



International FORUM on Development Service
FORUM International du Volontariat pour le Développement

Conference Report

IVCO 2005

**International Volunteers:
Making a Difference in the World**

Tokyo, 25-27 October 2005

Hosted by





Delegates at IVCO 2005 in Tokyo.

On Monday 24th October, JICA Vice-President Mr Kazuhisa Matsuoka hosted a reception to welcome delegates to Japan. Entertainment included traditional Japanese koto music followed by a performance of African songs by *Tamba-Famba*, a group of former volunteers.

Cliff Allum, President of FORUM, and Mr Masaaki Otsuka, Director General of JOCV, welcomed delegates to the conference and to Tokyo when the conference formally opened on Tuesday 25th October. Madam Sadako Ogata (President of JICA) addressed the delegates and responded to comments on human security and the international volunteer: *"The value of international volunteering is that activities are carried out at the grassroots level on a voluntary basis and are not enforced on communities and people."*



Traditional Japanese koto music

1. Setting the Context: Current Trends in International Volunteering

The accompanying CD includes the report on the 2005 trends survey of FORUM members and IVCO participants.

This session focused on the context of international volunteering and current trends experienced by organisations engaged in international volunteer co-operation. Karen Takacs presented the findings of FORUM's annual trends survey, which had been carried out on behalf of FORUM by Development Initiatives. Karen noted in particular the raised profile of international development in 2005: *"The silver lining of the cloud of natural disasters such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami and the recent earthquake in Pakistan and Kashmir was that people were hankering after ways to display international solidarity."*



Ad de Raad

Four years on from the International Year of the Volunteer, Ad de Raad explained that the Tsunami had highlighted the importance of volunteers and the need to support volunteers to mobilise in their own communities.

It was also suggested that we should consider the role of government departments and agencies in the context of post-disaster support through international volunteering, and how inter-governmental relationships affect these initiatives.

Australian Volunteers International has received enquiries from universities whose students want to do overseas placements. The universities need ethical frameworks to apply to these placements and AVI would be interested to share experiences and learning with other organisations who are working in this area.

In France, there is a greater level of consistency between agencies because, under French law, all agencies must sign the same type of contract with their volunteers. AFVP also signs its own agreement with the volunteer, in addition to the legal status contract. The individuality of the agency is respected in terms of financial remuneration.

Cliff Allum referred to EU studies being undertaken on the EVHAC and ECPC initiatives. He emphasised that as international volunteer co-operation agencies we need to think carefully about how to enable young people to engage in international volunteering. There is also an opportunity to educate the European Commission about how young people would be affected by being sent to areas of unrest, conflict or disaster. Further information is available on the FORUM website, www.forum-ids.org.

The Japanese experience is that young people want to engage in international volunteering but are often unable to provide the technical skills required by partner organisations. This requires the allocation of financial resources to equip young volunteers with the technical skills they need in order to become effective international volunteers. In Japan, there is a gap between supply and demand in terms of quality rather than quantity of young volunteers.

Delegates expressed an interest in sharing successes and case studies of where we have been successful and have had positive outcomes rather than looking solely at current trends. Some agencies receive enquiries from potential volunteers (often retired professionals) who want to undertake a self-financing international placement; how can we as a group address this area and explore this potential?



Masaaki Otsuka

Future surveys

Traditional recipient countries were represented at the conference, expressing their support for international volunteering. It was suggested that a future trends survey could include the perspective of programme beneficiaries to enable us to examine the principle of reciprocity and how IV can contribute to development.

The focus for many participants is on accountability, the increasing need to measure impact, and assessing the value of our investments.

Anne Frigon recognised the value of participating in the trends survey not only for the outcome but because participation can also generate useful discussion within the organisation.

Some organisations face a decrease in government funding and therefore need to diversify their sources. Frédérique Samé-Ekobo welcomed the survey because “it is useful to find out about other governments’ positions and learn more about other organisations’ challenges.”

Different funding bodies and national laws place different requirements on our programmes. French laws have opened international placements from French to European to volunteers of any nationality. For AVI, government funding is specifically for Australian volunteers.

Overall, participants placed an emphasis on accountability. Increased funding is accompanied by an increased need for accountability, whether driven by donors, public or by ourselves.

Delegates agreed that at future conferences it might be useful to identify and share a few anecdotes and examples to facilitate learning. While the trends survey only highlights key issues rather than investigating them in depth, it would also be of great benefit to review past trends surveys and assess trends over the last 5 years. This will be undertaken in 2006 and will form part of FORUM’s research programme.



Lilian Chatterjee

Suggested topics for future surveys:

- Cooperation with military bodies for development outcomes
- Reciprocity
- Higher level critical questions - MDGs
- We demand changes from developing countries but to what extent are we prepared to change in our own countries?

2. Demonstrating Impact

Chair: Ad de Raad, UN Volunteers

The accompanying CD includes presentations on JICA's evaluation & assessment framework and the CIDA report "The Power of Volunteering".

"We don't just want to justify our work to our donors and funding governments, but also genuinely want to find out whether our work is effective and achieves the intended impact",
Cliff Allum.

This session built on the added value theme, focusing on demonstrating impact through different initiatives.

Assessing Multiple Effects of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer Programme, Ms Satoko Miwa & Mr Ryuichi Nasu, JICA: JICA had undertaken a study to assess the added value of JOCV interventions, looking at the additional benefits of JOCV over technical assistance models. During the impact study they found that impact may include motivation of recipient communities to further development as well as a cultural exchange.

The Power of Volunteering, Lilian Chatterjee, CIDA & Karen Takacs, Canadian Crossroads International: Lilian and Karen presented the findings of CIDA's review of the Canadian Volunteer Cooperation Programme. Lilian explained, *"International volunteers are a means not an end to the development outcomes of the Canadian Volunteer Cooperation Agencies."* The evaluation identified the need for IVCOs to explore further the variety of ways in which we can work with our partner organisations to meet their needs and complement international volunteering, as Karen highlighted: *"We need to look at ways of being more flexible and responsive - to expand our toolbox!"*

Methodology to capture the impact of volunteer contributions, Ad de Raad, UNV: Ad provided an update on the impact assessment research among FORUM members being led by UNV.

Delegates discussed whether we fully understand the context in which we are asking our impact assessment questions: are our assessments more than customer service surveys?

Different methodologies were also discussed: should we adopt a log frame approach or a more organic process to record outcomes?

What are the intended outcomes of international volunteering programmes? We need to be clear about the objectives. International volunteering is the best single tool for achieving a combination of awareness and development objectives.

We need to recognise the outcomes for both the sending and recipient countries. Both need to share expectations and intended outcomes. It was also acknowledged that the personal contact of international volunteering brings an added value.

Tay Keong Tan stressed the importance of recognising that there is also a cost to the beneficiary organisation and country. It is important to level the playing field and be aware of the financial costs, cultural differences and management challenges faced by each partner.

Cliff Allum provided an update on the Brookings research project. Brookings had suggested undertaking research on longitudinal approaches to monitoring and evaluating our work, by monitoring the development outcomes of both projects with and without international volunteers.



3. Competition and Collaboration

Chair: Mark Goldring, CEO, VSO

The accompanying CD includes materials from Uniterra on collaboration and inter-agency partnerships.

This session focused on innovative collaborations, mergers and strategic alliances in international volunteering. These partnerships are driven by both public sector reforms and changes in donor perspective and practice and often have an impact on the ways in which international volunteering is being resourced. While the drive for best value has seen outsourcing, tendering and performance measurement; the drive for policy coherence and a programmatic approach has seen an increase in strategic grant arrangements. This session explored case studies of different forms of co-operation and competition, the reasons for these partnerships and the benefits and challenges that have arisen in the area of international volunteering.

"We have a whole range of agencies here which have been collaborating in different ways – from mergers to formal collaborations." Mark Goldring described VSO's takeover of beso in 2005 as an example of one model.

Lessons learned from the WUSC-CECI strategic alliance, Claude Perras, Director, Uniterra: *"Our strategy has not been to look at traditional competition but to look at the strengths of the other partner which we can leverage to optimise our own programme."* People are always asking who is leading the partnership – the external environment always encourages competition rather than collaboration. *"The parachute does not have to be an exit strategy. It could be a full merger for example."*

Lillian Chatterjee outlined CIDA's support

to the Uniterra initiative: *"CIDA made a conscious decision to give the Uniterra programme more funding than either organisation would have received if it had applied on its own; because we wanted to see how this collaboration would work."*

Lessons Learned from the Australian Experience of Tendering, Dimity Fifer, CEO, Australian Volunteers International:

Dimity presented an outline of the Australian international volunteering tendering process of 2004-5 which forced AVI to be more innovative and drive organisational change while delivering the donor's programme objectives. *"The steps that were taken might not have been the right process, but I am very proud of today's AVI. Without the tender process, it would have taken us at least 5 years to get to where we are today as an organisation. We now have the ability to fund short-term placements which is wonderful."*

Delegates shared their experiences of collaboration, outlining different models from collaboration on specific projects through to complete mergers. Two participating organisations even used the opportunity of IVCO 2006 to sign a new agreement: Peace Corps volunteers had initiated an informal collaboration with JICA volunteers at the local level which was then formalised on 25th October 2006 when Peace Corps and JOCV signed a strategic alliance. Gaddi Vasquez explained: *"This collaboration sends a strong signal to our Country Directors around the world. We place great value on building cross-cultural understanding and our volunteers now have the opportunity to build a friendship with a JICA volunteer who is from a 3rd country and another different culture. These friendships will in some cases extend beyond their time as a Peace Corps volunteer."*



This alliance will have practical benefits for volunteers and field office staff, as Masaaki Otsuka explains: *“In emergency situations there is potential for working together to evacuate both Peace Corps and JOCV volunteers. We are now also considering making joint projects with Peace Corps, particularly in the area of HIV/AIDS. We now have to strengthen the agreement on the ground through our offices.”*

Cliff Allum explained that organisational change, funding diversification and geographical expansion were the driving forces for Skillshare Africa’s merger with Action Health in 2000. Skillshare International has since developed collaborative partnerships with organisations which are not engaged in international volunteering, including with NGO Responding to Conflict, where each partner brings different strengths and areas of expertise to the collaboration.

4. Collaboration: changing the landscape of international volunteering.

Chair: Deborah Snelson, CEO, VSA

The accompanying CD includes an article about VSO’s work to address HIV/AIDS in Malawi and a presentation about JICA’s partnership with UNESCO.

Mark Goldring showed a DVD about VSO working with the UK government’s departments for Health and International Development in Malawi’s health sector. The UK Department for Health works to maximise the benefits for the UK health system while minimising the negative effects elsewhere, whereas the Department for International Development can have a different perspective. Jürgen Wilhelm noted the encouraging example of political dialogue where UK ministers from different departments work with VSO together.

Delegates discussed the implications of changes in government funding priorities and of the need to have exit strategies. The impact of health staff being drained from the poorer country and recruited to work in the donor country was also discussed.

Collaboration ensures that volunteering agencies do not simply fill gaps left by other agencies. Cliff Allum noted that where there is a coherent model, relationships become tighter and stronger, but encouraged participants to consider how others could connect to those models and programmes.

JICA-UNESCO partnership to address HIV/AIDS in Jamaica, Kaori Nakatari, JICA:

Programme materials were developed in Jamaica or borrowed from Africa and in 2002, JICA decided to recruit people with business skills or a background in health care because there are not many Japanese HIV/AIDS specialists due to low level of HIV/AIDS in Japan. Japanese volunteers supported health promotion specialists with their IT and data skills. The JICA-UNESCO project attempts to cover all state secondary schools in Jamaica. Secondary schools are the priority, followed by primary schools. Teachers and Parent-Teacher Associations are targeted first, followed by the students. This is only possible because of the strong commitment and full support of Jamaica’s Ministry of Health.

The key learning point was the importance of both partners investing the time to understand each other before identifying the role of the volunteers and specific programme activities. Understanding each other is a key part of the collaboration – communicating with each other, about each other.



5. The Role of International Volunteers in Public Education and Advocacy

Chair: Tay Keong Tan

Frédérique Samé-Ekobo, Karen Takacs and Taiko Tsuchihashi outlined the experiences of AFVP, Canadian Crossroads International and JOCA. The enclosed CD includes the JOCA presentation.

Recent studies show that international volunteers can play a significant role in public education and advocacy. Volunteer cooperation agencies (VCAs) carry out a wide range of public education activities that seek to both educate and engage citizens directly in their work. A panel led a discussion on the wide range of programmes being carried out by VCAs. Participants then shared examples of public engagement and working with diaspora communities.

Engaging volunteers in France - Frédérique Samé-Ekobo, Association of French Volunteers for Progress (AFVP)

Former volunteers have created associations which are independent of, but have links to, AFVP. There are around 10,000 returned AFVP volunteers and AFVP has a webpage devoted to them. Former volunteers represent AFVP alongside employees at events to recruit new volunteers and raise awareness of AFVP. Informal networking with returned volunteers also facilitates AFVP's interaction with other bodies such as NGOs and the local government. The challenge is to maintain contact details of former volunteers and to fund activities to engage volunteers when they return. There is great value in maintaining our links with and the engagement of former volunteers as Frédérique explained: *"Some friends and families of former volunteers become volunteers themselves when they hear about the RV's experience. Many may also be moved to try fair trade products and join other activities."*

Global Citizens for Action Against Poverty, Karen Takacs, Canadian Crossroads International: 9 Canadian volunteer cooperation agencies are working together to engage returned volunteers in the Global Call to Action.

Engaging the Canadian public was most successful with youth and at the local level – particularly where people from developing countries were involved as this presented the face of the developing world and made it easier to connect.

The Canadian agencies' aim was to move beyond understanding change to people becoming active global citizens. Karen explained: *"We want returned volunteers to effect change in Canada and we saw the Make Poverty History campaign as a golden opportunity because it offered individuals the room for creativity, initiative and innovation in their own communities."* With increased South-South volunteering, fewer Canadians are recruited as volunteers, presenting the agencies there with the challenge of engaging their alumni. The Canadian experience was that personal contact was more effective than email, which did not work that well. *"We have seen some really unbelievable responses and activities led and organised by our former volunteers."* Because personal contact was found to be much more effective than email at generating enquiries, dedicated resources are essential. It takes time to work collaboratively and identify strategies for engaging returned volunteers.

**How we can contribute to society?
JOCA's efforts to interact with students
and community, Taiko Tsuchihashi,**

JOCA: JOCA's Project Team Director, Taiko Tsuchihashi presented an outline of JOCA's efforts to engage students and citizens at home.

Mark Goldring outlined VSO's work with Diaspora communities who seek to maintain close links with their mother countries. Because Diaspora communities sometimes feature opposition groups to the mother country government, this area of work introduces numerous political sensitivities and challenges. Engagement with Diaspora communities can be difficult when there is a misconception of international volunteering and the mutually beneficial exchange of skills and ideas is not recognised.

Mark explained that *"VSO is not using Diaspora communities as a tool for us to deliver our objectives. We are using VSO as a tool for the Diaspora communities, which means turning our agenda on its head."*

VSO provides financial and technical assistance to harness the skills of Diaspora communities in the UK to use in their countries of heritage: *"It's a way to access funding for the Diaspora associations – they wouldn't have the structure or support mechanisms to access the funding and meet donors' needs. It's a new programme and we're expecting to send the first 30 volunteers in the next 6 months."*

Cliff Allum shared an example of Skillshare International's work with the Yemeni Diaspora community in the UK. This project supported and enabled the community to access major donors.

Ad de Raad recognised the huge potential of engaging people at home in voluntary activities and as global citizens. Mark Goldring agreed, explaining that in the UK *"international volunteering is a part of the broader volunteering movement encouraging young people to engage. There is enthusiasm for engaging young urban people in their own communities in the UK – but there can be an international dimension to that and that presents us with a challenge."*

The greater challenge for many IVCOs seems to be engaging our volunteers who are from a 3rd country and not returning to our base country. Karen Takacs asked *"How can we engage people at a distance? Our challenge will be to engage people wherever they may be. Not necessarily Canadians in Canada but our volunteers who return to other home countries. How do we build on that potential?"*



Tay Keong Tan

Tay Keong Tan recommended a research paper on social capital called "The strength of weak ties", which examines informal networks including alumni associations as opposed to formal structures which encourage competition rather than complementarity. He ended the session by challenging participants to take action: *"I encourage you all to look at how you can strengthen weak ties across Diaspora communities in your own countries."*



6. Final Remarks and Future Plans

At the annual meeting of FORUM members, the Executive had presented a vision for FORUM which was broadly supported by members.

Organisations were invited to share their comments on the research programme with Karen Takacs or Cliff Allum, who emphasised that in order to implement the plan, individuals here will need to enable their organisations to engage in it and participate as case studies.

IVCO 2006 will be hosted by UN Volunteers in Bonn on 4-6 October. IVCO 2007 will be hosted by the Canadian International Volunteer Cooperation Agencies (CIVCA), supported by CIDA.

27,000 former volunteers were invited to attend JOCV's 40th anniversary ceremony on Saturday 29th October, an event which the Prime Minister, Emperor & Empress of Japan were also due to attend. Cliff Allum delivered a statement on international volunteering.



Cliff Allum

For news and information about FORUM, please visit www.forum-ids.org

Delegates

Association of French Volunteers for Progress, Frédérique Samé-Ekobo
Australian Volunteers International, Dimity Fifer,
Canadian Crossroads International, Karen Takacs
Canadian Executive Service Organisation, Gordon Cummings
Canadian International Development Agency, Lilian Chatterjee
CUSO, Anne Frigon
DED German Development Service, Jürgen Wilhelm
FK Norway, Tor Elden
Hungarian Volunteer Sending Foundation, Péter Reicher
International Service/BVALG, Elsebeth Elo
JOCV – JICA, Masaaki Otsuka, Takashi Hatakeyama
Korea International Co-operation Agency, Sang-Tae Kim, Bomim Kim, Namsoon Lee
Oxfam-Québec, Michel Verret
Peace Corps, Barbara Daly, Maryann Minutillo, Gaddi Vasquez
PNVSCA, Joselito de Vera
Singapore International Foundation, Kim Hong Lim, Tay Keong Tan
Skillshare International, Cliff Allum
Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency, Tirath Viputtikulvart, Manop Tangusaha
UN Volunteers, Tomoko Shiba, Ad de Raad, Chika Kitajima
Uniterra (WUSC-CECI Initiative), Claude Perras
Volunteer Service Abroad, Deborah Snelson
VSO, Mark Goldring

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