



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

European Conference on International Volunteering



Skillshare International/Moya



E-Changer/Unité



HORIZONT3000-Bildarchiv



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AFVP



UN Volunteers

15-16 September 2005

Overseas Development Institute, London

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Which way forward for international volunteering?

President of International FORUM on Development Service, Cliff Allum, opened the conference with an overview of international volunteer co-operation in the European context. He posed a number of challenges for the conference to consider, including the role of international volunteering in today's increasingly globalised world, recognising that technical assistance is not a sufficient rationale to enable international volunteering to survive and thrive.

Delegates identified recent trends in international volunteer co-operation, including:

- Variation and flexibility in the length and model of volunteer placement
- Demands from governments and funders on value for public money
- The importance of our partners in driving the direction of change
- An incredible level of public interest and engagement, attributable in part to the Global Call to Action against Poverty



Cliff Allum, President of FORUM and CEO of Skillshare International

In September 2005, for the first time in five years, a European conference of organisations involved in international volunteer co-operation took place in London. It was organised by the International FORUM on Development Service, formerly a European organisation but now a global network of which I am currently President.

FORUM is unusual in the way it brings together governmental, multilateral and NGO bodies. They all share an interest in the way in which

people contribute to making this world a better place, demonstrating a willingness to share their lives with people and communities in other parts of the world through voluntary engagement, exchange programmes or institutional co-operation.

The impact of contemporary forces, often summarised as globalisation, has generated an innovative and critical approach to our ways of working as we meet fresh challenges. This conference focused on many of those future developments, emphasising how we can redefine and renew our models and approaches.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the conference, in particular to CONCORD, AKLHÜ and Skillshare International for the financial support that enabled it to happen.

Cliff Allum

International Volunteering and the Millennium Development Goals



Robert Leigh, Senior Policy Specialist, UN Volunteers

Robert Leigh (UN Volunteers) gave a presentation on the role of international volunteering in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, noting in particular that the MDGs are technically and economically feasible but require not only the full commitment of

governments from both the North and South, but also the engagement of millions of ordinary people through voluntary action. He explained that the MDGs are both an opportunity and a responsibility for the international volunteering movement and represent a clear call to action. "It is through volunteerism that large numbers of people are currently engaged in the task of helping to bring about a betterment of their lives. Indeed it is hard to see how the MDGs can be achieved without the mobilisation of many millions of people on a voluntary basis."

Robert Leigh summarised with the following observations on orienting international volunteering towards the achievement of the MDGs:

- The emphasis on measurement and indicators called for by the MDGs will require international volunteering organisations to demonstrate impact beyond anecdotal

evidence. There is a need to pool resources for volunteer impact studies and other research.

- The need to avoid duplication calls for more communication between international volunteering organisations, including at project development level.
- There are increased opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation in volunteerism, with

private sector, media, researchers and parliamentarians.

- We should seize opportunities for joint resource mobilisation and volunteer campaigns around the role of volunteers in achieving the MDGs.

More information about the MDGs is available at www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

Experiences of International Volunteer Co-operation Organisations based in Europe

On Thursday afternoon, participants worked in three workshop groups to discuss their experiences as European IVCOs, looking at the current situation, future developments and key challenges facing European agencies.

how these issues could be taken forward as a focus for further European collaboration and networking.

Richard Lewartowski of ECHO urged those attending from

NGOs to adopt a common position and to voice their expectations to the Commission, clearly stating who represents them (e.g. CONCORD) in European-level discussions and consultations.

The workshops produced a range of responses. The first group focused on co-operation and collaboration. The second group focused on the flexibility of different models of international volunteer placements. The third group concentrated on monitoring and evaluation.

Participants were asked to reflect on these issues and discussions, and to think about the next steps. This being FORUM's first European conference for five years, it was important to understand



NGOs, the EU and European governments across Europe participated in FORUM's European conference.

New Approaches to International Volunteering



Tor Elden, FK Norway, presented the Norwegian approach to partnership

On Friday morning, participants had the opportunity to share new approaches to international volunteering, through presentations from FK Norway, Canadian Crossroads International and VSO, followed by plenary discussions.

Live Bjørge and Tor Elden gave a presentation on the Norwegian approach to a model of partnership and Karen Takacs presented the Canadian perspective on volunteer co-operation.

FK Norway currently facilitates around 100 partnerships, each of which has 2-8 partners from the South and across Norway. The programme's objectives include reciprocal learning and the feedback of knowledge to volunteers' own societies on their return. In the Canadian Crossroads model, the length of placements is flexible to suit the Southern partners' needs and partner organisations share the responsibility for

recruitment of volunteers. Canadian Crossroads and FK Norway have very similar models of partnership but arrived at them through different processes. FK Norway's change was driven by the government while Canadian Crossroads' move from a cultural-exchange organisation to a development organisation was driven by its partners in the South.

During a plenary discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Public engagement of returned volunteers: of particular interest was the model of a compulsory education programme to raise awareness of development issues in the volunteer's home country.
- Cost-efficiency and value for money, particularly in relation to organisational structure.
- Challenges of M&E against development objectives and supporting volunteers during their placements without a presence in the country of operation.
- Volunteer benefits - financial allowances and living arrangements.
- Corporate partnerships and corporate social responsibility.

Mark Goldring presented VSO's experience of South-South international volunteering, explaining the background to the model and the challenges and complexity of managing such a programme. The following issues were discussed in plenary session:

- Practical challenges of recruiting volunteers from some countries e.g. visas.
- Assessment of qualifications from different countries.
- Diversification of supporter base.
- Demand from partner organisations for volunteers specifically from the South or North.
- Lack of expectation of cultural difference by volunteers from the South on placements within their own region. Positive side is the common language.
- Issue of dependents is greater with Southern volunteers.

Hartwig Euler, chairing the session, concluded with a summary of the discussion noting that "when we talk about international volunteering, we can no longer really separate South-South volunteering which has become a main part of our programmes."

Recent EU initiatives in international volunteering: the European Civil Peace Corps (ECPC) and the European Volunteer Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC)

The objective of this session was to focus on initiatives taken by the EU in relation to international volunteering. Cliff Allum, chairing the session, explained that members of FORUM had asked the Executive to find out more about the EU Commission's activities in this area, which was the aim of this session. Firstly Kathrin Schick (VOICE), responded on humanitarian issues. Knud Vilby (ECPC Consultant) and Richard Lewartowski (ECHO) provided updates on the research process which led to a discussion on the scope for response and feedback from NGOs.

As a preliminary, Richard Lewartowski outlined the background and status of two potential initiatives – the Civil Peace Corps (ECPC) and Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC). He explained that the research commissioned into

these initiatives would not be affected by the issues around the Constitution. He acknowledged that there tends to be a perception within the Commission that international volunteering is solely a youth activity.

Kathrin Schick of VOICE has a humanitarian background but attempted in the first presentation to broaden this perspective to incorporate the international volunteering and development dimension. VOICE, whose members are specialists in humanitarian, short-term emergency interventions, has a sectoral focus on humanitarian issues. Kathrin informed the participants that a 3rd study is being undertaken to consider how volunteers can be involved in civil participation in EU member states and in the South. This would address civil protection missions, for example in the aftermath of



Delegates from Aklhue, DED and the German government discuss European issues.

Hurricane Katrina. Kathrin stressed the importance of viewing all three studies alongside each other.

Feedback is currently being sought from NGOs. The European Commission is leading the implementation of the studies which were originally motivated by member states and politicians. The Asian tsunami had a significant impact on issues relating to the study and showed new ways of using volunteers. In an open discussion about the EU initiatives, the following points were raised:

Youth and humanitarian relief: an unlikely combination?

Although not explicit in the ECPC terms of reference, the EVHAC terms of reference refer specifically to young people. The study should carefully consider whether its aim is to engage youth or highly skilled professionals and

what their motivations and values should be: an act of solidarity, a career-building activity or an exercise to raise awareness of development and humanitarian issues for example. Would the initiatives be humanitarian or education and culture programmes? Many delegates considered that it would be counter-

productive or even irresponsible to take young inexperienced volunteers to dangerous disaster zones. The question of whether foreign volunteers are really needed in disaster zones was also raised. For example, many Indian NGOs addressed humanitarian issues after the Tsunami.

Building Peace

The ECPC would not be a development or humanitarian body, but a peace-building initiative, as reflected by changes to the study's terms of reference. It was recognised that this initiative would be compatible with the EU Human Security Force. An increasing number of NGOs are working in peace-related programmes and it is plausible that professionals who have been volunteers with NGOs could be recruited as ECPC volunteers.

Engaging Europe

The challenge will be to engage and work with new member states which do not have a history of volunteer sending and do not have large databases of volunteers or a high level of international volunteer co-operation activities. DED extended an offer to share further with the consultants their experience of humanitarian rapid response

work, that in disaster situations volunteers need to be even more experienced and able to deal with sensitive issues than for development placements. It was also noted that although not part of the EU, Norway is part of the European Economic Area and should have an input.

Resourcing and Accountability

Would the level of remuneration for EVHAC and ECPC volunteers be significantly higher than that offered by NGOs, leading to competition between the EU and established programmes in attracting expert professional volunteers? A more attractive benefits package could result in volunteers being attracted from development to humanitarian work. The EU has a duty to its citizens and to people and communities in the South to achieve the maximum added value from these initiatives at all levels.

Sharing Systems for a Rapid Response

Developing common databases (whether NGO or government) for humanitarian international volunteering will increase efficiency and effectiveness. There is scope for NGOs to improve databases and systems to enable expert volunteers to respond quickly to disasters. There is an opportunity to learn from Ireland's experience of establishing a Rapid Response Register. The unique benefits of the EVHAC and ECPC initiatives should be identified: do systems already exist and do we need another international volunteering organisation? A number of rapid response registers already exist across Europe and Knud Vilby affirmed that these systems will be looked at during the study to consider how the ECPC could build on existing structures.

Although there was broad agreement that there could be an international volunteering role for young people, many participants expressed concern that young people could be dispatched on volunteer placements to areas of conflict or disaster as this would be counter-productive for both the communities and volunteers involved. While it is important to strengthen the engagement of young people in international volunteering and in the relationship between the EU and developing countries, these separate aims may not be compatible and would not be the most effective way of

developing constructive links between international volunteering and humanitarian programmes.

Knud Vilby was expected to deliver a draft report on the ECPC initiative to the Commission in late 2005. Both Knud Vilby (ECPC) and Jonathan Potter (EVHAC) would welcome additional feedback and comments on the initiatives. The EVHAC and ECPC terms of reference are available at www.forum-ids.org Cliff Allum's presentation 'The EU and International Volunteering: ECPC and EVHAC' is also available in

English and French at www.forum-ids.org



**Skillshare International's
Head of International
Programmes, Luís Silva.**

Engaging with the EU



The aims of this session were to discuss how international volunteering organisations could engage with the EU and to consider the development of a policy on international volunteer co-operation in relation to the EU.

Jake Bharier, Treasurer of CONCORD, provided an introduction to the European confederation which represents approximately 1500 NGOs with an annual turnover of €7 billion and directly involves 2 million people through staff, volunteers and supporters. CONCORD's members include national associations, NGO families and a variety of faith, issue and activity-based networks. Of all CONCORD's member networks, FORUM has one of the longest histories and is also unusual at CONCORD because it

represents both NGOs and para-statal bodies.

Jake led a discussion on how international volunteering NGOs can engage with the EU, with particular reference to the previous session on the EVHAC and ECPC initiatives. In order to assess what needs to be changed, we should engage with the EU and decide who needs to engage on which issues. As representatives of civil society, FORUM members have a responsibility to engage in discussion at the European level.

Participants broadly agreed that feedback on the ECPC and EVHAC initiatives should be given both directly to the consultants and through existing membership bodies, such as CONCORD, which have dialogue with the official institutions of the EU.

Cliff Allum highlighted that while FORUM does engage in European issues through CONCORD, we have limited capacity. Members are therefore invited to represent FORUM at European-level

events. Mechanisms exist to engage and discuss issues at the European level, but FORUM members should indicate their interest in pursuing these discussions. Some participants felt that it would be useful to have a statement of position from FORUM and other networks in relation to the EU initiatives.

Next Steps

The aim of the European conference is to bring together the Programme Directors and Heads of European-based agencies to discuss current trends and issues in the European context. Following the success of this conference, FORUM is planning to hold a European conference on international volunteering in 2006. Themes identified during this conference will be considered as topics for future events. For the conference programme and further information about FORUM, please contact info@forum-ids.org

FORUM would be delighted to receive contributions to the website www.forum-ids.org in the form of news articles, accompanying images and papers or reports appropriate for the public domain. These should be sent to info@forum-ids.org

President: Cliff Allum (Skillshare International)

Executive: Tor Elden (FK Norway), Masaaki Otsuka (JOCV-JICA), Deborah Snelson (VSA), Karen Takacs (Canadian Crossroads International)

Co-ordinator: Jessica Lowe (Skillshare International)

Presenters and Participants

Cliff Allum, President, International FORUM on Development Service
Jake Bharier, Treasurer, CONCORD
Live Bjørge, Head of Programs, FK Norway
Kate Boylan, Volunteer 21 Unit, Development Co-operation Ireland/Irish Aid
Barry Cannon, Co-ordinator, Comhlámh Irish Association for Development Workers
Laurie Chambon, Co-ordinator, CLONG Volontariat
Doris Deiglmayer, Project Manager, ASA Programme - InWEntg GmbH
Tor Elden, General Secretary, FK Norway
Hartwig Euler, Arbeitskreis "Lernen und Helfen in Übersee" e.V. (AKLHÜ)
Mark Goldring, Chief Executive, VSO
Günter Klingenbrunner, Director of Recruiting and Preparation, Horizont3000
Christoph Klinnert, Senior Policy Adviser, DED
Robert Leigh, Senior Policy Specialist, UN Volunteers
Richard Lewartowski, ECHO, European Commission
Per Kristian Lunden, Chair of the Board, FK Norway
Pierre-Yves Maillard, Board Member, Unité
Joyce McNeill, International Assessment Manager, VSO

Masaaki Otsuka, Director General, JOCV
Jonathan Potter, Executive Director, People in Aid
Geert Rhebergen, Senior Programme Officer, PSO
Frédérique Same-Ekobo, Partnership Department Officer, AFVP
Kathrin Schick, Director, VOICE
Martin Schreiber, Central Secretariat, Unité
Susanne Schröder, German Ministry for Economic Cooperation & Development
Dagmar Schumacher, Head – Donor Relations Unit, UN Volunteers
Luís Silva, Head of International Programmes, Skillshare International
Elaine Stevenson, International Programmes Manager, Skillshare International
Karen Takacs, Executive Director, Canadian Crossroads International
Oswaldo Vasquez, Regional Manager, Latin America and Caribbean, Progressio
Knud Vilby, Consultant, COWI
Tomoyuki Yamada, Desk Officer, JOCV

Conference Staff

Jessica Lowe, Co-ordinator, International FORUM on Development Service
Jenny Hurrell, Administrator, Skillshare International

Glossary

CONCORD
European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
www.concordeurope.org

ECHO
The Humanitarian Aid office of the European Commission
europa.eu.int/comm/echo/index_en.htm

ECPC
European Civil Peace Corps

EVHAC
European Volunteer Humanitarian Aid Corps

FORUM
International FORUM on Development Service: a network of organisations engaged in international volunteer co-operation.
www.forum-ids.org

IVCO
International Volunteer Co-operation Organisation.
Also the annual IVCO conference hosted by FORUM.

MDG
Millennium Development Goals: eight goals with a target date of 2015 which form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions.
www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

M&E
Monitoring and Evaluation

NGDO
Non-Governmental Development Organisation