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CHAPTER 3

Volunteerism in the twenty-first century

*We are prone to judge success by the index
of our salaries or the size of our automobiles,
rather than by the quality of our service
relationship to humanity.*

Martin Luther King, Jr

INTRODUCTION

There are ever more opportunities for people to engage in volunteerism. This chapter examines three aspects of the changing world of volunteerism. While these changes are not strictly products of the twenty-first century, there have been important developments over the past decade that are crucial for expanding volunteerism in the future. Firstly, technological developments are opening up spaces for people to volunteer in ways that have no parallel in history. These developments enable people to relate to one another globally and more rapidly than ever before. Secondly, there is the role of the private sector in development and its interest in volunteering as an aspect of corporate social responsibility. Thirdly, unprecedented global movements of people and the expanded opportunities for travel, combined with more leisure time, are two phenomena which are impacting on traditional forms of volunteering everywhere.

VOLUNTEERISM AND TECHNOLOGY

Volunteers can count on a rapidly growing range of technology to help to tackle many global challenges of today. These range from tracking food insecurity to monitoring violent conflict, and from providing early warning of impending disasters to reporting election fraud. The advent of mobile and Internet-based information and communication technology (ICT) is revolutionising volunteer action in terms of "who, what, when and where". Online volunteering, online activism through social media, and micro-volunteering are fast growing trends. The potential contributions of technology to volunteerism are far-reaching. However, changes do not occur without challenges. Some observers contend that the digital divide may further exclude people with limited access to technology and that benefits are not as accessible in low-income countries. Others assert that technology has made volunteerism more impersonal, by discouraging face-to-face interaction. As such, it could serve to obstruct meaningful volunteer engagement.¹

Volunteerism and Mobile Communication Technologies

Access to relatively basic, and affordable, mobile technology is constantly opening new opportunities for volunteers. While significant disparities exist between countries, the use of new technologies continues to expand worldwide. Cellular phone subscription in developed countries is greater than 100 per cent, i.e. more than one subscription per inhabitant. In developing countries, it is estimated at about 60 per cent.² In fact, some of the most innovative and successful examples of mobile-related volunteerism are in the developing world, a phenomenon so extraordinary it is called the "mobile revolution."³

Short message service (SMS) text messaging has had perhaps the most profound impact. Mass SMS communication is considered a form of "micro-volunteerism", on account of its limited duration which does not require a long-term commitment. It can contribute to the production and sharing of richer, more complete and more reliable information.⁴ It is frequently used by volunteers to raise awareness on local issues, to inform people's choices, and to monitor and improve public services such as crop forecasting, education and health.

Volunteer health workers, for example, send SMS text messages to report basic symptoms of illness and disease. Plotting the geographical occurrence of these symptoms on maps, using programmes such as Kenyan-based *Ushahidi*, can help epidemiologists to identify patterns of disease and provide early warning of potential outbreaks. In Rwanda, the government distributes cell phones to volunteer community health-care workers in rural areas. These are used to monitor the progress of pregnant village women, to send regular updates to health-care professionals, and to call for urgent assistance when necessary. The scheme has contributed significantly to reducing maternal deaths. In Musanze district, for example, no maternal deaths were reported during the year following the launch of the programme in 2009, compared to

There have been important developments over the past decade that are crucial for expanding volunteerism in the future

ten deaths the year before. Given the success of the programme, there are plans to distribute 50,000 phones to reach all volunteer health workers in Rwanda and to extend the programme to agriculture and education.⁵

SMS messaging is also a powerful tool for election monitoring organizations to support the work of volunteers. It can help them to address logistic challenges more rapidly as well as contributing to effective election oversight and the protection of citizens' rights, as shown in the box on the right.

Volunteerism and the Internet

In the developing world, innovative synergies between volunteerism and technology typically focus on mobile communication technologies rather than the Internet. Around 26 per cent of people worldwide had Internet access in 2009. However, Internet penetration in low-income countries was only 18 per cent, compared to over 64 per cent in developed countries. While the costs of fixed broadband Internet are falling, access still remains unaffordable to many.⁸

Despite this, online volunteering is developing rapidly. Online volunteers are "people who commit their time and skills over the Internet, freely and without financial considerations, for the benefit of society."⁹ Online volunteering has eliminated the need for volunteerism to be tied to specific times and locations. Thus, it greatly increases the freedom and flexibility of volunteer engagement and complements the outreach and impact of volunteers serving in situ. Most online volunteers engage in operational and managerial activities such as fundraising, technological support, communications, marketing and consulting. Increasingly, they also engage in activities such as research and writing and leading e-mail discussion groups.¹⁰

UNV manages an online volunteering programme, accessible at www.onlinevolunteering.org. Launched in 2000, it connects NGOs, governments and United Nations agencies

BOX 3.1 : Election monitoring through SMS

Volunteer election monitors can play a key role in promoting good governance. Well-trained volunteers equipped with new technologies are an invaluable resource for maintaining democratic voting systems.

A new form of civic engagement emerged during the 2006 referendum in Montenegro. Election observers used text-messaging to provide regular reports about the election. Volunteers from a Montenegro NGO, the Center for Democratic Transition, with technical assistance from the US-based National Democratic Institute, used short messages (SMS) to report almost instantly from polling stations around the country. Since then, volunteer election reporting through text messaging via mobile phones has happened in elections in Albania in 2006, Sierra Leone in 2007, Nigeria in 2007 and 2011, and Sudan in 2010, as well as elsewhere.⁶

The first election in post-war Sierra Leone was monitored by thousands of trained local volunteers who observed at polling stations and collected voting information, sending it for analysis via text messaging to the National Election Watch, a coalition of over 200 NGOs in the country. The volunteers' presence and contributions helped "protect the right of voters and promote a fair and peaceful election environment."⁷ Volunteer reporting through SMS is broadening the scope for civic engagement and transparency and is contributing to greater political accountability.

Source: The National Democratic Institute. (2006); Schuler. (2008); Verclas. (2007).

with people who wish to volunteer using the Internet. Some 10,000 volunteers from 170 countries (62 per cent from developing countries) complete an average of 15,000 online assignments each year. These volunteers include not only professionals but also students and retired people. Women account for 55 per cent of all participants. The fields that they cover include education, youth, development advocacy and strategies, crisis prevention, income generation and employment, volunteerism, integration of marginalized groups, environment, health and gender. Online volunteering increases the capacities of development organizations while simultaneously providing space for many people to participate in development who would not otherwise have had the opportunity.

Online volunteering is typically short-term. In one study, over 70 per cent of online volunteers chose assignments requiring one to five hours a week and nearly half chose assignments lasting 12 weeks or less.¹¹ Some organizations, such as Sparked.com, offer online volunteering opportunities which last from ten minutes to an hour. A unique feature of online volunteering is that it can be done from a distance. People with restricted mobility or other spe-

cial needs participate in ways that might not be possible in traditional face-to-face volunteering. Likewise, online volunteering may allow people to overcome social inhibitions and social anxiety, particularly if they would normally experience disability-related labelling or stereotyping.¹² This empowers people who might not otherwise volunteer. It can build self-confidence and self-esteem while enhancing skills and extending networks and social ties.¹³ Online volunteering also allows participants to adapt their programme of volunteer work to their unique needs and life situations.¹⁴

BOX 3.2 : Online volunteering

The Online Volunteering service, a UNV tool to mobilize volunteers for development, links volunteers with organizations in order to strengthen the impact of sustainable human development.

Engineers Without Borders (EWB) in Cameroon brought together three online volunteers who developed a user-friendly manual on complex farming techniques and technologies. A Malian agricultural engineer translated scientific jargon into plain language. A Moroccan consultant with a PhD in environmental studies and a Togolese agro-economist also worked together on the product which is helping farmers to improve cultivation and processing of pineapples. Online volunteer Kokou Edoh (Togo) stated: *"This collaboration was a total success. The commitment, collaboration and conviviality on our team and with the EWB team triggered a decisive change in my life. This was my first time as an online volunteer and I am left with a feeling of complete satisfaction. I decided to volunteer again for EWB."*

The UNESCO World Heritage Forest programme works to strengthen the conservation of forests at World Heritage sites. Twenty-two online volunteers from 11 countries supported the programme, advocating for conservation during the International Year of Forests in 2011. By researching, analysing, summarizing and mapping information, volunteers contributed to the State of World Heritage Forests report and built databases related to World Heritage forests. According to a student in architectural/urban heritage conservation, Jae Hyeon Park (Republic of Korea), analyzing and summarizing data for the database *"allowed me to enlarge my knowledge of environmental areas and understand more about UNESCO's participation in natural heritage at a global level. Above all, what I have benefited this time is the pleasure of volunteering with professionalism."*

Source: UNV. (n. d., 2004, 2010a, 2010b, 2011b, June).

Social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Orkut have helped people to share information and organize. Examples include reducing wildfire risk in Russia in 2010 and mobilizing for political demonstrations in Arab states in early 2011. These social media platforms have also been used by volunteers and organizations for recruiting, organising collective action, increasing awareness, raising funds and communicating with decision makers.¹⁸ Yet "clicktivism", as it is called, may actually prevent activists, known as "clickers", from going further to engage in more meaningful volunteer action and advocacy. It is argued that, while social media may help to bring awareness of social causes, it does not inspire the passion to create effective social change.¹⁹ As a consequence, people may engage as "telescopic philanthropists" but may not be willing to make any real sacrifice for a cause.²⁰ Yet, while micro-volunteering may not always lead to radical social change, it brings benefits simply by informing and changing attitudes. For instance, the *Say NO to Violence against Women* page on Facebook educates thousands of subscribers on important activities and legislation concerning women's rights.

The Internet also facilitates volunteerism by matching the interests of volunteers with the needs of host organizations. Volunteer-matching sites enhance opportunities for volunteers to find placements while also providing vol-

unteer involving organizations with easy access to potential volunteers. Recruitment time and costs are reduced. On many levels, new information and communication technologies have introduced a network-style, horizontal and participatory flow of information among users, thus opening up innovative opportunities for volunteer participation. Technology-based volunteerism may be particularly suited to young people who tend to embrace and employ technology. There is a real need for researchers to seek a better understanding of the relative benefits and challenges of online versus face-to-face volunteerism.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERISM

International volunteerism is organized engagement in development by volunteers working abroad. It includes both short and long-term assignments through either governmental or non-governmental agencies. The last decade in particular has seen the numbers of volunteers abroad increasing and forms of engagement evolving.²¹ International volunteerism became a prominent feature of development assistance programmes in several developed countries in the 1960s. Some of the largest international volunteer coordinating organizations were established during this period, including Australian Volunteers International, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, Canadian University Service Organization, Peace Corps, Volontari nel Mondo – FOCSIV and the United Nations Volunteers.

With the exception of UNV, which has always had volunteers from the developing world, these programmes traditionally focused on sending volunteers from the North to the South. For many international volunteer service programmes, a more recent development has been adding national volunteering schemes to their activities. The purpose of these is to draw on the knowledge of people familiar with local languages and cultural issues while building sustainable local capacities and contributing to development.²² This

BOX 3.3 : Open-source online volunteering

People are increasingly using social media to promote causes important to them. On Annual Blog Action Day, which is marked on 15 October, thousands of bloggers meet online to share ideas about issues of public interest. In 2010, posts revolved around the water crisis. From water conservation to gender equality, bloggers explored water-related issues that have an impact on society, with the hope of inspiring positive action and keeping the debate going.¹⁵

Robin Beck, organizing director of the day in 2010, stated that: "The best possible result would be spreading the conversation to places where it is never held."¹⁶ Volunteers also participate online through the "open-source movement" which involves professionals from multiple disciplines. Biologists, for example, have embraced open-source tools to contribute to genome databases and genetic sequencing. Blogs and online message boards, forms of open-source journalism, contribute significantly to knowledge creation and dissemination as does open-source publishing. Project Gutenberg, for example, has digitized more than 6,000 books, with hundreds of volunteers typing in, page by page, classics from Shakespeare to Stendhal. Distributed Proofreading, a related project, engages countless volunteer copy editors to make sure that the Gutenberg texts are rendered correctly.¹⁷

Sources: Goetz. (2003); Roque. (2009); Knight. (n.d.); Blog Action Day Blog. (2010).

BOX 3.4 : Kraft Foods Micro-Volunteering

Kraft Foods partnered with Sparked, an online environment that enables individuals to volunteer regardless of time and place, to launch a pilot micro-volunteering programme. More than 50 employees participated, helping 48 NGOs on issues related to health, nutrition and children, in 38 countries. The top skills used were marketing, sales and social media. Of those who volunteered, 67 per cent noted the ease of fitting it into their schedules and 92 per cent said micro-volunteering should be offered to all employees. As one noted: *"I don't have time for other volunteering activities in my life right now so this keeps me contributing in at least one way."*

One Kraft Foods volunteer used his language skills to translate applications for financing and funding (from English to Spanish) for an international NGO, thus increasing access to lenders. Another used her social media, collaboration and content management skills to advise an NGO on how to use Facebook profiles to build awareness about its work. Technology can allow volunteers in locations across the world to work at their convenience on joint efforts that can have tremendous impact.

Sources: Allen, Galiano & Hayes. (2011); Sparked. (2010, November 4).

Forms of international volunteerism are becoming ever more diverse

builds useful complementarity with international volunteers who, in addition to skills, sometimes provide concrete donations and resources, either directly or through links with external organizations.²³

Recently a number of sending agencies, including VSO in Britain, Progressio in Ireland, and Fredskorpset in Norway, have promoted South-to-South and South-to-North volunteer assignments. These create opportunities for nationals of developing countries to volunteer abroad and to strengthen national capacities.²⁴ This South-to-South dimension is also taking hold in the developing world itself. In Africa, the African Union and ECOWAS, regional youth volunteering initiatives enable young Africans to gain experience from volunteering while contributing to peace and development in the region. In Latin America, the White Helmets initiative focuses on the assignment of Latin American volunteers in emergency programmes largely in the region. Brazil cooperates with UNV to send Brazilian volunteers to Central America. The programme is being expanded to Haiti and plans are in progress to do the same in Mozambique. In Asia, there are programmes underway by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Young Volunteers Serving Africa Programme of Chi-

na, and the Singapore International Foundation (SIF). The aim of the SIF is to improve livelihoods and create greater understanding between Singaporeans and world communities through shared ideas, skills and experiences.²⁵ Since 2004, the Volunteer Programme of Thailand (TICA) has sent nationals to neighbouring countries to support technical cooperation programmes. In addition to contributing to sustainable human resources development, the programme aims to build friendship and forge people-to-people relationships at the grassroots level between Thailand and other developing countries in Asia and beyond.²⁶

Forms of international volunteerism are becoming ever more diverse. The trend is towards shorter-term placements, with an average duration of less than six months, and placements that are individually tailored to the volunteer.²⁷ While international volunteerism was once equated with long-term commitment through a formal volunteer programme, newer forms of short-term international volunteerism combine interest in travelling with a desire to contribute.²⁸ This trend is driven by globalisation, cheaper and more convenient overseas travel, increased migration, globalised media, multicultural identities and more flexible working and educational arrangements.²⁹ International volunteering is increasingly promoted in universities and corporations as a force for global education and skills development. Volunteering is also growing among people living away from their countries of origin, expressing the desire of the diaspora to help communities in their homeland.³⁰ Recruitment of diaspora volunteers by corporations is also increasingly common.³¹ A further, growing, trend is for programmes facilitating short-term "senior volunteer" placements for retired professionals, as shown in the box on the right.

There is a question as to whether short-term international volunteerism is more beneficial as a learning experience for the volunteers themselves or for the host communities.³² Most studies conclude that it depends upon

BOX 3.5 : Friends from Thailand in Bhutan

The Thai Volunteer Programme, also known as "Friends from Thailand – FFT", sends young Thai volunteers or "friends" to do fieldwork in support of Thai technical cooperation programmes in developing countries. Through a cooperative agreement between Thailand and Bhutan, Thai volunteers provide technical support in agriculture, public health, tourism and vocational studies for the public and private sectors in Bhutan. Bandit Bitbamrond, aged 23, is an agricultural engineer on a two-year volunteer assignment. Bandit is researching farm machinery development at the Agricultural Machine Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and lecturing on farm machinery for the agriculture diploma programme at the Royal University of Bhutan.

Source: Phatarathiyanon, Tomon, Yosthasan, Ito, Lee & Ratcliffe. (2008); Bandit Bitbamrond, Personal Communication. (2011, July 20); Royal Civil Service Commission. (2005).

the programme. In reality, international volunteering is a two-way street, benefiting both volunteers and host communities. International volunteers frequently report gaining skills that they would have difficulty acquiring through local and national volunteering or employment.³³ Returned volunteers often claim that their experiences abroad were “transformative” or “turning points” in their lives, leading to increased commitment to service at home and abroad.³⁴ For host communities, programmes of differing lengths may be appropriate for specific types of service activities. Short-term volunteers may breathe fresh life into otherwise routine social service activities with children, adults or the physically challenged.³⁵ Short-term international volunteer experts bring with them significant technical experience. However, repeat assignments are seen as more effective. Individual expert assignments are also more effective as part of long-term projects than when they are stand-alone.³⁶

There is much debate over the benefits of short-term volunteering tourism, “volun-tourism”, to international development. In 2008, the market for volun-tourism in Western Europe had grown by 5 to 10 per cent over five years, with Africa, Asia and Latin America as the most popular destinations. An opportunity can range from one or two days to a month or more, with most experiences lasting for one to two weeks. It is most popular with students and people taking a career break. The most popular projects include education and training, construction and working with children.

Volun-tourism provides host organizations and projects with a means of outreach. For communities, it provides increased human and financial resources, local employment and improved facilities. Volunteers tend to stay in touch after they return home and even fundraise on behalf of the communities. But volun-tourism has also come under criticism. As the trip length decreases, the volunteering placements are designed more for the con-

BOX 3.6 : JICA Senior Volunteers

Masayoshi Maruko is a long-time owner of a car stereo shop. When he turned 60, he decided to apply for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Senior Volunteer Programme. He was assigned to a vocational training school in Zambia to teach electronic engineering. Although he did not have any previous teaching experience, he was certain of at least one thing: that work is only taught by work. In line with this motto, when he realized what the needs were, he set to work over and beyond his teaching duties.

In Zambia, where the electric power supply is unstable, there is a demand for solar power generators. Along with teaching how to repair televisions and radios in class, Mr. Maruko also developed new products including a motorcycle named Solar Bike and a solar powered light named Solar King which won prizes.

Through his activity in Zambia, Mr. Maruko said that he realized that there is something more important for a JICA Senior Volunteer than high levels of knowledge and skills: *“When you want to do something for the happiness of the others, then, for the first time, your knowledge and techniques will be handed down.”*

In 2009, the Senior Volunteer Programme gave 445 people aged 40 to 69 the opportunity to participate in cooperative activities in developing countries utilizing their experiences in the fields of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy, health and medical care, human resources, education, culture and sports. Since the programme began in 1990, a total of 4,462 people have been dispatched to 64 countries.

Source: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). (2011).

venience of the volunteer than to support local community needs. Participating volunteers tend to lack relevant qualifications, experience and training. They therefore undertake simpler tasks, smaller in scale, and with minimal impact. They can even be a burden on local resources. Some experts argue that the volun-tourism industry should be regulated in order to ensure that it benefits sustainable development.³⁷

In contrast to shorter-term international volunteer placements, programmes emphasizing longer-term international volunteerism tend to put a high priority on matching volunteers’

skills with the needs of host communities.³⁸ Programmes are more effective when they do the following: envisage continuity in the presence of volunteers; provide training and orientation, including cultural sensitivity; respond directly to community needs and, through their design, maximise contributions.³⁹

The case of diaspora volunteering merits special attention given its enormous potential for development in those countries with significant populations living abroad. For example, 1.1 million practising medical professionals residing in the United States alone are from developing countries. Over 120,000 of these come from sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁰ The nature of diaspora volunteering is contingent upon the circumstances of the diaspora in its adopted country and in the homeland. In the case of the Horn of Africa, for example, members of the diaspora return to the homeland periodically for short periods. Their purpose is to help to enhance the capacities of civil society networks in addition to instilling a "collective and civic-minded mentality" in local post-conflict communities. Yet little is known

about the important role of diaspora volunteers as agents of change in the region.⁴¹

The diaspora of Vietnam focuses on issues such as poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, medical care and disabilities. With a fairly well-integrated second generation in the countries of adoption, there is a question however about the long-term viability of diaspora volunteering in Vietnam as ties to the country of origin become weaker. It has been estimated that about 400,000 Vietnamese living abroad have received higher education yet only 200 are brought back each year to teach or consult.⁴³

Initiatives to mobilize diaspora volunteers are a sign of the growing significance of the diaspora for volunteerism. Such initiatives come from agencies including the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration, the British Department for International Development and the VSO-supported Diaspora Volunteering Alliance, the Canadian University Service

BOX 3.7 : The Ethiopian Diaspora Volunteer Programme

An estimated 20,000 skilled professionals have left Africa every year since 1990, taking their skills and knowledge with them. Ethiopia is reaching out through its Ethiopian Diaspora Volunteer Programme (EDVP) which recruits healthcare volunteers to build national capacity for the treatment of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. It works in partnership with the American International Health Alliance and the Network of Ethiopian Professionals in the Diaspora.

Between 2006 and 2010, the programme placed 45 volunteers in over 30 sites, including the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health, where they performed numerous functions ranging from developing pain treatment guidelines for the country's health professionals to building an online platform for the ministry. They also performed outreach to foreign universities, developed medical curricula for the country's teaching hospitals and examined the country's antiretroviral treatment programme.⁴² Among other examples, the volunteers enhanced and introduced new systems of care, developed educational and training materials, helped to adapt imported models and techniques to the Ethiopian setting, trained healthcare professionals, developed disease prevention and health promotion campaigns, and strengthened primary research.

The volunteers have diverse needs and expectations. However, the motivations for volunteering were a desire to help to address HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, a feeling of responsibility to give back to Ethiopia, and pride in Ethiopian heritage.

Source: Giorgis & Terrazas (2011a); International Organization for Migration (IOM), (2007); Network of Ethiopian Professionals in the Diaspora (NEPID), (n.d.).

Overseas, the VSO Diaspora Volunteering Programme and the USAID Diaspora Networks Alliance (DNA).⁴⁴ The value of this kind of volunteering is that it brings specialized knowledge to development and peace processes in countries in need of such support. Just as important, however, is that it adds to the social capital of people who are geographically separated but culturally linked. It is a good example of the glue that holds societies together.

International volunteering encourages us to re-focus on what development assistance is about. It is not just about transferring technical skills but also about relationship-building, global cooperation and the values of solidarity. "It can bridge the gap between the professionalized world of development experts and organizations and the 'non-specialized publics' who engage with the ideas and practices of development".⁴⁵

VOLUNTEERISM AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The United States economist Milton Friedman once quipped that "the business of business is business". Yet this notion has few adherents today. Private sector companies operate in an increasingly "moral marketplace" where consumers, investors and employees want to know whether companies are socially responsible. Consumers and investors have a more positive image of companies that they know are good corporate citizens.⁴⁶ Similarly, employees are motivated by contributing to society.⁴⁷

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been described as the "economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that a society has of organizations at a given point of time."⁴⁸ It means that private companies have moral, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, in addition to the obligation to earn a fair return for investors. Another definition goes further stating that CSR is about "improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at

large".⁴⁹ This overlaps with the values of volunteering and its relationship to the well-being of people and their communities.

Research in developing countries indicates that CSR is more prevalent than commonly believed although less institutionalised than in developed countries. In Asia, countries varied greatly in terms of CSR modes of action, with foundations, volunteering, partnerships, etc. In Africa, CSR practices focus more on economic and philanthropic than legal and ethical responsibilities.⁵⁰ CSR in Latin America is seen as a hope for positive change in the face of socio-economic, political and environmental challenges. Formal CSR tends to be found in connection with the large, high profile national and multinational companies, especially those with recognized international brands or those aspiring to global status.⁵¹

A major impetus to CSR is the UN Global Compact, launched in 2000, which promotes human rights and labour, environmental and anti-corruption principles in the private sector. Its aim is to catalyse actions towards meeting broader United Nations goals, including the MDGs, and to support a platform for corporate engagement. The number of companies involved in the Global Compact has grown from 47 in 2000 to over 8700 in 2011, across 135 countries. Member companies are encouraged, among other things, to mobilize volunteers to contribute to the MDGs.⁵²

Employee volunteering is a growing expression of CSR. It is variously referred to as "employer-supported volunteering" and "corporate volunteering" and is often a component of the community involvement strategies of businesses. Benefits for employees include raised morale, job satisfaction, increased pride and positive feelings about their company. Benefits for the company include improved corporate image and reputation, enhanced corporate visibility in the community and increased sales. Communities gain, too, through enhanced well-being, increased financial and

Private sector companies operate in an increasingly "moral marketplace"

BOX 3.8 : Need for values and principles in business

"We need business to give practical meaning and reach to the values and principles that connect cultures and people everywhere."

Source: Ban Ki-moon. (2008).

other assistance for local organizations, and increased levels of community volunteering.⁵³ What is often missing in appraisals of CSR, and what reinforces our central message in this report, is recognition that employee volunteering enables citizens to engage in activities that correspond to the values that they hold and that strengthen the fabric of society.

As with CSR in general, the nature of employee volunteering in developing countries shows considerable context-specific variations. A project of the New Academy of Business in seven developing countries (Brazil, Ghana, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Philippines and South Africa) found that traditional forms of corporate philanthropy and social investment initiatives were common practice. However, long-term employee volunteering programmes are not common nor do they receive institutional support.⁵⁹ A study entitled *Global Companies Volunteering Globally*⁶⁰ identified diverse ap-

proaches to employee volunteering worldwide with regional and cultural factors determining how volunteerism is understood and practised.

The ways in which companies support employee volunteering differ widely, ranging from encouraging employees to volunteer as individuals, or in small teams, or as part of organized programmes, often in partnership with NGOs. Activities sometimes take place in communities where the companies operate although volunteer employees are also sent to other countries. Activities may entail worldwide mobilizations involving days, weeks or months of service. These may feature one-time projects or take the form of online volunteering.⁶¹

A phenomenon that is still quite new, but growing rapidly, is the formal integration of employee volunteering programmes into the infrastructure and business plan of companies.⁶² Employees of large companies (over 250 staff) are more likely to have an employer-supported scheme (47 per cent) than those in medium-sized enterprises⁶³ (20 per cent) or small companies (14 per cent).⁶⁴ Employees in larger companies are also more likely than those in smaller ones to acknowledge that their employer supports volunteering. In fact, more than 90 per cent of Fortune 500 companies report having a formal employee volunteering and giving programme. On a global scale, it is difficult to gauge the prevalence of employee volunteering programmes as few companies record volunteer hours or evaluate the results of employee volunteering.⁶⁵

The lack of formal volunteer programmes in small and medium-sized businesses does not reflect an absence of corporate community involvement. A study of the social and environmental responsibility of small business owners in the United Kingdom found high levels of community involvement: "Basically small businesses take a different view from big businesses. The big boys are probably looking to see what they can get out of it, whereas small businesses see it as being part of the com-

BOX 3.9 : Employee volunteering and the MDGs

SUEZ is the French industrial utilities provider contributing to MDG 7: Environmental Sustainability. It provides employees with opportunities to volunteer in its core business through a partnership with UNV. SUEZ employees have established two volunteer associations, Aquassistance and Energy Assistance, to enhance the living conditions of highly disadvantaged populations across the globe. Aquassistance volunteers have carried out waste management assessments in Albania, Niger, Senegal and Guinea Bissau. Technical support was extended to a community-based volunteering waste management project. Energy Assistance volunteers developed recommendations on power distribution networks in Honduras; assessed sources of pollution in the Galapagos Islands; recommended changes in energy production; and performed an audit of an electrical plant in East Timor.

Source: UNGC. (n.d.).

munity and don't see it in business strategy terms at all."⁶⁶

A common perception is that employee volunteering occurs during company time. However, practices vary greatly. Some companies provide information about volunteer opportunities but expect employees to undertake activities outside of work. Others offer flexible working hours to allow for hours spent volunteering, while still others offer paid or unpaid leave.⁶⁷ Some, usually large companies, release employees to volunteer for long periods in anticipation that they will return with new skills and motivation.⁶⁸ The Pfizer Global Health Fellows, for example, engages employee volunteers with medical and business expertise in three to six-month team assignments with health-related international development organizations. Since 2003, some 270 employees have volunteered in more than 40 countries.⁶⁹

The most common types of employer-supported volunteer programmes (EVP) involve "soft" forms of support. These include adjusting work schedules to accommodate volunteering, allowing access to company resources and facilities, making information about volunteering opportunities available to employees, and officially recognising employees for their volunteer work.⁷⁰ National Commercial Bank of Saudi Arabia encourages employees to teach interpersonal skills to students in schools and provide coaching to entrepreneurs. Some schemes are also open to families, retired employees, clients and suppliers. For example, for three months every year, Hyundai with its NGO partner, the Korean Council on Volunteering, promotes opportunities suitable for families of employees who are supported by local volunteer centres and also provided with uniforms.⁷¹

Increasingly, companies are linking philanthropic giving to employee volunteering with matching donations and "dollars for doers". Companies contribute a specific amount to a cause or organization, based on the volunteer

BOX 3.10 : Corporate volunteering

The Proniño programme, a brainchild of the multinational telecommunication company Telefónica, aims to contribute to the eradication of child labour in Latin America where there are more than 5 million working children. Through schooling of working children and adolescents, and using Telefónica technology and management systems, Proniño aims to improve the quality of children's education and ensure that they are protected from child labour.⁵⁴ Implemented in the 13 Latin American countries in which the company trades, the programme works through a network of 118 NGOs, 674 alliances and almost 5000 schools and day care centres. It reaches more than 160,000 children and teenagers every year.⁵⁵ Proniño is run by Telefónica volunteers who teach after school, assist partner NGOs to monitor the families of participating children, conduct family and community workshops on education, and support teachers and social workers.⁵⁶

Volunteers are also at the heart of the Telefónica programme Escuelas Amigas (Twin Schools), which twins classes in Spain and Latin America for cultural exchanges via the Internet.⁵⁷ Volunteers support the teachers, providing technical assistance on the use of Web 2.0 tools, and monitor the classroom work. The Telefónica volunteers motivate and accompany teachers and pupils over the five-month project during which the classes work together on educational materials through blogs and teleconferences.⁵⁸

Source: Telefónica. (2009); Allen, Galiano & Hayes. (2011).

hours contributed by their employees. This gives employees an incentive to increase their volunteering. The UPS Foundation supports grants to local organizations chosen by UPS Community Involvement Committees. Grants are awarded after at least 50 hours of UPS volunteer service.⁷⁵

EVPs are increasingly focused on long-term collaborations with local NGOs. This helps companies to tap the knowledge of local partners and respond more effectively to community needs. Helping community-based not-for-profit organizations to function more effectively is among the primary goals of EVP today.⁷⁶ NGOs typically request "skills-based" volunteers to help meet specific needs and companies contribute by supplying employees as volunteers.

BOX 3.11 : Bankers without Borders

Bankers without Borders (BwB) is the Grameen Foundation's global volunteer reserve of more than 5700 highly skilled active and retired business professionals from diverse fields, not limited to banking and finance, who are willing to contribute between two weeks and four months to support microfinance and technology solutions. Since its launch in 2008, over 440 volunteers have donated more than 50,000 hours of service worth an estimated 4 million US dollars.⁷² Through on-site technical assistance, training and mentoring, and remote consulting projects, BwB volunteers work to increase the scale, sustainability, and impact of microfinance institutions.

In 2009, the Grameen Foundation's Technology for Microfinance Center engaged four experienced BwB volunteers to assist understanding of Mifos, an open-source management information system. The volunteers explored how cloud computing could minimize costs and maximize the value provided by management information systems for microfinance institutions. Having donated 485 hours of service, the volunteers provided quality research that led to a business plan for Mifos Cloud, a complete, ready-to-use solution for microfinance institutions to help them to overcome technological barriers and increase efficiency.⁷³

Another example of the contribution of BwB volunteers is the production of the Corporate Governance Handbook for the Middle East and North Africa Region. BwB volunteers improved the practicality of the handbook, aligned its material with customized training, and tailored its materials to the microfinance context in the Arab world.⁷⁴

Source: Maynard. (2010); Grameen Foundation. (2011).

Involving skills-based volunteers can radically reduce out-of-pocket expenses for NGOs. There is an estimated return of more than four US dollars for every one US dollar invested in developing a volunteer training and management infrastructure.⁷⁷

The Equity Bank in Kenya is a prime example of the private sector connecting to NGOs. The bank's employees volunteer to provide financial literacy courses to communities and to coach NGOs on the fundamentals of entrepreneurship and financial management. These volunteer initiatives complement, but do not substitute, financial services designed to re-

duce poverty and provide capital and finance to groups at risk. For the bank, these initiatives enhance the outreach and impact of its financial services.⁷⁸ The Tata Group, one of India's largest private sector conglomerates, is another example.

In recent years, there has been a clear interest at local, national and global levels in developing knowledge and standards, establishing partnerships and enhancing the practice of employee volunteering. Chambers of Commerce often have CSR committees. For example, since 2000, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vietnam has been running a Business Link Initiative and a Business Office for Sustainable Development focusing on promoting CSR which includes employee volunteering.⁷⁹ The Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria includes tools, connections and expertise on effective community engagement with volunteers.⁸⁰

While attention is largely directed at employee volunteering in the private sector, volunteering in the public sector is also relevant. In the United Kingdom, 45 per cent of public sector employees say that their employer has a volunteer scheme, compared to 30 per cent in the private sector.⁸¹ Public sector employees, like corporate employees, have often been deployed in national and international voluntary emergency response and recovery efforts. The Disaster Service Volunteer Leave Act of Guam allows government employees 15 days paid leave a year to assist the Red Cross during disasters.⁸²

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Globalisation and the digital age are altering the face of volunteerism. Change is challenging, and critical questions have been raised about the value and contributions of many new forms of volunteerism. In some cases, technology-based volunteerism may supplant significant and meaningful volunteer engagement. International volunteerism may be exclusive. Corporate volunteerism may be disingenuous.

BOX 3.12 : Bringing together people and causes

The Tata Council for Community Initiatives, which is the focal point for the United Nations Global Compact in India, brings together people and causes to make a difference in people's lives. Since 1994, the initiative has promoted volunteering among employees of the private corporate Tata Group in India. It does this by partnering with www.indianngos.com and linking Tata employees to 50,000 NGOs and volunteering opportunities listed on the portal. "Commitment to the welfare of the communities our companies serve has been a key tenet of the Tata Group", says Ratan N. Tata, Chairman of Tata Sons. The combined effort of the Tata Council for Community Initiatives and Tata companies has led to a more systematic attempt to focus the community work of the company on bringing about sustainable social development.

Pratham, an NGO providing education to under-privileged children of India, partnered with Taj Hotels to conduct training in the hospitality industry for young people from 40 rural villages of Maharashtra state. While Pratham mobilized young people and constructed a state-of-the-art facility in Khaultabad near Aurangabad, the Taj Hotels shared knowledge about curriculum development, training programmes and training infrastructure. Over 70 young people from the region have been trained with 100 per cent job placement for graduates.

Source: TATA Council for Community Initiatives. (2010).

Conversely, modern volunteerism has the potential to contribute significantly to human development. Efforts are therefore needed to ensure the broadest possible participation by all members of society. For large numbers of people in low-income countries, access to innovative technologies is still limited and the notion of volunteering internationally is very remote. Moreover, only a handful of companies in developing countries commit resources to supporting employee volunteering schemes.

Nonetheless, there is reason to be optimistic that evolving forms of volunteerism will enhance op-

portunities for people to volunteer. The spread of technology connects ever more rural and isolated areas. NGOs and governments are beginning to realise the value of South-to-South international volunteerism, as well as diaspora volunteering, and are dedicating resources to these schemes. Corporations are responding to the "social marketplace" by supporting CSR initiatives that include volunteerism. New opportunities for engaging in volunteerism are opening up with the result that more people are becoming involved and those already participating can expand their commitment. This is excellent news for the social fabric of our societies.

Evolving forms of volunteerism will enhance opportunities for people to volunteer