



Terms of Reference

Understanding Inequalities in Volunteering Research and Evidence

January 2023

Background and Rationale

The International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum) is seeking a consultant or consultants to carry out a study to help us understand global inequalities in volunteering research and evidence. It will also identify practical pathways for Forum, its member organisations, and members of the Forum Research, Practice, Policy and Learning (RPPL) Group to understand and address these imbalances in their own research.

We know that research and evidence on volunteering in development is dominated by people and organisations in the Global North, that this dominance is unfair and that it provides us with a skewed and incomplete understanding of the role and impact of volunteering in development.

This work builds on questions that were explored in Forum's Collective Research Project in 2022¹. This project highlighted research in the wider development field which identifies the dominance of the Global North in international development research. Volunteer-involving organisations interviewed as part of the project saw this reflected in volunteer-focused research, suggested that the historic dominance of northern academics and volunteer-sending organisations has established a particular language and lens through which volunteering is viewed, and questioned whether this is relevant or of interest to researchers in the Global South.

The project also began to propose solutions to these inequalities, notably an embrace of more participatory research methodologies, building a global community of researchers to collectively define a global research agenda, and more work that is led by researchers in the Global South.

Objectives and Outputs

The objectives of this project are –

1. To improve our collective understanding of inequalities in volunteering research, their root causes and how they are manifested, and
2. To use this improved understanding to propose concrete ways in which a range of actors in the volunteering/development/research space² can address these inequalities.

¹ See two papers based on this process by Nick Ockenden - [Report for Forum Members: A New Dawn: Strategic Pathways for the Future of Volunteering in Development](#) and [IVCO 2022 Framing Paper](#).

² Including volunteer-involving organisations, networks, researchers, donors and others.



Audience

The intended audience is decision-makers in Forum member organisations, researchers in the field of volunteering in development, and donors.

Deliverables

The main deliverable will be a final report no longer than 10 pages which will be published. This report may include case studies.

We estimate that this work will require 15 days of work. It should be completed by the end of April 2022.

This work will inform conversations at the Forum Research Day in October 2023. The consultant(s) will be invited to present their findings to the RPPL group, virtually or in person at IVCO.

Suggested Methods and Scope

These will be agreed with the consultant(s) in the inception phase, and documented in an inception report. The project will require engagement across the Forum network, and with outside experts, including representatives from stakeholders outside of the volunteering sector.

This project will focus on the particular needs and interest of Forum members, and will provide value to the wider volunteering and development sector.

Key Sources for Consultation

These will be agreed with the consultant(s), and may include -

1. Existing research, including but not limited to the pieces referenced in 'Background and Rationale' above.
2. Representatives of Forum member organisations – head office and in-country staff; International and National members.
3. Academics with an understanding of funding structures and the research economy
4. Representatives of in-country partner organisations and other community-based organisations that work with volunteers.

Timetable

A detailed timetable, including deadlines for agreed deliverables, will be agreed with the consultant(s) in the inception phase.



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In the inception phase, the consultant(s) will work with the Forum Executive Director and a small advisory group of Forum members to develop these Terms of Reference into an approach and a timetable including specific deliverables and milestones.

Management

The Forum Executive Director will be responsible for managing the project, and will be the primary point of contact for the consultant(s). The consultants will provide regular updates to the Executive Director, who will report to the Forum Board. The RPPL group will have a light steering role for the project – providing guidance in the inception phase and feedback on drafts as needed.

Ethics and Risk

We ask that the consultant(s) make clear that their approach will be based on ethical principles.

Qualifications and experience required

The consultants selected should have knowledge of the field of volunteering in development, strong experience in group facilitation, participatory methods and strategic planning.

Expressions of interest

Forum invites expressions of interest from consultants to carry out this work. We are open to expressions of interest from researchers, strategists, and others.

To be considered, please submit an expression of interest, no more than two pages please, setting out relevant skills and experience and a brief proposal of how you intend to approach the work, including an indicative timetable and budget.

The deadline for expressions of interest is 27 February 2023. Please email them, and any question you have, to James O'Brien - jobrien@forum-ids.org.