

International Forum on Development Service Discussion Paper Concept Note

The Interface between International and National Volunteering and the Implications for IVCOs

Objectives

The primary objectives of this discussion paper are:

1. Describe and identify the rationale for programs that engage with national and international volunteering and particularly those that explicitly connect them through their program models
2. Draw out the distinct advantages and disadvantages of programme models that promote international volunteering alongside national and community volunteering schemes and identify important learning for future programme developments.
3. Identify how and why choices are made to develop and implement different approaches to volunteering in this area and to address the policy implications for IVCOs based on these developments.

Background

Some recent developments indicate that IVCOs engage with national volunteering in the countries where they place volunteers, and in some cases are adding national volunteering programs to their repertoire of activities. One potential advantage of this development is that national volunteer programs are able to “draw on the knowledge of people familiar with local languages and cultural issues while also building sustainable local capacities and contributing to development.”¹

This shift reflects the changing international context for aid and development given the emerging economies and increasing interest in South-South and triangular cooperation compared to conventional North-South forms of aid. At the same time, the rationale for such changes needs to be more clearly understood, including the extent to which choices on different models are driven by beneficiaries and local partner organisations and the extent to which donor policies influence models.

This discussion paper will seek to review evidence of this situation, use contemporary examples to illustrate and highlight the key issues of debate arising from this development, and address the policy implications about the range of different possible approaches for IVCOs.

Content and Approach

¹ UNV's *State of the World's Volunteerism Report*, Chapter 3
http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2011/SWVR/English/SWVR2011_full_%5B06%5D_chapter3.pdf

The discussion paper will initially describe the main models of international/national volunteer placements, providing examples as appropriate.

- a. Provide a short introductory snapshot of how agencies use both national and international volunteers (and since when) as well as explaining the rationale (e.g. importance of South-South cooperation).
- b. Explore professional or skills based programs that engage national/international volunteers (e.g. Cuso International's volunteering development volunteers [VDVs]², employee volunteer schemes, VSO's diaspora partnerships).
- c. Explore youth volunteer pairing and exchange that focus on international/national relationships (e.g. International Citizen Service (ICS) Programme, Youth Xchange, Global Xchange, Africa Volunteer Corps, East Africa Peace Service Corps (EAPSC))

The paper will consider the justification or theories of change for international and national service collaboration and pairing.

The paper will explore the evidence of impact of these different models, identifying any studies documenting the relative benefits of different models.³ It will set out what we can learn from different programme models, both past and current.

Finally the paper will consider the implications for future programming, including organizational policies for choosing models that combine national and international volunteers, taking into consideration why such models are not chosen in some cases. The rationale for these forms of programme models will be explored, including the extent to which programme choices are influenced by beneficiaries/partner organisations, IVCOs or donors/funding sources.

Potential areas for discussion

In producing the paper, the author is asked to consider potential areas for discussion by IVCOs. Some examples of discussion questions that could be drawn out include:

Programme issues

- The use of International skills-based volunteering to promote the capacity building of local volunteer organizations and NGOs, and as a way to promote local/national volunteering in regions where volunteering is less common.

² Cuso International in China: http://cusointernational.org/sites/default/files/nv-china-programme-information_tcm77-23877.pdf

³ The Forum discussion paper Youth Volunteering in Africa cited independent evaluations of the Restless Development peer to peer program that placed national and international volunteers together as peer educators. If available, the paper could bring in additional research on the added advantages of pairing volunteers.

- Challenging traditional gender roles of national volunteers and the extent to which young people are more likely to question assumptions about their role and contributions to society – thus increasing the participation of youth in development problems and solutions.⁴ Alternatively, it will explore the extent to which stereotypes are reinforced with negative consequences as a result.
- How and to what extent do national and international volunteers interact when international volunteers return home (to North or South)?
- Is there any evidence of a role for Diaspora volunteers in these paired volunteer models?⁵ How might Diaspora volunteering or other program components help to counteract any programme limitations?

Resources

- What do we know about cost-effectiveness between exclusively hosting international volunteers versus pairing or supporting national volunteers?
- How might international volunteering affect resourcing for national volunteer schemes and vice versa?
- What are donor perspectives on national versus international volunteering and how has/does this shape what is done/has been done historically

Policy

- Where international volunteering organisations develop their own national volunteering schemes, are they adding value or competing with nationally-based organisations?
- What underpins the decision to choose national or international volunteering in any given situation? Are national volunteers being used to work in areas where international volunteering is no longer possible due to conflict, safety issues, etc.?
- Are models bringing together national and international volunteers driven by the requirements of partner organisations and their beneficiaries or the institutional needs of IVCOs responding to the changing demands of the South?
- What choices do local partners and beneficiaries have about models that are being used in any given situation?
- What are the implications of full time stipended international or national volunteers working alongside part time national/local volunteers who don't receive any support.

⁴ Dilhani Wijeyesekera, *The State of Youth Volunteering in Africa*. p. 18

<http://www.restlessdevelopment.org/file/forum-youth-volunteering-africa-pdf>

⁵ Dilhani Wijeyesekera, *The State of Youth Volunteering in Africa*. p. 17. Language issues have been highlighted as a serious limitation of national/international volunteer pairing models

<http://www.restlessdevelopment.org/file/forum-youth-volunteering-africa-pdf>