faith-based organizations received from members in the community.

These contributions were added up and costed at financial values that the participating organizations felt reasonable. The results translated into a total contribution of 19 years and eight months of unpaid labour a year. In a community where the local government estimates that 60 per cent of families live in poverty, the total contribution of volunteering was estimated to have a value of 53,000 US dollars generated by 4343 people across 378 households. This valuing of community assets has been eye opening, motivating and inspiring to participants, encouraging them to build on their "investment". *"Funders want to know that we will still be there after their money is finished. Our members fill our bucket, it shows their sustainability and that they can stand on their own,"* says Notizi Vanda, Director and founding member of the Jansenville Development Forum.

Source: Wilkinson-Maposa. (2009).

The international community has recognized the need for governments to "establish the economic value of volunteering to help to highlight one important aspect of its overall contribution to society and thereby assist in the development of informed policies."¹ However, we firmly believe that taking the measure of volunteerism should be more than computing bottom-line economic value and "number crunching". In 2008, the General Assembly of the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) expressed it precisely: "Measuring and presenting the economic value can be a good way of winning recognition for volunteering especially with policy makers. But it has to be employed cautiously and together with other measurement tools for the so far 'immeasurable impacts' of volunteering, such as on social capital, social cohesion, personal development and empowerment. Such measurement tools should be developed in order to enable the description of the full picture of volunteering and its true value."²

DIVERSE MEASURES OF VOLUNTEERING

Recent country-level studies, largely in developed countries, of the size and composition of volunteering have proven a solid basis for discussions of many aspects of volunteerism. For example, the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, conducted by Statistics Canada, recorded a total of 2.1 billion volunteer hours with both an increase in the number of volunteers (5.7%) and volunteer hours (4.2%) from 2004.³ In 2004, in the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor indicated that 62.8 million people had volunteered for an organization at least once in the previous 12 months. The Bureau of Statistics of Australia found that, in 2007, 5.2 million people volunteered for a sum of 713 million hours of work, the equivalent to 14.6 billion Australian dollars of paid work time. The study showed that 34 per cent of the adult population volunteered (36 per cent of women and 32 per cent of men).

Beyond economic data, there is ever more research into the nature and motivations of volunteers. These include studies that look at student volunteering in 12 countries;⁴ senior well-being in Europe;⁵ people in Israel on welfare benefits who volunteer;⁶ the role of religious organizations in promoting volunteerism in Latin America;⁷ and volunteerism policies and legislation globally.⁸

In 2006 at the Fifth African Development Forum, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, a study entitled *Youth Volunteering for Development: Africa in the 21st Century*⁹ was presented. The research, covering nine countries, showed how young people's capacities develop when they volunteer. They become active development agents in their communities. Moreover, it emphasized how volunteer programmes can be linked to policy frameworks on a sustainable basis. The outcome statement declared: "It is essential, therefore, that African governments, working with their development partners, foster the spirit of volunteerism among young people."¹⁰ In 2010 and 2011, both the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) launched regional youth volunteer corps to contribute to peace and development in their regions.

BOX 2.3 : Beyond the economic value

The 2010 National Survey of Volunteering conducted by peak-body Volunteering Australia, found that 83 per cent of volunteers say that volunteerism has increased their sense of belonging to their community. The survey highlights the important role that volunteering plays in providing opportunities for people to learn with 26 per cent saying the training received as part of their volunteer work has helped them to acquire an accreditation/qualification. The survey also found that volunteerism plays an important role in social inclusion in Australian society. The survey found that volunteering can help reduce feelings of personal isolation, offer people skills and social contacts, support a greater sense of self-worth and challenge stereotypes about different groups.

Source: ProBono News (2010).

In 2010, the International FORUM on Development Service mapped international volunteerism in 20 countries in Asia. It found that, when compared to other locations, volunteers

BOX 2.4 : African Union youth volunteers

"The youth should be the primary target of investment initiatives in Africa because, in a world in which skills and expertise are becoming increasingly indispensable, the youth constitute a huge asset for Africa."

In December 2010, the first group of African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) members concluded intensive pre-deployment orientation training in Obudu, Nigeria. The AU-YVC is a development programme that recruits and works with youth volunteers in all 53 countries in Africa. The initiative, a product of the African Youth Charter, the Fifth Africa Development Forum and the African Union, promotes volunteering to address poverty, weak professional and leadership development and slow development of a Pan-Africanist orientation, and to promote a better socio-economic climate. It aspires to improve the status of young people in Africa as key participants in the delivery of Africa's human development targets and goals. The 60 volunteers serve across the continent, sharing expertise in areas including education and ICT, gender and development, advocacy and communication, post conflict reconstruction and peace building, health and population, infrastructure and energy, and agriculture and economy. Together, these volunteers will share skills, creativity and learning to promote the spirit of service to Africa, their countries and communities, while developing leadership skills.

Source: African Union. (2010, April).

in Asia were principally concerned with addressing development issues, including poverty alleviation and the MDGs. In South and South-East Asia, there was a tendency towards South-to-South volunteering with developing country volunteers largely serving in other developing countries of the region. The study identified new ways to boost volunteering in Asia. These included targeting the Asian diaspora and linking with national volunteers to increase the effectiveness of international volunteers. The research also found close linkages with the state in public-private partnerships and in state-supported NGOs. Two further trends in Asia were international volunteer service as a form of corporate social responsibility, especially short-term corporate volunteering, and the growing influence of the Internet.¹¹

A study in Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe between 2005 and 2007 confirmed the challenges of volunteerism research in the South, namely poorly documented experiences, lack of academic research and limited library collections.¹² In the absence of comprehensive studies of the scope and impact of volunteerism, the literature available was largely that produced by NGOs and international volunteer organizations and focused on the impact of specific programmes on beneficiaries and their communities. There are clear limits, however, on the extent to which the findings of small-scale research at local level can be extrapolated to reflect the situation at the national level.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER STUDIES

The regular national surveys on volunteering and giving in Canada, the United States and Australia provide detailed data that demonstrate the relevance of ongoing measuring of volunteering. In 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General noted 15 country specific studies in developing countries.¹³ In 2010, UNV identified 14 new developing country studies and reports on volunteerism.¹⁴ These are generally one-off studies which aim to

increase public recognition and awareness of volunteerism and its contributions and to assess volunteering as a part of community needs. Such studies also perform resource mapping in support of national development planning and programming.

BOX 2.5 : First-ever volunteerism survey in Bangladesh

In 2010 the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) conducted a comprehensive national survey on volunteerism, the first of its kind ever carried out in the country. The survey addressed rural and urban volunteering; age, gender and education level of volunteers; volunteering rates; formal organizational and non-organizational volunteering; annual volunteering hours; and monetary valuations.

The results were discussed at the National Volunteering Conference in Dhaka in July 2011. The main recommendation was the establishment of a National Volunteer Agency responsible for planning, guiding and managing all volunteer activities in the country. Its purpose will be to enhance the contribution of volunteerism to individual and social welfare and well-being in Bangladesh.

The household labour-based survey revealed that a total of 16,586,000 people over 15 years of age volunteered in 2010. The survey estimated the contribution of volunteering to the Bangladesh economy in 2010 at approximately 1.66 billion US dollars. The findings also showed that the economic value of volunteering in 2009-2010 was equivalent to 1.7 per cent of GDP.

Nearly 80 per cent of volunteering in Bangladesh is conducted outside formal organizations. Mostly it takes the form of informal, spontaneous and sporadic help by individuals or groups. Volunteering by men constitutes 76.3 per cent with women at only 23.7 per cent. This, however, could well be an underestimate since the survey questioned heads of households who are usually men.

The National Volunteering Conference strongly recommended that the BBS undertake a follow-up qualitative survey to substantiate the results in question. It also called for a more broad-based survey for further examination of regional and gender differences in volunteering and to provide information on reasons for, and barriers to, volunteering.

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2011, July).

PURSuing A GLOBAL MEASURE: HIGHLIGHTING INTERNATIONAL MEASURING INITIATIVES

Notwithstanding these positive developments, few countries have taken on the task of systematically and recurrently measuring volunteerism with a view to incorporating results into policy. This is partly due to the absence of internationally recognized standards for defining and measuring volunteering. This limits comparisons between countries based on official statistics. However, a number of independent measuring initiatives are under way which offer a global perspective of volunteerism.

Few countries have taken on the task of systematically and recurrently measuring volunteerism with a view to incorporating results into policy

In a recent effort to devise a comprehensive measurement of volunteerism, the **European Commission (EC)** commissioned a **study** as part of the European Year of Volunteers 2011. The aim of the study was to help it to consider ways in which the voluntary sector could be further promoted and to examine how volunteering could help the European Union to achieve its wider strategic objectives.¹⁵ The intention was to aggregate national data on volunteerism. However, a review of national and regional studies, surveys, reports, and the views of key stakeholders on volunteering in each EU Member State revealed considerable discrepancies. These prevented the drawing up of a statistically accurate comparison across the European Union. Some of the challenges and lessons related to this study are described below as they represent a microcosm of the state of measuring volunteerism.

- *Complexity of the institutional landscape:* responsibility for country data on volunteerism was not coordinated by one public body. Rather, it was managed by different ministries on a "sector-by-sector" basis and sometimes supported by various sector-specific umbrella voluntary organizations. "In practice this means that ministries dealing with issues such as justice, educa-

tion, finance, sport, health and social affairs, and interior and foreign affairs can all be involved in volunteering and it was not possible within the scope of this study to consult every single ministry."¹⁶

- *Difficulties in comparative quantitative analysis:* analyzing quantitative information on the number and profile of volunteers was challenging because national studies were conducted at different times, using different definitions, methodologies, survey samples and target groups, and focusing on different types of volunteering. The finding that an estimated 92 to 94 million adults volunteer in the EU, around 22 per cent of Europeans over 15 years of age, with most volunteers aged 30 to 50 years "should be seen as indicative only."¹⁷

- *Limited statistics on voluntary organizations:* many EU countries have a national registry of not-for-profit associations or organizations. This is normally managed by a public body and updated regularly. This is a valuable data source when associations are obliged to register with the relevant public organization. Weaknesses include the fact that databases do not distinguish between associations relying entirely on paid staff and those fully or partly dependent on volunteers and that organizations may not necessarily give notice if they cease activities. A further weakness is that in some countries, registration is not compulsory and voluntary organizations have no incentive to register.

- *Lack of consensus on economic data:* voluntary organizations are developing tools and instruments to monitor the economic value of their volunteers' contributions. However, national statistical offices vary greatly in terms of data collected and their interest in measuring the economic value of volunteering. Efforts are hampered by the aforementioned difficulties arising from the inconsistency in approaches to quantifying

volunteer numbers, time dedicated and activities undertaken. Where calculations have been made, there is usually no consensus on estimated economic value due to differing ways of valuing volunteer work. Finally, the study does not use figures on monetary value provided by Member States. Instead, it uses gross estimates of the economic value of volunteering based on the common replacement cost method for all countries.¹⁸

- *Social and cultural impacts of volunteering:* national reports highlighted many social, economic and cultural benefits beyond economic value. “However, in practice benefits often vary considerably between countries as well as between different volunteers, local communities and amongst the direct beneficiaries of voluntary activities and services.”¹⁹ Impacts relating to key EU objectives in the areas of social inclusion and employment, education and training, active citizenship and sports are identified but the data are overwhelmingly qualitative.

In summarizing the current situation, not only for national studies but also for the measuring of volunteering in general, the Report states: “The extent to which each national report relies on primary and secondary data sources varies, depending on the availability of data and reports, the number of stakeholders that could be consulted and the specific context of each country.”²⁰

The methodological challenges encountered by the EC are even more pronounced for the developing world where statistical data are at times less comprehensive. Nevertheless, it remains essential to attempt to reach an understanding of the size and extent of volunteering. We shall refer briefly to four attempts that cover both industrialized and developing countries: the Gallup World Poll, the World Values Survey,²¹ the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, and

the CIVICUS Civil Society Index. All four employ different measurement approaches and definitions of volunteerism. Unsurprisingly, they produce very different findings.

The Gallup World Poll and the World Values Survey are cross-country population surveys that seek to profile behaviours and opinions of people through nationally representative samples. Given the broad range of topics covered, few questions can relate to volunteering. Additionally, given the diversity of terminology and understanding of volunteerism, certain questions are open to different interpretations by respondents.²² Nevertheless, the surveys have wide global reach and can be regularly repeated to provide longitudinal trends as well as comparative data.

The **Gallup World Poll** (GWP)²³ asks the following questions related to volunteering:

In the past month have you done any of the following?

How about volunteered your time to an organization?

How about helped a stranger or somebody you didn't know who needed help?

The first is an open-ended question about organization-related volunteering which assumes a consistent understanding of the term. The GWP found that 16 per cent of adults worldwide volunteered their time to an organization. People in North America, Australia and New Zealand were the most likely to volunteer, followed by those in South-East Asia (specifically Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines) and Africa. The lowest levels of volunteerism were in the Middle East, North Africa and East Asia, i.e. China, Japan and South Korea. The second question refers to actions outside an organization. As such, it may or may not be measuring “volunteering”, as defined in this report,

It remains essential to attempt to reach an understanding of the size and extent of volunteering

depending on the extent and nature of an individual's involvement.

The **World Values Survey** (WVS)²⁴ found that people in East Asia were most likely to report doing "unpaid voluntary work", followed by people in Africa, North America and the Pacific region. The lowest levels of voluntary work were found in Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The **Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project** (CNP)²⁵ provides a common survey form to participating countries with suggested questions and examples of the kinds of activity about which respondents would be asked.

Think about the past 3 months. During that time period, did you help, work or provide any service or assistance to anyone outside your family or household without receiving compensation?

Respondents who answered "no" were then prompted to think broadly about such activities even if they thought it "natural that everyone would do such a thing in a similar situation." While this also applies to formal types of volunteerism, it is especially relevant for the informal types often so embedded in cultures and traditions that they may not even be considered volunteering. This makes the task of measuring more challenging.

The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project estimates that, between 1995 and 2000, the number of volunteers contributing through voluntary organizations in 36 countries, taken together, would make the ninth largest country in the world in terms of population (see Figure 2.1).

In those same 36 countries, volunteers comprised 44 per cent of the work force of civil society organizations representing the equivalent of 20.8 million full-time workers. Using a "replacement cost" approach, CNP

FIGURE 2.1: If volunteers were a nation

1. China	1,306 million
2. India	1,094 million
3. United States	296 million
4. Indonesia	229 million
5. Brazil	186 million
6. Pakistan	158 million
7. Bangladesh	144 million
8. Russia	143 million
9. "Volunteer Land"	ca. 140 million
10. Nigeria	129 million
11. Japan	128 million

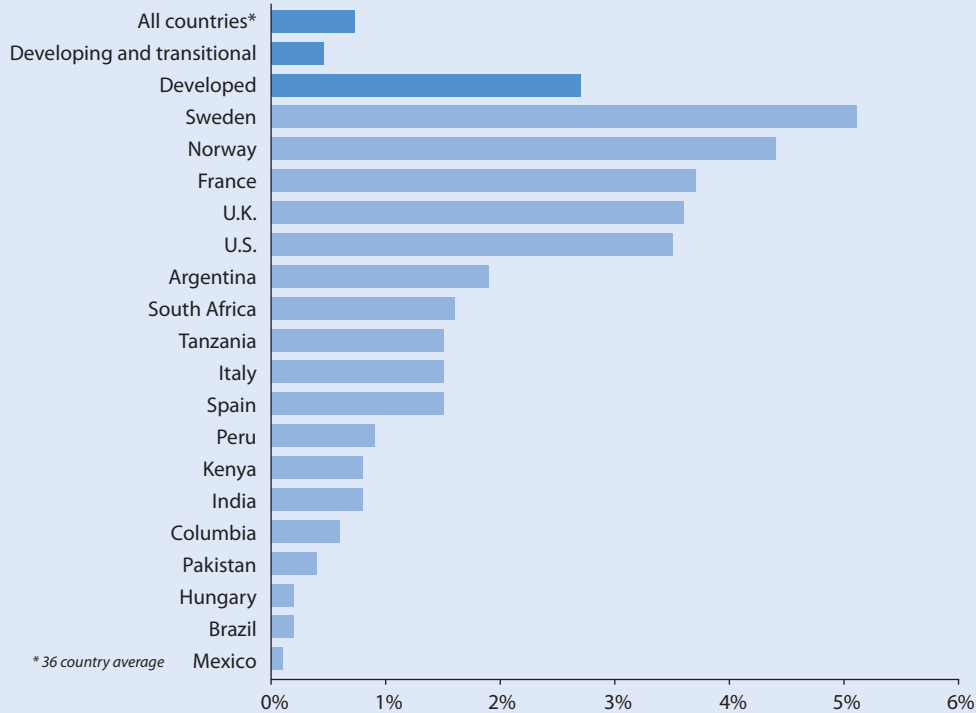
Source: Volunteering – Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project; Population: United States Census Bureau

calculated the economic contribution of volunteers in the 36 countries to be 400 billion US dollars annually. This represented, on average, 1.1 per cent of GDP in these countries. However, in developing and transition countries, volunteer work represented a somewhat smaller 0.7 per cent of GDP. In developed countries, volunteer work represented 2.7 per cent of GDP (See Figure 2.2).²⁶

CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI)²⁷ creates 72 indicators on different aspects of civil society. The indicators are then grouped into five dimensions: Civic Engagement, Level of Organization, Practice of Values, Perception of Impact and External Environment. Together they present a comprehensive picture of the strength of a country's civil society, expressed visually through the Civil Society Diamond (see Figure 2.3).²⁸

The CSI findings show interesting regional variations in volunteer participation rates between socially focused CSOs and CSOs with an activist orientation. The percentage of people undertaking voluntary work on a regular basis for socially-focused CSOs is far higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region with Latin America, Eastern Europe and the CIS

FIGURE 2.2: Value of volunteer work as share of GDP



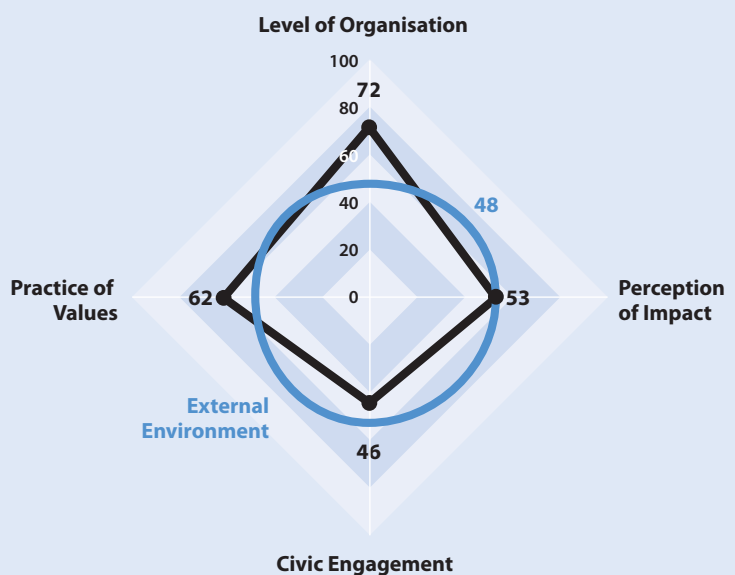
Source: Salamon, L. (2008, April). *Putting volunteering on the economic map of the world*. Paper presented at the IAVE Conference, Panama, Costa Rica.

following. Activism-oriented NGOs also record the highest participation rates in sub-Saharan Africa. However, here Eastern Europe ranks ahead of Latin America, followed by the CIS.

The CSI also measures the extent and nature of citizen engagement, including volunteerism, in relation to the other key dimensions of the diamond. This can enable comparison and reflection on some of aspects of volunteerism such as trust and solidarity which have not, thus far, readily lent themselves to quantification.

The CSI data also indicates that countries with high rates of volunteering in socially-focused CSOs have high rates of volunteering in politically oriented CSOs. The data also show a positive connection between higher rates of volunteering and greater civil society effectiveness. This suggests that volunteering brings benefits to civil society as a whole.

FIGURE 2.3: CIVICUS Civil Society Diamond



Source: Civil Society Index Diamond

CIVICUS identified this as an opportunity, especially in developing countries, to strengthen the bridge between less formal types of volunteering, many of which are linked to new technologies, and campaigning and advocacy by CSOs, thus broadening the space for civic participation.²⁹

THE MANUAL ON THE MEASUREMENT OF VOLUNTEER WORK

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has made a valuable contribution to standardizing measurement of volunteerism by preparing and launching a Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work.³⁰ Developed by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, at the request of the ILO, and supported by the United Nations Volunteers programme, the manual outlines a standardized set of measures of volunteering to supplement country labour force surveys. Its main objective is to facilitate estimates of the economic value of volunteer work.

Labour force surveys collect a range of work-force and demographic data. Adopting the ILO manual recommendations can substantially increase the availability of reliable, comparable measures of volunteering to supplement labour force statistics.

The definition of volunteering in the Manual is similar to that described in Chapter 1, namely "unpaid non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to activities

performed either through an organization or directly for others outside their own household."³¹ The Manual provides recommendations on how to administer the survey effectively.

The manual also provides suggestions for analyzing the data and estimating the economic value of volunteering. This includes reporting

BOX 2.7 : Best Practices in the measurement of volunteering

Describe volunteering for the participant while avoiding misunderstandings related to using the term: "The next few questions are about unpaid non-compulsory work that you did, that is, time you gave without pay to activities performed either through organizations or directly for others outside your own household."

Ask about volunteering within the previous four weeks, which facilitates recall.

Provide prompts or examples about the potential types of activities to include in reporting if a respondent indicates that they have not volunteered, which also aids recall.

Collect information about hours spent for each volunteer activity mentioned, the type of work done to enable the assignment of occupational codes (e.g., professionals, clerks, craft and related trades worker) that can be used for estimating the value of the activity performed.

Collect information about whether the activity was performed through or for an organization and, if so, collect the name of the organization and what it does (to enable coding by type of organization). Ask about the type of institution for which the volunteering was done (e.g., charity/non-profit, business, government, other).

BOX 2.6 : From house building to active citizenship

There is no doubt that volunteer work contributes significantly to the ILO objectives. It straddles both the economic objectives, even though it is not carried out to generate an income, and the wider social objectives. Its contribution is recognized by society and policy makers as essential for the well-being of any society. However its volume, value and characteristics do not feature much in mainstream information systems.

Source: Young. (2007, September).

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO). (2011).

direct volunteering by people as well as volunteering through organizations. This enables analysts to assess both the volunteer resources of community organizations and the extent of volunteerism outside organizational contexts. This initiative represents an important step forward towards a more uniform approach to measuring volunteering around the world and to the development of a comparative perspective. It builds on the fact that capacity for implementing household labour-force surveys, unlike other more complex methodologies, already exists globally. While the focus is on determining economic value, the approach should enrich understanding of the nature and degree of both organized and less formalized volunteering.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter confirms that volunteer action is found the world over and is huge. Taking the measure of volunteerism, in all its diversity and rich expressions, is occurring in many places and in many different ways. However, it is still at a very early stage and presents considerable challenges. The range of studies mentioned here points to the diversity of issues covered as well as the absence of common approaches. Due to the highly variable definitions, methodologies and purposes among national, regional and global initiatives, it is not yet possible to provide a composite picture of the dimensions of volunteerism by country, region or any other categorization. However, the purpose here is not, in any way, to curtail current and new initiatives aimed at measuring volunteerism. These meet specific needs. They help to add to the knowledge base on volunteerism. As such, they should be encouraged and supported, especially in the developing world. National studies of volunteerism are of particular importance to “ensure that consideration of the issues regarding volunteering is based on a sound appreciation and analysis of the parameters, profile and trends of volunteering in the particular country context.”³²

Effective policies to support volunteerism cannot be put in place without understanding its dimensions and profile. Yet national studies are not enough. There is a pressing need to compare and benchmark volunteerism at regional and global levels. Notwithstanding the inconsistency of existing measures, a common approach has to be pursued.

There are concrete steps that can be taken to begin establishing the field of volunteer measurement. Sector-based approaches to involvement in volunteerism by government, civil society and businesses are relevant to ensuring the benefits of volunteerism nationally. However, one public body should be held responsible for coordinating the measuring of volunteering in a country. Globally, these coordinating institutions, along with national, regional and global volunteering stakeholders, need to agree on a minimum standard quantitative data set and methodology for gathering data on volunteers and volunteerism suitable for use in comparative cross-national analysis. Since volunteer involving organizations provide a basic common data source for volunteer measuring, there should be internationally agreed practices for ensuring reliable databases.

Similarly, there is a need for agreed methods for placing a value on volunteerism, such as those proposed in the ILO *Manual on Volunteer Work*. Funding sources need to be generated and mechanisms created to encourage research in order to build a knowledge base. Countries should be encouraged to fulfill their commitments in intergovernmental legislation with regard to encouraging and supporting national studies and assessments of the economic value of volunteerism. It is accepted that measuring the contribution of volunteerism in economic terms represents only one piece of a much larger array of benefits that volunteer action brings to communities and societies. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to move forward with this aspect of the measurement agenda.

There is a pressing need to compare and benchmark volunteerism at regional and global levels

3

CHAPTER 3

Volunteerism in the twenty-first century

*We are prone to judge success by the index
of our salaries or the size of our automobiles,
rather than by the quality of our service
relationship to humanity.*

Martin Luther King, Jr

INTRODUCTION

There are ever more opportunities for people to engage in volunteerism. This chapter examines three aspects of the changing world of volunteerism. While these changes are not strictly products of the twenty-first century, there have been important developments over the past decade that are crucial for expanding volunteerism in the future. Firstly, technological developments are opening up spaces for people to volunteer in ways that have no parallel in history. These developments enable people to relate to one another globally and more rapidly than ever before. Secondly, there is the role of the private sector in development and its interest in volunteering as an aspect of corporate social responsibility. Thirdly, unprecedented global movements of people and the expanded opportunities for travel, combined with more leisure time, are two phenomena which are impacting on traditional forms of volunteering everywhere.

VOLUNTEERISM AND TECHNOLOGY

Volunteers can count on a rapidly growing range of technology to help to tackle many global challenges of today. These range from tracking food insecurity to monitoring violent conflict, and from providing early warning of impending disasters to reporting election fraud. The advent of mobile and Internet-based information and communication technology (ICT) is revolutionising volunteer action in terms of "who, what, when and where". Online volunteering, online activism through social media, and micro-volunteering are fast growing trends. The potential contributions of technology to volunteerism are far-reaching. However, changes do not occur without challenges. Some observers contend that the digital divide may further exclude people with limited access to technology and that benefits are not as accessible in low-income countries. Others assert that technology has made volunteerism more impersonal, by discouraging face-to-face interaction. As such, it could serve to obstruct meaningful volunteer engagement.¹

Volunteerism and Mobile Communication Technologies

Access to relatively basic, and affordable, mobile technology is constantly opening new opportunities for volunteers. While significant disparities exist between countries, the use of new technologies continues to expand worldwide. Cellular phone subscription in developed countries is greater than 100 per cent, i.e. more than one subscription per inhabitant. In developing countries, it is estimated at about 60 per cent.² In fact, some of the most innovative and successful examples of mobile-related volunteerism are in the developing world, a phenomenon so extraordinary it is called the "mobile revolution."³

Short message service (SMS) text messaging has had perhaps the most profound impact. Mass SMS communication is considered a form of "micro-volunteerism", on account of its limited duration which does not require a long-term commitment. It can contribute to the production and sharing of richer, more complete and more reliable information.⁴ It is frequently used by volunteers to raise awareness on local issues, to inform people's choices, and to monitor and improve public services such as crop forecasting, education and health.

Volunteer health workers, for example, send SMS text messages to report basic symptoms of illness and disease. Plotting the geographical occurrence of these symptoms on maps, using programmes such as Kenyan-based *Ushahidi*, can help epidemiologists to identify patterns of disease and provide early warning of potential outbreaks. In Rwanda, the government distributes cell phones to volunteer community health-care workers in rural areas. These are used to monitor the progress of pregnant village women, to send regular updates to health-care professionals, and to call for urgent assistance when necessary. The scheme has contributed significantly to reducing maternal deaths. In Musanze district, for example, no maternal deaths were reported during the year following the launch of the programme in 2009, compared to

There have been important developments over the past decade that are crucial for expanding volunteerism in the future

ten deaths the year before. Given the success of the programme, there are plans to distribute 50,000 phones to reach all volunteer health workers in Rwanda and to extend the programme to agriculture and education.⁵

SMS messaging is also a powerful tool for election monitoring organizations to support the work of volunteers. It can help them to address logistic challenges more rapidly as well as contributing to effective election oversight and the protection of citizens' rights, as shown in the box on the right.

Volunteerism and the Internet

In the developing world, innovative synergies between volunteerism and technology typically focus on mobile communication technologies rather than the Internet. Around 26 per cent of people worldwide had Internet access in 2009. However, Internet penetration in low-income countries was only 18 per cent, compared to over 64 per cent in developed countries. While the costs of fixed broadband Internet are falling, access still remains unaffordable to many.⁸

Despite this, online volunteering is developing rapidly. Online volunteers are "people who commit their time and skills over the Internet, freely and without financial considerations, for the benefit of society."⁹ Online volunteering has eliminated the need for volunteerism to be tied to specific times and locations. Thus, it greatly increases the freedom and flexibility of volunteer engagement and complements the outreach and impact of volunteers serving in situ. Most online volunteers engage in operational and managerial activities such as fundraising, technological support, communications, marketing and consulting. Increasingly, they also engage in activities such as research and writing and leading e-mail discussion groups.¹⁰

UNV manages an online volunteering programme, accessible at www.onlinevolunteering.org. Launched in 2000, it connects NGOs, governments and United Nations agencies

BOX 3.1 : Election monitoring through SMS

Volunteer election monitors can play a key role in promoting good governance. Well-trained volunteers equipped with new technologies are an invaluable resource for maintaining democratic voting systems.

A new form of civic engagement emerged during the 2006 referendum in Montenegro. Election observers used text-messaging to provide regular reports about the election. Volunteers from a Montenegro NGO, the Center for Democratic Transition, with technical assistance from the US-based National Democratic Institute, used short messages (SMS) to report almost instantly from polling stations around the country. Since then, volunteer election reporting through text messaging via mobile phones has happened in elections in Albania in 2006, Sierra Leone in 2007, Nigeria in 2007 and 2011, and Sudan in 2010, as well as elsewhere.⁶

The first election in post-war Sierra Leone was monitored by thousands of trained local volunteers who observed at polling stations and collected voting information, sending it for analysis via text messaging to the National Election Watch, a coalition of over 200 NGOs in the country. The volunteers' presence and contributions helped "protect the right of voters and promote a fair and peaceful election environment."⁷ Volunteer reporting through SMS is broadening the scope for civic engagement and transparency and is contributing to greater political accountability.

Source: The National Democratic Institute. (2006); Schuler. (2008); Verclas. (2007).

with people who wish to volunteer using the Internet. Some 10,000 volunteers from 170 countries (62 per cent from developing countries) complete an average of 15,000 online assignments each year. These volunteers include not only professionals but also students and retired people. Women account for 55 per cent of all participants. The fields that they cover include education, youth, development advocacy and strategies, crisis prevention, income generation and employment, volunteerism, integration of marginalized groups, environment, health and gender. Online volunteering increases the capacities of development organizations while simultaneously providing space for many people to participate in development who would not otherwise have had the opportunity.

Online volunteering is typically short-term. In one study, over 70 per cent of online volunteers chose assignments requiring one to five hours a week and nearly half chose assignments lasting 12 weeks or less.¹¹ Some organizations, such as Sparked.com, offer online volunteering opportunities which last from ten minutes to an hour. A unique feature of online volunteering is that it can be done from a distance. People with restricted mobility or other spe-

cial needs participate in ways that might not be possible in traditional face-to-face volunteering. Likewise, online volunteering may allow people to overcome social inhibitions and social anxiety, particularly if they would normally experience disability-related labelling or stereotyping.¹² This empowers people who might not otherwise volunteer. It can build self-confidence and self-esteem while enhancing skills and extending networks and social ties.¹³ Online volunteering also allows participants to adapt their programme of volunteer work to their unique needs and life situations.¹⁴

BOX 3.2 : Online volunteering

The Online Volunteering service, a UNV tool to mobilize volunteers for development, links volunteers with organizations in order to strengthen the impact of sustainable human development.

Engineers Without Borders (EWB) in Cameroon brought together three online volunteers who developed a user-friendly manual on complex farming techniques and technologies. A Malian agricultural engineer translated scientific jargon into plain language. A Moroccan consultant with a PhD in environmental studies and a Togolese agro-economist also worked together on the product which is helping farmers to improve cultivation and processing of pineapples. Online volunteer Kokou Edoh (Togo) stated: *"This collaboration was a total success. The commitment, collaboration and conviviality on our team and with the EWB team triggered a decisive change in my life. This was my first time as an online volunteer and I am left with a feeling of complete satisfaction. I decided to volunteer again for EWB."*

The UNESCO World Heritage Forest programme works to strengthen the conservation of forests at World Heritage sites. Twenty-two online volunteers from 11 countries supported the programme, advocating for conservation during the International Year of Forests in 2011. By researching, analysing, summarizing and mapping information, volunteers contributed to the State of World Heritage Forests report and built databases related to World Heritage forests. According to a student in architectural/urban heritage conservation, Jae Hyeon Park (Republic of Korea), analyzing and summarizing data for the database *"allowed me to enlarge my knowledge of environmental areas and understand more about UNESCO's participation in natural heritage at a global level. Above all, what I have benefited this time is the pleasure of volunteering with professionalism."*

Source: UNV. (n. d., 2004, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b, June).

Social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Orkut have helped people to share information and organize. Examples include reducing wildfire risk in Russia in 2010 and mobilizing for political demonstrations in Arab states in early 2011. These social media platforms have also been used by volunteers and organizations for recruiting, organising collective action, increasing awareness, raising funds and communicating with decision makers.¹⁸ Yet "clicktivism", as it is called, may actually prevent activists, known as "clickers", from going further to engage in more meaningful volunteer action and advocacy. It is argued that, while social media may help to bring awareness of social causes, it does not inspire the passion to create effective social change.¹⁹ As a consequence, people may engage as "telescopic philanthropists" but may not be willing to make any real sacrifice for a cause.²⁰ Yet, while micro-volunteering may not always lead to radical social change, it brings benefits simply by informing and changing attitudes. For instance, the *Say NO to Violence against Women* page on Facebook educates thousands of subscribers on important activities and legislation concerning women's rights.

The Internet also facilitates volunteerism by matching the interests of volunteers with the needs of host organizations. Volunteer-matching sites enhance opportunities for volunteers to find placements while also providing vol-

unteer involving organizations with easy access to potential volunteers. Recruitment time and costs are reduced. On many levels, new information and communication technologies have introduced a network-style, horizontal and participatory flow of information among users, thus opening up innovative opportunities for volunteer participation. Technology-based volunteerism may be particularly suited to young people who tend to embrace and employ technology. There is a real need for researchers to seek a better understanding of the relative benefits and challenges of online versus face-to-face volunteerism.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERISM

International volunteerism is organized engagement in development by volunteers working abroad. It includes both short and long-term assignments through either governmental or non-governmental agencies. The last decade in particular has seen the numbers of volunteers abroad increasing and forms of engagement evolving.²¹ International volunteerism became a prominent feature of development assistance programmes in several developed countries in the 1960s. Some of the largest international volunteer coordinating organizations were established during this period, including Australian Volunteers International, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, Canadian University Service Organization, Peace Corps, Volontari nel Mondo – FOCSIV and the United Nations Volunteers.

With the exception of UNV, which has always had volunteers from the developing world, these programmes traditionally focused on sending volunteers from the North to the South. For many international volunteer service programmes, a more recent development has been adding national volunteering schemes to their activities. The purpose of these is to draw on the knowledge of people familiar with local languages and cultural issues while building sustainable local capacities and contributing to development.²² This

BOX 3.3 : Open-source online volunteering

People are increasingly using social media to promote causes important to them. On Annual Blog Action Day, which is marked on 15 October, thousands of bloggers meet online to share ideas about issues of public interest. In 2010, posts revolved around the water crisis. From water conservation to gender equality, bloggers explored water-related issues that have an impact on society, with the hope of inspiring positive action and keeping the debate going.¹⁵

Robin Beck, organizing director of the day in 2010, stated that: "The best possible result would be spreading the conversation to places where it is never held."¹⁶ Volunteers also participate online through the "open-source movement" which involves professionals from multiple disciplines. Biologists, for example, have embraced open-source tools to contribute to genome databases and genetic sequencing. Blogs and online message boards, forms of open-source journalism, contribute significantly to knowledge creation and dissemination as does open-source publishing. Project Gutenberg, for example, has digitized more than 6,000 books, with hundreds of volunteers typing in, page by page, classics from Shakespeare to Stendhal. Distributed Proofreading, a related project, engages countless volunteer copy editors to make sure that the Gutenberg texts are rendered correctly.¹⁷

Sources: Goetz. (2003); Roque. (2009); Knight. (n.d.); Blog Action Day Blog. (2010).

BOX 3.4 : Kraft Foods Micro-Volunteering

Kraft Foods partnered with Sparked, an online environment that enables individuals to volunteer regardless of time and place, to launch a pilot micro-volunteering programme. More than 50 employees participated, helping 48 NGOs on issues related to health, nutrition and children, in 38 countries. The top skills used were marketing, sales and social media. Of those who volunteered, 67 per cent noted the ease of fitting it into their schedules and 92 per cent said micro-volunteering should be offered to all employees. As one noted: *"I don't have time for other volunteering activities in my life right now so this keeps me contributing in at least one way."*

One Kraft Foods volunteer used his language skills to translate applications for financing and funding (from English to Spanish) for an international NGO, thus increasing access to lenders. Another used her social media, collaboration and content management skills to advise an NGO on how to use Facebook profiles to build awareness about its work. Technology can allow volunteers in locations across the world to work at their convenience on joint efforts that can have tremendous impact.

Sources: Allen, Galiano & Hayes. (2011); Sparked. (2010, November 4).

Forms of international volunteerism are becoming ever more diverse

builds useful complementarity with international volunteers who, in addition to skills, sometimes provide concrete donations and resources, either directly or through links with external organizations.²³

Recently a number of sending agencies, including VSO in Britain, Progressio in Ireland, and Fredskorpset in Norway, have promoted South-to-South and South-to-North volunteer assignments. These create opportunities for nationals of developing countries to volunteer abroad and to strengthen national capacities.²⁴ This South-to-South dimension is also taking hold in the developing world itself. In Africa, the African Union and ECOWAS, regional youth volunteering initiatives enable young Africans to gain experience from volunteering while contributing to peace and development in the region. In Latin America, the White Helmets initiative focuses on the assignment of Latin American volunteers in emergency programmes largely in the region. Brazil cooperates with UNV to send Brazilian volunteers to Central America. The programme is being expanded to Haiti and plans are in progress to do the same in Mozambique. In Asia, there are programmes underway by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Young Volunteers Serving Africa Programme of Chi-

na, and the Singapore International Foundation (SIF). The aim of the SIF is to improve livelihoods and create greater understanding between Singaporeans and world communities through shared ideas, skills and experiences.²⁵ Since 2004, the Volunteer Programme of Thailand (TICA) has sent nationals to neighbouring countries to support technical cooperation programmes. In addition to contributing to sustainable human resources development, the programme aims to build friendship and forge people-to-people relationships at the grassroots level between Thailand and other developing countries in Asia and beyond.²⁶

Forms of international volunteerism are becoming ever more diverse. The trend is towards shorter-term placements, with an average duration of less than six months, and placements that are individually tailored to the volunteer.²⁷ While international volunteerism was once equated with long-term commitment through a formal volunteer programme, newer forms of short-term international volunteerism combine interest in travelling with a desire to contribute.²⁸ This trend is driven by globalisation, cheaper and more convenient overseas travel, increased migration, globalised media, multicultural identities and more flexible working and educational arrangements.²⁹ International volunteering is increasingly promoted in universities and corporations as a force for global education and skills development. Volunteering is also growing among people living away from their countries of origin, expressing the desire of the diaspora to help communities in their homeland.³⁰ Recruitment of diaspora volunteers by corporations is also increasingly common.³¹ A further, growing, trend is for programmes facilitating short-term "senior volunteer" placements for retired professionals, as shown in the box on the right.

There is a question as to whether short-term international volunteerism is more beneficial as a learning experience for the volunteers themselves or for the host communities.³² Most studies conclude that it depends upon

BOX 3.5 : Friends from Thailand in Bhutan

The Thai Volunteer Programme, also known as "Friends from Thailand – FFT", sends young Thai volunteers or "friends" to do fieldwork in support of Thai technical cooperation programmes in developing countries. Through a cooperative agreement between Thailand and Bhutan, Thai volunteers provide technical support in agriculture, public health, tourism and vocational studies for the public and private sectors in Bhutan. Bandit Bitbamrond, aged 23, is an agricultural engineer on a two-year volunteer assignment. Bandit is researching farm machinery development at the Agricultural Machine Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and lecturing on farm machinery for the agriculture diploma programme at the Royal University of Bhutan.

Source: Phatarathiyanon, Tomon, Yosthasan, Ito, Lee & Ratcliffe. (2008); Bandit Bitbamrond, Personal Communication. (2011, July 20); Royal Civil Service Commission. (2005).

the programme. In reality, international volunteering is a two-way street, benefiting both volunteers and host communities. International volunteers frequently report gaining skills that they would have difficulty acquiring through local and national volunteering or employment.³³ Returned volunteers often claim that their experiences abroad were “transformative” or “turning points” in their lives, leading to increased commitment to service at home and abroad.³⁴ For host communities, programmes of differing lengths may be appropriate for specific types of service activities. Short-term volunteers may breathe fresh life into otherwise routine social service activities with children, adults or the physically challenged.³⁵ Short-term international volunteer experts bring with them significant technical experience. However, repeat assignments are seen as more effective. Individual expert assignments are also more effective as part of long-term projects than when they are stand-alone.³⁶

There is much debate over the benefits of short-term volunteering tourism, “volun-tourism”, to international development. In 2008, the market for volun-tourism in Western Europe had grown by 5 to 10 per cent over five years, with Africa, Asia and Latin America as the most popular destinations. An opportunity can range from one or two days to a month or more, with most experiences lasting for one to two weeks. It is most popular with students and people taking a career break. The most popular projects include education and training, construction and working with children.

Volun-tourism provides host organizations and projects with a means of outreach. For communities, it provides increased human and financial resources, local employment and improved facilities. Volunteers tend to stay in touch after they return home and even fundraise on behalf of the communities. But volun-tourism has also come under criticism. As the trip length decreases, the volunteering placements are designed more for the con-

BOX 3.6 : JICA Senior Volunteers

Masayoshi Maruko is a long-time owner of a car stereo shop. When he turned 60, he decided to apply for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Senior Volunteer Programme. He was assigned to a vocational training school in Zambia to teach electronic engineering. Although he did not have any previous teaching experience, he was certain of at least one thing: that work is only taught by work. In line with this motto, when he realized what the needs were, he set to work over and beyond his teaching duties.

In Zambia, where the electric power supply is unstable, there is a demand for solar power generators. Along with teaching how to repair televisions and radios in class, Mr. Maruko also developed new products including a motorcycle named Solar Bike and a solar powered light named Solar King which won prizes.

Through his activity in Zambia, Mr. Maruko said that he realized that there is something more important for a JICA Senior Volunteer than high levels of knowledge and skills: *“When you want to do something for the happiness of the others, then, for the first time, your knowledge and techniques will be handed down.”*

In 2009, the Senior Volunteer Programme gave 445 people aged 40 to 69 the opportunity to participate in cooperative activities in developing countries utilizing their experiences in the fields of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy, health and medical care, human resources, education, culture and sports. Since the programme began in 1990, a total of 4,462 people have been dispatched to 64 countries.

Source: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). (2011).

venience of the volunteer than to support local community needs. Participating volunteers tend to lack relevant qualifications, experience and training. They therefore undertake simpler tasks, smaller in scale, and with minimal impact. They can even be a burden on local resources. Some experts argue that the volun-tourism industry should be regulated in order to ensure that it benefits sustainable development.³⁷

In contrast to shorter-term international volunteer placements, programmes emphasizing longer-term international volunteerism tend to put a high priority on matching volunteers’

skills with the needs of host communities.³⁸ Programmes are more effective when they do the following: envisage continuity in the presence of volunteers; provide training and orientation, including cultural sensitivity; respond directly to community needs and, through their design, maximise contributions.³⁹

The case of diaspora volunteering merits special attention given its enormous potential for development in those countries with significant populations living abroad. For example, 1.1 million practising medical professionals residing in the United States alone are from developing countries. Over 120,000 of these come from sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁰ The nature of diaspora volunteering is contingent upon the circumstances of the diaspora in its adopted country and in the homeland. In the case of the Horn of Africa, for example, members of the diaspora return to the homeland periodically for short periods. Their purpose is to help to enhance the capacities of civil society networks in addition to instilling a "collective and civic-minded mentality" in local post-conflict communities. Yet little is known

about the important role of diaspora volunteers as agents of change in the region.⁴¹

The diaspora of Vietnam focuses on issues such as poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, medical care and disabilities. With a fairly well-integrated second generation in the countries of adoption, there is a question however about the long-term viability of diaspora volunteering in Vietnam as ties to the country of origin become weaker. It has been estimated that about 400,000 Vietnamese living abroad have received higher education yet only 200 are brought back each year to teach or consult.⁴³

Initiatives to mobilize diaspora volunteers are a sign of the growing significance of the diaspora for volunteerism. Such initiatives come from agencies including the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration, the British Department for International Development and the VSO-supported Diaspora Volunteering Alliance, the Canadian University Service

BOX 3.7 : The Ethiopian Diaspora Volunteer Programme

An estimated 20,000 skilled professionals have left Africa every year since 1990, taking their skills and knowledge with them. Ethiopia is reaching out through its Ethiopian Diaspora Volunteer Programme (EDVP) which recruits healthcare volunteers to build national capacity for the treatment of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. It works in partnership with the American International Health Alliance and the Network of Ethiopian Professionals in the Diaspora.

Between 2006 and 2010, the programme placed 45 volunteers in over 30 sites, including the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health, where they performed numerous functions ranging from developing pain treatment guidelines for the country's health professionals to building an online platform for the ministry. They also performed outreach to foreign universities, developed medical curricula for the country's teaching hospitals and examined the country's antiretroviral treatment programme.⁴² Among other examples, the volunteers enhanced and introduced new systems of care, developed educational and training materials, helped to adapt imported models and techniques to the Ethiopian setting, trained healthcare professionals, developed disease prevention and health promotion campaigns, and strengthened primary research.

The volunteers have diverse needs and expectations. However, the motivations for volunteering were a desire to help to address HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, a feeling of responsibility to give back to Ethiopia, and pride in Ethiopian heritage.

Source: Giorgis & Terrazas (2011a); International Organization for Migration (IOM), (2007); Network of Ethiopian Professionals in the Diaspora (NEPID), (n.d.).

Overseas, the VSO Diaspora Volunteering Programme and the USAID Diaspora Networks Alliance (DNA).⁴⁴ The value of this kind of volunteering is that it brings specialized knowledge to development and peace processes in countries in need of such support. Just as important, however, is that it adds to the social capital of people who are geographically separated but culturally linked. It is a good example of the glue that holds societies together.

International volunteering encourages us to re-focus on what development assistance is about. It is not just about transferring technical skills but also about relationship-building, global cooperation and the values of solidarity. "It can bridge the gap between the professionalized world of development experts and organizations and the 'non-specialized publics' who engage with the ideas and practices of development".⁴⁵

VOLUNTEERISM AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The United States economist Milton Friedman once quipped that "the business of business is business". Yet this notion has few adherents today. Private sector companies operate in an increasingly "moral marketplace" where consumers, investors and employees want to know whether companies are socially responsible. Consumers and investors have a more positive image of companies that they know are good corporate citizens.⁴⁶ Similarly, employees are motivated by contributing to society.⁴⁷

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been described as the "economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that a society has of organizations at a given point of time."⁴⁸ It means that private companies have moral, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, in addition to the obligation to earn a fair return for investors. Another definition goes further stating that CSR is about "improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at

large".⁴⁹ This overlaps with the values of volunteering and its relationship to the well-being of people and their communities.

Research in developing countries indicates that CSR is more prevalent than commonly believed although less institutionalised than in developed countries. In Asia, countries varied greatly in terms of CSR modes of action, with foundations, volunteering, partnerships, etc. In Africa, CSR practices focus more on economic and philanthropic than legal and ethical responsibilities.⁵⁰ CSR in Latin America is seen as a hope for positive change in the face of socio-economic, political and environmental challenges. Formal CSR tends to be found in connection with the large, high profile national and multinational companies, especially those with recognized international brands or those aspiring to global status.⁵¹

A major impetus to CSR is the UN Global Compact, launched in 2000, which promotes human rights and labour, environmental and anti-corruption principles in the private sector. Its aim is to catalyse actions towards meeting broader United Nations goals, including the MDGs, and to support a platform for corporate engagement. The number of companies involved in the Global Compact has grown from 47 in 2000 to over 8700 in 2011, across 135 countries. Member companies are encouraged, among other things, to mobilize volunteers to contribute to the MDGs.⁵²

Employee volunteering is a growing expression of CSR. It is variously referred to as "employer-supported volunteering" and "corporate volunteering" and is often a component of the community involvement strategies of businesses. Benefits for employees include raised morale, job satisfaction, increased pride and positive feelings about their company. Benefits for the company include improved corporate image and reputation, enhanced corporate visibility in the community and increased sales. Communities gain, too, through enhanced well-being, increased financial and

Private sector companies operate in an increasingly "moral marketplace"

BOX 3.8 : Need for values and principles in business

"We need business to give practical meaning and reach to the values and principles that connect cultures and people everywhere."

Source: Ban Ki-moon. (2008).

other assistance for local organizations, and increased levels of community volunteering.⁵³ What is often missing in appraisals of CSR, and what reinforces our central message in this report, is recognition that employee volunteering enables citizens to engage in activities that correspond to the values that they hold and that strengthen the fabric of society.

As with CSR in general, the nature of employee volunteering in developing countries shows considerable context-specific variations. A project of the New Academy of Business in seven developing countries (Brazil, Ghana, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Philippines and South Africa) found that traditional forms of corporate philanthropy and social investment initiatives were common practice. However, long-term employee volunteering programmes are not common nor do they receive institutional support.⁵⁹ A study entitled *Global Companies Volunteering Globally*⁶⁰ identified diverse ap-

proaches to employee volunteering worldwide with regional and cultural factors determining how volunteerism is understood and practised.

The ways in which companies support employee volunteering differ widely, ranging from encouraging employees to volunteer as individuals, or in small teams, or as part of organized programmes, often in partnership with NGOs. Activities sometimes take place in communities where the companies operate although volunteer employees are also sent to other countries. Activities may entail worldwide mobilizations involving days, weeks or months of service. These may feature one-time projects or take the form of online volunteering.⁶¹

A phenomenon that is still quite new, but growing rapidly, is the formal integration of employee volunteering programmes into the infrastructure and business plan of companies.⁶² Employees of large companies (over 250 staff) are more likely to have an employer-supported scheme (47 per cent) than those in medium-sized enterprises⁶³ (20 per cent) or small companies (14 per cent).⁶⁴ Employees in larger companies are also more likely than those in smaller ones to acknowledge that their employer supports volunteering. In fact, more than 90 per cent of Fortune 500 companies report having a formal employee volunteering and giving programme. On a global scale, it is difficult to gauge the prevalence of employee volunteering programmes as few companies record volunteer hours or evaluate the results of employee volunteering.⁶⁵

The lack of formal volunteer programmes in small and medium-sized businesses does not reflect an absence of corporate community involvement. A study of the social and environmental responsibility of small business owners in the United Kingdom found high levels of community involvement: "Basically small businesses take a different view from big businesses. The big boys are probably looking to see what they can get out of it, whereas small businesses see it as being part of the com-

BOX 3.9 : Employee volunteering and the MDGs

SUEZ is the French industrial utilities provider contributing to MDG 7: Environmental Sustainability. It provides employees with opportunities to volunteer in its core business through a partnership with UNV. SUEZ employees have established two volunteer associations, Aquassistance and Energy Assistance, to enhance the living conditions of highly disadvantaged populations across the globe. Aquassistance volunteers have carried out waste management assessments in Albania, Niger, Senegal and Guinea Bissau. Technical support was extended to a community-based volunteering waste management project. Energy Assistance volunteers developed recommendations on power distribution networks in Honduras; assessed sources of pollution in the Galapagos Islands; recommended changes in energy production; and performed an audit of an electrical plant in East Timor.

Source: UNGC. (n.d.).

munity and don't see it in business strategy terms at all."⁶⁶

A common perception is that employee volunteering occurs during company time. However, practices vary greatly. Some companies provide information about volunteer opportunities but expect employees to undertake activities outside of work. Others offer flexible working hours to allow for hours spent volunteering, while still others offer paid or unpaid leave.⁶⁷ Some, usually large companies, release employees to volunteer for long periods in anticipation that they will return with new skills and motivation.⁶⁸ The Pfizer Global Health Fellows, for example, engages employee volunteers with medical and business expertise in three to six-month team assignments with health-related international development organizations. Since 2003, some 270 employees have volunteered in more than 40 countries.⁶⁹

The most common types of employer-supported volunteer programmes (EVP) involve "soft" forms of support. These include adjusting work schedules to accommodate volunteering, allowing access to company resources and facilities, making information about volunteering opportunities available to employees, and officially recognising employees for their volunteer work.⁷⁰ National Commercial Bank of Saudi Arabia encourages employees to teach interpersonal skills to students in schools and provide coaching to entrepreneurs. Some schemes are also open to families, retired employees, clients and suppliers. For example, for three months every year, Hyundai with its NGO partner, the Korean Council on Volunteering, promotes opportunities suitable for families of employees who are supported by local volunteer centres and also provided with uniforms.⁷¹

Increasingly, companies are linking philanthropic giving to employee volunteering with matching donations and "dollars for doers". Companies contribute a specific amount to a cause or organization, based on the volunteer

BOX 3.10 : Corporate volunteering

The Proniño programme, a brainchild of the multinational telecommunication company Telefónica, aims to contribute to the eradication of child labour in Latin America where there are more than 5 million working children. Through schooling of working children and adolescents, and using Telefónica technology and management systems, Proniño aims to improve the quality of children's education and ensure that they are protected from child labour.⁵⁴ Implemented in the 13 Latin American countries in which the company trades, the programme works through a network of 118 NGOs, 674 alliances and almost 5000 schools and day care centres. It reaches more than 160,000 children and teenagers every year.⁵⁵ Proniño is run by Telefónica volunteers who teach after school, assist partner NGOs to monitor the families of participating children, conduct family and community workshops on education, and support teachers and social workers.⁵⁶

Volunteers are also at the heart of the Telefónica programme Escuelas Amigas (Twin Schools), which twins classes in Spain and Latin America for cultural exchanges via the Internet.⁵⁷ Volunteers support the teachers, providing technical assistance on the use of Web 2.0 tools, and monitor the classroom work. The Telefónica volunteers motivate and accompany teachers and pupils over the five-month project during which the classes work together on educational materials through blogs and teleconferences.⁵⁸

Source: Telefónica. (2009); Allen, Galiano & Hayes. (2011).

hours contributed by their employees. This gives employees an incentive to increase their volunteering. The UPS Foundation supports grants to local organizations chosen by UPS Community Involvement Committees. Grants are awarded after at least 50 hours of UPS volunteer service.⁷⁵

EVPs are increasingly focused on long-term collaborations with local NGOs. This helps companies to tap the knowledge of local partners and respond more effectively to community needs. Helping community-based not-for-profit organizations to function more effectively is among the primary goals of EVP today.⁷⁶ NGOs typically request "skills-based" volunteers to help meet specific needs and companies contribute by supplying employees as volunteers.

BOX 3.11 : Bankers without Borders

Bankers without Borders (BwB) is the Grameen Foundation's global volunteer reserve of more than 5700 highly skilled active and retired business professionals from diverse fields, not limited to banking and finance, who are willing to contribute between two weeks and four months to support microfinance and technology solutions. Since its launch in 2008, over 440 volunteers have donated more than 50,000 hours of service worth an estimated 4 million US dollars.⁷² Through on-site technical assistance, training and mentoring, and remote consulting projects, BwB volunteers work to increase the scale, sustainability, and impact of microfinance institutions.

In 2009, the Grameen Foundation's Technology for Microfinance Center engaged four experienced BwB volunteers to assist understanding of Mifos, an open-source management information system. The volunteers explored how cloud computing could minimize costs and maximize the value provided by management information systems for microfinance institutions. Having donated 485 hours of service, the volunteers provided quality research that led to a business plan for Mifos Cloud, a complete, ready-to-use solution for microfinance institutions to help them to overcome technological barriers and increase efficiency.⁷³

Another example of the contribution of BwB volunteers is the production of the Corporate Governance Handbook for the Middle East and North Africa Region. BwB volunteers improved the practicality of the handbook, aligned its material with customized training, and tailored its materials to the microfinance context in the Arab world.⁷⁴

Source: Maynard. (2010); Grameen Foundation. (2011).

Involving skills-based volunteers can radically reduce out-of-pocket expenses for NGOs. There is an estimated return of more than four US dollars for every one US dollar invested in developing a volunteer training and management infrastructure.⁷⁷

The Equity Bank in Kenya is a prime example of the private sector connecting to NGOs. The bank's employees volunteer to provide financial literacy courses to communities and to coach NGOs on the fundamentals of entrepreneurship and financial management. These volunteer initiatives complement, but do not substitute, financial services designed to re-

duce poverty and provide capital and finance to groups at risk. For the bank, these initiatives enhance the outreach and impact of its financial services.⁷⁸ The Tata Group, one of India's largest private sector conglomerates, is another example.

In recent years, there has been a clear interest at local, national and global levels in developing knowledge and standards, establishing partnerships and enhancing the practice of employee volunteering. Chambers of Commerce often have CSR committees. For example, since 2000, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vietnam has been running a Business Link Initiative and a Business Office for Sustainable Development focusing on promoting CSR which includes employee volunteering.⁷⁹ The Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria includes tools, connections and expertise on effective community engagement with volunteers.⁸⁰

While attention is largely directed at employee volunteering in the private sector, volunteering in the public sector is also relevant. In the United Kingdom, 45 per cent of public sector employees say that their employer has a volunteer scheme, compared to 30 per cent in the private sector.⁸¹ Public sector employees, like corporate employees, have often been deployed in national and international voluntary emergency response and recovery efforts. The Disaster Service Volunteer Leave Act of Guam allows government employees 15 days paid leave a year to assist the Red Cross during disasters.⁸²

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Globalisation and the digital age are altering the face of volunteerism. Change is challenging, and critical questions have been raised about the value and contributions of many new forms of volunteerism. In some cases, technology-based volunteerism may supplant significant and meaningful volunteer engagement. International volunteerism may be exclusive. Corporate volunteerism may be disingenuous.

BOX 3.12 : Bringing together people and causes

The Tata Council for Community Initiatives, which is the focal point for the United Nations Global Compact in India, brings together people and causes to make a difference in people's lives. Since 1994, the initiative has promoted volunteering among employees of the private corporate Tata Group in India. It does this by partnering with www.indianngos.com and linking Tata employees to 50,000 NGOs and volunteering opportunities listed on the portal. "Commitment to the welfare of the communities our companies serve has been a key tenet of the Tata Group", says Ratan N. Tata, Chairman of Tata Sons. The combined effort of the Tata Council for Community Initiatives and Tata companies has led to a more systematic attempt to focus the community work of the company on bringing about sustainable social development.

Pratham, an NGO providing education to under-privileged children of India, partnered with Taj Hotels to conduct training in the hospitality industry for young people from 40 rural villages of Maharashtra state. While Pratham mobilized young people and constructed a state-of-the-art facility in Khaultabad near Aurangabad, the Taj Hotels shared knowledge about curriculum development, training programmes and training infrastructure. Over 70 young people from the region have been trained with 100 per cent job placement for graduates.

Source: TATA Council for Community Initiatives. (2010).

Conversely, modern volunteerism has the potential to contribute significantly to human development. Efforts are therefore needed to ensure the broadest possible participation by all members of society. For large numbers of people in low-income countries, access to innovative technologies is still limited and the notion of volunteering internationally is very remote. Moreover, only a handful of companies in developing countries commit resources to supporting employee volunteering schemes.

Nonetheless, there is reason to be optimistic that evolving forms of volunteerism will enhance op-

portunities for people to volunteer. The spread of technology connects ever more rural and isolated areas. NGOs and governments are beginning to realise the value of South-to-South international volunteerism, as well as diaspora volunteering, and are dedicating resources to these schemes. Corporations are responding to the "social marketplace" by supporting CSR initiatives that include volunteerism. New opportunities for engaging in volunteerism are opening up with the result that more people are becoming involved and those already participating can expand their commitment. This is excellent news for the social fabric of our societies.

Evolving forms of volunteerism will enhance opportunities for people to volunteer

4

CHAPTER 4

Sustainable livelihoods

The poor is one who is alone.
Senegalese expression

INTRODUCTION

The “poor” are people with families, neighbours, friends, ideas and capacities as well as traditions and aspirations. These characteristics are generally overlooked in development policies and programmes which principally define poverty as the lack of an income. Frequently, the income poor lack opportunities to realize their potential. However, they also have a variety of assets, not only their labour but also local knowledge, skills and networks with which they confront challenges.¹ The values that underpin volunteerism, as discussed in Chapter 1, help to ensure that these assets are shared for the benefit of the community.

There is growing evidence from developing countries that the income poor are both givers and receivers of help

There is growing evidence from developing countries that the income poor are both givers and receivers of help. They have significant capacity to assist one another through volunteerism, in association with formal organizations and also through informal channels of mutual aid. A study of five countries, covering Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, highlighted how the volunteerism of people from poor backgrounds was part of community coping mechanisms.² Another study in South Africa revealed that people who were poor and those who were not were equally likely to give volunteer time. Poor respondents and respondents from rural areas were more likely to have volunteered than non-poor respondents or those from urban areas.³ The same study found that self-managed, volunteer-based mutual aid groups are found throughout the country. These social structures are open and accessible to all community members and therefore can be said to have “public good characteristics”.⁴

Unmet needs or unresolved problems are the context within which people seek support from others. Such needs and problems are also the context for providing support to other people. Where service delivery to poor commu-

nities is weak due to scarce resources, or where governments simply fail to provide for their citizens, volunteer-based community initiatives typically emerge in response.⁵ The response may also take the form of a collective voice to advocate on behalf of citizens and insist that governments carry out their obligations. Fragile economic conditions, poor health, limited or non-existent access to healthcare systems, and poverty in general are powerful incentives for people to help one another and to find a common voice.⁶ For the income poor, deep engagement in social relations and volunteer-based collective action is entirely rational behaviour given its potential for enhanced psychological, cultural and economic well-being. This chapter explores how people, through volunteerism, build on their assets to address the impact of poverty.

WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS?

There are 1.4 billion people in the world living in extreme poverty of whom about 70 per cent live in rural areas.⁷ Through the lens of sustainable livelihoods, we are going to examine the contribution of volunteerism to their lives. The term “sustainable livelihoods” reflects the shift towards a more people-centred approach to development following the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report⁸ and the first UNDP *Human Development Report* in 1990.⁹ The concept of sustainable livelihoods was then developed further by research institutions including the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex and the Overseas Development Institute in the United Kingdom; NGOs such as CARE and Oxfam; and development organizations including DFID and UNDP. The commonly used definition is a livelihood that comprises the capabilities, assets, which include both material and social resources, and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with, and recover from, stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource

base.¹⁰ During the 1990s the livelihood approach was adopted by many development agencies, including the World Bank and UNDP.

A livelihood approach is a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for development. It focuses on the multiple resources, skills and activities that people draw upon to sustain their physical, economic, spiritual and social needs. Ultimately, it is an attempt to redefine development in terms of what human beings need¹¹ and, we would add, in terms of what they can contribute to one another's well-being.

The livelihood approach is a valuable concept for articulating the relevance of volunteerism to people's lives, especially those of the income poor. It is complementary to another concept, namely the rights-based approach to development, concerned with "empowering" the beneficiaries of development as well as giving greater legitimacy and moral force to their demands.¹² Within this frame of reference, this chapter considers six types of capital assets in terms of their relevance to volunteerism.¹³ These are:

- *Social capital*: social resources, including networks, social relations and associational memberships, based on the trust, mutual understanding and shared values on which people draw when there is a need for cooperation
- *Human capital*: skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health
- *Natural capital*: soil, water, forests and fisheries
- *Physical capital*: basic infrastructure such as roads, water and sanitation, irrigation, schools, health posts, energy, tools and equipment
- *Financial capital*: savings, credit, income from employment, trade and remittances

- *Political capital*: awareness and participation in political processes supported by relevant legislation, policies and institutions.

VOLUNTEERISM AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital in the context of sustainable livelihoods refers to the range of connections on which people draw in their daily lives. Such connections are a clear manifestation of volunteerism. They include membership of both informal local associations and of more formalised groups governed by accepted rules and norms. The concept of social capital also encompasses relations of trust, reciprocity and exchanges that facilitate cooperation and may provide a basis for informal social safety nets among the income poor.¹⁴

Depending on the nature of the needs, networks may be simple sets of individual connections or traditional social structures, such as family, community, village, ethnic and professional groups, or they may contain complex combinations of actors.¹⁵ From neighbouring initiatives in the United States¹⁶ to village-level mutual aid systems in developing countries, what they have in common is the key attribute of volunteerism. This is the "glue"¹⁷ that holds a group or society together by motivating people to help others in the community and, in the process, to help themselves. Underpinning social capital is the notion of "relationships" which is at the core of volunteerism.

There is a rich global vocabulary to describe the phenomena. For example, for the Zulu people in South Africa, society is built around the saying *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, or "a person is a person through other people." In other words, one needs other people to advance one's individuality. The term *ubuntu*, meaning "humanity" in the isiZulu language, describes the African philosophy of "I am who I am because of those around me". In East Africa, a similar saying is embodied in the Swahili expression *mtuniwatu* meaning "a

The key attribute of volunteerism is the "glue" that holds a group or society together

Both health and education are high up on the MDG agenda and in both areas volunteerism plays a significant role

person is because of other people". It is a mindset that celebrates community and it is found all over the world: for example, *mutirão* in Brazil; *batsiranai* in Zimbabwe; *bayanihan* in the Philippines; *gotong royong* in Indonesia; *harambee* in Kenya; *shramadama* in Sri Lanka; *tirelosetshaba* in Botswana; *taka'ful* in Arab States; *minga* in Ecuador and Peru; and *neighbouring* and *barn raising* in the United States. In Sudan, *naffir* refers to a common practice of neighbourhood or community groups forming and disbanding when a job such as building a house or harvesting a crop is completed. *Naffir* benefits the community as a whole and often reaches across ethnic borders.¹⁸

In a number of countries, the state has promoted systems of mutual support based on traditional cultures of self-help. In Kenya, for example, the Swahili word *harambee*, meaning "let us all pull together" was the ideology adopted by Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of the country. The intention was to mobilize and unify the nation, rallying efforts and resources to promote faster national growth. Volunteerism was at its core, as it is for many other self-help systems in many countries. *Harambee* has connotations of mutual assistance, joint effort and community self-reliance. The government of Kenya has promoted *harambee* groups since 1963 "as a way to organize rural people around a new political base and indigenous values" and to encourage communities to work "collectively toward a common goal."¹⁹ With government support, *harambee* self-help projects have built schools, health centres, dispensaries, nursery centres, bridges and rural access roads throughout Kenya.

Another example of state-encouraged systems of self-help is *gotong royong* in Indonesia. This system is rooted in rural Javanese culture and refers to the principle of mutual help in a community. *Gotong royong* covers a wide range of public and private activities including maintaining rural infra-

structure, such as rural roads or irrigation facilities, emergency work to cope with natural disasters, mutual help for house construction or for daily agricultural operations, and support in organizing important ceremonies.²⁰

Literature describing the connections between social capital and volunteering focuses largely on developed countries and formal organizations. We, however, want to turn the spotlight on informal types of volunteerism in developing countries. We hope this will lead researchers, policymakers and practitioners to pay greater attention to how local self-help groups are formed, how they network and how they should be supported in developing countries.

VOLUNTEERISM AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Human capital is the possession of an ability to use skills, knowledge and good health to pursue livelihood strategies. Poor health and lack of education are core dimensions of poverty. Therefore, overcoming these conditions is both a primary livelihood objective in itself and a prerequisite for making effective use of other assets that enable the income poor to improve their livelihoods. Both health and education are high up on the MDG agenda and in both areas volunteerism plays a significant role.

Under the right circumstances, where volunteering is recognized and appropriately supported, it helps to build human capital. Yet the impact of volunteer action on volunteers is rarely considered in relevant academic literature. Where this has been studied, the results are revealing. For example, a study in the Philippines concluded that the recognition and satisfaction from volunteering, and the respect gained from their communities, were considered more important by the volunteers than material rewards.²¹ Another example comes from Iran. In 1992, the government mobilized women in urban

centres to spread family planning awareness. Some 100,000 women joined the campaign as volunteer health workers. Through their work, they earned respect and felt empowered. One woman said: *“Now I believe in myself and I feel I can help to change our lives in the neighbourhood. Now some women have set up their own savings clubs to help each other financially. I learn from others how we can make petitions and ask the municipality for what we need.”*²²

The role of the community health worker (CHW) was first highlighted in the Alma Ata Declaration adopted at the International Conference on Primary Health Care in 1978. Since then, CHWs have been key to extending health services to underserved rural areas in many developing countries. The World Health Organization defines CHWs as men and women chosen by the community and trained to deal with the health problems of individuals and the community and who work closely with the health services.²³ Primary healthcare systems require large numbers of trained and motivated healthcare workers to function. CHWs have a vital role to play in supporting public health systems under pressure. There is a worldwide shortfall of 2.4 million trained healthcare workers²⁴ with the highest deficits in Africa.

CHWs in developing countries help to ensure that people have access to health services that would otherwise be unavailable due to geographic remoteness, limitations of public services or lack of financial resources. They fill major gaps in health personnel in areas such as reproductive health services, child and maternal health, responses to HIV/AIDS, malaria prevention and polio immunization campaigns. With their local knowledge, CHWs can help to ensure that the most vulnerable population groups are reached and to provide services that may be more appropriate to people’s needs. They are active in the establishment of local health committees that promote village health centres and phar-

BOX 4.1 : Cambodian taxi drivers help fight malaria

Taxi drivers in Cambodia take passengers from point A to point B as they do everywhere else in the world. However, they have also become key to malaria control. Mobile and migrant workers often come for seasonal work from the south-eastern region of the country, where the disease is not common, to the western part of the country along the Thai border where malaria is endemic. As those workers are highly mobile, reaching them to raise awareness about malaria prevention and symptoms has proven difficult. Group discussions in the affected communities determined that taxis were the most popular mode of transportation for migrant workers. Since July 2010, as part of the Malaria Control in Cambodia Project, 32 trained volunteer taxi drivers have played malaria information on CDs or cassettes during their rides and provided additional information to the passengers. Sometimes, they have also helped to identify malaria symptoms among their passengers and driven them directly to the hospital. From August 2010 to May 2011, the taxi drivers reached out to 47,723 passengers of whom some 21,660 were migrant workers. A sharp drop in malaria cases over the past years cannot be attributed solely to the taxi drivers’ initiative. However, it is worth noting as an example that the Pailin province, a high-risk area, did not report a single casualty due to malaria during the above-mentioned period.

Sources: Soy Ty & Linna, [Chief of Party, USAID/Malaria Control in Cambodia, and Khorn Linna, IEC/BCC Specialist], Personal Communication. (2011, June 13)..

macies. They mobilize local people to join in campaigns in such areas as immunization, contraceptive use and the cleaning of places where disease might breed. Furthermore, CHWs help local organizations to tap resources to support local initiatives. Most importantly, CHWs serve as a bridge between professional health workers and communities. They help communities to identify and address their own health needs and assist in building awareness on the part of health-system managers and health authorities about those needs.²⁵

One study in five South Asian countries²⁶ indicated that CHWs can be extremely effective when undertaking clearly defined, concrete tasks such as a national health campaign. Nepal initiated a National Female Community Health Volunteer programme in 1998 which has now expanded to around 50,000 trained

volunteers across the country.²⁷ The volunteers, who are illiterate, are selected locally by mothers' groups. Their roles include maternal and child health, family planning and the treatment of diseases such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections. A study of the programme revealed that the main motivations to volunteer were gaining social respect and carrying out religious and moral obligations.²⁸ Brazil's Family Health Programme began on a volunteer basis and was later incorporated into official health programmes with paid staff. In Ethiopia and Malawi, CHW volunteers, trained and deployed to support expanded access to HIV and other health services nationwide, have also been fully integrated as regular staff into the national system of those countries.

In western Kenya, over 100 volunteer CHWs provide a "bare-foot doctor" service in Sauri Millennium Village. This programme was initiated by the United Nations Millennium Project and the Earth Institute at Columbia University. The volunteers are important providers and

disseminators of information. They play the role of advocates for family planning, HIV/AIDS testing and clean drinking water. They also assist health teams working in Sauri in birth registration, following-up immunization schedules and promoting the use of bednets. The role of CHWs can extend beyond prevention to curative functions.²⁹ A study in sub-Saharan Africa indicates that well-resourced CHWs are effective in managing non-severe pneumonia and malaria.³⁰

There is much debate as to whether CHWs should be volunteers supported in kind by the community or paid with funds from the community, NGOs or the government. Full-time salaried CHWs are rare but a range of financial incentives is often provided – and is necessary. One study in Kenya concluded that 62 per cent of households in the survey relied on the services of CHW volunteers. However, attrition rates among volunteers appeared to be high where they had to bear the cost of travel.³¹ It is often argued that, as CHWs are living in poor communities, they require at least a small income, otherwise relying on

BOX 4.2 : Education for building human capital

In 2009, one of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prizes went to the Tin Tua literacy programme in eastern Burkina Faso.

Tin Tua is an NGO specializing in literacy education. It means "let's help ourselves to develop" in Gulimancema, one of the languages spoken in Burkina Faso. Its literacy programme started in 1986 with educated youth volunteers from Burkina Faso who first received a three-week training programme held in two sessions. These teachers were then deployed to villages to teach basic literacy skills in five local languages. Their motivation was to give an education to children and adults who had not had the opportunity to go to school.

Today, up to 50,000 students, men and women, are trained every year to teach in villages of eastern and northern Burkina Faso. In addition to teaching in the different national languages, the programme offers French courses, thus opening doors to national exams. Tin Tua has extended its programme to Benin, Togo and Niger, all countries with low literacy rates, where its methods and outlook are likely to make a difference.

According to UNESCO: "Tin Tua's greatest achievement lies in the manifold changes brought into the daily lives of villagers. The programme has enabled farmers to better manage food production at the village level, for example, by taking measures to stock cereals in order to avoid speculation in times of famine. It has trained health workers, notably in the field of maternal health."

Source: UNV. (2011, January); UNESCO. (2009); SociLingo Africa. (2009, August).

them as volunteers for an important part of the health system is unsustainable.³²

There are, however, problems associated with paying CHWs. For instance, payments can be irregular or simply stop when the project ends. Moreover, the relationship of CHWs with the community changes once financial incentives are involved. Payments can “destroy the spirit of volunteerism and work against the volunteer philosophy of a sense of community”.³³ Even a small allowance can reinforce perceptions in the community that CHWs are employees. There is evidence that, when this happens, local people may withhold in kind support. Volunteer CHWs seek personal growth and development opportunities, training and peer support. Above all, they seek a good relationship with the community and the feeling that they have contributed through their volunteer work.³⁴ Some observers argue that non-monetary incentives such as training, provision of equipment and links with other CHWs should be emphasized.³⁵ Ultimately, the health sector constitutes an important channel by which the income poor can participate actively in the lives of their communities and gain dignity and respect.

VOLUNTEERISM AND NATURAL CAPITAL

Natural resources range from intangible public goods, such as the environment and biodiversity, to divisible assets used directly for production such as land, trees and forest products, water and wildlife. The relationship between natural capital and the vulnerability of the income poor is particularly close. Many of the shocks that impact on their livelihoods, and destroy natural capital, are themselves natural processes such as fires that destroy forests and floods and earthquakes that ravage agricultural land. Natural capital can also be depleted by expanding populations, declining resources and adverse terms of trade. The sustainability of natural resources is also affected by the levels of solidarity and sense of common purpose in a community.

The sinking of boreholes may affect groundwater while felling and marketing forest products depletes the soil and may exacerbate desertification. Access to, and use of, these assets may be inequitably distributed to benefit those who are better off. Watershed interventions, for example, are likely to benefit those who own more land and people living at lower elevation.³⁶

Knowledge of local natural resources resides at grassroots where needs and priorities are best articulated. Yet, local people may not have access to information on sound practices available in other parts of the world. This is where international volunteering combined with lo-

BOX 4.3: The Tongan giant clam sanctuaries

Giant clams are an endangered species owing to their dwindling population in the Pacific Ocean. Initiatives led by volunteers are underway to re-establish overexploited species. On Vava'u Island, Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific Ocean, an independent environment expert and volunteers from the NGO EarthRights International assisted island communities and the government in establishing giant clam sanctuaries in marine protected areas to preserve the population of Tokanoas, a typical local species of giant clam.

Over five years, around 200 volunteers visited Vava'u to collect information on the rapid decline of the clam population. This volunteer action provided evidence of the falling clam yields and inspired the creation of giant clam sanctuaries. This entailed placing adult clams in breeding circles in shallow protected waters. The establishment of giant clam sanctuaries with stocks of clams was successful thanks to the support of local leaders. Information disseminated by the media in villages raised awareness of preserving giant clams for the benefit of the community in order to ensure a food supply for future generations.

Today, the sanctuaries on Vava'u are considered part of the people's collective cultural obligation towards future generations. *“If anyone takes clams from the community sanctuary, he causes damage to sea production and does not meet his social obligations to himself, his family or his community,”* said a village district officer. Villagers have learned how to establish and maintain sanctuaries for clam protection and cultivation. Communities in Vanuatu and Fiji have replicated this example.

Source: Dinu. (2011); Community Environmental Research in the Pacific Islands. (n.d.).

International volunteering combined with local volunteer action can have a profound effect on livelihoods

cal volunteer action can have a profound effect on livelihoods. One example is in the South Pacific where external knowledge and local engagement resulted in the preservation of a vital ecological and cultural asset, namely giant clams, for future generations of South Pacific islanders.

Ethiopia is experiencing one of the worst cases of erosion in the world, with 70 per cent of the country affected. The spread of desertification aggravates land degradation and increases poverty. A UNV-supported pilot project, with the Ethiopian Federal Environmental Protection Authority in the Amhara and Oromia regions, involved training 200 youth volunteers in soil and water conservation, forest management, water harvesting, nursery establishment, bee-keeping and horticulture. The young people gained useful skills and hands-on experience while improving their own and their families' livelihoods. They constructed trenches and micro-basins to conserve soil and water and planted tree seedlings. Their efforts helped to raise awareness of environmental issues in surrounding communities which emulated their efforts.³⁷

VOLUNTEERISM AND PHYSICAL CAPITAL

Physical capital refers to basic infrastructure needed to support livelihoods. It includes adequate water supply and sanitation, affordable transport and energy, secure shelter and access to information. Much of this is normally considered to be part of public goods but, as for many other facets of livelihood assets, the income poor often do not have ready access to them and thus have to develop their own strategies. Poor communities are typically involved in communal activities such as constructing and maintaining feeder roads, schools, health centres, irrigation ditches and flood protections. As one author observed: "The rural communities cannot afford to fold their arms and wait for the government to bring all the facilities to them."³⁸

In the early 1960s, African leaders agreed that infrastructure was vital to lubricate the wheels of intra-African trade and to distribute its benefits. Yet, a major obstacle to trade among African countries remains the dire lack of infrastructure beyond urban areas or around coastal ports. A far-reaching road network is essential in sub-Saharan Africa to promote development. However, low levels of traffic make expensive paved roads difficult to justify while unpaved roads require more frequent maintenance interventions. Participation of local communities is therefore vital, not only to ensure maintenance but also to enhance a sense of ownership. One study identified some of the key factors for successful community participation: a large, homogeneous group that accrues benefits from having good roads; the ability of the community to organize; and previous positive experiences with similar programmes.³⁹ While payments are made to community members for road maintenance, volunteer-based local committees are in charge of the planning and monitoring tasks related to road construction.

Despite overall progress in the Millennium Development Goal to halve the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015, in sub-Saharan Africa only 60 per cent of the population enjoys such access. Moreover, eight out of ten people without access to an improved water source live in rural areas.⁴⁰ The key issue is a failure to plan for maintenance of boreholes, wells and hand pumps. Surveys of dysfunctional wells in Mali and Ghana indicated that 80 per cent and 58 per cent respectively required repair. "For the whole of Africa, the estimated number of dysfunctional water supply installations is 50,000."⁴¹ Massive top-down interventions made in the past decade by governments and donors have resulted in the provision of clean water only until the first major breakdown occurs.⁴² Where effective maintenance of water supply infrastructure takes place, it is usually because of the presence of well-functioning, volunteer village-

based water committees, which are a common feature in rural areas in many developing countries.⁴³ Their accountability to community members helps to ensure that there is local ownership and commitment to the upkeep of the facilities while the provision of basic training in maintenance ensures efficiency.

VOLUNTEERISM AND FINANCIAL ASSETS

Among the financial assets that underpin livelihood objectives are remittances. The “economy of solidarity” or the “social economy” refers to monetary income shared with people beyond the immediate family or household. Although the idea of social economy is not new, it rose to prominence at the second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2002. Social economy combines two concepts: “economy”, referring to the production of goods or services that contribute to a net increase in wealth, and “social”, referring to social profitability as opposed to economic profit. Social economy is understood to contribute to an active and empowered citizenship and to improved quality of life and well-being of the population, particularly through an increase in available services.⁴⁴ It is a form of solidarity that has evolved with growing numbers of migrants who generate income outside their home countries and send remittances to families and communities there. Financial transfers to developing countries have increased from 18 billion US dollars in 1980 to 30 billion US dollars in 1990; and 126 billion US dollars in 2004. That part of the transfers over and above what families need to survive is directed to the well-being of communities: ambulances, health stations, medicine, school buildings, teachers’ income etc. As such, it has the values of volunteerism at its core and should be included in our discussion of the assets of the income poor.

The “economy of solidarity” together with the “economy of volunteerism” and the “economy of tradition” were the subject of a 2005 colloquium entitled “The Hidden Actors

BOX 4.4 : Community volunteers taking the lead

Twenty years after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, many affected communities were still facing environmental, economic and social problems. Additionally, there was a widespread sense of “dependency-syndrome” with communities expecting the government to provide.

From 2002 to 2007, 192 Chernobyl-affected villages created 279 community organizations with the help of the Chernobyl Recovery and Development Project. This initiative aimed to support community-centred long-term development. It was implemented jointly by UNDP, UNV and the Ukrainian Ministry for Emergencies and Affairs of Population Protection from the Consequences of the Chernobyl Catastrophe.

Through democratic planning, community organizations engaged with local and regional governments and businesses to implement social, economic and infrastructure projects. More than 200,000 people benefited directly from community projects that brought heating to communities; improvements to the water supply system; access to computers and the Internet; and refurbished health centres, schools and youth centres.

Locally-mobilized resources accounted for more than 70 per cent of total project costs. Numerous activities were conducted independently of the project funding, some thanks to the efforts of volunteers from the communities. One example is the Kirdany village where Olga Kolosyuk leads the Dryzhba community organization. According to Ms. Kolosyuk, the 1000 inhabitants of her village now have access to safe drinking water because village residents took the lead in improving their own situation.

Source: Russel. (2007, December); UNV. (2006, April 26).

of Development”, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and organized by the Fondation pour l’Innovation Politique and the Institut Afrique Moderne.⁴⁵ With the participation of governments, the scientific world and civil society organizations, the objective was to examine major contributions to development that were underrecognized and to bring together their main actors including migrants and their associations. Among the outcomes of the meeting was a greater recognition of the impact that financial transfers of migrants have on local markets and their effect as an economic growth factor.⁴⁶

Volunteerism contributes to laying a sound basis for citizen participation in governance

VOLUNTEERISM AND POLITICAL ASSETS

Political assets are the power and capacity to influence decision-making through formal and informal participation in political processes. They include the freedom and capacity to collectively organize in order to claim rights, campaign for a cause and negotiate resources and services. This also involves active participation in support of national efforts for development and holding government and service providers accountable. We have seen already how activism is an important expression of volunteer engagement at all levels. The extent to which the income poor can count on political assets depends on many factors including legislation and the level of law enforcement; the nature of the institutions and public access to them; and people's awareness of their basic rights. The degree to which community members are organized greatly impacts on their ability to play a transformational role as does their

ability to occupy "public space" and to own the processes.

Volunteerism contributes to laying a sound basis for citizen participation in governance. It promotes and sustains feelings of being able to express one's views and to influence decisions that have an impact on one's community. This may come about through formal channels of civic engagement such as wards in South Africa, constituency development in Kenya, and panchayats in India. It may occur through civic associations and participation in social movements, protests and activism. There is abundant evidence that volunteer-based associations act as "training grounds" or schools of democracy. They impart key civic skills to citizens, from learning how to organize collective actions to running and speaking in meetings, advocating for issues and writing letters. Such action brings local issues into the political sphere while also helping people to take on responsibilities as citizens. From this perspective, the role of civil society organizations extends well beyond the usual functions of advocacy, monitoring and service delivery. Civil society provides space for people to engage politically and contribute, in a meaningful way, to building the democratic foundations of society.

In the context of democratic decentralization, moving the power base closer to people and their volunteer groups at local level can help to engender a political framework within which other assets can be mobilized. In the 1960s, for example, Uganda adopted a decentralized system with two categories of local governance. The first is government, merit-based appointment for technically led development interventions; the second is locally appointed leaders elected by adult suffrage to provide political guidance and supervision and to coordinate local development activities. In terms of the political and leadership contexts, and their effect on access

BOX 4.5 : Cross-border volunteering in Mexican Hometown Associations

Mexican Hometown Associations (MHTAs) are diaspora communities in the United States that send collective remittances to their home communities in Mexico. MHTAs also provide a sense of community for immigrants in the United States. The associations support civic works, such as the construction of health clinics, facilities and improvements in urban services in the former hometowns of their members. They support and finance various types of social projects selected through a volunteer network.

Grupo Union is an MHTA based in New York consisting of migrant workers from Boqueron, Mexico. Although members are busy and low-paid, they find time and motivation to meet weekly to pool their money. Members give what they can, usually in the range of 10 to 30 US dollars a week. The money is then deposited in a local bank to fund projects in Boqueron. The association supplements the contributions through raffles and other fundraising activities. Grupo Union has raised money for a kindergarten cafeteria, an ambulance, bought in New York City and driven 3,000 miles to Boqueron, and a 2,000-seat baseball stadium.

Source: Belizaire. (n.d.)

to services, community members noted that the decentralization of fiscal and administrative authority for resource utilization had led to improvements in the quality of services such as roads and water supplies.⁴⁸

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Using a sustainable livelihoods approach to address how the income poor engage in volunteer action helps to illustrate the broad range of assets available to them including their knowledge, skills and networks of relationships. It highlights the need to take such assets fully into account in projects and programmes aimed at reducing poverty. These assets are often mobilized through collective action based on the values of solidarity and reciprocity inherent in volunteerism. These are values which, as we argue elsewhere in this report, need to be promoted and nurtured. The examples provided make it clear that the benefits from volunteer action are many. They include reduced vulnerability with support from others through mutual aid arrangements; sustainable use of the resource base; access to health and education; innovative financial resource mobilization; and the transformative power of political activism. They also point to increased well-being in terms of enhanced self-esteem and sense of control over one's life.

Volunteerism in local communities can be especially empowering when resources are pooled and utilized to resolve some of the immediate development problems faced by people living in poverty. However, moving people out of poverty requires connections with an external world that is supportive. Investment is needed to ensure a favourable environment in which volunteerism can flourish. This includes local capacity-building in general, and training in particular, which in turn calls for sound knowledge of local institutions and leaders, issues and constraints, including competing interests.

BOX 4.6 : Volunteering for gender equity in Latin America

The poverty rate in Latin America would be 10 per cent higher today without the voluntary work carried out by women, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.⁴⁷ Yet women's contributions to development remain largely invisible in policies and budgets across Latin America. For the past five years, a UN Women and UNV regional programme has strengthened women's volunteer engagement through participatory processes, increasing their involvement in, and impact on, local decision-making and enhancing local, national and regional accountability.

In Bolivia, the programme provided training on rights and active citizenship, decision-making, negotiation and accountability. This significantly empowered women who had previously been excluded from decision-making processes, enabling them to become involved in planning municipal budgets in their communities.

For example, in one municipality in Tarija, women formulated their own project proposals and advocated for their inclusion in the municipal budget. As a result, authorities are now more aware of the importance of having gender-sensitive budgets. An agreement was signed to ensure inclusion of the women's proposals in the 2012 municipal budget. In the words of one of the women involved: *"This is an historical moment for the municipality. I was very proud to see that our volunteer efforts were recognized and produced results in favour of gender equity."*

Source: CEPAL. (2007).

Strategies are needed to ensure that local leadership and structures are responsive to the needs of the income poor, for example ensuring that there are mechanisms in place that allow access to information on local government programmes. Local institutions upon which volunteer groups depend for funds and other services to support livelihood initiatives need to be strengthened. Citizen participation and oversight of local government authorities, need to be in place to help to ensure transparency and accountability. Broader constraints such as corruption and clientelism, unresponsive bureaucracies and inconsistent administrative machineries all impact negatively on the income poor and prevent them from taking full advantage of opportunities for enhancing livelihoods. Volunteerism will flourish best

where such issues have been addressed and resolved. Nevertheless, the benefits of volunteer action are clear. Initiatives that rely on the

spirit of cooperation, burden sharing and self-help are clearly more likely to succeed than initiatives lacking those virtues.

5

CHAPTER 5

Volunteering as a force for social inclusion

We have seen the success of popular movements in forcing political change in key Arab states. That now needs to be followed by the difficult and detailed work of building more inclusive societies, economies and governance systems.

Helen Clark (2011)

Volunteerism enables people to play a fuller and more satisfying role in the lives of their communities and societies

WHAT IS SOCIAL INCLUSION?

The concept of social inclusion has grown out of concern over poverty, marginalization and other forms of deprivation. Social inclusion places people at the centre of policy-making. Its ultimate goal is to enable them to improve their own lives through the realization of opportunities. The World Bank definition of social inclusion is a “process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live.”¹

Social inclusion is a relative concept whereby exclusion is judged by considering the circumstances of certain individuals, groups or communities relative to others. It is also a normative concept that places emphasis on the right of individuals to participate in the life of their communities. Social exclusion is a process whereby individuals, groups or communities are pushed to the edge of society, cut off from community networks and activities, and prevented from participating fully on account of their poverty, poor health, lack of education or other disadvantages. This may be the result of discrimination or an unintentional outcome of policies. Access to decision-making bodies is dimin-

ished and there is often a feeling of powerlessness to affect daily life.

The 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen affirmed that the most productive policies and investments are those that empower people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. It called for a “society for all where every individual has rights, responsibilities and an active role to play.”² Five years after Copenhagen, at the special session of the General Assembly in Geneva, governments recognized volunteerism as: “an additional mechanism in the promotion of social integration”³ and agreed on the need to raise “public awareness about the value and opportunities of volunteerism” and to facilitate “an enabling environment for individuals and other actors of civil society to engage in volunteer activities and for the private sector to support such activities.”⁴ The recognition of volunteerism as a path to inclusion signified a move away from the perception of a gift relationship, whereby one side gives and the other receives, towards a reciprocal relationship in which both sides benefit.

The summit was a seminal moment in the discourse on volunteerism. The focus of this chapter is on the benefits that volunteerism, with its universality and values base, can bring to people who experience some form of exclusion. Among these benefits is the space provided by volunteerism which enables people to play a fuller and more satisfying role in the lives of their communities and societies. This in no way diminishes the important work of the vast array of organizations and programmes, many involving volunteers, that provide direct services to people who are considered excluded. However, in this report we want to turn the spotlight on aspects of volunteerism that are widely experienced but that receive little exposure.

BOX 5.1 : Volunteerism is a social behaviour

A notion is beginning to emerge of volunteerism as a form of social behaviour rather than as a category of person: the “volunteer”. The reciprocal relationship that underpins this behaviour is understood to include benefits accruing to volunteers as well as the “beneficiaries”. This notion will have major implications for policies focused on promoting and strengthening various forms of voluntary action. It is also starting to impact on discussions on social inclusion with volunteerism being one way out of exclusion.⁵

Source: UNDESA and UNV. (2007, November).

THE LEVELS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

At the level of the individual, volunteer action can help people to overcome feelings of personal isolation and reduced self-worth. Volunteers come into contact with others face-to-face or, increasingly, online in circumstances that can help to enhance feelings of belonging and of contributing.⁶ Volunteerism reduces stresses in life and combats feelings of loneliness. People who are excluded often experience a sense of shame and failure and lose hope of affecting their circumstances. Through volunteering, people can tackle some of the underlying causes of social exclusion such as lack of employment, education and health.

Volunteering can improve employability by enhancing a person's vocational and social skills.⁷ Contacts arise through social networks that people form through volunteering and these can lead to securing useful references and even finding a job. Individuals who have experienced poverty and homelessness may work with others in need as a way of elevating their own status.⁸ Through volunteering in counselling, advising and supporting others, people are able to move from being service recipients to service providers which can be empowering.⁹ Identities are expanded as people see that they have something to give to their community by volunteering.¹⁰ The element of recognition of people's volunteer contributions is an important aspect of belonging.

At the level of communities, where some groups, or the entire population, suffer from exclusion, volunteerism fosters an enhanced sense of belonging and community well-being that helps to build resilience.¹¹ In rural communities, in particular, people are better able to mobilize through volunteerism to manage resources, minimise the impact of climate change and create sustainable practices that lead to a better quality of community life.¹² Many poor urban communities

BOX 5.2 : Retired and engaged

Rui Oliveira, a retired person with more than 40 years of experience in information and communication technologies (ICT), created a news portal for the Ghana-based NGO Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa (VPWA). The portal, which provides information for and about NGOs in Africa, has 2000 subscribers and boasts 15,000 visitors per month.

"Rui created the web portal NGO News Africa in 2009 and has been the webmaster ever since. He recently re-modified the website, integrating so many amazing features! Communication with Rui was joyful and fulfilling and we are grateful for his dedication to serving the NGO community in Africa," says Portia Sey, Volunteer Manager of VPWA.

With NGO News Africa, VPWA provides a one-stop shop where journalists, donors, researchers, volunteers and other interested people worldwide can find information about the work of NGOs across Africa. Every day, Rui publishes new information provided by online volunteers who act as correspondents for different African countries. This includes articles on development issues and news about the NGOs, as well as information on grant opportunities for NGOs.

Rui, who is from Portugal, explains: *"I was in Guinea-Bissau, where my concern with people who have less on Earth, and my wish to help, originated. After retiring from something that I love, my work in ICT, I was completely stressed and lost. That was when a friend from Africa told me about online volunteering."* He continues: *"After I joined, my life changed completely. I feel useful and the stress is almost gone. When I see that I have more free time, I go and look on www.onlinevolunteering.org for another NGO that needs help."*

Source: UNV. (2010c).

experience urban decay, crime and social fragmentation. Living in challenging environments can carry a stigma that attaches itself to the entire community.¹³ People living in such communities often volunteer through local groups and organizations to provide basic services and to engage in activism and campaigning. Action of this type can challenge prevailing views outside the community that local people are passive or have violent tendencies. Such perceptions hinder moves towards inclusion.

BOX 5.3 : Traditional help in Brazil - *mutirão*

In Brazil, *mutirão* is a traditional system of mutual help originating in rural areas, during harvest time. The União Nacional por Moradia Popular (National Union for Popular Housing) has applied the term to the collective building and management of community housing. Through collective work in the *mutirão*, participants working together do not only acquire new technical skills but also get to know one another better. They learn about their rights and more.

"In the mutirão I found my identity and I could obtain what I needed whether transport or health! ... I met a lot of people I hadn't met before. I discovered there were a lot of people who had a keen interest in helping others who struggle daily. Before, my life was very limited. I didn't know what a community was, what was a movement. I had no political awareness. Here, I have begun to understand my rights. This has been a revelation for me." Christian Leray, member.

Source: União Nacional por Moradia Popular. (n.d.); Leray. (n.d.).

At the country or global level, volunteerism through campaigning and activism can bring about changes in policies that may be hindering inclusion. We have seen this in the high-profile women's rights movement and in lower-profile, but equally effective, campaigns for recognition of the status of indigenous people and for the provision of facilities for people with disabilities. As a vehicle for fostering, deepening and sustaining participation, volunteerism plays a significant role in determining how all people can be engaged in shaping their destiny beyond their own immediate locality.

The international movement ATD Fourth World works with volunteers at grassroots level to improve the well-being of people living in extreme poverty. In addition, its volunteers are advocates at country and global level for the rights of the most disadvantaged populations in areas such as child nutrition, gender violence and social inclusion.¹⁴ Global initiatives such as the Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Women's Movement Campaign and the Global Call to End Poverty have all relied

on the desire of people to engage on a volunteer basis in causes to which they are personally committed. In addition to mobilizing public support and helping to bring about change, these volunteer-based initiatives have also provided opportunities for people from every corner of the globe to share their ideas and aspirations and, through participation, be part of a more inclusive world.

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF GROUPS THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

The economic, political and social dimensions of exclusion impact on disadvantaged groups in different ways. In this section, a few groups in society are highlighted with particular focus on women and young people. The aim is to illustrate key aspects of the exclusion that specific groups face and how, through volunteerism, people can find a way towards inclusion.

Women

Across the world, women are more likely than men to live in poverty.¹⁵ In many places, women's lack of education and health care is an enduring issue.¹⁶ In some regions, women still struggle for the right to vote and to own property. In this context, it is surprising that the impact of volunteerism on women's lives is rarely researched, especially if we consider the widely studied impact of the women's rights movement. Yet, this women's rights movement achieved so much because of the commitment of so many women, and men, to engage in volunteer action to achieve their goals. As mentioned in Chapter 1, we recognize that volunteer action may reinforce existing gender roles. Yet there are also signs that, through volunteerism, women are challenging their traditional place in society and experiencing greater empowerment.

In India, volunteering in social movements has helped to address social and political issues that affect women's lives.¹⁷ Through volunteering to build institutional shelters for abandoned and abused girls, women have bonded

Through volunteerism, women are challenging their traditional place in society

BOX 5.4 : Political participation of indigenous people

Volunteering in the form of social activism can help to influence decision-making, national policies and representation. Over the last 20 years, great progress has been made in Mexico in increasing the representation of indigenous peoples who represent a population of 15.7 million or 13 per cent of the total national population. While indigenous peoples represent 40 per cent or more of inhabitants in more than 30 per cent of Mexican municipalities, they account for only eight out of 500 members of the lower house of parliament.

According to the recent UNDP *Human Development Report on Indigenous Peoples in Mexico*, multiculturalism can lead to greater human development if it brings wider political participation from local to national level.

"In our communities, we do not elect someone just for the sake of the election; in order to reach a position, one needs to start from the bottom where the community can get to know you," says Marcelino Nicolás, a member of the civil association Servicios al Pueblo Mixe. Civil society groups play an important role in articulating new ideas and bringing them to the attention of the general public as well as, ultimately, influencing decision-making. It is partly thanks to such initiatives that, during the first half of the 1990s, Mexico began a number of reforms of laws and institutions, recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples.

For the last four years, UNDP has provided support to Mexican electoral bodies to further promote the political and electoral participation of indigenous peoples.

CDI. (2010); CIVICUS, the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) & United Nations Volunteers (UNV). (2008); Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (UNDP) & Organización de los Estados Americanos (OAS). (2010).

and addressed issues of gender-based violence. They have created social networks and generated resources that protect mistreated and forgotten members of society. This work has raised the profile of women, lifting some into leadership roles, and is influencing policies that affect women. When volunteer activists spread information about such initiatives, there is greater public understanding of the importance of the issues.¹⁸ Women in Latin America have been able to influence policy on gender through their work as volunteers in a gender budgeting programme.

In Arab states, volunteerism has for long been perceived as a concept adopted from the West with a focus on "service volunteer" models involving the provision of assistance through formal organizations.¹⁹ The reality is very different as recent developments in the region have shown. In fact, "volunteerism" and "civil society" are just new names for age-old traditions in the region. Social activism has long been embedded in associations such as

Muslim consultative councils and parallel secular organizations aimed at combating poverty and underdevelopment.²⁰

Women played a major part in the Tunisian demonstrations that sparked the Arab Spring at the beginning of 2011, often marching up Bourguiba Avenue in Tunis with their husbands and children behind them. In Yemen, columns of veiled women poured into Sana'a and Taiz to affirm their right to participate, along with men, in peaceful demonstrations for regime change.²¹ To advocate for social and political change, they used all the means of expression at their disposal: word of mouth, newspapers, Internet and social media. The power of women's activism not only played a major role in bringing about change but also succeeded in breaking down stereotypes about the passivity of Arab women.

Women volunteer in many informal ways within their communities. In rural areas, particularly where poverty levels are high, women

BOX 5.5 : Maasai Pastoral Women's Council

The Pastoral Women's Council (PWC) is a women-led, community-based organization founded in 1997 in Tanzania to develop solutions to address the poverty and marginalization of Maasai women and children. Through its large volunteering network, the council has made significant impacts in three key problem fields for Maasai women: education and gender equality, financial independence and property ownership rights, and their participation in the political process.

One example is the Olosirwa Women's Action Group, set up in 2002, with 25 members and a loan of one million Tanzanian shillings from PWC. Half of the members of the group had the lowest income in the village. They began by buying cattle in Tanzania and selling them at the nearest market in Posimoro, Kenya. They used the profit to build improved houses for the four poorest and most disadvantaged women of the group and completed 16 houses for other members. The group farms maize and beans; sells sugar, tea and beadwork; and supports members to buy dairy cows. It is also involved in raising awareness of HIV/AIDS using Maasai songs and runs an adult education programme and nursery schools. There are currently 49 members in the Olosirwa Women Action group. Collectively, they own 45 goats, 4 cattle and 51 farms.

Source: Ngoitiko. (2008); T. Oleyaile, [Assistant Coordinator: Pastoral Women Council of Tanzania], Personal Communication. (2011, July 14).

volunteer as a way to combat poverty and contribute to the economy.²² They are more likely to achieve inclusion when they organize into functional groups that address social and political issues within their societies and extend mutual support to initiatives towards economic emancipation. This is challenging in situations of minimal education and literacy. Nevertheless, local volunteer-based organizations established and run by women are found throughout the developing world.²³

Young people

The World Bank World Development Report for 2007²⁴ states that the number of 12-24 year olds is set to rise to 1.5 billion by 2035. Young people represent a huge potential for development. There is a pressing need to build on this potential, to open doors to all forms of youth participation including volunteering. Young people should not be seen as passive recipients of resources or as the cause of society's problems. Rather, they should be recognized as important contributors to development in their countries. However, as the global economy and political and social institutions undergo major changes, young people face huge constraints due to their lack of capacity and limited opportunities to partici-

pate. Indeed, young people are among the groups most susceptible to social exclusion characterized by unemployment, poverty, crime and drug use.²⁵ Youth crime in developing countries is on the rise, with a 30 per cent increase from 1995 to 2005.²⁶ Also rising is the participation of young people in armed conflict, especially through recruitment into gangs and rebel organizations. Although historically young people have faced social exclusion, the recent economic downturn has created a crisis which particularly affects the younger generation.

Employment is a critical area in any discussion of paths to inclusion for young people. In this respect, volunteerism is one route by which young people can improve their employment prospects by enhancing job-related skills. There is much anecdotal information to show how volunteering can play a valuable role in the transition from schooling to paid employment in both developed and developing countries. One survey in the United Kingdom found that 88 per cent of unemployed respondents believed that their volunteering would help them to get a job.²⁷ Research on the extent to which volunteering enhances employability skills needs to be greatly expanded so that

Volunteerism is one route by which young people can improve their employment prospects

policy can be informed by robust empirical evidence. A China Youth Daily survey of 1044 employers shows that more than 60 per cent of them prefer a candidate with experience of volunteering in the remote western region of China. Employers said that the values that they sought in their employees were the dedication, integrity and good communication skills displayed in volunteering service. The vast majority of those employers who employed former volunteers said that they were satisfied with their performance.²⁸

However, it is also essential not to see volunteering solely as preparation for employment. Young people themselves usually refer to important aspects of giving their time to help others, to make changes that matter to them, gain new experiences, meet new people and have fun. Moreover, there are wider benefits to individuals and society in terms of health, well-being and community engagement. Empirical studies support the view that young people who participate in volunteerism tend to develop positive social behaviours that mitigate delinquency.²⁹ Volunteerism constitutes an important part of the transition to responsible adulthood.³⁰ It is a valuable vehicle by which young people are exposed to active citizenship.

Increasingly, developing countries are introducing volunteerism to young people through the educational system. Service learning has grown rapidly over the past few decades in South America. In some countries, such as Venezuela, service has been introduced into secondary grades.³¹ This is not volunteering in the sense of having free choice. However, exposure to civic service at an early age can lead to involvement in volunteerism in later years. For many young people, volunteerism is their first experience in a work setting. It helps them to form attitudes and opinions about work and to gain exposure to benefits that they can pass on to others through volunteerism.³² There are also benefits to be gained from building peer relationships with other volun-

BOX 5.6: Increasing youth employability in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Students in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, increase their future employability through a social volunteering programme. Around 300 secondary school students and ten university students engage every year in a programme run by Omladinski Komunikativni Centar (OKC) (Youth Communication Centre). The volunteers break down stereotypes and prejudices among students by organizing leisure activities for children and young people with learning difficulties; orphans and young people without parental care; and older persons and young people with physical disabilities.

Tanja Grujic, who volunteered in the Center Zaštiti Me (Protect Me) for children with special needs, said: *"I have been always thinking how I can help others? When I started with my education studies, I had in mind primarily helping children. I contacted the OKC and found out that they are planning to start engaging volunteers in the Center Zaštiti Me. As fashion design and tailoring are my hobbies, I decided to start a tailoring workshop with children from this centre."* Tanja adds proudly: *"I feel hours spent with these kids are so useful for me. This experience fulfils me as a person, allows me to taste life and expands my knowledge and experience."*

Conducting creative workshops, organizing excursions and playing games has an additional impact on the students: they develop personal and social skills that complement the theoretical knowledge gained during their studies. Through these practical skills, the students become more competent and competitive on the labour market.

Source: J. Jevdjic, [Executive Director, OKC], Personal Communication. (2011, July 13-27).

teers, forming adult networks and developing relationships with those who are served by their efforts.³³ These social connections all facilitate greater inclusion. In Latin America, youth unemployment stands at around 22 per cent, and as high as 40 per cent in some countries.³⁴ In the region, volunteerism in the form of youth civic service is seen as serving the dual purpose of contributing to development and preparing young people for employment.³⁵

Where young people are concerned, two sets of considerations are necessary. Firstly, there is the sort of society that they are going to inhabit as they move into adulthood with all the responsibilities that this entails. Secondly, there are the barriers that they may confront on account

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engaged**

of factors such as religion, ethnicity or general stereotyping. This is where volunteerism, with core values such as mutuality and respect, can play a significant role. Volunteerism stresses active involvement in society. As we observed in Chapter 3, new ways of volunteering are opening up that widen the opportunities for participation. Education can play an important role in inculcating civic attitudes. At the wider level, the media, governments and volunteer involving organizations all have an important influence on the lives of young people. Encouragement is needed to promote news about the contributions of youth including reports by young people themselves. Governments need to promote a climate in which needs and interests of young people are fully respected and to ensure that infrastructure is provided. Volunteer involving organizations should be proactive in engaging young people. Healthy societies need young people who are involved with their communities. Volunteer action can be a highly effective route towards such involvement.

Older persons

Older persons have traditionally been active contributors to their societies. Indigenous people in particular have long recognized the valuable contributions that elders make in perpetuating and enriching society. Ageing trends in many parts of the world are contributing to awareness of the social dimensions of ageing. The first United Nations World Assembly on Ageing, held in 1982 in Vienna, and follow-up conferences have led to the adoption of global, regional and country plans of action that recognize the role of volunteerism in active ageing. The 20-year review of the Vienna conference, which took place in Madrid in 2002, in its first recommendation stressed that a society for all should provide older persons with the opportunity to continue contributing. Such contributions extend beyond economic activities to include voluntary activities in the community. These need to be recognized as contributing to the growth and maintenance of personal well-being.

The contribution made by older persons to society through volunteer action is vast. Volunteering itself can be a valuable asset in keeping older people active and engaged. This is an important observation since research, mostly in developed countries, indicates that older people are particularly vulnerable to exclusion. This is especially true of those who have left the labour market and those with weak family ties.³⁶

Data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) confirm that older people at risk of social exclusion are less likely to be involved in voluntary activities. However, when they do volunteer, the impact on them can be significant.³⁷ Studies have found that volunteering in later years of life can contribute to reducing the risk of social exclusion. Aside from age-related ailments, older persons often suffer from mobility restrictions or isolation. Volunteering can lead not only to higher activity levels but also to better integration and inclusion in society.³⁸ These findings are backed up by the statement in the *Guide to the National Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* that emphasizes the importance of older persons' "participation in the countries' broader social and cultural life, challenging negative stereotyping and exclusionary practices".³⁹ Volunteerism is a universal channel for such participation.

People with disabilities

For societies to achieve social inclusion, all members must feel that they are able to contribute in a meaningful way.⁴⁰ People with disabilities often face social exclusion based on misunderstandings and prejudices that depict them simply in terms of their disability and not in terms of the contributions that they can make. Like other excluded groups, they are often perceived as passive recipients of the actions of volunteers rather than as active volunteers themselves. The charitable or "giving" perception of volunteerism prevalent in the developed world reinforces this attitude. Volunteerism

also has an image problem for many people who feel that, because of their disability, volunteer action is not for them.⁴¹

The result is that people with disabilities are less likely to volunteer. In the United Kingdom, for example, in 2008 just 32 per cent of adults with disabilities volunteered with organizations compared with 41 per cent of the general adult population. This was due to factors such as lack of special equipment, inappropriate premises, the extra cost of travel and the need for support workers.⁴² In one study, an informant suggested, with respect to the image problem, that researchers consider the term “activists” for volunteers with disabilities as “people seek to move away from the traditional, passive image of people with disabilities as the subject of volunteering to a far more proactive image associated with activism.”⁴³

One example of just such an activist role occurred during the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in March 2011. People with disabilities often avoided going to designated evacuation centres because they knew that they would not receive support to meet their special needs. Among the volunteers who went from house to house to identify and assess needs were people with disabilities from the YUME-YAZA Foundation. The Foundation was established after the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake in 1996 to assist people with disabilities affected by natural disasters. These volunteers not only enabled people with disabilities in the affected areas to express their immediate needs but also communicated their wishes, and abilities, to live in their own communities rather than in residential care.⁴⁴

Migrants

Migrants face unique challenges in overcoming exclusion. Often they must surmount language barriers and learn local customs. Volunteerism can offer opportunities to practice language skills and to build social networks that can lead to greater inclusion. Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to participate in formal volunteer ac-

BOX 5.7 : Have wheels – will volunteer

Volunteerism can transform volunteers, leading to increased confidence, a strong sense of personal accomplishment and new professional aspirations. Motivated by these gains, volunteers with disabilities help to dispel stereotypes and change perceptions about what people with disabilities can and cannot do.

US citizen Shannon Coe served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay. There, local people with physical disabilities are not often seen outside their homes. Shannon says: *“When I pushed myself around my community, people stared at me curiously. Many had probably never seen an independent woman in a wheelchair before. Every time I heard “qué guapa” (hey you are great!) when going to work on my own, I knew that I had changed another person’s perspective.”*

Like Shannon, people with disabilities make valuable contributions as international volunteers, yet historically they have been underrepresented in volunteer programmes abroad. Those programmes often focus on serving the disability community rather than engaging volunteers with disabilities as leaders and contributors. People with disabilities have the same desire to contribute and gain skills as their non-disabled peers. With simple accommodations, creativity and a positive attitude, any international volunteer programme can be made accessible to volunteers with all types of disabilities.

Source: Scheib & Gray. (2010).

tivities.⁴⁵ Rural immigrant communities, on the other hand, experience high levels of informal types of volunteerism. These include volunteering in schools, in secondary language programmes and in organizations that help immigrants to integrate into society.⁴⁶

The potential of migrants volunteering for their own communities crosses borders. The concept of “co-development” is relatively new. It applies to development initiatives undertaken by migrants who live in developed countries to assist their communities of origin. Co-development is a means for migrants to share the benefits that they enjoy in their host countries and to continue to engage in the civic life of their communities in their countries of origin. One example is the Asociación Socio-cultural y de Cooperación al Desarrollo por Colombia e Iberoamérica (ACULCO). This is a

BOX 5.8 : Immigrant volunteering: New Zealand

The Change Makers Refugee Forum in Wellington is an NGO that helps refugee communities to participate fully in New Zealand life. In one initiative of the NGO, around 50 volunteers produced a DVD and resource kit to support families of Afghan, Assyrian, Burmese, Colombian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Iraqi, Oromo, Sierra Leonean, Somali, Sudanese, Rwandan, Ugandan and Zimbabwean descent.

The Strong Families, Strong Children Resource Kit took six months to complete. Phase one, during the resettlement of Assyrian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali and Sudanese immigrants, included workshops on family and identity. Phase two focused on family values and possible sources of conflict. In Phase three, a cast of volunteers and professional actors acted scenes for the DVD depicting refugee communities confronting everyday situations. For the participants, this was a chance to explore how to deal with the generation gap, cultural differences and pressures on families and how to raise children in a new country without the family support to which they were accustomed.

According to the volunteers: *"Our objective is to highlight that coming to a new country is a huge cultural shift. When refugees arrive in New Zealand, they only have six weeks of orientation... but adaptation to the new culture takes a long time and continues for their whole life."*

Source: Change Makers Refugee Forum. (n.d.); Johnstone, Personal Communication. (2011, July 16-22).

volunteer-based NGO created in 1992 by immigrants from Colombia living in Spain. It works for the integration of Colombians into the Spanish society and supports community-based development initiatives in Colombia.⁴⁷

People living with HIV/AIDS

While cases of deaths from HIV/AIDS have fallen in recent years, the estimated number of people infected globally is still over 33 million according to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).⁴⁸ Misunderstandings about the disease abound, creating a stigma for those infected. Volunteerism among HIV/AIDS patients and volunteerism by HIV-positive people themselves both help to create an understanding about the disease and the people affected by it. Nearly 75 per cent of HIV/AIDS affected people live in sub-Saharan Africa. Much of the support to patients and families comes through home health services provided by volunteers.⁴⁹ Volunteerism is one way for HIV-positive people to fight the stigma of HIV/AIDS, build their self-esteem and enhance their well-being.⁵⁰

The idea of drawing on personal experiences of people living with HIV to help to shape the

BOX 5.9 : Talking Positive about HIV: China

"I always tell people with a smile: HIV is a virus, not a sin! We are living with HIV and we can still make our own contribution to society," declares Xiaofeng, who contracted HIV through a blood transfusion. When this became known, he faced humiliation and discrimination but, eventually, he decided to speak out.

Despite regulations that prohibit institutional discrimination against people living with HIV, barriers remain in China. Fear of stigma often prevents people from accessing services and disclosing their HIV status to families and friends. The Positive Talks Project was initiated by Marie Stopes International China, a not-for-profit family planning and sexual and reproductive health-care organization, in 2007, with support from UNDP and UNAIDS, and in consultation with the National Centre for AIDS/STD Control and Prevention and the Chinese Association of STD/AIDS Prevention and Control. More than 40 people living with HIV from across China were trained as educational speakers and trainers. Subsequently, the Positive Talk speakers held training sessions for government departments, private sector enterprises, universities, media, NGOs and people in rural areas. In June 2008, five Positive Talk speakers trained 7500 Beijing Olympic volunteers on HIV awareness. Through their engagement, the Positive Talk speakers have been bringing about positive behaviour change and reducing discrimination against people living with HIV.

Source: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). (2010b, March 6); Luo Nan, [Project Manager, Positive Talks Project], Personal Communication. (2011, July 15).

response to the AIDS epidemic was formally adopted as a principle at the 1994 Paris AIDS Summit. Some 42 countries declared that the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV and AIDS (GIPA) was an ethical and effective national response to the epidemic. Volunteer community support groups involving HIV-positive people are increasingly part of HIV programmes in many countries. Much of the care for People Living with HIV and AIDS takes place in the home by individuals from among the immediate family, friends and from the community. The latter includes support groups and NGOs.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are many ways by which people can find their way out of exclusion through volunteering. For individuals, volunteer action can lead to improvements in feelings of self-worth. It can help to develop vocational skills and other competencies and assist in building networks. All of these contribute to feelings of well-being. At community level, volunteerism can lead to greater cohesion through the building of trust and the reduction of conflict. More generally within society, greater inclusion through volunteering brings economic gains and helps to develop strong and cohesive nations.

Volunteerism will become more integrated into social inclusion discourse when there is greater

recognition of the broad parameters of volunteerism as outlined in Chapter 1. The literature on volunteering and inclusion focuses largely on volunteer action in formally constituted organizations. This should be encouraged. However, volunteering by excluded groups generally takes place in an informal context. The more inclusive definition adopted by the international community, reflecting all forms of volunteer action, should help to make the role of volunteerism more prominent.

There is much that can be done. For example, governments can include volunteering in policies dealing with inclusion, encompassing both formal, organized and informal types of volunteering. The micro-policies of volunteering and the macro-policies for tackling social exclusion need to work in unison. For example, Access to Work legislation could be extended to include volunteering as could anti-discriminatory legislation. At the core of inclusion is recognition of the capabilities, not the disabilities, of individuals. It requires an open and flexible approach. Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector are all capable of proactive targeting of excluded groups, together with other segments of society, in order to involve them in volunteerism. If this were to happen, and more inclusive societies were to emerge, it would represent a major step forward in ensuring that the entire population enjoyed the multiple benefits of volunteerism.

Greater inclusion through volunteerism brings economic gains and helps to develop strong and cohesive nations

6

CHAPTER 6

Volunteerism, cohesion and conflict management

Volunteerism is a source of community strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion. It can bring positive social change by fostering respect for diversity, equality and the participation of all. It is among society's most vital assets.

Ban Ki-moon (2009, December)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about the links between volunteerism and social cohesion in situations of violent conflict. The World Development Report for 2011, *Conflict, Security, and Development*, states that 1.5 billion people today live in countries affected by political violence, organized crime, exceptionally high murder rates or low-intensity conflicts. Violent conflict is now seen as a key challenge to development as it deters investment, limits access to employment and educational opportunities, drains state resources and threatens governance. It erodes social cohesion and is becoming the primary cause of poverty.¹ For many people, living in the midst of direct physical violence is a “normal” part of life.²

Conflict is more or less normal in any ethnically or religiously plural society and open expressions of conflict are more likely to occur in democratic societies. The important question is how a conflict is managed, whether through institutions and social norms or through violence. There are various forms of violence including organized and individual crime and violence against women. Our concern here is with violent, armed conflict. The twenty-first century marks a break with the past as inter-state wars have declined sharply. In their place, there is strife within nations in the form of conflict at community and national levels. Here, people can contribute at every stage. Through volunteer action, they can ease tensions that may give rise to violent conflict; engage in conflict resolution; and create a common sense of purpose once the immediate conflict is over in order to prevent new violence. At the root of all such interventions are the civic values and desire for democratic engagement expressed throughout this report. As noted by UNDP: “Peace can be agreed by high-level leaders gathered around negotiating tables but such accords must be matched by initiatives which

promote the ability of society to deal with and overcome conflict in the short, intermediate and long-term. Peace building requires that communities learn to address the past, adjust to the present and plan for the future.”³

We will look at conflict through the lens of social cohesion. This can be created and reinforced by people supporting one another, largely at local level, through volunteer action. We consider volunteer-based interventions that can help to prevent tensions, mitigate the impact when tensions spill over into violence or assist recovery when the tensions subside. We also focus on women and young people as the two segments of the population most affected by violent conflict in addition to their role as real and potential peace builders. The remainder of this chapter will consider examples of volunteer action at three stages: pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict. However, we recognize that violent conflict does not occur in such a linear way.

SOCIAL COHESION AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

Social cohesion has long been considered a factor in promoting sustainable development, as was discussed in Chapter 4. Social cohesion as an attribute of groups also has a key role to play in the context of violent conflict. One way to describe social cohesion is a situation in which a society is characterized by two complementary features. The first feature is an absence of severe inequalities in terms of income or wealth; racial, religious or ethnic tensions; or other forms of polarization. The second is the presence of strong social bonds demonstrable in terms of trust and norms of reciprocity. Such societies have an abundance of voluntary associations in which different groups in society are free to participate. There are also structures and institutions, such as an independent judiciary and an independent media, that support conflict management.⁴ It is generally under-

Volunteer-based interventions can help to prevent tensions, mitigate the impact when tensions spill over into violence or assist recovery when the tensions subside

stood that volunteerism entails a sense of belonging and active participation, of cooperation and solidarity.⁵ An individual with a sense of belonging, motivated by a strong commitment, will do something because it is the right thing to do rather than because it maximizes utility.⁶ As noted by the World Bank: "Social cohesion manifests in individuals who are willing and able to work together to address common needs, overcome constraints and consider diverse interests. They are able to resolve differences in a civil, non-confrontational way."⁷

Social cohesion is a key variable in the way in which people react to the risk of violent conflict, in their response when it actually breaks out, and in their actions in its aftermath. The stronger the social cohesion, the more likely it is that there will be webs of social connections and social interactions. Such webs define volunteer action. They lessen the risks of social disorganization, fragmentation and exclusion which, in turn, feed back into violence. As we have already seen, the value system underpinning volunteerism promotes norms of reciprocity and fosters trustworthiness. These favour efforts to reduce violent conflict and mitigate its effects. Of course, where networks are exclusionary on ethnic or other grounds, they can be manipulated for individual and group advantage and lead to extremism.⁸ During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, for example, Hutu power groups relied on hate propaganda "that bonded Hutu, primarily male unemployed and uneducated youth, to form such groups as the Interahamwe ("those who attack together" in Kinyarwanda) who were at the forefront of the genocide."⁹

Networks based on volunteerism that operate among people with common interests, whether they know one another or not, have a valuable role to play in situations of potential or actual violent conflict. In 2005, the Commission for Africa recognized their effectiveness in African society and qualified

them as non-state forms of governance. The Commission also highlighted their lack of visibility: "These are social networks that all too often can seem invisible to many from the developed world who have a different and more formal perspective on governance but which form much of the social capital without which many African communities could not function...For many people, their primary loyalty remains with the family, clan, tribe or other social networks, including, increasingly, religious groups."¹⁰ The contribution of volunteer action for peace often takes place in the context of such networks or through informal associations or mutual aid groups. As conflicts involve different factions or parties, peace building requires reciprocal contacts between all the stakeholders. In the case of violent outbreak, this includes all those taking an active role in the fighting. Such contacts may give rise to the creation of national or regional peace networks.

VOLUNTEERISM IN THE PREVENTION OF CONFLICT

People living their lives in a context of tolerance and mutual respect, with volunteer action as one characteristic of social harmony, are more likely to avoid being drawn into conflict situations. One important facet of cohesion is reciprocal participation and mutual help in community life, for example in important rites, ceremonies or events related to economic production.

In India, where confrontations between religious groups are not uncommon, it has been observed that inter-religious participation in festivals helps to prevent conflict. Hindus and Muslims participate in each other's celebrations and share each other's food. Joint peace vigils and marches are further examples of cross-ethnic collaboration. In the event of tensions, youth exchanges between India and Pakistan reduce the potential for conflict by strengthening mutual understanding. This is a Gandhian peace approach with young

The value system underpinning volunteerism promotes norms of reciprocity and fosters trustworthiness

people living together with one another's families and engaging in actions for peace. These programmes are entirely volunteer-based.¹¹ Labour-sharing groups are a common feature in the southern coastal regions of India although traditional agricultural labour sharing practices have been in decline. Hindu, Muslim and Christian families coming together to share their labour has reduced conflict and led to feelings of broader common identities. It has also created an understanding of differences and an appreciation of how, if those differences are not managed, they may lead to conflict or, conversely, how they can be used to help in conflict resolution.¹²

In situations of potential conflict, relationships within communities can act as a buffer by reducing the negative impact that situations of insecurity have on people's sense of well-being. People may

use local associations and collective action as a way of creating safeguards which generate feelings of protection for individuals. For example, the ability to spread information in networks about events that affect people's fears and insecurities can act as an important protective factor.¹³ The kind of resilience that counteracts potential violence can also be created through actions that strengthen volunteer-based community networks against violent events and through building trust in volunteer associations through education and training.

One study compared the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India with violent strife in the former Yugoslavia and in Northern Ireland. It confirmed the relationship between high levels of ethnic violence and low inter-ethnic or inter-religious civic engagement.¹⁴ This suggests that vigorous and well-integrated communities can serve as agents of peace. Strong associational forms of civic engagement, such as integrated business organizations, trade unions, political parties and professional organizations, are often able to control outbreaks of ethnic, religious and other forms of violence. This was also found to be the case in Bosnia, Cyprus, and Israel and Palestine.¹⁵

BOX 6.1 : Creating bridges across ethnic borders

Kikuyus for Change is a youth initiative for peace. It was formed in Kenya in 2008 by young Kikuyus during the post-election violence. The young people saw ethnicity as a primary source of their country's problems. This group of volunteers challenged tribal "bonding" by reaching out to young people in different parts of the country. They organized inter-ethnic dialogue platforms where young opinion leaders came together to discuss ethnicity. They also developed activities and strategies to promote neighbourliness and reconciliation. Press conferences were held in response to statements by political leaders that they perceived as negative to ethnic harmony. In addition, they spoke on radio and television and prepared articles for the print media on tribalism and the need for national cohesion. Kikuyus for Change also promotes interaction with Kikuyu elders and arranges for civic education on subjects including how members can participate in grassroots development programmes.

*"We must work from the basis that Kenya is a garment of many colours which is beautiful because each colour is present. We cannot be one colour because we would be dull. Some colours cannot run over others because we would be ugly. We must all stay in place and be bright."*¹⁸

Source: Mayor of Garissa [in Kikuyus For Change Secretariat]. (2010).

VOLUNTEERISM DURING CONFLICT

In Kenya, during the 2008 post-election violence, volunteer groups sprang up sporadically in the affected communities to help one another and to make connections with different ethnic groups. Cultural exchange visits were organized by elders from different parts of the country to promote intercultural learning. This type of initiative created new tiers of social interactions. Such interactions are separate from those mediated by politicians who had some responsibility for fuelling animosities between the communities.¹⁶ At the height of the violence, the Media Council of Kenya transcended the parochial interests that had gripped the country. The Council was able to persuade the national media to synchronise messages by relaying them for free for several days until people

started to reach out to one another. Online media blogging sites such as Ushahidi and Pambazuka kept people informed of atrocities and called on Kenyans to assist one another.¹⁷ Some NGOs provided logistical support to volunteers to reach out to communities, assisting them in peace building wherever possible.

In situations of potential conflict, relationships within communities and a sense of belonging to social networks can help to construct safeguards which generate feelings of protection for individuals.

External interventions based on volunteer initiatives, whether at the state or the community level, can be highly effective in turning people away from violent conflict and back to peace.¹⁹ For example, when inter-religious conflicts in India threaten, they are often resolved through the mediation of “peace volunteers” who engage with the parties to facilitate mutual reconciliation. In countries such as Bangladesh, India and Thailand volunteers are also at the core of “community policing” initiatives supported by local governments and security agencies.²⁰

VOLUNTEERISM IN THE AFTERMATH OF CONFLICT

In Sri Lanka today, the healing process between the two ethnic groups involved in the country’s long-standing conflict is being assisted by volunteers from the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. This is the country’s most influential national NGO which has a development strategy and programme of its own.²¹ Sarvodaya has mobilized thousands of volunteers trained in peace building, crisis intervention and non-violent dispute resolution, contributing to the longer-term rehabilitation process.

In Rwanda, where genocide resulted in the decimation of the male population, the task of rebuilding the country fell to women.²²

Women with access to land formed groups structured like the pre-war mutual aid associations. The purpose was to help each other with agricultural production and to build houses and establish savings and credit schemes to finance income-generating activities. These reciprocal initiatives enabled women to gain social status outside their traditional roles and to secure entitlements such as greater power and economic independence.²³

Volunteerism can be especially effective in building cohesion and peace when people

BOX 6.2 : Muslim Volunteering Organization in the Philippines

“Believing in change but keeping the faith” is the motto of the Muslim Volunteering Organization for Peace and Development in the Philippines. Established in 2004, Kapamagogopa Inc. (KI) is actively involved in peace-building initiatives in the Mindanao region where antagonism between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has fuelled conflict between Christians and Muslims. Some 69 volunteers have been deployed since 2005 to 23 Muslim and Christian community NGOs working in peace building, community dialogue and intercultural exchange. They have contributed about 150,000 volunteering hours, impacting on the lives of as many as 500,000 people.

The volunteers have contributed to establishing community water reservoirs. They introduced Sloping Area Land Technology, a simple low-cost method of upland farming suited to small farmers with limited tools, capital and exposure to modern agriculture. They taught organic farming methods to farmers, provided capacity-building training in disaster reduction and participated in the All Women Contingent in the Civilian Protection Component of the International Monitoring Team which is assisting the peace process in Mindanao.

KI has played key roles in mobilizing Muslim volunteers to help Christian NGOs to reach out to non-Christian communities. During the August 2008 conflict, KI volunteers delivered humanitarian relief to remote communities. They also contributed to peace-building initiatives, for example addressing *rido* (clan or family conflict) in the Mindanao community.

Source: Kapamagogopa Inc. (2011); Maraim Barandia, Personal Communication. (2011, July 17-22).

from previously opposing groups connect in new and innovative ways.²⁴ In Northern Ireland, for example, people reached out to others beyond their own religious or party group through collaboration on projects that helped to rebuild bonds of trust among divided communities. When inter-ethnic violence escalated in the Solomon Islands, in the South Pacific, in 2002 between Malaitan settlers and indigenous people of Guadalcanal, women from the capital Honiara, from all backgrounds, joined forces to issue a Women's Communiqué for Peace. Subsequently, the volunteer multi-ethnic Women for Peace group negotiated with the warring parties, raising awareness of the impacts of the conflict and helping the victims.²⁵

VOLUNTEERISM AND THE PROMOTION OF PEACE

Women

Women are most vulnerable to violent conflict but have the potential to be powerful agents for peace and transformation. As the 2011 World Development Report states: women's organizations "often play important roles in restoring confidence and sustaining

the momentum for recovery and transformation."²⁶ Civic participation through volunteerism can be a powerful mechanism for marginalised women, giving them a voice in decision-making. This is especially true of societies in which both custom and law clearly favour men in terms of control of key resources, landed property, income and financial resources and access to labour market and official positions. This is the case, for instance, in Ethiopia²⁷ and in Sudan (2009). Although women are active members of civil society, they face many obstacles in being fully involved in development and peace reconstruction.²⁸

Women are increasingly involved as combatants in violent conflict. However, for most women, such conflict aggravates their situation, leading some of them to organize resistance. In fact, there is a long history of women's participation in grassroots efforts to minimise hostility and begin reconstruction efforts.²⁹ In countries exposed to long wars such as Angola, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone, women have taken a lead role in a range of volunteer initiatives

BOX 6.3 : Community volunteering for peace

In the South Pacific, women are becoming more involved in community volunteer initiatives to build trust, understanding and peace. The Kup Women for Peace (KWP) initiative began in 1999 in the highlands of Papua New Guinea after decades of tribal fighting. The often brutal violence against women and children had included the burning of whole villages. After one particularly devastating battle, women from four antagonistic tribes formed the KWP with the aim of stopping tribal violence. KWP members, male and female, collected stories from villages that highlighted the desire for peace and shared them with men from warring tribes. They mediated peace agreements, conducted workshops on women's health and food production, and gathered local resources to help victims of violence.

In 2003, fighting broke out between two clans in the Western Highlands Province. In an effort to restore peace, seven women and five men from KWP spent two weeks camping on the battlefield. During the day, they used their loud hailer to call for a truce and advocate reconciliation. Every night, they stayed in a village of one of the warring clans and talked about peace. The warring men had never heard strangers, especially women, talk about peace in this way before. In the words of one of the men: "The police and the government have forgotten us. But these women cared for us enough to be with us for two weeks." Eventually, both parties stopped fighting and allowed the women to facilitate compensation payments.

Source: Dinh. (2011); Garap. (2004).

including leading protests, building peace initiatives, mobilizing resources, and recreating a sense of community. This was first recognized in the literature of the 1990s³⁰ and has since been gaining increased attention.³¹

The Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, defined the following as a strategic objective: "Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at all levels...and integrate a gender perspective in the resolution of armed or other conflicts...and ensure that bodies are able to address gender issues properly."³² United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) calls for greater participation of women in peace processes and conflict resolution.³³ However, as stated in 2003, "if Resolution 1325 has strengthened African women's claims to a seat at the peace table, it has not removed the formidable political, cultural and economic obstacles to their full participation as peacemakers or as citizens."³⁴ At that time, experiences of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the Mano River Union (MRU) countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, illustrated the barriers that women face in making their voices heard and in bringing about sustained change at political level.

In Latin America, the impact on women of the conflict in Colombia over five decades has remained hidden for years. The silence was broken when, in 1996, thousands of women from 300 grassroots and indigenous organizations across the country joined in sending a message against more fighting through the network Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres (Women's Peaceful Path). The volunteer-based network opened doors for women to play an active role in the peace-building process in Colombia.³⁵

Conventional views of women as passive onlookers in times of crisis need to be corrected.³⁶ However, as the experience of the Mano River Women has shown, women

BOX 6.4: Women struggle to be heard

The Mano River Basin is a cross border area covering Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone. With its porous frontiers facilitating the flow of weapons and combatants, it has been the focus of intense violent conflicts and refugee movements. The Mano River Union (MRU) Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) was launched in 2000 with the involvement of women leaders, rural women, women communicators, religious women and businesswomen from the four countries. While MARWOPNET has played a significant role in mediating conflict, it has been excluded from some parts of the formal peace process. According to one member, the problem is: *"the male mentality that says women are not supposed to be involved in these things. They will meet with you and say they appreciate our efforts and promise all the cooperation. But we don't see them doing that. They want to give us only observer status and that is what we cannot accept."*

Source: Fleshman. (2003).

who voluntarily engage in addressing conflict have to be prepared for a long struggle.

Young people

The youth population of the world is growing fast, especially in poor countries affected by violent conflict. There is increasing concern about the conditions that may encourage adolescents, especially males, to perpetuate violence and prevent the consolidation of peace processes. Young people are often seen as a security threat that needs to be disarmed and kept occupied.³⁷ Another narrative is that young people in conflict situations are passive victims characterized by vulnerability, rather than resilience, and without a role in influencing peace processes.³⁸ However, a vital resource for overcoming violent conflict is overlooked when young people are denigrated or feared or when their potential role in the solution is ignored.

In many conflicts, young people themselves have been fully involved in the fighting. However, when hostilities cease, they have little opportunity to become involved in peace-building processes at national level.³⁹ Moreover, the absence of mechanisms for participation, combined with high levels of

underemployment and unemployment, can result in further disaffection among young people in many low-income, post-conflict countries. This reinforces the very factors that gave rise to the violence in the first place. It should be remembered that, in countries where violent conflict is prevalent, many young people have been born in time of war. This is the only "social dynamic" that they know and they have developed coping mechanisms to come to terms with this reality of fear and violence. At times, this includes becoming violent themselves. The young people have few opportunities to express themselves in other ways. Engaging in peace activities may, therefore, bring a whole new perspective to them, encouraging non-violent forms of interactions with different groups.

The idea "that youth must be engaged as primary building blocks for peaceful futures"⁴⁰ is now beginning to be accepted. Volunteerism is one channel by which young people can engage, especially through youth organizations. Where young people work together through volunteer action, they can contribute to building bridges across cultures and gender and play their full part in peace

processes.⁴¹ A leading civil society organization in West Africa, the West Africa Network for Peace-building (WANEP), runs an Active Non-Violence and Conflict Transformation Programme for Youth providing opportunities for over 650 students and 450 community young people to become directly engaged in conflict prevention and management through peace clubs in Monrovia, Liberia.⁴²

After 20 years of war, northern Uganda is fortunate to have a dynamic, growing network of national and grassroots volunteers, many of whom are war-affected youth. One example is a group of female returnees from the Lord's Resistance Army. They have used skills acquired in the bush, such as midwifery and leadership, to carry out peace-building work through the NGO Empowering Hands. Established in 2004, the NGO set up peer support groups for released abductees transitioning to freedom. It provided them with counselling and helped them to re-enrol in school.⁴³ Empowering Hands is a well-known success story. Throughout northern Uganda, there are many volunteer youth groups that have also demonstrated similar potential with the capacity to form the next

BOX 6.5 : Youth promote post-conflict recovery in Liberia

The Liberia National Youth Volunteers Service (NYVS) enables college graduates to contribute to reconstruction and development in Liberia in the aftermath of the 15-year civil conflict. The programme offers training to graduates in education, health and agriculture for one year. It then deploys the graduates as national volunteers around the country.

The national volunteers teach in schools and administer health awareness campaigns. They work to improve the situation of women, to advocate for girls' education, end gender-based violence and discriminatory practices, and develop peace-building campaigns to reduce divisions and polarization. Where they have served, people have been more willing to volunteer and parents have wanted their children to participate.⁴⁵

Liberia also faces high unemployment, especially among young people. The NYVS has enabled graduates to cultivate skills and gain professional experience. Over 80 per cent of the first 67 national volunteers from 2008 are currently employed in the public and private sector. Of the 121 from the second batch in 2010, over 50 per cent are employed and 3 per cent are pursuing further studies. A third batch of 128 national volunteers completed their assignment in June 2011.⁴⁶

Source: Isaac Bropleh, [Project Manager of the Liberia National Volunteer Youth Service Programme], Personal Communication. (2011, July 13).

generation of civil society. However, being loose associations, they lack official legal status and are unable to absorb grants.⁴⁴ Much could be achieved if governments and donors recognized the presence of youth initiatives in conflict situations and worked towards building the capacity of the groups involved and their leaders.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, we examined the relationship between volunteerism and violent conflict from the perspective of social cohesion with particular focus on the situation of women and young people. The dynamics that generate violent conflict, and determine the course that it takes, are complex. They do not respond to a standard set of remedies. However, the values of solidarity and mutual support, that help to create cohesion in soci-

eties and also underpin volunteer action, contribute in addition to preventing, mitigating and removing the causes of conflict.

Volunteer action should, therefore, be an integral part of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and responding to conflict. While food and shelter, rebuilding of infrastructure and economic stabilization are necessary, so is civic engagement based on mutuality and solidarity. There is growing awareness of the need to strengthen networks that have survived violent conflict or to support re-activation of such networks where they have been destroyed. Networks are not sufficient on their own: rule of law, justice and human rights must accompany any peace process. However, recognizing and supporting volunteerism will help to ensure the sustainability of achievements and to avoid the risk that elements underlying conflict remain combustible.

Volunteer action should be an integral part of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and responding to conflict

7

CHAPTER 7

Volunteerism and disasters

When facing the massive disasters which occurred in Tohoku, everyone must have felt the vulnerability of human beings to natural threats. Yet I believe the biggest power of recovery comes from human beings. What one volunteer can do is small, but what all of us can do is huge for recovery, it creates a stronger power. . . After the initial media boom people gradually forgot about the disaster, but the real challenge for survivors has just begun. Their need may have changed but there is still need for help. The true recovery can come only after a long-term effort of everybody.

Khaliunaa, Japan tsunami volunteer from Mongolia¹

The most effective resources for reducing vulnerability are community self-help organizations and local networks

INTRODUCTION

Volunteer action in response to disasters is perhaps one of the clearest expressions of the human values that underpin the drive to attend to the needs of others. It is also among the most visible of the faces of volunteerism. People's immediate reaction to a disaster is often to assist those directly affected. In many instances, this takes place spontaneously, outside any organized setting. However, the contribution of volunteerism extends far beyond immediate response. This chapter looks at the range of volunteer actions across the spectrum of disaster management, from prevention through to preparedness and mitigation, as well as response and recovery.

DISASTERS AND DEVELOPMENT

The nature and frequency of disasters is changing with climate change, rapid urbanization, food insecurity and increasing numbers of conflicts. Valuable progress in development over many years can be dramatically wiped out by disasters. Growing awareness of this connection has led to a move away from dealing with disasters simply as humanitarian emergencies and towards treating them as development issues. How to reduce vulnerability to disasters, especially for people living in poverty, is now a major policy consideration in many countries. The 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction gave considerable impetus to this shift in thinking. The overar-

ching goal of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015* is to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. It recognized that the most effective resources for reducing vulnerability were community self-help organizations and local networks.

MULTIPLE ROLES OF VOLUNTEERISM IN DISASTERS

Managing disasters efficiently and effectively begins and ends with communities. A key term, widely used today, is "resilience" which encompasses the ability of communities to prevent, prepare for, cope with, and recover from disasters. Those located in hazardous environments are not helpless prospective victims of events outside their control. They may have limited livelihood options but, given opportunities, they can engage in initiatives that reduce their vulnerability.

Before a disaster

Increasingly, the aim of disaster programmes is to enhance prevention, mitigation and preparedness, limiting the need for response and recovery, and thus reducing loss of lives and livelihoods. These steps are known collectively as Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and are today the focus of national and international efforts. Prevention involves eliminating the hazard or erecting a barrier between the hazard and the community. Mitigation is protecting the elements at risk prior to a disaster in order to minimize its damaging effects. Preparedness concerns measures taken in anticipation of a disaster including building readiness for the emergency response and laying the basis for recovery.

Prevention and mitigation of disasters

Prevention and mitigation actions include reforestation, watershed management, urban planning and zoning, improved infrastructure such as communications and transportation, utilization of drought-resistant seed, and improved construction practices such as earthquake-resistant housing.

BOX 7.1 : Good practices for community resilience

Particularly impressive is the level of volunteerism encountered and the strength and commitment of the community-based organizations (CBOs) formed in the target communities. Their role in guiding the development and implementation of community-based development plans ...encourages cohesion and contributes to the sustainability of community-based disaster management (CBDM).

Source: Ullah, Shahnaz & Van Den Ende. (2009), p.6.

Changes in climate patterns are increasing vulnerability of communities, especially among the most vulnerable.² Volunteers have a critical role to play in creating awareness about the sustainable management of natural resources that can prevent and mitigate the impact of disasters.

The First International Conference on Volunteerism and Millennium Development Goals held in 2004 in Islamabad, Pakistan, highlighted the role of volunteers in disaster risk management. The conference emphasized the link between volunteerism and environmental sustainability in water sanitation projects, forestry and natural resource management. Grassroots initiatives made an impact not only on ensuring environmental sustainability but also on improving local living conditions. This was especially true for women and girls who benefited from improved water supplies. The conference called on governments to recognize the important contributions of volunteers and volunteer involving organizations in these areas.³

In prevention and mitigation, as in other aspects of disasters, young people are very active. In Nepal, volunteerism draws on strong cultural and historical traditions. The Development Volunteer Service was launched there in 2000. This built on the National Development Service, a successful model of volunteerism in rural areas which began in the 1970s.⁴ The scheme mainly involves students in projects in the mountain districts of Nepal and includes infrastructure development, agriculture, and health and sanitation activities. Since 2000, over 7,000 volunteers⁵ have been deployed in 72 districts working on disaster mitigation projects such as the building of seeds banks, toilet construction and water sanitation.⁶

Through volunteer action, NGOs and local organizations can mobilize communities and create community-based systems for disaster

risk management.⁷ For example, the Women's Tree Planting and Caring Movement 2009 for Water Conservation in Indonesia has involved several women's organizations in planting over 30 million trees since 2007.⁸ In Sri Lanka, 26 youth leaders from the voluntary Peace Brigade of Sarvodaya took their knowledge and training to 32 coastal villages, which had all been battered by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and mobilized local Muslim, Sinhala and Tamil communities.⁹

During the 2008-2009 droughts in Syria, volunteers from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies played a key role in supporting local communities in assessing vulnerability and capacity to counter desertification.¹⁰ Here, as in other drought-prone areas, communities have knowledge about hazards, vulnerabilities and resources available which can help disaster managers to take appropriate measures.¹¹ Droughts in Africa are also being countered by building on local knowledge mainstreamed into new technologies. For example, the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE) and the Southern African Drought Technology Network (SADNET) have facilitated voluntary peer-to-peer information exchanges between small-scale farmers and community-based organizations to ease the effects of droughts in Southern Africa. SADNET has worked as a network, bringing together development practitioners involved in agricultural development. It promotes indigenous knowledge systems and addresses livelihood and food security issues for communities in drought-prone areas through information-sharing.¹²

Volunteers contribute in other, significant, ways to adaptation to new environments resulting from climate change¹³ through initiatives that are culturally sensitive and locally accepted. In Australia, traditional practices of indigenous people, such as controlled burning of vegetation, have been adopted by rural fire services in Wollondilly, southwest Sydney, as part of fire-risk reduction measures.

Volunteers have a critical role to play in creating awareness about the sustainable management of natural resources that can prevent and mitigate the impact of disasters

Volunteers from within communities are the first line of response

One ethnic group, the D'harawal, have knowledge of plants that warn of major bushfires well in advance. Frances Bodkin, a D'harawal who predicted the New South Wales bushfires in early 2002, spoke of how her people "followed the patterns of the native flora and fauna to indicate how the seasons would behave".¹⁴ The rural fire service consults with the D'harawal and uses this knowledge to plan controlled burning activities.¹⁵ Volunteer contributions that build on local knowledge are important to counteract the trend identified by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) whereby "indigenous knowledge has been either eroded or ignored in the development of these [early warning] systems. It needs to be revived, harnessed, documented and brought to the service of communities."¹⁶

Preparing for disasters

The preparedness stage is reached when, despite prevention and mitigation efforts, a disaster is about to occur. The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organi-

zations, communities and individuals to anticipate, respond to, and recover effectively from the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazards are now put to use.¹⁷ Actions may include risk analysis, development of early warning systems, public information, contingency planning, stockpiling of supplies, and training and field exercises. Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) were set up following Hurricane Katrina in the United States. These involved local volunteers trained in disaster preparedness and response. They included neighbourhood watch, community organizations, communities of faith, school staff, workplace employees, scouting organizations and other groups.¹⁸

Recognizing that volunteers from within communities are the first line of response, the Government of India stresses the importance of preparing local people. This includes periodic drills that communities practise in advance of a disaster.¹⁹ To be effective, these actions require volunteers to come forward for training. The Hyogo Framework for Action

BOX 7.2 : Volunteer early warning to save lives

Natural disasters are common in Bangladesh. After a devastating cyclone in 1970 that took half a million lives, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and the Bangladesh Government established the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) to strengthen disaster-management capacity in coastal communities. CPP relies on the technical skills and the commitment of volunteers to ensure that there is cyclone advance-warning.

The programme comprises 2845 units in 32 sub-districts, each unit serving one or two villages of between 2000 and 3000 people. Ten men and five women volunteers from each unit are appointed by the villagers and divided into groups to address warning, shelter, rescue, first aid, and food and clothing needs. The volunteers receive training on cyclone behaviour, warning, evacuation, shelter, rescue, first aid and relief operations. Around 160 volunteers have been trained as trainers and now equip their communities with these skills.

On 15 November 2007, category-4 Cyclone Sidr hit the south-west coast of Bangladesh, claiming the lives of around 30,000 people. A cyclone of similar magnitude had killed 140,000 in 1991. The lower death toll in 2007 was partly due to the work of over 40,000 trained volunteers who received advance warning and alerted communities through flags, megaphones, hand sirens and the beating of drums. Data from the World Meteorological Organization on the approaching cyclone were received by the volunteers through government services and local Red Crescent offices. Volunteers also helped people to evacuate and find cyclone-safe shelters, advised on safety and helped maintain order, showing high commitment to the programme and the people.

Source: The Government of Bangladesh. (2008); Rashid. (n.d.).

highlighted the need to: “Promote community-based training initiatives, considering the role of volunteers, as appropriate, to enhance local capacities to mitigate and cope with disasters.”²⁰

Beyond communities, there are many other ways in which volunteerism is manifested in disaster preparation. In Mexico, a university network (UNIRED) was established in 1997 to mobilize volunteers from universities to collect and share information on hazard scenarios throughout the country and abroad. The network taps into more than 60 Mexican universities and has links with governments, the private sector and international organizations outside the country. Volunteers are in charge of all initiatives, recruiting other volunteers, training them, designing and implementing risk assessment, and coordinating humanitarian aid collection. In 2010, UNIRED helped to address the effects of, and subsequent response to, Hurricane Alex and flooding in Chiapas State in Mexico. The network was also involved in the response phase. In addition, it sent volunteers to help in the response to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010.

Another manifestation of volunteerism in disasters involves the private sector. Ready When the Time Comes is a workplace volunteer programme launched by the American Red Cross Society in 2006. Over 10,000 employees of 300 United States companies have been trained as a community-based volunteer response force. As a result, the capacity to respond to local disasters increased by more than 40 per cent between 2006 and 2010.²¹

Awareness and education should start from early childhood. In Nigeria, Volunteer School Clubs for DRR are being established in the Federal Capital Territory. This initiative, launched in 2010, recognizes the potential of children to play their part in DRR through volunteering in their schools and communi-

ties. It involves educating school children so that they can become agents of prevention and management in basic emergencies such as fire, flooding and air pollution in schools, homes and communities. The children are expected to propagate the importance of building disaster-resilient communities.²² In the Giang province of Vietnam, in the lower Mekong basin, school projects on disaster preparedness were implemented in 2006 by the Department of Education and Training. These raised awareness among children about school flood safety, provided swimming lessons for safety, and established “child-to-child” clubs in which children can volunteer under the supervision of teachers.

Responding to disasters

The image of volunteerism in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, often perpetuated by the media, is first the spontaneous reaction from people living in, or close by, the affected area. This is usually framed in a positive light, reflecting altruism and concern for one’s neighbour. It is frequently followed by an influx of foreign personnel including many volunteers. In this scenario, local and national expressions of volunteerism are usually overlooked.²³ In one sense, this is positive as it draws attention to the power of volunteerism. For example, “the unprecedented humanitarian response to the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake involving hundreds and thousands of volunteers has led to the recognition of the important role of trained volunteers in emergency response, better coordination mechanism and an increase of grassroots organizations which has continued to support the reconstruction and longer term development efforts.”²⁴

Conversely, from this perspective local communities are seen as experiencing disasters as victims only and not as proactive volunteers.²⁵ The evidence points to a different reality. The first respondents are not trained emergency personnel but rather local residents and neighbours.²⁶ Many actions are spontaneous. When

The first respondents are not trained emergency personnel but rather local residents and neighbours

People at local level are best placed to identify their immediate emergency response needs

volunteers are untrained, or their actions uncoordinated, they may actually cause harm to themselves, for example by entering collapsing buildings. Similarly, they may impede the organized rescue work, for example by blocking access roads. Yet many people who are involved in local community-based or national non-governmental organizations combine local knowledge and experience with essential training. Response entails not only saving lives but also reducing health risks, ensuring public safety, and meeting subsistence needs of affected people. People at local level are best placed to identify their immediate emergency response needs and contribute to local decision-making for the future.²⁷ They can also provide valuable insights into community needs, bringing trust and a human touch to affected families as part of the healing process.²⁸ The combination of local people with those who have the necessary skills can be particularly effective when mobilized rapidly.

National volunteers from outside the affected communities also have a valuable role to play. They provide a direct, trustworthy connection between people directly hit and other stakeholders. They are also a "vital link between the informal resources of the community as a

whole and the more focused resources of established government agencies, such as police, fire and medical services".²⁹ This applies particularly to so-called "permanent volunteers"³⁰ who are highly trained and readily available for large-scale crises. In some countries, the use of such volunteers is increasing rapidly. In China, as of 2006, there were an estimated 100 million trained volunteers many of whom were registered with three major organizations: the Communist Youth League, the Red Cross and Civil Administration.³¹ Permanent volunteers are especially valuable in hazards resulting from less visible disasters such as health pandemics.

In some cases, governments have established national volunteer schemes. Following a major earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, a national agency to coordinate and support volunteerism-related activities, the National Volunteer Movement (NVM), was established to serve as a focal point for national volunteering activities. Its long-term objectives are to train a pool of first responders; to provide support in disaster situations; to promote volunteerism in government agencies; to facilitate cooperation in volunteerism between the public and private sectors and civil society; and to

BOX 7.3 : Christchurch earthquake: volunteers of all types

On 22 February 2011, an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale wreaked havoc in Christchurch, New Zealand. The devastation led to an outpouring of solidarity expressed through volunteerism. Canterbury University Student Volunteer Army, a 10,000-strong, self-organized student workforce, assisted with clearing liquefaction sludge around homes and with disseminating information.

The students used a web-based platform to organize volunteers by updating job positions, taking notes in the field, and sending photos with iPhones donated by Apple, and data cards from Vodafone, 2Degree and Telecom. These communications companies also offered volunteers a no-cost SMS emergency short code and prepaid top-ups. Twitter, Flickr and Facebook offered channels for people to request and offer assistance and to gather data on information. A group of farmers, the Farmy Army, volunteered alongside students to clear hard-hit parts of the city and deliver meals to affected residents. Other volunteer contributions ranged from 1500 sandwiches prepared for rescue workers and volunteers by low-security prisoners to advice provided by professional architects and urban designers who volunteered to help rebuild the city. Beyond the affected area, students in Auckland raised funds for the victims while residents in Dunedin and Wellington offered accommodation.

Source: 3 News. (n.d.); MacManus. (2011, February 21).

enhance public recognition of volunteerism. It has a core group of around 17,000 volunteers and coordinates a further 80,000. During the flash floods in 2010, the NVM undertook massive volunteer mobilization. The floods were the worst in recorded history of Pakistan, killing over 1750 people and affecting some 20 million. The NVM acted as a link between the government and NGOs.³²

The connection between volunteerism and technology was explored in Chapter 3. A system called *Ushahidi* was developed in 2008 to map the post-election violence and peace efforts in Kenya. It has since been utilized in a variety of humanitarian, development and disaster relief efforts including in the earthquakes in Chile and Haiti in 2010. Volunteers monitor and map incoming reports from various media sources including information from Twitter feeds, Facebook accounts, blogs and traditional media such as radio, print and television. Crisis locations are identified and volunteers can reach them more quickly. The technology was initially developed to give cell-phone users the ability to send text messages about locations and events. The messages appear in a web-based map. During the Haiti earthquake, *Ushahidi* in Nairobi and a technology partner, Frontline SMS, developed a code (9636) for use by people in need anywhere in Haiti. People could send text messages to that number free of charge so the appropriate response group could be deployed to assist. This facility made it possible to identify injuries, lost family and friends, trapped individuals, dead bodies, orphaned children and water needs.³³ In the case of the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in China, the response was accelerated by the sharing of maps of areas in the province needing assistance. These were transmitted by thousands of volunteers online.³⁴

A smaller, more personal, effort was apparent when Mount Merapi in Central Java, Indonesia, erupted in 2010. A nearby community used Twitter to help its response. The Twitter

account was part of a broader information network that began with a community radio called *Jalin Merapi* which was set up to track signs of volcanic eruptions. The news agency Reuters reported that: "*Jalin Merapi* has helped shelters that are unable to receive government aid by deploying about 700 volunteers who report by tweeting specific aid needs."³⁵ "The community announced they needed help to provide meals for 30,000 people and the food was ready in four hours."³⁶ While there is no way to verify the accuracy of information shared through such channels, in times of crisis people use the technology with which they are comfortable. In this case, it was Twitter.³⁷

In many countries, volunteer-based fire services are an example of how people engage in volunteerism to strengthen local capacities to respond to disasters. Volunteer fire brigades tend to be highly reliable and respected all over the world. Surveys conducted in Chile place firemen among the institutions most trusted by Chileans, ahead of the police and the Catholic Church.³⁸ Brazil's first volunteer fire brigade, the first in Latin America, dates back to 1892.³⁹

Recent years have seen increasing numbers of volunteers from outside affected countries willing to volunteer in disaster-related activities.⁴⁰ This can pose new challenges. For example, in the case of the Haiti earthquake, in 2010, difficulties were encountered in managing the hundreds of doctors and nurses who volunteered and whose skills were often under-utilized.⁴¹ Other challenges include unfamiliarity with the environment and surroundings⁴² and lack of cultural sensitivity and language skills. However, when well-organized, this contribution is effective and much appreciated. During the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and the subsequent earthquakes of 2005 and 2006, the Indonesian response to the emergency received a massive contribution from volunteers. This was both structured, from the government, international and national NGOs and community groups, and unstruc-

Communities with more trust, civic engagement and stronger networks have a better chance of recovering after a disaster

tured. Thousands of other spontaneous, non-affiliated volunteers provided their help in the spirit of *gotong royong*, or working together, as mentioned in Chapter 4. Volunteers play a vital role in disaster response. Yet their capacity should be further strengthened. Governments should rely on them as a resource in integrated disaster management and not treat them as a stand-alone component.⁴³

VOLUNTEERISM AND RECOVERY

The numbers of people from outside the affected communities who volunteer falls sharply after the immediate response phase is over. In one study of NGOs engaged in disaster recovery efforts, 64 per cent used volunteer services for 12 weeks or less in the aftermath of the crisis.⁴⁴ Yet, as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction states: "The recovery task of rehabilitation and reconstruction begins soon after the emergency phase has ended and should be based on pre-existing strategies and policies that facilitate

clear institutional responsibilities for recovery action and enable public participation."⁴⁵

During the recovery phase of a disaster, the attention of national authorities and donors tends to be on rebuilding essential physical infrastructure: bridges, roads, power lines and buildings. These are vital for people to sustain their livelihoods, often in situations of extreme vulnerability. However, this focus ignores social infrastructure. Growing empirical research indicates that communities with more trust, civic engagement and stronger networks, which are largely volunteer-based, have a better chance of recovering after a disaster than fragmented, isolated ones.⁴⁶ Indeed, "social networks may be the most dependable resource in the aftermath of disaster," argues Zhao Yandong from the Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development.⁴⁷

A review of the post-tsunami disaster in Indonesia in 2004 noted that: "Relief and recovery efforts will be more effective if they

BOX 7.4 : Early response in Haiti

The Cascos Blancos (White Helmets) Initiative was launched by the Government of Argentina in 1993 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994. It provides opportunities for volunteers from Latin America and other regions to assist in post-disaster relief and recovery efforts. The scheme engages in emergency-response missions globally. Within 72 hours of a disaster, it can call on over 4000 highly trained volunteers from other developing countries to serve with United Nations agencies and in partnership with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

Following the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, Cascos Blancos deployed 37 volunteers from Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay to help in the immediate response as well as in long-term recovery, especially in the area of health. The team of volunteers mobilized by Cascos Blancos comprised doctors, nurses and paramedics as well as firefighters and experts in supply management and logistics.

They carried with them medical supplies, sanitation facilities, food, seeds, tents and mobile communications devices to help the immediate response to the earthquake. The volunteers worked mainly in Leogane, a city at the epicenter of the earthquake, 40 kilometres from Port-au-Prince. They worked in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and were supported operationally by UNV.

Following the success and recognition of the volunteers' work by PAHO, MINUSTAH and the Haitian Government, more Cascos Blancos volunteers were later mobilized to provide further support in the Dominican Republic border town of Jimani and in the Haitian town of Fond Parisien.

Source: Carlos Eduardo Zaballa [Coordinator United Nations-White Helmets Commission, Argentina], Online Communication. (2011, July 25).

BOX 7.5: Disaster recovery and the *gotong royong* spirit

The major earthquakes that occurred off the coast of northern Sumatra in Indonesia, in 2004 and 2005, and the resulting tsunami, caused great loss of life and damage to property, especially in the provinces of Aceh and Nias. International donor support included a grant of 291 million US dollars to the Government of Indonesia by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the Earthquake and Tsunami Emergency Support Project (ETESP) to help restore basic public services and infrastructure and to facilitate economic revival in the affected regions. The project placed strong emphasis on the involvement of local communities at all stages. The irrigation component, for example, was a vital part of restoring rural livelihoods. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of the lower-level canal systems was undertaken through community water-user organizations drawing on the well-established tradition of *gotong royong* volunteer labour. The success of the initiative demonstrated that, with appropriate external expert and financial support, local communities are able to undertake substantial infrastructure work effectively even when traumatized by a major natural disaster and decades-long internal conflict, as was the case in Aceh.

Source: Seyler, Personal Communication. (2011, July 14).

identify, use and strengthen existing social capital: community-based skills, programmes and networks. The community-driven approach to post-disaster recovery, which builds on this social capital, requires significant investments of time and human resources but results in greater client satisfaction, more rapid disbursement and local empowerment.⁴⁸

It is widely accepted that, after disasters, there is a need to address the damage not only to physical infrastructure but also to social infrastructure.⁴⁹ The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 highlighted the “spirit of volunteerism” as a basis for building mechanisms and appropriate interventions. This “spirit”, as has been seen, is a universal characteristic of human beings and lies at the core of the coming together of people to help one another in the recovery period as in other phases of the disaster cycle. It contributes greatly to bringing back hope and confidence to communities as livelihoods are rebuilt.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Communities have always faced disasters and volunteerism has always been present in preparing for and coping with them. With growing attention being given to the devel-

opment and implementation of strategic approaches to disasters in recent years, including building on the connections with development, volunteerism needs to be fully included in the discourse. This chapter has demonstrated the various ways in which people undertake volunteer action at the preparation, mitigation, response and recovery stages of disasters. It has shown how this action is manifested in various ways: spontaneous actions of people at community level, organized volunteering with associations and organizations at local and national level, and volunteers from abroad. It has also underlined that the involvement of volunteers helps to ensure that fundamental values of solidarity and a sense of common destiny, values that add immeasurably to the resilience of communities, are reflected in strategies and programmes to reduce disaster risk.

One of the most visible faces of volunteerism appears in disasters. It should not come as a surprise therefore that this is where actions to support volunteerism are most strongly articulated. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 is subtitled “Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters”.⁵⁰ This is a clear indication of the role of communities and, within them, volunteer action by

community members. There are various recommendations for providing disaster education and training for people at the local level contained in the Hyogo Framework.

They should go a long way to ensuring that the power of volunteerism to reduce vulnerabilities and increase resilience to disasters is fully realized.

8

CHAPTER 8

Volunteering and well-being

Too much and for too long, we seemed to have surrendered personal excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our Gross National Product ... if we judge the United States of America by that ... counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armoured cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.¹

Robert F. Kennedy (1968, March 18)

INTRODUCTION

In previous chapters, we examined the contributions of volunteerism in selected fields. It is now time to consider how the contributions of volunteerism affect society as a whole. The success of a country has long been assessed primarily on the basis of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Increasingly, however, the direct relationship between economic growth and social progress has been challenged. Critics are calling for alternative concepts and new indicators. In reality, this criticism is not especially new, as the above quote of Robert Kennedy from 1968 shows. The 1975 Dag Hammarskjöld Report states that: "Development is a whole; it is an integral, value loaded, cultural process; it encompasses the natural environment, social relations, education, production, consumption and well-being."² This concern has moved from academic circles into public debate and now is increasingly relevant at the highest levels of policy-making, as a consequence of the current global crises affecting economy, society and the environment.

The 2009 report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, also known as the Stiglitz Commission, represented a key moment in the evolving debate about what societies should strive to achieve. It was established at the initiative of France in order to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress and to consider alternatives.³ Headed by prominent economists Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean Paul Fitoussi, this influential initiative concluded that GDP should not be dismissed. However, as an indicator of market activity, it fails to capture many factors that contribute to human well-being and societal progress. The writers argued that: "As what we measure shapes what we collectively strive to pursue – and what we pursue determines what we measure – the report and its implementation

may have a significant impact on the way in which our societies look at themselves and, therefore, on the way in which policies are designed, implemented and assessed."⁴

So why is this important for volunteerism? The Stiglitz Commission, like other initiatives challenging the economic growth paradigm, considers well-being as the ultimate goal of development. Clearly, strong and healthy economies are desirable but only inasmuch as they enable people to lead lives that bring them well-being. Among these important factors are values such as solidarity, passion for a cause and wanting to give back to society which have been identified throughout this report. In this chapter, we will look at well-being and how volunteerism impacts on it. We then look at some related policy issues.

Well-being has been described as feeling good and doing well both physically and emotionally.⁵ At the heart of well-being is "the sense of having what you need for life to be good."⁶ For our purposes we add the idea of "social well-being" as a sense of belonging to our communities, a positive attitude towards others, a feeling that we are contributing to society and engaging in pro-social behaviour, and a belief that society is capable of developing positively.⁷

Other definitions include the notion of happiness. Surveys enquire about life satisfaction and happiness of people in different ways. People have different ideas in mind when answering questions on life satisfaction and happiness. Life satisfaction is closer to well-being which is concerned with concrete issues such as health, housing and education. Happiness involves people's evaluation of their lives.⁸ The Kingdom of Bhutan has made happiness a fundamental national goal. In 2011, Bhutan led an initiative at the United Nations General Assembly that invites Member States to elaborate measures that successfully capture the pursuit of happiness

Strong and healthy economies are desirable but only inasmuch as they enable people to lead lives that bring them well-being

and well-being in development to help to guide public policies.⁹ “Happiness” and “well-being” are terms which are often used interchangeably. However, happiness refers to subjective positive feelings about one’s life context and environment while well-being includes measurable parameters such as health, safety and financial security, along with feelings of connectedness and participation. In this report, happiness is considered as an integral part of well-being.

At first glance, the relevance of well-being to much of the developing world, especially to the income poor, may be questionable. When people lack incomes to provide the basics for survival, then well-being and happiness might appear a secondary concern. However, the income poor are not defined by their poverty alone. They strive to achieve well-being for themselves, their children and their communities. Ever more evidence is emerging that people in developing countries have notions of well-being that are as vivid and valid as those of people living in wealthier countries.¹⁰

The Wellbeing in Developing Countries research group is a groundbreaking initiative. It started in 2003, at the University of Bath, to develop a framework for understanding well-being. Application of the framework was tested in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Thailand with local partners. Volunteerism is not explicitly mentioned in the conclusions of the study. However, among the key areas identified by people as impacting on their well-being were the scope to participate and take effective actions, making positive social connections and having a sense of self-worth.¹¹ In Bangladesh, being benevolent and altruistic led to well-being. In Ethiopia, it was giving advice and resolving disputes. In Peru and Thailand, it was helping one another.¹² Framing the enquiry in terms of well-being, rather than poverty, enabled the researchers to explore what the income poor have, and what they can do, instead of focusing on their deficits. The aim was to

BOX 8.1 : Gross National Happiness in Bhutan

The Himalayan state of Bhutan is the country with the most extensive experience in adopting happiness as the overarching indicator of progress. The concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), first introduced in 1972, is deeply rooted in the unique historical, cultural and socio-economic background of Bhutan. Substantive elements of GNH, such as the general objective of well-being and the goal of environmental conservation, were drawn from Buddhist values while the principles of self-reliance and paternalism were inherent in traditional Bhutanese society. The concept triggered a national dialogue about progress and became a guideline for policy in Bhutan. In a Financial Times interview in 1986, the King of Bhutan said: “Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product”.

An index of nine domains was developed to make the concept measurable. It included: education, physical health, psychological well-being, time use, living standard, cultural diversity, good governance, ecological diversity and resilience and, finally, community vitality and social connections. Community vitality focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of relationships and interactions within communities. In this domain, volunteerism is an important variable to measure. In the questionnaires, Bhutanese people are asked whether they volunteer for their communities as voluntary work is understood to be integral to a vital, happy community.

Sources: Braun. (2009); Priesner. (2008).

produce more credible, respectful representations of people’s lives in order to inform development policy and practice and to create the conditions in which people can experience well-being.

The Wellbeing in Developing Countries group is now engaged with local partner NGOs in a follow-up research project in rural India and Zambia on how poverty affects well-being and how general well-being influences people’s pathways into, within, and out of poverty. The domain of well-being includes values and meanings, social connections and participation, all of which are integral to volunteerism. According to Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways (2011), “Relationship is at the heart of well-being – it is not the property

Relationship is at the heart of well-being

of an individual.”¹³ The same study also shows that “assessing well-being must therefore consider interactions amongst people and between them and the wider environment.”¹⁴

The relationship between volunteerism and well-being has been extensively studied in developed countries with conclusions largely based on information provided by individuals on the positive impact of volunteering on issues of health, depression and life satisfaction.¹⁵ This chapter will bring some clarity to the connections between volunteerism and well-being by considering the impact of volunteer action on the well-being of communities as well as of individuals.

VOLUNTEERING AND INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING

Among the studies of the benefits of well-being that individuals derive from volunteerism, many have been in the field of health. These studies examine how the experience of volunteering impacts on the way people feel and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. One common finding is that people who volunteer are more likely to report being happy.¹⁶ The service aspect of the volunteer action often results in people reporting the experience of a “warm glow” which they associate with helping someone and contributing to the public good¹⁷ in addition to feeling stronger and more energetic.¹⁸ For older

persons, volunteering also leads to more positive moods,¹⁹ as well as less anxiety and fewer feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.²⁰

Some longitudinal studies tracking the well-being of individuals over time have found that engagement in volunteering leads to positive mental health.²¹ It may also result in decreased psychological stress and buffer the negative consequences of stress while enhancing life satisfaction, the will to live and self-respect.²² People who volunteer for more hours and for more than one organization experience greater well-being.²³

Other longitudinal studies have suggested that engaging in volunteering leads to better physical health.²⁴ Older adults who do not volunteer report significantly worse health than those who do volunteer. In rural China, it was found that reciprocal relationships through mutual aid led to higher levels of health. In particular, the enhanced levels of trust that may result from such mutual help were related to higher levels of general health, mental health, and subjective well-being.²⁵ Mortality rates are lower for volunteers in comparison to non-volunteers of the same age, regardless of age, marital status, education or gender.²⁶ One study found much lower mortality in older persons who reported providing practical or emotional support to others compared to those who did not.²⁷ Interestingly, giving support had a much greater impact on mortality rates than receiving support. While there is a two-way relationship between health and volunteering, with healthier people volunteering more, these studies are fairly conclusive in demonstrating that volunteering contributes to physical well-being.

VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Volunteerism also has a significant positive impact on community well-being. It creates ties among people, increases social capital and contributes to many social factors that

BOX 8.2 : Volunteering and individual well-being

In South Africa, a study of volunteer caregivers from faith-based organizations working with people living with AIDS found that volunteers derived rewards related to self-growth and personal development. They reported satisfaction from community members liking them and expressing appreciation for their services. They felt rewarded when the services that they rendered made their patients happy and when they gained skills and competencies. The ability of volunteers to make a difference in the community contributed to their sense of happiness.

Source: Akintola. (2010).

create healthy societies in which people enjoy living. A stronger sense of community also leads to more volunteering. As such, this creates a virtuous cycle in which people volunteer, thus strengthening community ties which leads more people to volunteer. “Community” includes not only people living in close geographic proximity but also people with common needs, assets and interests. Membership of virtual communities can engender feelings of belonging and well-being. Efforts to capture people’s subjective experience of community well-being have largely focused on the social components of human well-being. Social well-being has been assessed by measures of supportive relationships and trust and belonging.²⁸ Volunteers are more likely to develop “civic skills”, to attach more importance to serving the public interest as a personal life goal and to be more politically active. Thus, in going about their voluntary activities, individuals are also cultivating an outlook that contributes to a social environment that nurtures the well-being of all.²⁹

Another concept relating to community well-being is resilience: collective capacity to engage and mobilize community resources to respond to, and influence, change.³⁰ One study has shown the links between community stability and well-being in forest-dependent communities.³¹ It has been suggested that local economic resilience has three dimensions: community resources, active citizenship and strategic action.³² Social ties, and the resources to which they give collective access, sustain community life and bolster resilience when underpinned by trust, reciprocity and belonging. In good times, they strengthen local economies. In more difficult times, the impact of risk factors beyond people’s direct control can be reduced by the capacity of a community to engage and mobilize its resources to respond positively to, and influence, change. As has been seen in other chapters, this occurs, for example, when a disaster strikes or when violent

BOX 8.3 : Well-being through volunteering in Brazil

For the Associação de Apoio à Criança em Risco (ACER) (Children at Risk Foundation), local economic development of poor neighbourhoods such as Eldorado, in the city of Diadema, Brazil, has to come from within the community. A new project focuses on the untapped potential in 13 to 16 year-olds. By 16 years of age, most young people have to make a living. Prior to that age, they are largely overlooked in the community despite having ideas and energy to contribute. Nearly 600 students at the Simon Bolivar school participated in workshops on five key themes: local economic development, mapping community assets, my sustainable school, project management and five ways to well-being. Through these workshops, the young people explored what matters to them, their interdependence on others and nature, and their own capabilities to make changes that can make a difference. They discussed and identified what they felt would contribute to economic, social and environmental well-being and to the well-being of their community.

ACER offers these young people the support of a youth worker who is trained in coaching techniques. Their role is to unlock the natural resourcefulness and energy that help young people to believe in themselves. Groups of young people have led projects to clean up the school, provide the publicity for a Halloween party organized by a local theatre group, and design a workshop to teach children and teenagers how to make Christmas ornaments out of reused and recycled materials. This group held 15 meetings to consolidate ideas, arrange materials and research, and practice ways of making objects from recyclable materials. One young person, Talia, pointed to the importance of the coach “who believed in us at all times.”

The coach can help cultivate positive energy and willingness for future action by actively seeking to support the psychological and social well-being of the young people. ACER is using surveys to assess changes in how the young people feel as the project progresses. The surveys consider their sense of competency, autonomy and relatedness to others, as well as their personal resources of self-esteem, resilience and optimism.

Sources: Jonathan Hannay [Charity Director, Children at Risk Foundation, São Paulo, Brazil], Interview. (2011, February, 14); ACER. (2010, 2011).

People have better health, do better at school and experience less crime when they live in neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of informal types of volunteerism

conflict erupts. Volunteering can also help to reduce crime. The direct connections, and the knowledge that neighbours have of one another, provide a "natural surveillance."³³

Similar outcomes have been found for volunteer action outside of the organizational context. People have better health, do better at school and experience less crime when they live in neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of informal types of volunteerism such as helping older persons or taking part in local community initiatives.³⁴ In a study of a national sample of African Americans in the United States, social support networks of family, friendship, church and neighbours were found to contribute to people's life satisfaction and happiness.³⁵ In a study in urban Ethiopia, direct social networks and the ability to rely on others in case of emergency was related to subjective well-being and happiness.³⁶

WELL-BEING AND POLICY

Well-being is now making inroads into national policy. Bhutan was mentioned earlier (see *Bhutan Gross National Happiness*) as an example of a country that has long had quality of life considerations at the heart of

its policy. Since 2004, conferences have been held on Gross National Happiness around the world including in Bhutan, Brazil, Canada and Thailand. Participants discussed findings from research that related to policies on well-being and the development of indicators to measure happiness.

The notion of *buen vivir* in the Andean region reflects well-being concerns of indigenous people and stresses harmonious coexistence with other people and with the environment. Working together through volunteer action to attain common goals based on such values as tolerance and respect is an integral part of the lives of indigenous people around the world. This development is of particular interest to this report. Practical implementation remains challenging, however, since the generally accepted indicators of progress cannot capture this dimension. Therefore, new indicators are necessary. It must be said that there is much debate as to what *buen vivir* actually signifies in terms of practical implementation as it is a notion that rejects generally accepted indicators of progress.³⁷

Several countries have focused on the well-being of young people. A 2007 World Bank-supported study in Brazil looked at how Brazilian young people were coping with their transition to adulthood. It examined health, school performance, connections and socio-economic conditions. The 2010 Human Development Report of Egypt, with its focus on drawing young people into mainstream society, proposed an annual Wellbeing Index.³⁸ It assesses progress on a range of indicators and feeds into policies related to young people to ensure that their potential contribution to development is fully realized. Civic participation, for which youth volunteerism is seen as one contributing factor, is included among the indicators.³⁹ The Index of Wellbeing of Canada identifies and publicizes what impacts on the quality of life of Canadians. Community vitality is one of the key indicators and volunteering is one of the main parameters considered.⁴⁰

BOX 8.4 : Living well

Indigenous communities in the Andes boast an alternative growth model that they call *sumak kawsay* in Quecha, translated as *buen vivir* in Spanish. Literally "good life" or "living well" in English, the concept is based on long-standing traditions of solidarity and respect for others and for the environment rather than individualism and materialism. It reflects a shift from economic progress to a more humanistic view with a focus on quality of life. At its core is collective well-being and the satisfaction of basic needs in harmony with the natural resources of the planet. *Sumak kawsay* was formally enshrined in the Ecuadorian constitution in 2008. In 2009, *buen vivir*, or *suma qamaña* in Aymara, was incorporated into the constitution of Bolivia as an ethical and moral principle to be promoted by the state.

Sources: Gudynas & Acosta. (2011); Davey. (2011).

The Happy Planet Index of the New Economic Foundation in the United Kingdom is a global index that combines environmental impact with well-being for a country-by-country measurement of the environmental efficiency with which people live long and happy lives. It shows that high levels of resource consumption do not produce high levels of well-being.⁴¹ The 2010 *Human Development Report* includes an index of well-being and happiness using Gallup World Poll data citing life satisfaction as well as measures of purpose, respect and social support. Well-being is a central concept in the global project on Measuring the Progress of Societies of the OECD. This project has been raising awareness and mobilizing political support for better progress measures.⁴² Such measures include the richness of people's interactions within their communities. Volunteerism is present through the values that it represents and the sense of meaningfulness and purposefulness that it gives to people's lives.

Well-being is thus increasingly seen as a useful and important concept that can guide and inform development policy. Consensus is building around the idea that an understanding of well-being could better promote development effectiveness. However, little work has been done so far to identify mechanisms and ways of working that directly support well-being outcomes for individuals and communities as they develop economically. There is "little clarity on how to translate [well-being] into practice at programme and project level."⁴³

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

There is a widespread view today that GDP does not provide an adequate picture of a society because it does not account for the well-being of individuals and their communities. Nor does it include activities that have an economic value but that fall outside the market and therefore have not, traditionally, been reflected in national accounts, as

discussed in Chapter 2. In the search for alternative development models, well-being is rapidly gaining respectability as a useful concept to guide and inform development policy. It offers "a unique opportunity to improve the ways in which our policies are made and breathe new life into the democratic process."⁴⁴

There are various definitions of well-being and different views as to what it should include. It is certainly about connecting the development process to factors that reflect a better way of life for everyone. As we have seen, for volunteerism, the question of relationships is paramount. Our own well-being is intrinsically linked to what we contribute to the lives of others. Where mainstream economics fosters values of self-interest and competition to achieve maximum satisfaction, a focus on well-being finds greater reason to value compassion and cooperation, both core values of volunteerism. The discourse on quality of life and well-being, and its place in the evolving development paradigm, must recognize the solidarity and reciprocal values of volunteerism as part of the dynamics that enhance human well-being.

The way forward is to pay particular attention to the contribution of volunteerism to "healthy societies that are good to live in", as described earlier, or what the Canadian Index of Wellbeing refers to as "community vitality". A healthy society is one in which importance is given to formal and informal relationships that facilitate interaction and engagement and thus engender a sense of belonging. It is also one in which there is broad participation by all sections of the population. As we have seen elsewhere in this report, communities with these characteristics do better in moving forward to meet common aspirations. They are better able to build their resilience to withstand the shocks and stresses that the income poor, in particular, encounter on a regular basis.

Understanding of well-being could better promote development effectiveness

Making the connection explicit between volunteerism and well-being would help to ensure that policy takes into account all options for action

The following chapter will examine some aspects of the evolving development framework and the emergence of well-being as a key element. However, we can already state that policymakers need to incorporate volunteerism into the ongoing discourse. In many ways it is implicitly there already. Yet making the connection explicit between volunteerism and well-being, and linking with researchers and practitioners working in the field of volunteer engagement, would help to ensure that policy takes into account all options for action.

The research community needs to extend its work on volunteerism. It needs to cover the impact of volunteer action on the well-being of communities and societies to a far greater extent, especially in the developing world. Volunteer involving organizations should be proactive in publicizing the impact of their work. This impact is not limited to the volunteers themselves and the people and causes to whom the volunteer action is directed. Organizations need to look at the overall contribution of their efforts to the health of their societies.

Conclusion: the way forward

The aid effectiveness agenda has produced important behavioural changes on the part of both donors and partners.

Yet the question that now faces the global community is whether this progress is enough to overcome even greater global challenges. In the face of the recent financial, security, food, health, climate and energy crises, I have to conclude that the development paradigm has not shifted enough. To solve these crises and meet the Millennium Development Goals we must all do more.

Brian Atwood (n.d)

Volunteerism should not take the place of actions that are the responsibility of the state

INTRODUCTION

This report has highlighted the universal nature, and underlying values, of volunteerism and the significant contributions that it makes to some of the major global issues of our times. We have seen how people engage in volunteerism as a route to inclusion, to achieve livelihoods that are sustainable, to manage disaster risks and to prevent and recover from violent conflict. We have also seen how voluntary action can significantly contribute to the cohesiveness and well-being of communities and of societies as a whole. With massive social upheavals affecting most of the planet, there has never been a greater need to recognize, nurture and promote actions that lead towards a global community living in harmony, characterized by justice, equity, peace and well-being.

This report does not claim that volunteerism is a panacea that can be “programmed” to put right the injustices of the world by itself. A key point, and one that features prominently in intergovernmental legislation over the past decade, is that volunteerism should not take the place of actions that are the responsibility of the state. However, governments and other stakeholders from civil society, the private sector and international development agencies do have vital roles to play in promoting and nurturing an environment in which volunteerism can flourish.

At the same time, care should be taken not to overprescribe how citizens should engage in volunteerism. Such action could remove the spontaneity of volunteer action and impact negatively on the very values that drive people to engage. It is essential to understand and appreciate volunteerism in terms of the focus which it places on people-centred approaches, on partnerships, on motivations beyond money, and on openness to the exchange of ideas and information. Above all, volunteerism is about the

relationships that it can create and sustain among the citizens of a country. It generates a sense of social cohesion and helps to create resilience in confronting the issues covered in this report. This cohesion and resilience are often the mainstay of a decent life for which all people strive. Volunteerism is an act of human solidarity, of empowerment and of active citizenship.

Despite all of its attributes, it is regrettable that volunteerism has, so far, been largely absent from the peace and development agenda. This was explained in Chapter 1 as being due to common misperceptions that form a “dominant paradigm” as to what volunteerism is and what it achieves. This misleading paradigm tends to obscure the essence of volunteer action and the impact that it has on our daily lives. The powerful complementary role that volunteer action can have, alongside other areas of intervention, is therefore unfortunately minimized, or not raised at all, in core discussions on development policy and programmes. As a result, those interventions are less effective than they would be if people’s desires and abilities to engage through volunteerism were fully taken into account. This refers not only to achieving desired development outcomes but also to creating more intangible benefits associated with people’s participation such as enhanced well-being and social cohesion.

Volunteerism in developed countries is the subject of extensive research, discussion and writing. Indeed, it is increasingly a part of the discourse on the kind of societies that we seek. It is an aspect of human behaviour that needs to be nurtured and encouraged. This very same phenomenon in many developing countries, when it is recognized, is generally considered to be integral to local cultures and traditions, a point which is rarely factored into strategic thinking. Yet these very cultures and traditions, with reciprocal volunteer-based relationships at their root, are both ancient and highly contemporary for a large part of

Above all, volunteerism is about the relationships that it can create and sustain among the citizens of a country

humanity. They are a key feature in strategies enabling people to survive and to progress to higher levels of well-being. As expressions of solidarity throughout the world, they need to be respected and revalidated and brought under the spotlight in the development debate.

THE TIME IS RIGHT

The timing of this report is crucial. In 2010, the world reviewed the progress of the eight MDGs that countries had agreed to achieve by 2015. This review highlighted the very uneven progress in attaining the goals among regions and between, and within, countries. The governments expressed “grave concern” about the status of some of the goals.¹ They included among their recommendations “supporting participatory, community-led strategies [that are] aligned with national development priorities and strategies.”² The implementation of community-led strategies is rooted in expressions of volunteerism. Thus, this report should be one important element in helping to get the MDGs on track. Connecting volunteerism and national development planning is likely to bring considerable benefits to the countries that most need to accelerate progress towards the MDG targets.

The timing of this report is also crucial for other reasons. Concern over the effectiveness of development cooperation is growing. Pressures are mounting both to increase and to demonstrate more clearly the effectiveness of aid in terms of improving the lives of poor and marginalized populations who are, or should be, at the centre of development. A recent study on aid effectiveness in the health sector stated that the focus has been mainly on processes and coordination of aid rather than on the downstream impacts of those processes on health delivery and outcomes.⁴ When the focus does move downstream, the role and contributions of volunteer action must be understood if this

BOX C.1 : Recognizing the contribution of volunteerism

In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly recommended that governments recognize the potential contribution of volunteerism to achieving sustainable development goals. It further recommended to governments to “extend the notion of volunteerism as an additional valuable component of national development planning to development cooperation policy. Recognizing and building strategically on rich, local traditions of voluntary self-help and mutual aid can open the way to building up a new constituency in support of development efforts. Forging a link in the mind of the general public in countries providing development assistance between domestic volunteering in those countries and volunteering in countries receiving assistance can also help to enlist public support for development cooperation.”³

Source: UNGA. (2002b).

major resource is to be incorporated into development strategies. It needs to be recognized that aid is not the only tool in the development cooperation kit.⁵ Home-grown volunteerism already plays a very significant role in peace and development, and constitutes a vast untapped resource. However, there are large gaps in our knowledge on the subject that urgently need to be addressed. This was one of the recommendations that governments made in 2001.⁶ Yet research on volunteerism in developing countries still falls far short of hopes and expectations raised at the time.

Another marker in the evolving debate on development is the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or “Rio+20”, to be held in 2012. Chapter 4 examined the synergies between volunteerism by the poor and natural resources. The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 stressed social factors, underlining that the link between economic development and improving human well-being is not automatic.⁷ The conference cited the need for enhanced partnerships between governments and major groups including volunteer groups. This position needs to be reinforced at Rio+20.⁸ A synthesis report on best

The role and contributions of volunteer action must be understood if this major resource is to be incorporated into development strategies

The moment has come to ensure that volunteerism is an integral part of any new development consensus

practices, prepared as an input for Rio+20, stated that national development plans have to commit many more resources to community-based policies and programmes.⁹ The United Nations Secretary-General has highlighted how ignoring social marginalization, vulnerability and the uneven distribution of resources weakens the trust needed for collective action.¹⁰ Rio+20 is an extraordinary opportunity to give greater recognition to the fact that volunteer action at grassroots is a key way for the income poor to engage in sustainable development practices at local level. As such, this needs to be supported. We have stated throughout this report that volunteerism is a powerful, yet largely under-exploited, resource with which to address development challenges. Its close links with the green economy, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, must not be overlooked.¹¹

In the larger timeframe, the approaching end of the MDG cycle in 2015 is currently of primary concern. Considerable effort is needed to sustain progress where it is being achieved and to work towards overcoming obstacles where they have been identified. It is hoped that this report will provide an impetus to include volunteerism as a complement to other efforts at meeting the challenges. However, we cannot ignore the fact that bilateral and multilateral organizations, national governments and civil society are now thinking seriously about the shape of the development framework for the post-2015 period. Growing recognition of the limitations of the present development paradigm, and a related desire to see well-being issues more prominent in the development discourse, were discussed in Chapter 8. The context for

ideas now circulating about an evolving development paradigm is very different from the one prevailing in 2000 when the Millennium Declaration was adopted. Issues now dominating international debates on peace and development, including climate change, disasters, conflict, population movements, young people and exclusion, are all discussed in this report in the context of volunteerism.

Volunteerism is a very old tradition. At the same time it is a novel, and potentially fruitful, approach when thinking about development policy. In a world experiencing unprecedented change, volunteerism is a constant. Even if its forms of expression are evolving, the central values of solidarity and feelings of connectedness with others remain as firm as ever and are universal. People are driven not only by their passions and self-interest but also by their values, their norms and their belief systems. With North-South distinctions becoming increasingly irrelevant, volunteer action is a renewable global asset with huge potential to make a real difference in responding to many of the most pressing concerns of the world.

It is certainly possible to be optimistic that volunteerism will assume a much higher profile as quality of life is increasingly seen as occupying a place at the core of concerns of all nations. We are increasingly questioning what we value in life. The well-being benefits associated with the volunteering experience, together with bonds of trust and societal cohesiveness that derive from relationships forged through volunteer action, are likely to be at the forefront of such thinking. The moment has come to ensure that volunteerism is an integral part of any new development consensus.

Notes

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- 23 The GWP surveys representative population samples of at least 1000 people (increased to at least 2000 people in large countries such as China and Russia) aged 15 and older in over 150 countries, covering around 95 per cent of the world's population, on a range of topics such as business and economics, education and families, environment and energy, government and politics, and citizen engagement. The data are commercially available but can also be accessed for free, by country and variable (see GWP, 2011).

- 24 The WVS, an offshoot of the European Values Study, is an ongoing longitudinal and cross-cultural survey covering public attitudes and behaviours and undertaken on a five yearly basis. The minimum sample size is 1000 but larger sample sizes are desirable. The WVS employs face-to-face interviews in the interviewees' own environment. Survey findings are publically available on the study website (see WVS, 2011). The 1999-2004 study was the most recent WVS wave employing a detailed questionnaire on volunteerism.
- 25 The CNP project aimed to document the civil society sector through national studies, to explain differences among countries and to evaluate the impact of civil society organizations on the wider society. The project employs a comparative empirical approach that features a common framework, set of definitions and information-gathering strategies and a network of national and international advisory committees to oversee progress and help to disseminate results. The study was launched in 1992 in an initial set of 12 countries and has since expanded to 45 countries representing a wide range of social, economic and religious contexts.

The CNP collects data on organization-based volunteering through specially commissioned standardized surveys administered by Local Associates, professional survey firms or government agencies. The surveys are typically population based using representative random samples of 1000 to 2000 people, although organization-based surveys were used in some places, often relying on sampling methods focused on representative regions, where suitable sampling frames were unavailable. Variables covered included the number of volunteers, the hours volunteered and the distribution of these hours among activity fields defined by the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO). This allowed the translation of volunteering into the equivalent number of full-time workers which was then related to the economically active population of the country to control for the variations in the size of different countries.
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participation and public trust in institutions, and an organizational survey of civil society representatives which provides a picture of the institutional strength of civil society and its perceived impact. A third survey, of external stakeholders from government, business, academia and the media takes a second opinion of the impact of CSOs.

28 Data on individual levels of volunteering can be found in the Civic Engagement dimension. The relevant indicators, drawn from the population survey, are:

- Percentage of the population that does voluntary work for a social organisation / political organisation
- Percentage of the population that engages several times a year in sports clubs or voluntary / service organisations / engages more frequently (once a month)
- Percentage of the population that does voluntary work for more than one social organisation / political organisation.

In addition, the Level of Organization dimension gathers information from CSO representatives about the perceived reliance of organizations on volunteers.

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 6 UNGA, 2002b
 7 UNGA, 2010b
 8 UN, 2002a
 9 UNGA, 2011b
 10 UNGA, 2010b
 11 A Green Economy is one that results in "improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities" (UNEP, 2011).

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