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Social Impact of Volunteerism



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1 Executive summary and key findings

Research on the social impact of volunteerism is a secondary, independent and non-partisan study that assesses if and how the national and community service has affected the society as a whole. The objective of the study is to identify the specific social effects of volunteerism, such as on economy, social welfare and the volunteers as individuals. The study presents existing evidence from research, reports and evaluations that demonstrate this positive impact and relevance, including a internationally literature reviews from United Nations Volunteers (UNV), a diversity of academic research as well as reports from a diversity of voluntary organizations. It is the first such assembly of this information in one place and provides a foundation for anyone wishing to establish the relevance of volunteering social impact.

Introduction

In the general perspective, the concept of volunteering refers to “rendering of service by choice of or free will for the benefit of the wider community by an individual, group, or institution without necessarily expecting monetary gain in full knowledge and appreciation of being a volunteer”. In the last decades, government has recognized the critical contribution that volunteering makes to build a strong and cohesive society. It has promoted volunteering as the essential act of citizenship, a means for combating social exclusion, and an important contributor to the delivery of high quality public services.

This report marshals the best evidence available in three key areas – volunteering impacts on economic development, social inclusion, and volunteers as individuals – in order to demonstrate the positive impact of volunteering.

The report opens by examining the central role of volunteering in relation to economic development. In chapter two it then discusses the contribution of volunteering to the social connections, development of safer and stronger communities, and explores its role in helping to foster civic engagement as well as delivering public goods. In chapter three it

draws together evidence exploring the impact volunteering can have on the life and career paths of the individuals that take part. The report concludes by looking to the future, exploring some of the findings and highlighting areas for government consideration and policy strategy.

Key findings

Based on previous research on volunteerism, we found that:

- ◇ Volunteering makes a significant contribution to the global economy
- ◇ Volunteering enhances the social connections between different sectors, builds the bridges for governments, enterprises and employees
- ◇ Volunteering helps build a more cohesive, safer, stronger community, increase the social network between communities and neighborhood
- ◇ Volunteering promotes people to be more active in civic engagement and concerned of citizenship
- ◇ Volunteering delivers some part of public services, encouraging more people work in public section, helping raise the educational performance of youth, leading environmental movement and adapting to climate change risk
- ◇ Volunteering also have positive effects on volunteers as individuals, increase their self-esteem, enhance various skills and capacities, expand career paths and be healthier physically and mentally

2 Volunteerism impacts on the society

2.1 Economic Impacts

The calculation of the economic value of volunteering is important because it can:

- emphasize to government and policy makers that voluntary work makes a significant contribution to the economy

- encourage people to become volunteers and make a difference by demonstrating the economic benefits of volunteering, and
- inform the media and the community about the value of volunteer time

Voluntary organizations are key players in the economy in their own right as employers and service providers, adding to the overall economic output of a country and reducing the burden on government spending. The sector also plays a key role of creating the conditions where the economy can flourish by investing in people through training, boosting skills and improving the employability of people on the margins of the labor market.

The volunteering makes a significant contribution to the economy all around the world. According to the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies 2011¹, approximately 140 million people in the 37 countries engage in volunteer work in a typical year. If those 140 million volunteers comprised the population of a country, it would be the 9th largest country in the world. Those 140 million volunteers represent the equivalent of 20.8 million full-time equivalent jobs. It's estimated that volunteers contribute around \$400 billion to the global economy annually. These estimates are produced using data on hours volunteered or the wage-based dollar value. One interpretation that could be given to this wage-based estimate is that it reflects what users of volunteer labor would have had to pay if they had had to hire the labor that instead was freely given to them.

In the United States, volunteers produce services worth \$113 billion to \$161 billion annually (Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, 2010²). In 2009, 63.4 million Americans volunteered to help their communities, 8.1 billion hours of service is produced, which has an estimated dollar value of \$169 billion³. In United Kingdom in 2003, according to the Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England,⁴ 42 percent of people in England and Wales volunteered through a group, club or organization at least once, equivalent to approximately 17.9 million people. Each volunteer contributed an estimated 104 hours in the twelve months before the survey and the total contribution was 1.9 billion hours. This was equivalent of one million full-time workers. At the national average wage their

contribution was worth around £22.5 billion. In Irish context, Donoghue et al (2001)⁵ estimated the volunteering sector was worth 4.2 billion Euros, when expressed in terms of overall contribution to the Irish economy, it took 8.6% of GDP and 9.5% of GNP, based on its expenditure that year. In South Australia, using ABS data it shows that South Australians volunteered 229 million hours in 2000; Ironmonger (2002)⁶ estimated that the value of each South Australian's volunteer labor in 2000 was \$4,352. The aggregate value of South Australian volunteer contributions in 2000 was \$4.98 billion-equivalent to 11.5% of GDP.

2.2 Social Impact

However, these numbers about the economic values do not account for the benefits of third parties—fellow citizens— may enjoy when time is devoted to people or causes they care about. Nor do these numbers account for the less tangible benefits that flow from volunteering. The volunteer sector plays a key role in social life. Volunteer activities bring together people who might not otherwise have contact with one another. The social fabric can only be strengthened by practices that bridge our socioeconomic divides. There would be potential values lying in the social capital, combining the community organizational life, participation in voluntary associations, engagement in public affairs, and informal sociability and social trust. In this study, based on previous research, we divide the social impacts of volunteerism into four categories: **Strengthening social connections; Building strong, safe, cohesive community; Enhancing civic engagement; and Delivering public goods and services.**

2.2.1 Strengthening social connections

The volunteering plays as the bridge of different parts in the society, which concerned of benefits and demands for different social sectors. Most of the voluntary organizations (91.7%) in a survey by UNV⁷ reported some form of collaboration with other organizations, government and private sector. The nature of collaboration on volunteering includes: community partnership, networking, advocacy, funding, support, and invitation to participate in events. Many voluntary organizations also share information with local government and community to push forward community services, including department of

education, environment, and energy and so on. This illustrates the crosscutting nature of volunteering throughout and between the different sectors.

Accordingly, besides the voluntary organizations or the non-profit organizations, there are various forms of volunteer involved programs in private sector. At its best, the voluntary sector act as exemplars of socially responsible business practice to the business community, promoting corporate responsibility by linking business decision making with ethical values, respect for communities and the environment. These businesses have therefore been understood as having a double bottom line, as being concerned with both economic and social impacts, The “socially responsible businesses,” will create positive social change indirectly through the practice of corporate social responsibility (e.g., creating and implementing a philanthropic foundation; using environmentally friendly raw materials; providing volunteers to help with community projects).

As well, there are various employee-based volunteer programs in companies. These volunteer programs are viewed as strategic assets and companies are incorporating service into their business planning, to respond to their desire to make a meaningful difference in society and strengthen the relationship with employees. A survey conducted by Deloitte⁸ states that, right now rather than “nice-to-do” employee perk, volunteer programs are more viewed as a strategic business initiative. Companies that connect the dots between talent and volunteerism have an opportunity to strengthen relationships with young employees and will likely be rewarded with happier workers. The more satisfied employees are, the more likely they will remain loyal to the company. Meanwhile, many influential business leaders and management gurus agree - the affinity that employees feel toward an employer has the power to create a competitive advantage that can be hard to imitate, and is inextricably linked to organizational performance. Sometimes intangible, its force is undeniable.

2.2.2 Building strong, safe, cohesive communities

Through cooperation with government, enterprise, community, the voluntary sector is key partners in the regeneration of deprived communities. The service sector contributes significantly to building community cohesion – creating links and social networks in

communities, giving people the opportunity to come together and develop social network, for example, through sports, voluntary arts and youth clubs, institutional co-operation and community identification. Volunteering helps to foster greater trust among citizens and developing norms of solidarity and reciprocity that are essential for stability.

According to studies of AmeriCorps in 2008⁹, service sector could increase people's capacities to lead a more cohesive community. This report is the culmination of an eight-year rigorous study to investigate if and how AmeriCorps has an impact on volunteers as well as voluntary service recipients, which was achieved by questionnaires and surveys on comparing the post-service habits and attitudes of alumni with those of others who did not serve in the program. Specifically, the volunteer service program increase people **the ability to lead a successful community-based movement**, they have more feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program; people feel stronger **connection to community**, more strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment; people have better ability and knowledge to **identify and understand problems in the community**, better self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime; people understand more about the **importance of neighborhood participation**, being more active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations.

The service sector would also help build a safer community and reduce crime. In a study by Putnam (2000)¹⁰ it reported strong inverse relationships between levels of voluntary membership and crime. He found a strong negative correlation between his measure of social capital and homicide. Kawachi reported strong negative correlations between measures of voluntary membership and assault, robbery and burglary in the United States (Kawachi, 1999¹¹; Kawachi 2000¹²).

2.2.3 Enhancing civic engagement

Volunteer labor deserves a special place in discussions of philanthropy and civic renewal. Alexis de Toqueville (1988)¹³, in his classic study of American democracy, saw volunteering is a form of civic engagement through which individuals can make meaningful contributions to their own visions of societal well-being.

Keely S. Jones (2006)¹⁴ conducted research on the distinct connection of volunteering with public life and civic engagement. Using data from The Survey of Giving and Volunteering in the United States, the author finds that greater volunteering is most strongly promoted by community ties. One such theoretical framework is that of community integration, which suggests that community ties within a physical place draw people into common interests and public engagement. When ties overlap in a community, making a person highly integrated into a physical place, he or she is pulled into public life in multiple ways, and civic engagement becomes more likely and more important.

In reports of AmeriCorps 2008¹⁵, volunteering increases people's confidence in ability to work with local government or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot. People also feel more civic obligations, and are more active in participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury. A majority (80%) of alumni report they are more likely to participate in community service as a result of their volunteering experience. Alumni who did not volunteer prior to AmeriCorps are much more civically engaged than a comparable group of individuals who expressed interest in, but did not join, AmeriCorps. There is a 25-percentage point difference in their rates of volunteering.

In a survey among youth by the Corporation for National & Community Services¹⁶, it finds out the participants in school-based service would talk about politics with their friends and parents more often than non-participants do — and even more so when the service is part of a service-learning course that lasts at least one semester; youth who report current or past participation in service-learning courses that include reflection, planning, and service that lasts at least one semester are almost three times as likely to believe they

can make a great deal of difference in their community than youth who participated in school-based service without any of the quality elements of service-learning.

As reported by UNV about the volunteerism¹⁷, in Nairobi, UNV volunteers are working alongside residents of slums to enhance their ability to organize, in order to better represent their interests, vis-à-vis local authorities, and to mobilize volunteer-led basic services within the settlements. In southeastern Asia, in an environmental governance dialogue supported by UNV volunteers, volunteers are helping create opportunities for rural communities in three countries along the Mekong River, for collaboration among the communities and local government to address conflicting and detrimental uses of the river, and to devise volunteer-driven initiatives to ensure the sustainable use of the river's natural resources.

The National Survey on Volunteerism of Kenya¹⁸ reports that volunteering helps build a confident, democratic Kenya. With a strong ethos of volunteer management, voluntary organizations have embrace ideals of civic participation and active citizenship. The service sector promotes the involvement of people in the lives of communities and wider society through its projects and through volunteering. Volunteering itself has been about people who step forward to help others whose lives are very different from their own, without judgment or prejudice, to work with people affected by drug or alcohol misuse, people with mental health problems or those affected by war and conflict. Volunteering has thus been a way of creating a climate of optimism, hope and a confident Kenya.

In summary, as an important resource and social capital, the volunteer labor is producing rewards for the philanthropy and civic renewal. It's pointed out that individuals who voluntarily help out at a sporting event are often the same individuals who attend community meetings with government officials to talk about community problems. Not only are individuals who participate more likely to be active in a range of civic issues, but individuals who volunteer at a young age are more likely to sustain their participation in later life. For example, a 2007 study in the American Educational Research Journal identifies community service during high school as a strong predictor of voting and volunteering in adulthood. This suggests that people may move from occasional volunteer

action to more sustained engagement in activities related to development and change, and the other way round. These progressions may facilitate a deeper understanding of the issues producing the socio-economic conditions that volunteers and social activists aim to address, and can strengthen social inclusion by virtue of fostering people's participation in activities seeking to change those conditions.

2.2.4 Delivering excellent public goods and services

Volunteering can provide excellent public goods and services, especially that not available (or not available in sufficient amounts) due to both market and government failure. The assumption here is that volunteering fills gaps in the supply of goods and services that are desired by their beneficiaries, but are not available from either private commercial or public sector providers. And even if they are available, some members of society may not be able to access them because of binding budget or other constraints (e.g. imperfect information). Voluntary organizations have contributed to planning and designing of service delivery through powerful advocacy to ensure that services meet the needs of specific groups or individuals.

Pipeline to public service careers

From voluntary organizations, volunteers are exposed to parts of society that they might not otherwise have encountered (Sagawa, Connolly, & Chao, 2008¹⁹), and are introduced to careers they might not have considered. These career opportunities may have been perceived as unattainable, or may have simply been unknown for a member not served.

In addition, while the service sector prepares members for the workforce, it can also be a conduit to careers that serve the public good. Members have the opportunity to serve in fields such as healthcare, education, and social services—fields that need visionary leaders (Sagawa et al., 2008), but are currently facing a severe shortage of qualified employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2008).

In reports from AmeriCorps 2008, in view of the dire need for those serving the public good, the study focuses on whether the volunteering service has an impact on the career choices of

members, including: Employment in a public service career; and Effects on the importance of service-oriented careers. Reports find out that the service organization provides a pipeline to public service. The voluntary program alumni are more likely to enter public service careers than a comparable group of individuals who did not join. The majority (66%) of alumni choose to go into a public service career, with 35 percent working in the public sector and 31 percent working in the nonprofit sector. There is a seven-point difference between the percentage of alumni who went into a public service career after service and a comparison group of individuals who did not join.

Support to the youth education

Volunteering has a considerable impact on the education system itself. Schools and other educational institutions are one of the most popular areas to volunteer within and volunteers perform a number of vital functions within the education system, contributing to a range of outcomes. Education has been one of the prime focuses for government policy, much of which could not be delivered in the same way without the involvement of volunteers.²⁰ A number of these policy initiatives have recognized the importance of increasing parental and community involvement in education, coinciding with volunteering policies that have sought to increase levels of participation in public service delivery.

Volunteering also contribute to the delivery and enhancement of education. Baker, Gersten and Keating (2000) showed that volunteers can have a direct impact on students such as helping them to learn how to read. Putnam reported that higher levels of social capital are associated with higher levels of performance by students on standardized tests and higher school retention rates (Putnam 2000, p. 299)²¹.

In report about UK volunteerism²², volunteers undertake a wide range of roles, from learning support (particularly in areas such as reading, math and citizenship) through to fundraising for the school. The learning support programs have a significant impact on student learning and on student attendance. An evaluation of one volunteer reading project found that it helped to raise academic performance among approximately 60 percent of the participating 10 to 11 years old students.

In the For At-risk Youth program from Cross Cultural Solution 2010²³, it provided successful intervention services for the at-risk youth and that their unique contribution positively impacted services as a whole. For example, they were significantly less likely to start using alcohol or illegal drugs, hit someone, or skip school than those who were not in the program. They were also more confident about their school performance and got along better with their families.

Lead in sustainable development

In 1987 the Brundtland Commission coined the phrase ‘sustainable development’ to highlight that economic growth could not continue to take place at the expense of social and environmental factors. Innovative environmental initiatives from bottom-up rely on the contribution of volunteers.

There are many voluntary programs are making significant contributions for their communities in environmental protection and energy saving areas; the collective impact of these projects that involve volunteers can be enormous. In 2002 in UK, there were approximately 350 community recycling initiatives linked to the Community Recycling Network, and around 300 furniture recycling projects throughout England and Wales.²⁴ Volunteers are also involved in carbon offsetting initiatives, including woodland planting and management, as well as peat conservation.

In Power Saver Volunteers program²⁵ in Austin, aiming to solve energy scarce in peak hours since most of people cool homes, cook dinner, wash dishes, and do laundry at similar times—in the early evening. Signed-up volunteers take simple actions in specific alert time to help reduce peak demand and put off building new power generation plants, such as switch off unnecessary lights, delay washing and drying clothes, cook dinner in the microwave oven rather than with an electric range, adjust the thermostat temperature if possible by two to four degrees. It estimated that if all 338,000 Austin residential customers turned off just two 40-watt light bulbs, the energy reduction would power 3,100 homes.

In Pennsylvania State University in the United States, they launched The Penn State Beaver Stadium Post-Game Recycling Volunteer Effort (PGRVE)²⁶, which strives to promote environmental sustainability through recycling and heightened awareness of recycling, while also encouraging the students to become engaged in public service through environmental activism. After each Penn State home football game, typically 50 to 75 students volunteer to collect thousands of pounds of recyclable plastic materials that otherwise would be discarded with regular trash collection. Materials collected through the PGRVE are recycled and the annual profits are donated to the Centre County United Way. In its 10-year history, PGRVE has collected nearly 300 tons of recyclables that would have otherwise required disposal. Throughout the years, the program has shared its unique stadium recycling approach and plan with many other colleges and universities, more universities are joining in to launch similar volunteer programs for the recycling and environment protection.

Response to climate change

The symptoms of climate change have a severe impact on the poor and the marginalized and those who live in the developing world will bear the greatest burden. Various volunteer programs mobilize the creativity and knowledge of local communities everywhere to meet the challenges of global climate change, to address environmental threats and also support communities affected by natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunami, help set up early warning systems in local and rural communities.

For example, UNV voluntary organizations have been building expertise and capacity in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Brazil, training large numbers of volunteers for planning for disasters.²⁷ In India, UNV supported UNDP's Natural Disaster Risk Management project which resulted in 500,000 villagers training as community volunteers to create an early warning system. This has been established in 78,000 villages with the formation of disaster management teams and taskforces ensuring that community participation remains significant for the purpose of both sustainability and functionality UNV also operates the UNV Online Volunteering service,

which has helped almost 1,000 development organizations to engage 11,000 volunteers in projects delivered over the internet. By sharing information and expertise, these volunteers and organizations are helping to strengthen the capacity of local communities and enhance their resilience to climate change.

2.3 Impacts on Volunteers

Volunteers report both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits from volunteering. Volunteering has certain positive impact on the volunteer, such as social recognition, better health and self-esteem, building résumé, training and career enhancement; economic benefits and capacity in the labor market (Wilson & Musick, 2000; Carlin, 2001; Katz & Rosenberg, 2005; Prouteau & Wolff, 2006).

Noting a variety of potential benefits to the volunteer, here we divided volunteering benefits into three categories: internal rewards such as social recognition, self-esteem, training and career enhancement, and health benefits.

2.3.1 training and career enhancement, building résumé

Service sectors provide volunteers with the opportunity to explore different career paths, gain job-related skills, develop leadership skills, and network with community leaders, while engaged in activities that strengthen communities.

According to reports from AmeriCorps 2008, during their year of service, many members develop teaching skills as they teach or tutor students. Other members may be required to obtain Red Cross certification in order to serve through hospitals and healthcare organizations or provide disaster relief. Still other members learn how to manage projects and work in teams as they build homes or clear trails. While these job training and experiential learning techniques are proven methods for workforce development, engaging in these activities through national service provides an added benefit that goes beyond merely preparing members for employment. In the survey about the benefits of volunteers, nearly all (90%) members report that they have gained useful skills from their volunteer

experience, with 57.8 percent reporting to a large extent and 31.7 percent reporting to a moderate extent. Nearly half (46%) of members identify “gaining new skills” as their primary or secondary reason for joining the program.

According to the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP), more than three quarters (79%) of volunteers said that their volunteer activities helped them with their interpersonal skills, such as understanding people better, motivating others, and dealing with difficult situations. Just over two thirds (68%) of volunteers said that volunteering helped them to develop better communication skills. Sixty three percent reported increased knowledge about issues related to their volunteering. The percentage of volunteers who reported gaining specific skills as a result of volunteering increased steadily with the number of hours they contributed. For example, over three quarters (78%) of volunteers who contributed 188 or more hours reported gaining communication skills, compared to just over half (52%) of those who contributed 19 hours or less. Similar, but less pronounced, patterns are seen with other skills.

2.3.2 internal rewards such as social recognition, self-esteem

Though a “volunteer” is someone who contributes time to helping others with no expectation of pay or other material benefit to herself, this does not mean that volunteer work is of no consequence for the volunteer. Indeed, it is widely believed that helping others is as beneficial for the donor as it is for the recipient. “Research studies show that most people do in fact hold the belief that helping others is a good way to gain fulfillment for yourself.”(Robert Wuthnow, 1991)

Volunteering creates the sense of self worthiness and instills self esteem. It gives the very important feeling of being needed as through volunteering somebody is offered help, which is by itself a very rewarding experience for the helper. Besides, volunteering can represent an important trial period and provide opportunity to experiment and put preferences to practice (Street, 1994).

2.3.3 health benefits

In the review of The health benefits of volunteering²⁸ by Corporations of National & Community Service, those who give support through volunteering experience greater health benefits than those who receive support through these activities, especially among the elderly.

Likewise, Nancy Morrow-Howell et al. were commissioned by OASIS, a U.S. nonprofit agency designed to promote volunteering among the elderly, to find out what kinds of benefits volunteers thought they had derived from volunteer work. Nearly eight out of ten reported an increase in well-being, while the same proportion reported having more friends and acquaintances, and three-quarters believed they now made more productive use of their time.

A longitudinal study of older married adults found that those individuals who reported providing instrumental support to friends, relatives, and neighbors had lower rates of mortality five years later than those who had not reported providing support. In addition, providing support was found to have a stronger relationship with longevity than receiving support from others (Brown et al., 2003). A study of adults age 65 and older found that the positive effect of volunteering on physical and mental health is due to the personal sense of accomplishment that an individual gains from his or her volunteer activities (Herzog et al., 1998). Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose, as found in a study of older adults; according to this study, formal volunteering moderated the loss of a sense of purpose among older adults who had experienced the loss of major role identities, such as wage-earner and parent (Greenfield and Marks, 2004). A second study found that, in general, volunteers report greater life satisfaction and better physical health than do non-volunteers, and their life satisfaction and physical health improves at a greater rate as a result of volunteering. The researchers found statistically significant, positive relationships between volunteering and lower levels of depression (Harlow and Cantor, 1996).

3 Conclusions

Based on previous research on volunteerism, we can see that the voluntary organizations have been affected the society very diversely and deeply. Volunteering is viewed as a form of social capital, with particular reference to the role of volunteering in promoting social inclusion, assisting marginalized social groups, its relationship to other forms of civic participation and unpaid work, creating a civil society, social action, in community building and community renewal. The character of the cooperation of the sector with all kinds of other key social players such as government, business, communities and people as individuals has given the voluntary sector strong power to affect the society as a whole. In conclusion, we found that:

- ◇ Volunteering makes a significant contribute to the global economy.
- ◇ Volunteering enhances the social connections between different sectors, builds the bridges for governments, enterprises and employees
- ◇ Volunteering helps build a more cohesive, safer, stronger community, increase the social network between communities and neighborhood
- ◇ Volunteering promotes people to be more active in civic engagement and concerned of citizenship
- ◇ Volunteering delivers some part of public services, encouraging more people work in public section, helping raise the educational performance of youth, push forward sustainable development, solve environmental problems, and respond to climate change etc.
- ◇ Volunteering also have positive effects on volunteers as individuals, increase the self-esteem, enhance various skills and capacities, expand career paths and be healthier physically and mentally

4 Policy implications and strategy

The volunteer sector plays an important role in contributing to the society as a whole, where its unique position in society often gives it special insight into the needs of local

communities and individuals. It also has the role of an advocate to enable communities and individuals who find it difficult to articulate their needs and views, to communicate with decision-makers. The voluntary sector is uniquely positioned and motivated to articulate alternative visions and solutions to local development challenges. It should initiate campaigns for public provision for unmet, social needs or for better or alternative provision where public services already exist.

In order to better develop the positive role of the voluntary sector, it is clear that a policy is required and a working group should be formed to undertake this. The fundamental issues that need to be addressed in the policy include:

4.1 Recognition

This covers the responsibilities, roles, the value of respective contributions and constraints of targeted voluntary organizations. There is need for official acknowledgment and appreciation on the value and the contribution of the volunteers and voluntary organizations to the social economic, environmental and cultural life. There is also need for the government to acknowledge the independence of the voluntary sector and its practices in the interest of volunteers, voluntary organizations and service recipients.

The policy should:

- Promote the importance of good volunteer management practices
- Promote, develop and maintain agreed monitoring and evaluation systems
- Promote sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure self-reliance and project sustainability

4.2 Cooperation

The policy framework should also enhance the cooperation between voluntary organizations, and the partnership of voluntary organizations with government. This includes areas of information sharing, mechanisms for joint working, involvement in policymaking, planning and service delivery, openness and spirit of cooperation. This should put a clear mechanism of having joint collaboration programming.

4.3 Resource

This policy area is required to cover aspects of finance, expertise, access to facilities and other in kind support, provide information on environment, energy, climate change, education, healthcare and so on, and make efficient mechanism to encourage volunteering initiatives bottom-up.

The policy should also encompass the contribution of volunteers, especially those with technical skills, such as medics, teachers, legal and para-legal professionals who occasionally provide services in their leisure time. Deliberate efforts should be made to systematically nurture this mechanism of volunteering such that it happens in a structured manner.

4.4 Evaluation

The policy needs to provide a framework for consultation, decision making and performance and efficiency evaluation among the voluntary organizations. The voluntary sector needs to clearly state its objectives and priorities, provide clear and easily accessible information about channels of communication with the government, and within the sector and issues relating to structures and systems for conducting consultations. Voluntary organizations need to figure out program specific questions such as what kind of people volunteer, why they volunteer and how they got to hear about the need for voluntary help, which can provide vital evidence for volunteer-involving organizations seeking to improve their mobilization and support of people who volunteer.

This policy also includes the evaluation and assessment onvolunteers. Some material or non material rewards towards volunteers who make significant contributions may encourage more people to take part and enhance the benefits of being a volunteer.

5 Further studies

The background study shows volunteering can foster social cohesion and put individuals on a path to longer-term engagement in development activities. To develop the body of research-based knowledge, there is need to know more about:

5.1 Motivation of volunteering

What leads individuals to volunteer at different points in time and in different ways – both the personal motivations and the situational factors? It would be helpful for further inquiries into people's volunteering so as to inform broadening of volunteering options that could be promoted.

5.2 Policy on integration mechanism

The development of a voluntary sector policy and its integration in socio-economic planning mechanisms needs to be backed by empirical evidence. This would thus require an action-oriented research to establish the sector's contribution in the areas such as poverty alleviation, production of goods and services, capacity building, employment creation, enterprise development, community regeneration, social inclusion, development of social economy etc.

5.3 Best volunteering practices in different sectors

Research project to document best practices of voluntarism in different sectors, such as social responsible businesses, employee based voluntary programs, cooperated projects between non-profits and local government etc.

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