

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE EXCHANGE CONFERENCE

BEIJING 2015

CONFERENCE REPORT



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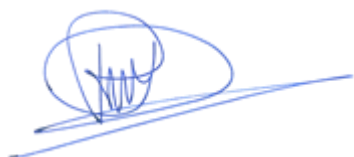
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FOREWORD

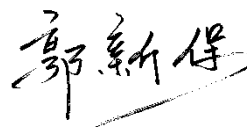
The inaugural International Volunteer Service Exchange Conference was successfully held from 12th to 13th October in Beijing, People's Republic of China. The event provided a unique opportunity to share best practices, analyze common challenges, and identify new and innovative partnerships. Overall, it explored a significant and exciting new space that we hope can be expanded in the future.

Why is this space significant and exciting? We already know that volunteering contributes to a more equitable and participatory approach to development. However, up to now the direction of international volunteering programmes has remained primarily North-to-South. This leaves a lot of untapped potential. Not only do MICs have their own unique development experiences to share with other countries, if they do not send volunteers then they miss out on the significantly enhanced capacity that volunteering brings to the volunteer. Today there are many Middle Income Countries (MICs) that now have mature national or international volunteering programmes. It is our hope that these programmes be expanded, enhanced, connected and learnt from. This will contribute to a more sustainable volunteering future, in which volunteers flow not just from North-to-South, but also from South-to-South and South-to-North.

This conference represents a significant first step in this process and we would like to thank again all of those who attended for generating rich discussion and providing valuable insights. The conference, with its key messages summarized in this report, marks the start of a conversation which we firmly believe can be carried on into the future to position volunteering as a strong pillar for South-South Cooperation and a deep foundation for the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.



Richard Dictus
Executive Coordinator
United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme



Guo Xinbao
Secretary General
Beijing Volunteer Service Federation

1. INTRODUCTION



1.1. Summary of the Conference

The International Volunteer Service Exchange Conference was organized by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF). It was a two-day event held in Beijing, People's Republic of China, on 12-13 October, 2015. The Conference focused on international volunteering as a driving force to support international and South-South Cooperation (SSC) in the context of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. In attendance at the event were a broad range of stakeholders involved or interested in volunteering in Middle Income Countries (MICs). These included national volunteering organizations, youth organizations, regional organizations, and development organizations. In total, participants came from 18 UN member states on five continents.

The conference was a two-day event with plenary sessions and breakout small group discussions. The four plenary sessions included one special presentation and three moderated panel discussions in which panelists presented best practices and lessons learned in developing and implementing international volunteering programmes. The questions that were raised in these plenary sessions were then discussed in-depth in two breakout sessions.

1.2. Rationale for the Conference

Why was the conference held? The conference marks a tectonic shift in the international development landscape. An increasing number of Middle Income Countries (MICs) are now engaging in international development work. Many are now both providers and recipients of development assistance and all have their own unique experiences with significant political, social, and economic variation. While some follow the traditional standards set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), an increasing number are aligning their assistance with the ideals of South-South Cooperation. This is a contemporary trend and there is a pressing need for new platforms to share and learn from recent experiences, avoid the repetition of past mistakes, and discover innovative solutions to common challenges.

“Across the Global South significant momentum has built up domestically with increased awareness and stronger enabling environments for volunteerism”

The conference fulfills a particularly pressing need to share experiences of MICs using volunteering as a development modality. Stronger enabling environments in developing countries mean that volunteering programmes are no longer confined to traditional donor countries. Across the Global South significant momentum has built up domestically with increased awareness and stronger enabling environments for volunteerism. Many MICs now recruit, train and deploy volunteers in their own countries to assist in the delivery of public services. Some of these countries are looking to scale-up their programmes to expand overseas. An increasing number already do so. For example China and Brazil send volunteers to assist in developing

agricultural capacity in Africa, and India sends volunteers to work in disaster relief in South Asia. With these new volunteering actors, there are now opportunities to both scale-up and form new partnerships. However before this potential can be fully realized it is important to evaluate and share experiences in order to find synergies and common ground.

Not only are there now significant new actors that send volunteers, in the future the needs for volunteerism will only grow. The trends described above come together at a pivotal year for international development cooperation. Just a couple of weeks before the conference was held in Beijing, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York. They strongly recognize that a participatory approach to development is required for real changes to be achieved. The post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda also acknowledges that development should be equally spread to be sustainable. The future of volunteering



should therefore be multi-polar. For this to happen it is important to continue to learn from OECD countries with established volunteering programmes while also learning from the experiences of newer programmes from MICs. That is why at the Beijing conference there were participants from a very broad range of stakeholders coming from all regions. The time was therefore right to hold the conference. Momentum that has built up within MICs has created a strong opportunity for volunteerism to become a pillar of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. Holding the conference in China is indicative of this future. China is becoming increasingly involved in providing overseas development assistance and remains a committed supporter of South-South cooperation. Just a few days prior to the conference, China's President Xi Jinping committed significant funding to international development, including US\$2 billion for a South-South Cooperation Aid Fund to support the implementation of the SDGs. For volunteering, China itself has significant momentum that has built up domestically, with stronger governance, societal awareness, and integration of volunteering into national development. As a country committed to international development along South-South cooperation lines, and with a strong domestic volunteering system looking to expand internationally, China was therefore well positioned to host this conference.

1.3. Report Outline

This report aims to capture and document the discussions and findings of the conference, so that these can be built upon to promote future collaboration. It is organized into five sections. The next section summarizes the main outcomes and key findings of the conference. These include the core issues that were discussed, the questions that were raised for future discussion, and the suggestions for concrete steps that can be taken after the conference. Parts Three to Five then summarize the content of the conference sessions. Part Three documents the opening remarks that were made at the conference, including the opening ceremony speeches and special presentation. Part Four details the discussions from the first day. These included two panel discussions followed by a small group discussion. The main topics for discussion were: 'policy frameworks for promoting international volunteering in MICs' and 'best practices and lessons learned in implementing international volunteering programmes'. Part Five then outlines the discussions from the second day which consisted of one panel session and one small group discussion. The major topics for discussion were: the 'impact of volunteering on public service delivery' and 'the way forward'. Finally, the appendix of the report includes the conference agenda, participants list, and organizational profiles of UNV and BVF.

2. KEY THEMES, FURTHER QUESTIONS, AND FUTURE STEPS

The Beijing conference was the first time that a group of organizations and experts involved in or interested in MIC volunteering came together to share, learn, and discuss. As such it represents a significant contribution to the more inclusive international development cooperation that is required to achieve the goals of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. Overall, all participants expressed a sense of optimism about moving forward, strongly welcoming new opportunities to exchange knowledge, anticipating new opportunities for innovative partnerships and a stronger role for MICs in the future volunteering landscape, and displaying a joint commitment to ensuring that volunteering remains a key driving force for international development.

It is clear that all participants saw the conference as representing a beginning. All participants expressed gratitude to the organizers of the conference for providing them with an opportunity to share. Many interesting topics were discussed at the conference. These key areas of interest are documented below in the “key themes” section. However, illustrative of the high demand for the conference, by far the most frequent feedback was that there was “not enough time!” Many conversations were started but not finished. These are detailed in the second section below titled “questions to explore”. Finally, there was also discussion about concrete steps that could be taken to continue the momentum that the conference had created. These are discussed in the final section below.

2.1. Key Findings and Themes of Discussion

The section below details the key issues that were debated during all sessions of the conference including the plenary sessions and the small-group discussions. They are not intended as a complete record of everything that was said but more a collation of the main strands of discussions into general themes. Many of the points are interconnected and they are arranged below in an order that begins with themes related to strategic, macro-level considerations and ends with issues related more to operational concerns. Where consensus was achieved it is mentioned although in general there were no firm resolutions made during the discussions.

Volunteering can play a significant role in assisting MICs achieve the SDGs

There was general consensus that volunteering could significantly assist in the achievement of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. This included through the delivery of basic services, the transfer of skills, and the exchange of best practices. Overall, volunteers can play a crucial role in localizing ownership and ensuring a participatory approach to development. Volunteering can also nurture global citizens through increasing awareness and building capacity. The general contribution that volunteering could make to the delivery of the SDGs was therefore agreed upon. However there was also agreement that it was important to propose more concrete steps, including about how volunteers can contribute to each of the 17 individual SDGs.

Volunteering should form a core part of SSC and people-to-people exchange

Participants at the conference had varying levels of optimism about the ability of MICs to scale-up and internationalize their domestic volunteering programmes. Some highlighted resource constraints and the challenge of transforming domestic experience into international programmes. However, most were optimistic about the potential, noting the existence of enabling resources and political willpower. Most agreed that international volunteering should become a much stronger part of SSC and particularly “people-to-people exchange”. International volunteering was acknowledged by many as a means of strengthening relations between MICs and even fostering a regional identity. These participants welcomed the possibility of increased trilateral engagement to enable them to expand. It was also acknowledged that existing international volunteering programmes should become more aware of and better aligned with national ODA strategies. This would enable them to play a more effective role in building capacity and assisting in a scaling-up of national programmes.

Reciprocal exchange is especially well suited to SSC volunteering

There was general agreement that reciprocal exchange, focused on two-directional and horizontal flows of volunteers, is particularly suited to the “win-win” ideals of South-South Cooperation. Deployments could consist of bilateral arrangements in which countries are matched based on their unique strengths and needs, with one country’s volunteering strengths fulfilling the needs of another country and vice versa. It was acknowledged that not only can this promote mutual development, it can also build strong ties between countries. It was also recognized that organizations such as UNV can support this trilaterally through the use of their existing infrastructure. Some participants remained unclear on how reciprocal exchanges were implemented and what lessons can be learned from prior experience. Participants also identified challenges related to traditional volunteer sender countries becoming receiver countries.

Enhanced coordination is important for more effective collaboration

Throughout the conference many participants acknowledged that a lack of coordination at the local, national, and international level was limiting their impact. This included the duplication of similar but separate programmes, as well as missed opportunities to share experiences and pool resources. This lack of coordination could be seen between all actors, for example amongst and between government ministries, development agencies, and civil society organizations (CSOs). The point was made that there are already an existing number of initiatives set up - for example conferences and trainings - and future initiatives planned - for example UNV’s Decade of Volunteering and Global Volunteer Conference in 2020 - that MIC volunteering organizations could benefit from taking part in. However there was the need to find synergies between these events. Mechanisms to enhance coordination were therefore desired. Many participants made the point that they would like the UN, through UNV, to take a more proactive role. While a desire for greater coordination was agreed upon by all participants it was also noted that a plurality of coordinating actors was also desirable to guard against a monopolization of volunteering initiatives and to fit with the values of SSC.

Linking international volunteering exchanges with national development goals remains a priority

While many participants were keen to expand their international volunteering programmes, many also made clear that their national development goals remained priorities. Many expressed that their own

countries continued to be faced with considerable development challenges, including not least poverty alleviation and environmental issues. Participants also noted how MICs are facing increasing expectations from the international community to take on more responsibilities and that sometimes these were unrealistic. Therefore one key issue that was discussed was how to link international volunteering exchange with the national development priorities of MICs. It was noted that this could be challenging because even if the development modality is the same, the values and working practices of the international programmes can be different to those of the domestic programmes.

Political space for civil society is essential

Many participants spoke about the need for broad-based participation in volunteering to ensure a strong and diverse volunteering eco-system. For many this included strong civil society participation and cooperation with national and international volunteering providers as well as the private sector. It was acknowledged that participants came from countries in which there were different depths of civil society and large differences in relationships and frequency of collaboration between government and civil society. Many spoke of a trust deficiency between government and civil society actors, often caused by a lack of experience working with each other. Participants discussed this as a challenge to overcome with many noting that CSOs had a vital role to play in the delivery of volunteering programmes, particularly in providing access to local communities, especially those that were most vulnerable.

Knowledge sharing is a crucial first step towards further cooperation

There was widespread agreement that the most important achievement of the conference was as a unique conduit for knowledge-sharing. Many expressed that they lacked knowledge of the aims and working practices of similar organizations, especially those from the Global South, and that this was preventing them from improving their programmes and building partnerships. There was therefore general agreement that knowledge-sharing was an important foundation for future cooperation. Some participants also noted that they lacked not only shared knowledge but also the capacity to share knowledge. Ways to tackle this issue were proposed, including the development of methodologies to identify and respond to demands, and to analyze the best ways to transfer knowledge and then assess impact of the knowledge transfer. Many participants agreed that after the conference, mechanisms should be explored to build capacity for knowledge-sharing.

Sharing and cooperation should be inclusive

While participants at the conference clearly expressed that knowledge-sharing should form the basis for future engagement, it was also agreed that sharing should be as inclusive as possible. This included amongst MICs but also to High Income Countries (HICs) and Low Income Countries (LICs) as well. As many MICs are now both providers and recipients of ODA, they are now in a position to share unique experiences relevant to a broad range of stakeholders. The point was repeatedly made that MICs each had their own unique experiences of development and volunteering's role in development that could lead to innovative approaches in other contexts. However it was also agreed that it remains important for lessons to be continued to be shared between traditional donors and MICs. Outreach from the conference should therefore aim to include a broad range of stakeholders. Many participants suggested that a strong use of technology in future platforms would facilitate this inclusive sharing.

More research should be conducted and shared to ensure mistakes are not repeated

A very common theme of discussion at the conference was that MICs should not repeat past mistakes. There was widespread acknowledgement that volunteering organizations from HICs had made significant contributions to international development and had many lessons to share. However it was also mentioned that there were also working practices that were far less effective and at times even harmful because they followed a top-down approach that was led by supply and not demand. Some participants saw these same practices beginning to be adopted by some MIC donors. It was agreed that some key requirements to resolve this issue include a strong research agenda into the experience of previous volunteer exchanges to provide recommendations, and a strong desire from all parties to learn. Overall, this approach would not only prevent the repetition of mistakes but also the duplication of methods and aims.

Broad-based engagement with all stakeholders is vital

Many participants agreed that MICs should try to focus cooperation on the needs of the local communities. It was therefore crucial to facilitate a better understanding of recipient needs through broad-based engagement with all stakeholders. This in turn would lead to enhanced sustainability. Related to this point it was also generally agreed that the way in which volunteering was conceived needed to be broadened. This would enable future programmes to better learn from local knowledge and engage with local communities. This could be achieved through knowledge-sharing, enhanced research, strong engagement with local stakeholders, and well-planned but flexible programme management practices.

Defining “volunteering” is important for MICs looking to establish policies and legal frameworks

Many participants mentioned that for MICs that were developing policies and legal frameworks to regulate and promote volunteering, there was still much discussion about defining “what is a volunteer?” This topic came up for debate many times, often in discussions relating to compensation and evaluation. Therefore coming up with definitions of volunteering was an important step for many MICs. Participants discussed whether MICs should develop their own definitions of volunteering, including different standards for reporting and evaluating volunteering programmes. Many agreed that it was important to include the mutuality and demand-driven nature of South-South Cooperation in the way that future volunteering cooperation was conceived.

The inherent values of volunteering should not be forgotten

At the conference some participants expressed the opinion that the contemporary social norms of the society in which they operated lacked some of the “core values” of volunteerism, such as solidarity, reciprocity, and mutual trust and belonging. This issue was cited as a challenge for developing formal volunteering. There was also some suggestion by participants that volunteering organizations also run the risk of ignoring the benefits that the act of volunteering brought to the volunteer, such as building capacity and facilitating social inclusion. Instead, some volunteering organizations were focusing on volunteering as a tool to achieve development aims. For certain participants this represented a limited vision of volunteering that failed to incorporate the holistic aims required by, for example, the Sustainable Development Agenda. Related to this point, it was also repeatedly noted that the value of

volunteering continues after the deployment has finished, and that this was important to recognize in support of reciprocal exchanges and more MICs becoming sender countries.

The benefits of volunteering need to be continuously advocated for

Although volunteering programmes have become increasingly accepted as a development modality and many MICs have expanding ODA budgets, it was agreed by all participants that demonstrating the benefits of volunteerism was important to strengthen support from government and society. This could be done through coordinated monitoring and evaluation, research, and outreach. This was noted as one particular area where MICs often find they have contexts that are similar to each other and different to those in HICs. Similarities can include a public that is not used to formal volunteering programmes or to the allocation of national resources to overseas development assistance. Communicating the benefits of volunteerism was seen as an important first step to creating an enabling environment that includes strong legal frameworks that promote volunteerism. Sharing successful experiences of outreach and advocacy was therefore important.

Monitoring and Evaluation is important but challenging for MIC volunteering organizations

One common feature of the presentations given by the panelists was a focus on the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M and E). All participants recognized the importance of monitoring and evaluating every stage of a volunteer programme from the perspective of as many stakeholders as possible. However most also acknowledged this as a common challenge with many admitting that they lacked resources to implement effective M and E procedures. This was therefore seen as one area to explore further and work to share best practices, including reporting standards, data collection methods and transparency measures. While participants acknowledged that they could learn from established volunteering programs in HICs they would also benefit from the development of M and E standards and practices that were more suited to the MIC context. For many participants this challenge of impact assessment was seen as one of the most significant hurdles that had to be overcome to enable them to improve and scale-up their existing programmes.

Training and support for volunteers is crucial but challenging for MIC volunteering organizations

Along with M and E, training and support for volunteers was acknowledged by all participants as very important but challenging. Participants noted the particular importance of selecting and managing volunteers to ensure that the right candidates are chosen. They also noted the importance of training volunteers before, during, and after they are sent on assignment, and providing legal and security support to volunteers. However they also noted that many MIC volunteering organizations face significant capacity restraints, including a shortage of qualified staff and a lack of knowledge management and information gathering systems. Participants therefore remarked on a pressing need for sharing experiences of codes of conduct, legal support, incentive systems, and financial management tools. They also discussed the possibility of setting up joint standards or codes of conduct that would be more suited to MIC volunteering organizations.

2.2. Questions to Explore in the Future

While there was much rewarding discussion around the issues listed above there were also many questions that were raised but participants did not have enough time to fully discuss. These are summarized below and proposed as issues to base future dialogues around:

How to ensure inclusive access to future volunteering exchanges?

Questions of equality in volunteering exchanges were raised several times at the conference but not fully explored. Marginalized groups in MICs - in common with LICs and HICs - tend to lack awareness and equal opportunity to participate in volunteering programmes. How to ensure inclusive access should be a priority.

How to use new technology to engage and manage volunteers more effectively?

References were made to technological tools many times and this topic was clearly one that is suitable for significant further discussion. Some technological tools are particularly suited to MIC contexts because they can be used to overcome resource constraints.

How can volunteers use new technology to better achieve the aims of their assignment?

New technology can also be used to enhance the capacity of volunteers themselves. For example in assisting volunteers to measure and map pollution. This can play a significant role in enabling volunteers to assist in achieving the SDGs through monitoring, collecting, and analyzing data.

What components make up a strong legal framework to protect volunteers and volunteering organizations in the context of an MIC?

At the conference most participants agreed that strong legal frameworks were a fundamental component of a strong enabling environment. It was noted that there should be future opportunities to share challenges and successes, especially those that took place within an MIC context.

How can the values of volunteerism be promoted within MIC societies?

The core values of volunteering can be found in all cultures, although in some contexts they can become muted. Future discussion on what these values are in the contexts of MICs and what methods can be used to better recognize them is required. These changes in attitude are linked closely to the shifts in behavior required by the SDGs.

What steps can be taken to mainstream formal volunteering?

Leading on from the above, some participants also raised questions about how formal volunteering can become an everyday part of life in MICs. This is a necessary stepping stone to increased international volunteering. Practical considerations include incentivizing volunteering through rewards systems and integrating it with the employment system.

How can government volunteering organizations cooperate effectively with CSOs?

Achieving the SDGs requires strong partnerships between a broad-range of stakeholders, however some participants at the conference expressed that there was a lack of trust between governments and

CSOs. Lessons therefore need to be shared about how to strengthen relationships between MIC governments and civil society to create a diverse volunteering eco-system.

How can MIC volunteering organizations form constructive partnerships with the private sector?

The private sector is becoming increasingly involved in tackling development issues. Many MICs now have large companies that are internationalizing and beginning to better fulfill their social and environmental responsibilities. How can MIC volunteering organizations form partnerships with businesses to make use of the resources and expertise of the private sector?

How can volunteering become integrated into the expanding ODA allowance of MICs?

Some MIC volunteering organizations find themselves in a context in which the national ODA budget is expanding. How should they approach governments to ensure that volunteering becomes an integral part of national overseas development assistance? How can stand-alone isolated volunteering projects scale-up to become sustained ODA involvement?

What approaches ensure effective trilateral partnerships?

Trilateral partnerships are becoming increasingly common in the ODA of MICs. Important lessons can be learned from these that can ensure that volunteering projects based around trilateral engagement increase and become more effective.

How should the impact of MIC volunteering be assessed?

Monitoring and evaluation was a common discussion topic but there were many questions left unanswered. For example: what common indicators, that take into account the significant variation to be found between MICs, could be used to assess the impact of MIC volunteering?

2.3. Suggestions for Future Steps

Suggestions emerged through discussion about concrete steps that can be taken to build on the momentum generated by the conference. These are summarized below:

More regular dialogues to deepen collaboration

It was overwhelmingly agreed that there should be more meetings of MIC volunteering organizations and on a regular basis. It was also agreed that these should have a focus on inclusivity and multi-stakeholder dialogue, and therefore include an expanded range of actors, particularly more CSOs and the private sector.

Thematic exchange of knowledge

While it was agreed that a general convening, similar to the Beijing conference, should take place regularly, it was also noted that smaller and more focused knowledge-exchange gatherings should also be held. These would focus on one main topic of discussion, for example: use of technology, management of volunteers, legal frameworks, generating political will and public support, and overcoming capacity constraints.

Organization of sub-forums for MIC volunteering organizations at international events

Some participants also made the point that it would be useful for MIC volunteering organizations to meet before or during international meetings to develop joint agendas and coordinate positions. These meetings could be hosted by a rotation of volunteering organizations with support from UNV.

New research to be commissioned

Many participants saw a pressing need for new research into the experience of MIC's volunteering exchanges. It was agreed that there was a lack of case study research that analyzed positive experiences and challenges faced, and that these were important to improve the management and design of programmes and avoid replicating past mistakes.

Knowledge hubs

Alongside new research, participants also suggested that it would be beneficial to create a network of research bodies that looked at issues surrounding MIC volunteering exchanges. This could include think tanks, academics, university research centers, and development agencies. The point was also made that there were existing research networks that focused on either SSC or international volunteering, whose experiences could be learnt from.

Online platform

All participants agreed that making use of technology to form an online platform represented an easy way to both retain the network created by the forum as well as giving the opportunity to extend the findings to volunteering organizations that did not attend the conference.

Leading group of MIC volunteering organizations

Some participants also suggested the creation of a "leading group" of organizations concerned with MIC volunteering which could head efforts to advance SSC and MIC volunteering. It was suggested that UNV could facilitate the creation of this body.

3. OPENING REMARKS

This short section briefly summarizes the contents and discussions contained in the first two sessions of the conference. These were the opening ceremony, consisting of four speeches, and the first plenary session, consisting of a presentation given by the head of UNV. These opening speeches are summarized here to provide a resource for readers interested in looking at the core messages that were given by the senior leaderships in attendance at the conference. The special presentation in the first plenary session, as well as the question and answer session that followed, is included to highlight the historical trends that lay behind the holding of the event and that set the tone for the discussions that followed.

3.1. Opening Ceremony Speeches

The opening ceremony of the conference consisted of four speeches. First to speak was Executive Coordinator of United Nations Volunteers Mr. Richard Dictus. In his address Mr. Dictus said that he was honored to be part of this “groundbreaking meeting”. He drew particular attention to the timing of the event, identifying a rise of MIC-led volunteering, the creation of a South-South volunteering movement, and the synergy between volunteering and the new SDGs. He also talked about how UNV has a resilient relationship with China, having operated in China since 1981, and strong South-South cooperation credentials, with over



Mr. Richard Dictus, Executive Coordinator of UNV (BVF, 2015).

80% of UN volunteers coming from the Global South. Mr. Dictus also described China’s unique volunteering experience, which includes the role model figure of Lei Feng and key programmes such as the Go West Development Plan, as well as volunteering’s prominent role in major events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the relief effort after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

Second to talk was Mrs. Teng Shengping¹, Vice-President of the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation. Mrs. Teng focused her talk on the ways in which Beijing has created a successful volunteering infrastructure to tackle its own development challenges. This included the establishment of mechanisms to plan and guide volunteer service, including creating the Beijing Volunteer Service

¹ For the names of Chinese participants the Chinese convention of writing the surname first is used. For example, here the speakers surname is “Teng.”

Federation to coordinate all volunteer service organizations and resources in Beijing. She outlined Beijing's efforts to institutionalize volunteer service through the introduction of local legislation, the establishment of a volunteer service fund, and the adoption of an insurance scheme for volunteers. Mrs. Teng also talked about the success of campaigns to build public support for volunteering. These included "Beijing Civilized and Polite Beijingers", "Getting Volunteer Service into Life" and "I Participate, I Contribute, and I Enjoy". She concluded by saying that volunteering would play an important role in



Mrs. Teng Shengping, Vice President of BVF (BVF, 2015).

the "Jing-Jin-Ji" development plan, which will aim to integrate the cities of Beijing and Tianjin and the surrounding province of Hebei.

Mr. Alain Noudéhou, UN Resident Coordinator in China, spoke next, describing the conference as "precedent-setting" and hoping that a "groundbreaking global commitment towards enhanced partnerships for international volunteering in the service of peace and development" would be added to the radical new development agendas that were being put in place in 2015. Mr. Noudéhou also talked of vibrant new development actors bringing new

creativity, innovation, and empathy, and praised China's unprecedented support for South-South Cooperation including the recent establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a South-South Cooperation Aid Fund, and free peacekeeping assistance to the Africa Union. Mr. Noudéhou went on to outline how the UN system has played an important role in assisting China's development and how volunteering is both programmatically and operationally part of all of the Seven UN Theme Groups, and thus an important component of the UN's joint work.

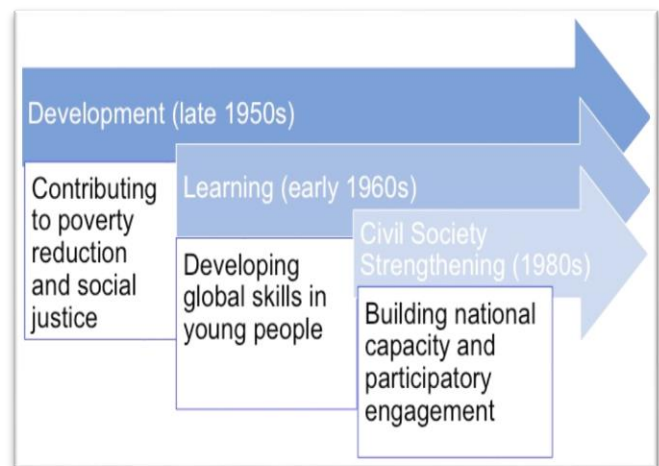
Last to speak was Mrs. Zhao Jinfang, Secretary General of China Volunteer Service Federation (CVF). Mrs. Zhao began by recognizing overseas volunteering as an important bridge for interpersonal communication and friendly cross-border cooperation. She then outlined the successes of CVF in promoting volunteerism in China, including having a total of 13.5 million registered volunteers and implementing successful programmes such as a neighborhood mutual help project that connects nearly 100 million volunteers with vulnerable people. Mrs. Zhao also described China's own overseas volunteering program which is implemented by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League (CCCYL) along with CVF. She concluded by saying that international exchange and cooperation has played an important role in enabling CVF to have these successes.

3.2. Special Presentation on the Evolution of International Volunteering

The first plenary session of the conference consisted of a presentation delivered by the Executive Coordinator of UNV Mr. Richard Dictus. The presentation was based around the paper “The Evolution of International Volunteering” written by Dr. Benjamin Lough, Associate Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and consultant to the United Nations Volunteers². Some of the main themes presented are summarized below.

Shifts in policy objectives

One of the trends discussed in the presentation related to changes in policy objectives for international volunteer cooperation organizations. Early objectives in the late 1950's had general development aims focused on poverty reduction and social justice. A new learning priority emerged in the 1960's which added emphasis to developing global skills and citizenship for young people and providing a value-for-money approach to human capacity development. Later on, in the 1980's the objective of “civil society strengthening”, which aimed to build national capacity and participatory engagement, was introduced.



Key policy objectives for international volunteering

Directional flows

“Today more and more MICs are themselves developing bilateral international volunteer programmes”

The presentation also covered trends in the flows of sending and receiving volunteers. North-to-South volunteering remains the dominant flow today and since the mid-1970's UNV has been the only large-scale South-to-South volunteering programme. Some established international volunteering organizations are launching new South-to-South volunteering programmes although these are mainly ancillary programmes that are often supported by private funding. However, today more and more MICs are themselves developing bilateral international volunteer programmes, and regional unions and associations are establishing multilateral international volunteer exchange structures.

² The full paper can be downloaded from <http://www.buildingbridgescoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Evolution-of-International-Volunteering1.pdf>

Increase in short-term programmes

In terms of length of deployment, the presentation described how by the 1970s most international volunteering programmes sent international volunteers for long, often 2-year assignments, usually preceded by an extended period of training. However this model has significantly diversified in recent decades, especially with the growth in funding for short-term programmes. This has caused growing concern that volunteers lack opportunities to develop the cultural knowledge and learning that is crucial to ensuring a mutually beneficial experience for the individual and the recipient and sender communities. Concordantly, the presentation also detailed the historical shift away from youth-based

volunteers with generalized skills and education towards experienced professional volunteers with specialized technical skills. Since the 2000's there has been a move back towards youth-based volunteering but there is ongoing concern that this is based on supply of volunteers rather than demand, and fails to assess or fulfill the needs of local communities.

“Nobody has the right answers and you can even say that there isn’t a right answer. There is only the right answer for you and your programme”

Training and support for volunteers

Another issue discussed was training, support, and skills development for volunteers. Traditional training was usually carried out pre-deployment in sender countries and focused on language development, cross-cultural training, country studies, project preparation, and specific technical skills.

However, from the 1970s training began to be implemented in receiver countries and focus more on safety, security, and risk management issues. In terms of support for volunteers, there was an early focus on support in the field combined with employment opportunities and re-settlement allowances when returning. By 1970s volunteers often began to be given a living allowance, liability, disability, and accident insurance. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the presentation detailed a shift towards results-based management and greater pressure from donors to demonstrate volunteers’ contributions to development goals.

Mr Dictus ended the presentation by saying that “nobody has the right answers and you can even say that there isn’t a right answer. There is only the right answer for you and your programme. What I tried to do with this presentation was to make sure that you ask yourself the right questions to move forward.”

The presentation was followed by a question and answer session in which both Mr. Dictus and Dr. Lough fielded questions from the audience. Several questions asked about the main contemporary and future trends for volunteering. In their answers the presenters summarized some of the main trends as:



A delegate asks a question (BVF, 2015).

Contemporary volunteering trends

Countries establishing **national voluntary service schemes** to tackle domestic development challenges. These are often seen as a way to alleviate unemployment problems, especially where there is a large population of young people at risk of becoming marginalized.

A **growing use of technology** to manage volunteers, connect society with volunteering opportunities, measure the impact of volunteering, and incentivize volunteering through online rewards.

An **increase in corporate volunteering**, with more and more businesses including a volunteering component in their expanding Corporate Social Responsibility strategies. This has occurred mainly in the North but is increasingly happening in the Global South.

A significant discussion focused on how volunteers should be compensated and the boundaries between volunteer service and commercial service. Some points raised included:

Compensating volunteers

Volunteers **should be fully supported both during and after their deployment**. This includes providing resources in the field and assistance in re-integrating into society after they finish their deployment.

The right **balance needs to be found in giving compensation**. Giving no compensation limits the pool of volunteers to those who can self-finance. However over-compensation of volunteers can alter motivations for involvement. The question of compensation is closely linked to definitions of what a volunteer is.

What constitutes “volunteering” should **include the influence of national values and norms**. This will impact the way that volunteers are compensated and regulated.

Other issues raised focused on using volunteering to generate global citizens:

Generating global citizens through volunteering

In the same way that countries are recognizing the importance of volunteerism in generating local and national solidarity, **volunteering should also play a key role in the generation of a global identity**.

In order to achieve this it was important **to connect local and national values with global values** and to align local and national volunteering policies with international development cooperation strategies.

Through doing this volunteers can become the “amino acids” of the “new thinking” that is required to **achieve the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals**.

4. DAY ONE SESSIONS

4.1. Policy Frameworks for Promoting International Volunteering in MICs

The second plenary was a panel session moderated by Ms. Hannah Ryder from UNDP China. The session looked at how policy frameworks can promote international volunteering in MICs. Panelists presented their experiences around two questions: “How does international volunteering cooperation fit your countries’ own national development plans and international development cooperation policy objectives?” and “What is required to strengthen the role of international volunteering in support of the MIC cooperation agenda?” Through exploring these issues the session highlighted successful models of integrating volunteering into development cooperation, and identified opportunities to strengthen frameworks to support international volunteering.



Ms. Hannah Ryder

Head of Policy and Partnerships, UNDP China
United Nations (Kenya)



Mr. Gabriel Ive

President of the White Helmets Commission
Argentina

Mr. Gabriel Ive focused his presentation on the volunteering work of the White Helmets Commission. The main points that he covered were:

- The White Helmets Commission is part of the Argentinian government’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship. They are in charge of planning and implementing Argentina’s international humanitarian assistance. 2015 is their 20th anniversary and they are often cited as an early example of MICs participating in international development work.
- From their inception the White Helmets have always relied on a cadre of volunteers, forming their development assistance model around “horizontal cooperation, solidarity, community participation and local risk management”.
- They operate in line with the Hyogo Framework and the new Sendai Framework and use volunteers as a key tool to build resilience.

Volunteering and the Sendai Framework

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015, and the first major agreement to directly link with the post-2015 development agenda. It was endorsed by the UN General Assembly following the 2015 Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR).

It acknowledges that there should be “a broader and a more people-centered preventive approach to disaster risk” and that volunteers and volunteer involving organizations should participate in the planning and implementation of future disaster risk reduction to “facilitate an inclusive and all-of-society disaster risk management”.

- Recent examples of the White Helmets taking part in humanitarian assistance include after the 2004 Asian Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and the Haiti earthquake in 2010.

Mr. Yang Song from the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCCYL) spoke about China's Overseas Youth Volunteer Program. His key messages were:



Mr. Song Yang

Director-General of Young Volunteers Department,
CCCYL

China

- The Overseas Youth Volunteer Program is implemented by the CCCYL through the China Young Volunteers Association (CVA) and overseen by the Ministry of Commerce's Department of Foreign Aid (DFA). In 2005 the Program was integrated into China's overseas development assistance (ODA) framework and the added-value that the Program has brought was being increasingly recognized.
- It was established in 2002 and has sent 152 volunteers to Southeast Asia, 458 volunteers to Africa, and 40 volunteers to Latin America (Guyana).
- One challenge faced was to strengthen management and support for volunteers, in particular protection and compensation. The Program selects volunteers from local organizations that due to variations in provincial or municipal policies, gave their volunteers varying degrees of support.
- The Program is experiencing a "bottleneck" in scaling-up within the existing framework of China's overseas aid. They are actively exploring new models.



Dr. Sofia Stoimenova

Head of International Federation of Red Cross and
Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in East Asia

IFRC (Bulgaria)

The third presenter was Dr. Sofia Stoimenova, who spoke about the use of volunteers in the work of the IFRC. The key messages in her presentation were:

- Volunteers perform a key role for the global network of 189 Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) national societies, especially in facilitating access to vulnerable people.
- Effective management systems to support volunteers are very important. This includes both before and after they finish their assignments. Support should include psycho-social counselling, safety training and legal support.
- The IFRC campaign "One Billion Coalition for Resilience & Volunteers" aims to place one volunteer in every community across the world by 2025 to build community resilience.
- "It is important to share not just achievements but also challenges, to work together to empower volunteering." Several IFRC studies look at the impact on volunteering of changing demographics, urbanization, changing types of volunteering, migration, consequences of economic downturn, new technology, and the growing role of the private sector.

**"It is important to
share not just
achievements but
also challenges, to
work together to
empower
volunteering"**

After the presentations there was another opportunity for audience members to ask questions. Overall, the key messages that came from the presentations and the question and answer session can be summarized as:

Common Challenges

Integrating existing domestic volunteer programmes into the ODA frameworks of MICs can be a major challenge, even if ODA budgets are increasing.

MIC volunteering organizations that lack international experience can face **challenges in identifying the needs of local communities** to design the direction and type of volunteer assignments.

MICs have **wide cultural, economic and political variations**. This presents challenges to developing common standards, fostering cooperation, and implementing bilateral programmes.

MICs that are developing policy frameworks and regulations to cover volunteers face significant challenges in **defining “what is a volunteer?”** in their local context.

Success factors

MIC countries can have very different demographic distributions and this will impact the ways in which they do volunteering. However, in general MICs do tend to have younger populations which gives **particular potential for youth volunteering programmes**.

Providing **strong support to volunteers** is vital, both before and after deployments, including insurance, legal support, and post-deployment briefings.

Sharing experiences is very important. This includes both challenges and successes and should be facilitated through greater research and cooperation.

Policy frameworks should be developed through a process that **involves a broad range of stakeholders**. This includes not just government volunteering organizations but also non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, volunteers, and recipient communities.

There is much **potential to work more with the private sector**. This is especially the case for MICs in which domestic businesses are expanding abroad.

4.2. Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Implementing International Volunteering Programmes

Plenary Session Three was also a panel discussion. It focused on the implementation of international volunteering programmes and was moderated by Mr. Paul Bird, CEO of Australian Volunteers International (AVI), who also gave a short presentation. The panelists were asked to present their experiences based around the following questions: “What are the successful or innovative models for developing international outbound volunteering programmes, which national institutions are involved, and what modalities are used?” and “What are the main challenges, obstacles or bottlenecks in developing and implementing these programmes, and how have they been overcome?”



Mr. Paul Bird

CEO of Australian Volunteers International
Australia

The moderator Mr. Bird began the session by briefly introducing the work of AVI. He made the point that although AVI use volunteers, they should be considered a development agency. He also emphasized that it is important to “start by asking questions” to take a demand-led approach. AVI

strived to avoid imposing volunteers on local communities and “to go from the community to the volunteer”. Mr. Bird also iterated that AVI had learnt that developing long-term programmes was the most effective approach, particularly because it can take a long time to build up trust in recipient communities.

After this introduction Mr. Jan Baarøy talked about the work of FK Norway. The key messages in his presentation were:



Mr. Jan Olav Baarøy

Deputy Director General of FK Norway
Norway

- Volunteering partnerships work best when they are long-term and properly monitored with full integration of the volunteer into the local community.
- It is important to strive towards establishing equal partnerships and mutual exchange. It is particularly important to recognize that volunteering not only built capacity in the volunteer but also the receiver community and the sender community.
- During their deployment, volunteers acquire new communication skills, personal confidence, and ability to adapt to new situations. Volunteers continue to contribute once they return from their deployment and *“it can be that the volunteer achieves most after they return home”*.
- This is a key argument to support MIC countries to become senders of volunteers, rather than just receivers. This would contribute to truly sustainable volunteering programmes.

**“It can be that the
volunteer achieves
most after they
return home”**



Ms. Manon Bernier

UNV Regional Manager for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations (Canada)

Ms. Manon Bernier then introduced the work of the United Nations Volunteers. Some of the key messages in her presentation were:

- UNV has different partnership arrangements and the flexibility of the programmes allows volunteer placements to align with local development priorities.
- An example of a successful UNV South-South trilateral initiative is the collaboration with the African Development Bank to establish the ECOWAS Volunteers Programme in 2009, in which volunteers from 12 West African countries were deployed in peace-building and development activities. According to UNV evaluations most ECOWAS volunteers felt that the programme had positive effects on their personal and professional development including enhanced employability, awareness and knowledge, and project management skills.
- Important elements in programme design include well-designed trainings, and capacity assessments that enable relevant capacity building components to be built into programmes.
- Volunteerism is set to play a key role in the Sustainable Development Agenda and volunteerism and volunteer groups are explicitly mentioned in the reports that will guide the implementation of the SDGs including the UN Secretary General's Synthesis report.

Dr. Wooyong Chung then talked about the volunteer work of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). His main points included:



Dr. Wooyong Chung

Executive Director of KOICA
Republic of Korea

- South Korea launched its first overseas volunteer program in 1990 and a new programme, called the "World Friends Korea (WFK)" program was begun in 2009 to link together all existing state-run overseas volunteer programmes.
- South Korea uses its unique domestic development experiences to influence its own approach to overseas development. An example of this is the creation of overseas volunteer programmes focused around the domestic development initiative of "Saemaul Undong", which was launched in 1970 with "self-help and cooperation" as guiding principles. Another example shared was South Korea's use of its strong technological capacity to develop WFK volunteering programmes that addressed the problem of "digital divide" in developing countries.
- One major challenge faced by WFK is finding effective mechanisms to both monitor and evaluate volunteer performance, as well as measure the impact of volunteering on relationships with partner countries.
- Another challenge is safety and security issues for overseas volunteers. To ensure safety and security, WFK has introduced a safety and security management system that includes monthly safety and security reports, safety and security training, an emergency monitoring and contact system, country-level safety and security manuals, and insurance coverage.

Volunteering and the UN Secretary-General's Report on the post-2015 agenda

The UN Secretary-General's Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda underlines the key role that volunteer groups can play in the sustainable development agenda:

"As we seek to build capacities and to help the new agenda to take root, volunteerism can be another powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation. Volunteerism can help to expand and mobilize constituencies, and to engage people in national planning and implementation for sustainable development goals. And volunteer groups can help to localize the new agenda by providing new spaces of interaction between governments and people for concrete and scalable actions."

"The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet", p. 36, para 131

Overall, including the discussions that followed after the presentations, some of the key messages from this plenary session included:

Common Challenges

Monitoring and evaluation (M and E) was described as a challenge many times. In particular this was caused by a lack of experience and resources.

Another M and E concern related to the **lack of procedures relevant for MIC or SSC volunteering**. This included finding successful measurement indicators that fit with objectives of MIC volunteering programmes.

Reciprocal volunteering exchange was cited as a model to aim for, however there are challenges for traditional volunteer sender countries to become receivers.

Safety and security for volunteers were common concerns. This included the provision of insurance policies and the development of systems to respond to emergency situations.

Success Factors

It is particularly important to **provide strong support for youth volunteers**. This includes psychological support before, during, and after the assignment.

Mentoring can be useful, particularly for youth volunteering programmes.

MICs all possess their own unique experiences of development and this should be used to influence how they develop their own ODA programmes.

MIC volunteering programmes now have a **unique opportunity to play a key role** in the post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Trilateral programmes are useful frameworks for development cooperation. This can include two MICs partnering with a traditional donor or development agency.

Volunteers contribute added value **not just during their assignment but also after they finish**. This is important to recognize to promote reciprocal programmes and South-North exchange.

Programmes work best when they are long-term. This allows for trust to develop between sender and recipient.

4.3. Small Group Discussion: Successes and Challenges

The final session of Day One took the form of a small group discussion. Participants were assigned to three groups that met in separate rooms opposite the main conference room. Each group had two facilitators, one international and one Chinese, translators, and note-takers. The topics that were discussed by the group were formulated around the questions from the first two panel sessions: “What are the key factors of success of international of outbound volunteering programmes?”, “What are the main challenges in developing and implementing these programmes?”, and “How can they be overcome?”

Group One had participants from nine countries and one UN agency. There was much discussion about demand-led and supply-led volunteering and how to match the volunteer to the assignment. It was generally agreed that key skills for volunteers included the capacity to work in other cultures and be respectful of cultural differences. Another topic that was discussed was the importance of technological capacity. This was identified as both a need of local communities and also a key factor for successful volunteer programmes, including for outreach and communication, management, and monitoring and evaluation. Many participants therefore agreed that using new technology to implement programmes, as well as recruiting and sending volunteers with technological skills, was very important. Elsewhere there was also consensus that strong government support, including through

enabling policies and clear legal frameworks, was crucial to develop an enabling environment for volunteering.

In Group Two there was also participants from nine countries and one UN agency. Some key topics included how to deal with cultural differences between sending and receiving countries. Here the importance of rigorous selection and in-depth training for volunteers was again mentioned, with all participants agreeing that both were important to ensure that volunteers and recipients gained the most from the assignment. Many participants also agreed that

Small Group Discussion Session Design

- 1) Each group member receives 2 post-it notes of two different colors.
- 2) They have 10 minutes to respond to the questions. Participants can write one response per post-it.
- 3) Once they have their post-it completed, they come and place them on the relevant flip chart.
- 4) While participants are sticking their post-its, facilitators are clustering the ideas around main ideas emerging.
- 5) Facilitators summarize main ideas coming out for each question. After summarizing, the group is asked to comment.
- 6) Facilitators then report back key findings to the plenary session.



Members of Group One post their “challenges” on the board (BVF, 2015).

ensuring security and safety for the volunteer was of primary importance. Participants also discussed how to best generate support from government and society and all agreed that forging strong partnerships with international actors was a significant way to share, learn and scale-up.

In Group Three there were participants from 10 countries and one international agency. Many group members agreed that having a broad-based and diverse partnership among many stakeholders was critical to ensuring maximum impact and reaching all members of a community. Many participants commented on the significance of monitoring and evaluation. For many this was not done rigorously enough and organizations were not learning from their mistakes. This theme of learning from past mistakes was also a prominent topic of discussion with many group members agreeing that knowledge sharing was a crucial factor for success. There was also vigorous debate about challenges. These included bridging differences in culture and overcoming resource constraints, with many participants agreeing that they faced significant funding deficits that prevented their programmes from scaling-up, recruiting experienced staff, and implementing strong monitoring and evaluation procedures.

In the report back to the plenary the small group facilitators listed the **challenges faced** by the participants as:

Group 1	<i>Navigating large variation in the way that volunteering is understood in different contexts. Understanding the needs and priorities of a recipient community. Recruiting volunteers that are suitable for the assignment. Ensuring that recipient communities have the capacity to work successfully with volunteers.</i>
Group 2	<i>Gaining consensus in contexts with large cultural and political variation Ensuring that volunteer assignments are safe and secure, including both physical and mental. Creating sustainable programmes. Measuring volunteering impact to get support from government and funders</i>
Group 3	<i>Operating in environments that lack enabling policies and laws. Large variation in cultural attitudes towards volunteering. Obtaining financial support. Measuring impact and evaluating programmes. A lack of coordination between programmes and organizations. Ensuring strong programme management. Managing safety and security for volunteers.</i>

The **success factors** were described as:

Group 1

*Volunteering awareness should be increased in the sender and recipient countries.
Assumptions shouldn't be made that volunteering means the same to everyone.
Local needs may differ to national needs.
It is important for needs analyses to "move with the times" and be informed by contemporary requirements and priorities of a range of local stakeholders.
Volunteering organizations should allocate significant resources to systematic recruitment and training methods.
To ensure sustainability it was important to take a long-term view and build a long-term relationship with the recipient community.*

Group 2

*Using evidence-based empirical research to demonstrate the worth of volunteers to partners that included both government and donors.
Using knowledge-sharing platforms to share ideas across national boundaries.
Provide insurance and communication for the safety and security of volunteers.
Provide education and training to volunteers and recipient communities that involve a broad range of stakeholders.*

Group 3

*Promote strong policies in government to create an enabling environment.
Build strong, diverse, and innovative partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders.
Obtain the support of the government.
Share knowledge and best practices to encourage mutual learning.*

5. DAY TWO SESSIONS

5.1. Impact of Volunteering on Public Service Delivery

The fourth plenary session took place on the morning of Day Two. It focused on the impact of volunteering on the delivery of public services. It was moderated by Dr. Zhang Qiang from Beijing Normal University and panelists were asked to discuss the following questions: “What national or international programmes exist to support service delivery through volunteering?”; “How have countries engaged with volunteering organizations and UNV to promote their volunteer infrastructure?” and “How do these programmes engage international and domestic volunteers?” The three panelists who gave presentations were Zhang Zhenshan, representing UN-HABITAT, Ms. Wei Na, from Renmin University, and Mr. Gekonge Japheth Gesare from Kenya.



Dr. Zhang Qiang

Associate Professor, School of Social Development
& Public Policy, Beijing Normal University

China



Mr. Zhang Zhenshan

Programme Manager for UN-HABITAT in China
United Nations (China)

Mr. Zhenshan Zhang was the first to speak and he focused his presentation on UN Habitat’s successful use of volunteering in its programmes. His key messages were:

- UN Habitat acknowledged the many benefits that volunteers brought to their programmes. These included technical expertise, knowledge, creativity and enthusiasm.
- It’s important to recognize what volunteers gain from participation. In the UN Habitat programmes this includes gaining experience, training, and familiarity with the UN system.
- Volunteers made a significant contribution to UN Habitat’s “Water for Asian Cities Programme” which worked to improve the efficiency of water use, scaling-up sanitation measures, and making pro-poor investments in urban water supply.
- The volunteer contribution to this project had enhanced the delivery of public services, in particular by improving the awareness and participation of the public.

Professor Wei Na focused her presentation both on the contribution of volunteering to public service delivery in China as well as taking a cross-cultural perspective. Her key messages were:



Dr. Wei Na

Vice President of Beijing Voluntary Service Research
& Development Institute at Renmin University

China

- China has experienced a recent surge in volunteerism as well as an increase in NGOs that relied upon volunteers. China now has over 600,000 registered NGOs, and the government is now beginning to outsource public services to NGOs.

- It is important to create an enabling environment that promotes the activities of all parties involved in volunteering including government, civil society, and business.
- Volunteers bring significant added-value to the delivery of public services through enhancing capacity and effectiveness, making delivery more fair and equitable by creating a participatory approach, and optimizing the relations between government and society.
- Two very important future tasks are “the consolidation of partnership between the government and volunteering service through institutionalization and legalization” and “the increase of support for volunteering service by the government.”



Mr. Gekonge Japheth Gesare

National Volunteerism Secretariat Head, Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services

Kenya

Mr. Gekonge’s presentation focused on Kenya’s experience of incorporating volunteerism into the delivery of its public services. The key issues in his presentation were:

- The Kenyan government has already issued a policy on volunteering and is currently developing a legal framework to regulate and promote volunteerism.
- When developing policy frameworks it is vital to consult with all stakeholders involved, including government departments, NGOs, and the private sector. Volunteering policy should also be aligned with international initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Volunteering organizations should work in partnership with government to deliver services, and to form an enabling environment for volunteerism. However volunteers also perform a vital role in providing checks and balances on government services through monitoring and reporting. Through this they enhance their delivery.
- It is important for governments to promote a culture of volunteerism in the family unit and through education. In Kenya they are aiming to encourage a culture of volunteerism from primary school upwards.

“Volunteers also perform a vital role in providing checks and balances on government services through monitoring and reporting”

The challenges and success factors from the presentations and discussion that followed included:

Common Challenges

Volunteer organizations **can have very different values, backgrounds and working practices**. Just because they deploy volunteers doesn't necessarily mean they have the same aims.

Governments can **lack awareness of the benefits of volunteering** and sometimes lack trust in volunteer organizations.

A **lack of regulations** hinders the contributions that volunteerism can make in MICs. Volunteer organizations can find it difficult to find the right channels to influence the policymaking process.

Success Factors

Technology offers significant new tools for volunteers.

It is key to **involve all stakeholders in developing policy and legal frameworks** so that the resulting framework is truly representative and enabling. This includes ensuring that volunteering organizations participate in the consultation process.

Research should be done to **demonstrate the value of volunteerism** so that volunteering stakeholders can use it to influence policy makers to support volunteerism.

Strong partnerships, **based on trust, equality, and mutual benefits** are key to successful programmes.

Alongside significantly enhancing the delivery of public services - particularly through accessing vulnerable groups - **volunteers and volunteer groups also provide oversight of public services** through monitoring and reporting, and through doing so improve them.

5.2. Small Group Discussion: The Way Forward

The panel session in Plenary Four was followed by the second small group discussion session. This followed the same format as the first small group discussion session but group-members were asked to discuss the following questions: “How can international volunteering deepen civic engagement in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda?”; “How should we take forward the key lessons from this conference?”; and “What core features could a ‘global volunteer exchange platform’ have?”

Group One focused their discussion on how international volunteering can deepen civic engagement. Participants attributed importance to having a rigorous selection process and appropriate and prolonged training before, as well as during and after the assignment. Many also agreed that a key aim for youth volunteering programmes was to strengthen local and national unity in the wake of pressures from civil unrest or unemployment. Group members also talked about the importance of establishing

strong links between volunteering programmes and the recipient government and local community so as to ensure a demand-led approach. The point was also made that limited resources were a key factor in programming and how to overcome resource restraints should be discussed more in the future.



Group Two members engage in discussion. (BVF, 2015)

Group Two participants decided that education was key to strengthening the values that promote volunteerism and civic engagement. International volunteers can also play an important role in promoting volunteerism when they return home from their assignments. The point was made that it would be useful to explore ways of incentivizing volunteers and

many group members agreed that measuring the impact of volunteering was a vital first step to convince all stakeholders of the value of volunteering. Group members also discussed how global cooperation should be coordinated while remaining inclusive.

Group Three agreed that holding fixed activities, such as the Beijing conference were important to develop South-South volunteerism. Some group members suggested that future events could be thematic or regional and many agreed that future platforms should have a strong online presence that could include training and knowledge sharing components. Sharing standards, policies and regulations was also recommended as being important for MICs with expanding volunteer programmes as well as LICs with nascent volunteering infrastructure. It was discussed whether it would be beneficial for MICs to explore formulating joint standards for implementing and evaluating programmes.

In the report back to the plenary, the **key issues** that were summarized had many similarities between groups:

Group 1

Short-term volunteer programmes could be used to create interest in longer-term international volunteering.

The selection and training of volunteers is crucial to ensuring sustainable programming. Volunteer services should always be aligned with the needs of the local community. International volunteering can be used to strengthen relations between government and civil society.

International volunteer organizations should assist other volunteer organizations in becoming more professional.

It is important to recognize that organizations that use volunteers are very different. Some are from government, some are from civil society, others are part-government and part-civil society.

The aims and values of the volunteering organizations are also very different, therefore it's also important to recognize the different contexts present in every country.

Group 2

There is a need for stronger partnerships that do not follow the "one size fits all" model. Partnerships with the private sector should be strengthened and to achieve this it was very important to communicate the value of volunteering to the private sector.

UNV should play a stronger coordinating role and hold more regular meetings for volunteering organizations interested in or involved in volunteering in MICs.

The impacts of volunteering should be better measured to more effectively demonstrate the value of volunteering not just to partners but also to potential volunteers.

Returnee international volunteers can play a key role in strengthening civic engagement in their own country.

Group 3

A new association should be established to coordinate volunteering amongst MICs.

UNV should hold more regular meetings.

Future meetings should be focused on specific themes.

Regional forums could also be set-up.

UNV should commission some research on developing a future platform.

A research network should be established.

A database could be established to share examples of policies and legal frameworks.

APPENDICES

About the UN Volunteers Programme

Since 1971, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) is the focal point organization within the UN system that contributes to peace and development worldwide through volunteerism, particularly by mobilizing UN Volunteers to serve as social development actors within UN and partner organizations, advocating for volunteerism as a form of civic engagement, and integrating volunteer activities into development initiatives. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation. UNV is administered globally by the UN Development Programme.

UNV promotes South-South and triangular cooperation through volunteerism, bringing countries and stakeholders together to find solutions to development challenges through the exchange and transfer of skills, knowledge, and best practices. The majority of UN Volunteers deployed in the field are from developing countries, serving either in their own countries or in other developing countries. In 2014, UNV mobilized a total of 6,325 UN Volunteers from 155 countries to serve on assignment in 121 countries. This represents an economic investment of around USD200 million. As 81% (5,125) of these volunteers were from the Global South, the UNV therefore made a significant contribution in 2014 to South-South cooperation and capacity building. This South-South emphasis is foregrounded in UNV's Strategic Framework (2014-17). Core areas of intervention include youth, peace-building, economic development, disaster risk reduction and food security, and community-based climate change adaptation.

About the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation

Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF), established in December 5th 1993, is a nonprofit social organization which joins and unites volunteer service organizations in the city, established by self-motivated government departments, corporations, institutions, civil organizations and other public welfare enthusiastic persons from different areas and fields which provide voluntary service to the society. It is the first provincial level volunteer-involving organization registered in the provincial civic affairs department.

Since establishment, BVF makes strong commitment to promote social development through volunteerism. BVF adheres to the volunteer service spirit "Contribution, Friendliness, Mutual Assistance, Improvement", disseminates the volunteer culture on Contribution, Friendliness, Goodness, Integrity, Equality, Justice, Openness and Inclusiveness, Happiness, Enrichment, Cohesion, Growth, promoting volunteer work as part of every citizen's lifestyle. In 2008, the Beijing government successfully organized the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games, during which Beijing Volunteer Service Federation played key role in supporting the management of 1.7 million Games volunteers. Currently, over 3 million volunteers and 50,000 volunteer organizations have registered at the BVF's online platform. BVF actively promotes the development of volunteering projects across the city with particular

focus on elderly, children of migrant workers, disable as well as vulnerable groups on regular basis , paying attention to supporting much needed projects ,including environment protection, education and poverty reduction etc . Currently over 50,000 volunteering projects have been in actual operation. Volunteers from Beijing participate proactively in voluntary work on emergency response, engaging in the rescue work during a numbers of severe natural earthquakes in the areas of Wenchuan, Ya'an and the country of Nepal. BVF attaches importance to academic research on volunteerism through publishing 36 research books. The book entitled "Experience • Value • Effect" which systemically summarized the Olympic Games Volunteers working mechanism has been recognized by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a "Beijing modality" of large scale event. BVF dedicates to international volunteer service exchanges and collaboration, under the framework of cooperation with United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the communication with 43 international volunteer organizations from 29 countries located in Europe, Asian and Latin America have been established. In addition, since the year of 2007, Beijing Volunteer Service Federation has been in partnerships with UNV on projects cooperation in strengthening volunteer organizations capacity development, volunteering infrastructure improvement as well as international-wise exchanges and knowledge sharing.

BVF was awarded as "Outstanding Volunteer Service Organization" by the United Nations in 2008. In recent years, BVF, which received "China Advanced Non-Governmental Organization" and "China Outstanding Group on Voluntary Service" as well as "the Prize of Chinese Volunteer Work Organization", has been highly recognized by Chinese Government as one of the outstanding social organization in China in promoting various volunteer work.

Conference Agenda

DAY ONE – 12 OCTOBER					
Time	Session Activity	Format	MC	Speakers	Session Goals
08h30-09h15	Registration				
09h15-09h30	Group Photo			All participants	
09h30-10h30	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Opening remarks	BVF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Richard Dictus, Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme Mrs Shengping Teng, Vice-President, Beijing Volunteer Federation Mr Alain Noudéhou, UN Resident Coordinator Mrs Jinfang Zhao, Secretary General, China Volunteerism Federation 	Welcome to delegates by event hosts.
10h30-10h45	Tea/Coffee Break			All participants	
10h45-11h45	Plenary I: UNV Think Piece The evolution of international volunteering over the past 60 years	Presentation and Q&A	UNV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Richard Dictus, Executive Coordinator, UNV 	To frame the conference within the emerging global context, and for participants to share how international volunteering has developed within their own countries, and assess likely directions for the future. This discussion will be based on a discussion paper by Dr. Ben Lough, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois.
11h45-12h00	Viewing of Exhibition: Community Volunteer Service in China	Exhibition	BVF	All participants	
12h00-14h00	Lunch			All participants	
14h00-15h00	Plenary II: Policy Frameworks for Promoting International Volunteering in MICs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does international 	Moderated panel with Q&A session	UNV	Moderator: Ms Hannah Ryder, Head of Policy and Partnerships, UNDP China Panelists:	Highlight successful models of integrating international

	<p>volunteering cooperation fit with countries' own (a) national development plans (b) international development cooperation policy objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is required to strengthen the role of international volunteering in support of the MIC cooperation agenda? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Gabriel Ive, President, White Helmets Commission, Argentina Mr Song Yang, Central Committee of the China Youth League Dr Sofia Stoimenova, Head of Regional Delegation, East Asia, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 	volunteering in national development and international development cooperation policy plans, and identify opportunities to further strengthen frameworks to support international volunteering.
15h00-15h15	Tea/Coffee Break			All participants	
15h15-16h30	<p>Plenary III: Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Implementing International Volunteering Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the successful or innovative models for developing international outbound volunteering programmes, which national institutions are involved, and what modalities are used? What are the main challenges, obstacles or bottlenecks in developing and implementing these programmes, and how have they been overcome? Are there any lessons to share? 	Moderated panel with Q&A session	UNV	<p>Moderator: Mr Paul Bird, CEO, Australian Volunteers International</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Wooyong Chung, Executive Director, KOICA Mr Jan Olav Baarøy, Deputy Director General, FK Norway Ms Manon Bernier, Regional Manager for Asia and the Pacific, UNV 	Identify successful approaches, as well as challenges and lessons learned, in implementing international volunteering programmes.
16h30-17h45	<p>Small Group Discussions to Explore Questions from Plenary II and III:</p> <p>Group discussions</p> <p>Summary by Master of Ceremony</p>	Group discussions	BVF/ UNV	All participants	To identify solutions to common challenges in order to improve the implementation of international volunteering programmes in MICs.
17h45-18h00	Summary of Small Group Discussions				
18h00-19h30	Conference Dinner Reception to be hosted by BVF			All participants	
DAY TWO – 13 OCTOBER					
Time	Session Activity	Format	MC	Speakers	Session Goals
09h00-09h15	Recap From Day One		BVF		

09h15-10h15	Plenary IV: Impact of Volunteering on Public Service Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What (urban or national, international) programmes exist to support service delivery through volunteering? How have countries engaged with VIOs and UNV to promote their volunteer infrastructure? How do these programmes engage international and domestic volunteers? 	Moderated panel with Q&A session	UNV	Moderator: Dr Zhang Qiang, Beijing Normal University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Zhenshan Zhang, Senior Human Settlements Officer, UN Habitat Ms Wei Na, Vice President, Beijing Voluntary Service Research and Development Institute Mr Japeth Gekonge, Kenya Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services 	Share best practices and lessons learned on how national or international volunteerism can successfully enhance the delivery of public services.
10h15-10h30	Tea/Coffee Break				
10h30-11h30	Small Group Discussions: The Way Forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key lessons from discussions on how to integrate international volunteering in national development and international cooperation plans; Identify options for the global volunteer exchange platform to continue to share knowledge and best practices; Highlight options for deeper civic engagement in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and South-South and Triangular Cooperation, through international volunteering. 	Group discussions	UNV	All participants	Identify concrete options for participants to take forward the key lessons from the Conference, as well as proposing a platform to promote continued peer learning.
11h30-12h00	Summary of Small Group Discussions				
12h00-12h30	Closing ceremony	Closing remarks	UNV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mrs Mary Efiom Danabia, Director, Nigeria National Youth Service Corps Mr Guo Xinbao, Secretary General of the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation Mr Richard Dictus, Executive Coordinator, UNV 	
12h30-13h45	Lunch			All participants	
14h00-17h00	Optional Visit: Beijing Cultural Volunteer Service Programme			All participants (optional)	

Conference List of Participants

Country/government representatives

Name	Organization and Position
Gabriel Adrian Ive	President of the White Helmets Commission (Argentina)
Alfredo Eduardo Ladillinsky	Project Coordinator of the White Helmets Commission (Argentina)
Theodore Dela Ashiabor	Deputy Director of Department of Social Welfare (Ghana)
Wicaksono	Deputy Director for International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Indonesia)
Dossulan Aitbayev	Head of Unit of Educational Work, Department of Youth Policy, Ministry of Education and Science (Kazakhstan)
Zhanna Gazizulina	Attache, United Nations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kazakhstan)
Japheth Gesare Gekonge	National Volunteerism Secretariat Head, Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Services (Kenya)
Mohamed Reda Oudghiri Idrissi	Advisor for the Department of Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (Morocco)
Jambaldorj Tserendorj	Ambassador, Head of International Fund Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mongolia)
Mary Efiom Dan Abia	Director, National Youth Service Corps (Nigeria)
Lawrence Meakpakhe Anaweokhai	Assistant Director, National Youth Service Corps (Nigeria)
Eric Masetholela Rafahlema	National Youth Development Coordinator, Department of International Relations and Cooperation (South Africa)
Makume Tlaleane	Senior Manager, National Youth Development Agency (South Africa)
Piyawan Phanphuet	Development Cooperation Officer, Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (Thailand)
Mavi Belgin Cagdas	Senior Expert, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (Turkey)
Tuan Phuong Don	Director, Center for Sustainable Development Studies (Vietnam)

International volunteering organizations

Name	Organization and Position
Paul Bird	CEO of Australian Volunteers International (Australia)
Jan Olav Baarøy	Deputy Director General of FK Norway (Norway)
Wooyong Chung	Executive Director of KOICA (Korea)
Myung Keun Choi	Assistant Manager, KOICA (Korea)
Jong Min Park	Director, World Friends Korea (Korea)

Mohamad Ali El Jannoun	President, Lebanese Centre for Voluntary Activities, Arab Federation of Voluntary Activities (Arab States)
Sofia Stoimenova	Head of IFRC's Regional Delegation for East Asia (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

Chinese participants³

Name	Organization and Position
Chui Mei Yee Claudia	Vice President, Hongkong Volunteers Association
Jiang Minhong	Director of Foreign Affairs, Dean of International College, Beijing Youth Politics College
Lian Si	Professor, University of International Business and Economics
Liang Lvqi	Vice President of Beijing Voluntary Service Research & Development Institute, Professor, Beijing Youth Politics College
Lu Shizhen	President of Beijing Voluntary Service Research & Development Institute, Professor, China Youth University of Political Studies
Wang Weizheng	Professor, Harbin Normal University
Wang Yanrui	Director, Social Work Service Center for Senior Citizens, Shijingshan District of Beijing
Wang Yuejun	Secretary General, Hangzhou Volunteer Association
Wang Zhongping	Director, Horizon Corporate Volunteer Consultancy
Wu Qichun	Vice Director, Students Affairs Division, University of International Relations
Yang Song	Director-General of Young Volunteers Department, Central Committee, Communist Youth League of China. Vice Chairman & Secretary General, the Chinese Young Volunteers Association
YIP Chun To Adrian	Executive President, Hongkong Volunteers Association
Zhang Lixin	Vice President, Youth Volunteer Association, Peking University
Zhang Youhui	Consultant, UNIDO-Green Industry Platform
Zhang Zhijun	Director, Provincial Youth Volunteer Work Department, The Communist Youth League Sichuan Provincial Committee
Deng Shoucheng	Deputy Secretary General, Volunteer Service Federation of Guizhou Province

³ Not including participants from BVF

Ji Lanlan	Project Manager of Internatoinal Development Department,Hongkong Volunteers Association
Li Xiaoxin	Deputy Secretary-General,Cooperation Association of Guangdong Social Workers and Volunteers
Liu Shasha	Director of Volunteer Service Guidance Center,Beijing Language and Culture University
Mo Yuchuan	Professor,Renmin University of China
Qi Xingda	Vice Secretary,Youth League Committee,Tsinghua University
Shen Jie	Vice President of Beijing Voluntary Service Research & Development Institute, Professor,China Youth University of Political Studies
Tan Jianguang	President, Professor,Guangdong Institute for International Development of Volunteerism
Wang Huadi	Secretary,Youth League Committee,China Foreign Affairs University
Wei Na	Vice President of Beijing Voluntary Service Research & Development Institute; Renmin University of China
Xu Nana	Project Manager,The Volunteers Guidance Center of Shanghai
Xu Qingqun	Vice President,Youth Volunteer Association of People's Publishing House
Zhai Yan	Director,Beijing Huizeren Volunteering Development Center
Zhang Qiang	Professor,Beijing Normal University
Zheng Chunling	Director General,Xinfeiyang Youth Volunteer Service Center of Xicheng District, Beijing
A Le Tai-Sai Ken	Secretary General, Youth Volunteer Association,Renmin University of China
Liang Xiongwen	Director,The City Volunteer Action Guidance Center of Guangzhou
Ma Liyang	Executive Vice President,Hangzhou Volunteer Association
Niu Lijuan	Project Coordinator,Roots and Shoots
Ren Wei	Deputy Secretary-General of Beijing Voluntary Service Research & Development Institute, Assistant Professor,Beijing University of Technology
Shi Linlin	Officer of Volunteer Work Department,The Communist Youth League Tianjin Municipal Committee
Si Yunrui	Vice Director,Department of Volunteers and Social Practice,Beijing Foreign Studies University
Wang Jing	Vice secretary, Youth League Committee,Beijing International Studies University
Xie Haishan	President,The Star Volunteer Association
Yang Tianqiao	Secretary,Youth League Committee,Beijing Language and Culture University

Yuan Ruijun	Professor,Peking University
Zhang Xiaohong	Vice President of Beijing Voluntary Service Research & Development Institute, Professor,China Agricultural University
Zhang Zuping	Professor,Shanghai Normal University
Zheng Xiaojie	Director,Beijing Hongdandan Cultural Service Center for Visually Impaired

UN entities⁴

Name	Organization and Position
Niels Knudsen	South-South Team Leader (UNDP China)
Hannah Ryder	Head of Policy and Partnerships Unit (UNDP China)
Narendra Wagley	Chief of Operations, China Officer (UNICEF)
Zhang Zhenshan	UN Habitat Programme Manager, China (UN Habitat)

⁴ Not including participants from UNV