



The role of gender in VOLUNTEERISM FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

A THEMATIC PAPER FOR THE 2018 STATE OF THE WORLD'S
VOLUNTEERISM REPORT: *THE THREAD THAT BINDS*

Working draft (March 8th 2019)



■ SUMMARY

This paper analyses data collected in five communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to understand the relevance of gender roles, needs, and interests in volunteering at the community level. It explores the distinctive contributions of volunteerism for gender equality and women's empowerment within resilience contexts and provides insights on how to enhance gender equality and inclusion in volunteerism as part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The paper is a working draft to be published in a final version as an input to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. If you have any suggestions or revisions please get in touch using the contact details below.

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Author: Consuelo Fernández Manchego

Design and layout: Diana De León

Technical advice and inputs: Tom Bannister, Yngve Braaten, Maggie Carroll, Jimena Cazzaniga, Benjamin Lough, and Julia Oliveira

■ THE 2018 SWVR

The 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report *The thread that binds* is a United Nations flagship publication that presents new evidence on the role of volunteerism in strengthening community resilience. It finds that communities value volunteerism because it enables them to create collective strategies for dealing with diverse economic, social and environmental challenges. At the same time, unless appropriately supported by wider actors, volunteering can be exclusive and burdensome for some groups. Alone, communities have limited capacities and resources to adapt to emerging and future risks. The report thus explores how governments and development actors can best engage with volunteerism to nurture its most beneficial characteristics, while mitigating against potential harms to the most vulnerable. In doing so, the report provides an important contribution to the evidence base on inclusive, citizen-led approaches to resilience-building.



www.unv.org/swvr/resilientcommunities



@UNVolunteers #resilientcommunities #SWVR2018



unv.swvr@unv.org

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For further information, revisions or enquiries please contact the 2018 SWVR team at unv.swvr@unv.org

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1

Introduction

Volunteering is recognized as a powerful, transformative and participatory means of development.¹ The 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR 2018) estimates that the contributions of the world's one billion volunteers equal around 109 million full time equivalent workers.² Volunteers are everywhere but it is important to recognize that they have multiple identities, needs, motivations, strengths and weaknessesⁱ.

Around the world, people volunteer in different ways to achieve diverse impacts, both planned and unplanned.³ Most volunteering takes place through informal engagement between individuals, with only an estimated 30 per cent of volunteering taking place formally, through organizations.⁴ Much of this volunteerism – both informal and formal – takes place at the community level. The SWVR 2018 investigates the relationship between volunteerism and community resilience.⁵ It highlights that local volunteers can strengthen the capacities of their communities to cope with diverse stresses and shocks such as climate change and disasters and recognizes volunteerism as a fundamental community resilience strategy. SWVR research also reveals that local

To ensure that no one is left behind, it is important to understand the role of gender in development in different contexts, including volunteerism for community resilience

ⁱ Volunteering can take diverse forms. It can be formal (organized and managed through formal organizations) or informal (often practiced amongst individuals within communities). Volunteerism also includes many different forms of civic engagement and participation, including unpaid campaigning and advocacy work.

The objective of this paper is to understand the relevance of gender roles, needs, and interests in volunteering for community resilience

volunteerism is not inclusive by default and that some groups in a community – such as women – may be excluded from volunteering. This exclusion, and the barriers to volunteering that they may face, reduces their potential as volunteers to reduce the vulnerabilities and risks that affect them, their families and communities.

Volunteerism is not gender neutral. To understand how the potential of volunteerism can make communities more resilient, it is important to question how different groups within a community relate to volunteerism and resilience. Applying a gender lens to volunteering for community resilience is critically important, particularly as globally women volunteer more than men (57 per cent and 43 per cent respectively)⁶. As Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG) recognises, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is crucial for sustainable development. Before this can be realised and to ensure that *no one is left behind*, it is important to understand the role of gender in development in different contexts, including volunteerism for community resilience.

Gender is defined as the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women.⁷ Since the 1970s, literature on gender has underlined that women and men face different constraints in their daily lives, and that the predominance of patriarchy typically leads to the subordination of women.⁸ Gender inequality acts as one of the most pervasive global inequalities.⁹ Literature on women's vulnerability and resilience shows that gender inequality is linked to, and expressed through, gendered social, economic and political roles, and unequal access to power, resources, and decision-making. Due to these differences, women's lives and experiences are quite different and distinct from those of men. Women's roles and contributions may not be fully materialized because of these imbalances and discrimination and this has profound implications for women's resilience to stresses and shocks.¹⁰

Studies on gender and resilience confirm that examining gender needs and interests is vital, not only to have a better understanding of the underlying causes of vulnerability to stresses and shocks but also to recognize the different capacities that people bring to resilience-building.¹¹ In this sense a gender analysis of volunteering for community resilience is important because people's resilience strategies are often developed through voluntary actions (especially at the community level) and these strategies can be closely linked to gender norms, gender relations and gender roles within communities. Considering this framework, the objective of this paper is to understand the relevance of gender roles, needs, and interests in volunteering for community resilience, and to explore the distinctive contributions of volunteerism for gender equality and women's empowerment within resilience contexts in five communities in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

This paper aims to address the following questions:

1. How do gender roles, needs, and interests intersect and interact with women's and men's volunteer responses to stresses and shocks?
2. How do the distinctive characteristics of volunteering support or inhibit women's empowerment in community resilience contexts?
3. How do structural factors enhance or inhibit inclusion and gender equality in volunteering for community resilience?

To address these questions the paper is organised in the following sections:

theoretical framework, methodology, analysis of key findings, and conclusions and recommendations. The next section discusses theories of gender inequality relevant for a gender analysis of volunteering for community resilience. The third section (methodology) describes the methods undertaken to build empirical knowledge for this paper through primary and secondary research. The fourth section (key findings) presents an analysis of the findings in response to the three research questions. The final section gives conclusions and recommendations on how to enhance gender equality and inclusion in volunteerism for community resilience as part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).



2

Theoretical Framework

Many of the informal mechanisms that women use to cope with these adversities are through voluntary actions at the household and community level

Gender inequalities can be manifested in all dimensions of sustainable development, including volunteerism. From the perspective of volunteering in local contexts this is confirmed, for example, by the disproportionate amount of informal voluntary work carried out by women and girls in many communities.¹² As such, a gender analysis of volunteering for community resilience is needed. This section aims to build a theoretical framework for this analysis that is based on existing frameworks from studies on gender, development, resilience and volunteering.

2.1 Why a gender analysis of volunteering for community resilience?

The concept of resilience speaks to ‘the idea of strength in the face of adversity’ but also to ‘vulnerability’. Gender and resilience studies have underlined that vulnerability is not a natural attribute of women but rooted in gender inequalities. Women living in poverty in fragile contexts are required every day to be resilient to cope with stresses and shocks that affect their lives and the lives of their families.¹³ Many of the informal mechanisms that women use to cope with these adversities are through voluntary actions at the household and community level.¹⁴ Although women participating in voluntary action can be particularly vulnerable, they may also have distinctive ways of confronting vulnerabilities and often find their ability to cope with adversities affected

by power relations and social roles.¹⁵ In short, these women are not passive, they act. Yet there is little known about the intersection between 'gender and volunteering' in resilience framing and this is the gap that this paper intends to address.

Volunteering, as a potential promoter of social inclusion can support gender equality and women's empowerment in different contexts, including community resilience. Volunteering can provide people with new opportunities. For instance, volunteering can expand women's choices and roles by providing them with social networks and giving them access to skills and support that they may otherwise have been unable to access.¹⁶ However, while relationships are the basis of volunteerism and one of the channels through which its distinctive positive attributes are developed, they are also the means by which power relations and social inequalities are perpetuated.¹⁷ For example, as a relational approach, local volunteering can be influenced by the social status of those involved. As such, women's participation in volunteering can be restricted by traditional gender norms and relations that mediate how power, access and control of resources are distributed.¹⁸

As gendered beings, volunteers may face discrimination and marginalization based on their gender (and other identities) when they volunteer. Volunteers may also unknowingly or knowingly produce, reproduce, or reinforce gender norms, roles and relations through their voluntary efforts in different contexts. As such, volunteers can not only perpetuate gender inequalities but also challenge these inequalities and systems of oppression in their communities.

2.2 Theories of gender inequality for a gender analysis of volunteerism for community resilience

Over the past decades, discussions about the extent to which women benefit or not from development have resulted in three main theoretical approaches: Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) which emerged in the 1970s, and Gender and Development (GAD) that rose to prominence in the 1980s. WID's rationale was to enhance women's role in economic development by increasing their access to resources. However, it has been criticised because it did not challenge the larger social structures and processes that negatively affect women's lives. WAD, while similar to WID, focussed on examining why women had not benefited from development, but it discouraged a strict analytical focus on the problems of women independent to those of men.

In contrast to WID and WAD which focus solely on women, GAD focuses on gender and raises the need to bring gender relations, the concept of institutionsⁱⁱ and the gendered division of labour into mainstream development thinking. Within this approach, three streams of scholarship¹⁹ have contributed significantly to the GAD discussion through notions of gender roles, gender interests and needs, and transformative potential (see Figure 1). These frameworks are briefly addressed below.

- ➔ **Gender roles and division of labour:** One framework to examine gender relations from the perspective of gender division of labour is based on Moser's concept of

GAD focuses on gender and raises the need to bring gender relations, the concept of institutions and the gendered division of labour into mainstream development thinking

ii Institutions are the social arrangements of formal and informal rules and practices that enable and constrain the agency of women and girls, and govern the distribution of resources (see Annex A for a glossary of key terms).

'triple roles'.²⁰ This framework has its limitations,²¹ including the fact that it does not mention other forms of inequality (such as those related to class, race or ethnicity which can be addressed through 'intersectionality analysis')ⁱⁱⁱ. However, it does help to make the sexual division of labour within community contexts visible and to question its influence on voluntary responses to cope with stresses and shocks at the community level.

→ **Gender interests and needs:** Specific frameworks to examine gender interests and needs in planning contexts are the 'practical gender needs' and 'strategic gender interests' proposed by Molyneux and Moser.²² Like the triple roles framework, these approaches have also been critiqued for ignoring men as gendered individuals and for assuming there are two separate areas of gender interests and needs ('practical' and 'strategic').²³ Nevertheless, linking these approaches to the stresses and shocks that affect communities can more closely address women's (and men's) needs and interests. This approach allows an investigation of whether gender interests and needs – either practical or strategic - can be, or are being, addressed through volunteerism for community resilience.

→ **Transformative potential:** One framework to complement the preceding one is the 'transformative potential' framework proposed by Young.²⁴ This framework aims to tackle the underlying causes of gender inequality (such as social norms, attitudes, beliefs and value systems) that create structural power imbalances between different groups of people. As such, it focuses on transforming unequal gender relations and empowering women by converting practical gender needs into strategic gender interests. In this paper, women's empowerment is understood as "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability."²⁵ While this framework is often used by development planners, it is expected that women themselves - as agents of transformation - examine their practical needs and determine how these can be transformed into strategic interests. In this framework, a distinction between the condition and position of women and men is made which refers to the relative material state in which they live, for example as expressed through their workloads and economic conditions.

Volunteers can not only perpetuate gender inequalities but also challenge these inequalities and systems of oppression in their communities

2.3 Working theoretical framework

Building on the above discussion, this paper presents a theoretical framework (see Figure 1) to set the conceptual and theoretical parameters for the analysis of how and why gender considerations shape the transformative potential of volunteerism for community resilience. More specifically, the framework offers a gender lens through which the conditions and positions of women (and men) in volunteering for community resilience can be viewed. The gender analysis concepts that underpin the framework and lens are: gender roles, needs and interests, and transformative potential. It is important to stress that these four concepts are interrelated and influence one another, as will be highlighted in subsequent chapters. The gender lens they result in will further guide the analysis of the factors that a) produce and reinforce and/or b) challenge and transform, the conditions and positions of women in volunteering.

ⁱⁱⁱ Intersectional analysis strives to understand, and respond to, the ways gendered oppressions intersect with and is constituted by other social factors such as race, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

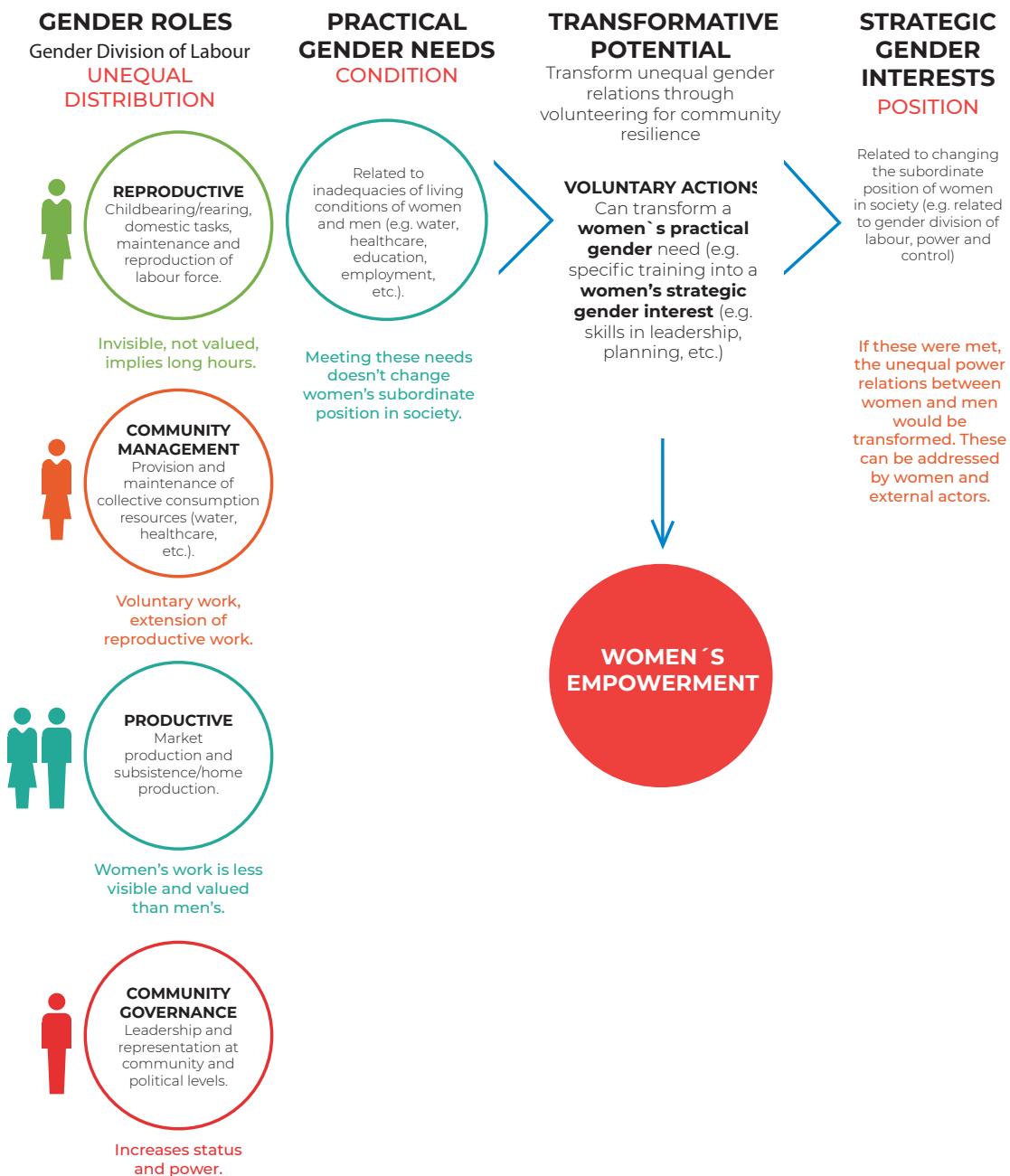
This framework has reflexively informed primary research carried out on community volunteerism to understand the complex relations women and men operate in, and how this influences voluntary actions for resilience at individual, household and community levels.

The next section describes the methods undertaken to build this empirical knowledge based on research carried out as part of the SWVR 2018 project.

GENDER ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEERING FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Understanding the unequal conditions and positions of women (and men) in volunteering for community resilience.

Figure 1 | Working theoretical framework





3 Methodology

This paper is part of the SWVR 2018 project. The SWVR 2018 is a United Nations flagship publication that presents new evidence on the role of volunteerism in strengthening community resilience.²⁵ In 2017, qualitative field research was carried out in 15 communities in 15 countries around the world to gather the perspectives of over 1,200 volunteers and community members. This paper uses primary data collected from five of those communities: Puerto Yumani in Bolivia, El Edén in Guatemala, Milenaka in Madagascar, Kyaikhto in Myanmar, and Dagag in Sudan (see Figure 2). In addition to findings from the field research, the paper also draws on secondary literature and data collected from survey responses in 2018.

3.1 Data collection and analysis

→ **Field research:** The key steps undertaken to collect primary data in the five communities are outlined below:

1. The field research followed a methodology developed by the SWVR 2018 project team. It included different research questions to the ones defined for this paper (see UNV, 2018).



Figure 2 | The communities studied in this paper

2. The field research was carried out between April and August of 2017 by volunteer researchers using a standardised approach. The data analysis and reporting of the field research resulted in a community-level report which outlined key themes and findings for each of the 15 communities.
3. The data used to inform this paper was drawn from 41 focus-group discussions and 54 key-informant interviews in five of the 15 communities. A total of 382 participants took part - 189 men and 193 women (see Annex B).
4. The selection of the five communities for this paper depended on the inclusion of specific gender data in the community-level reports.

→ **Survey responses:** To complement and validate the original field research data, an additional gender-focused survey was developed and sent to the researchers in the five communities. The survey questions focused on four key areas:

1. How do gender roles interact with shocks and stresses experienced by the communities?
2. How do volunteers' responses to shocks and stresses interact with gender roles?
3. In what ways does gender influence how the distinctive characteristics of volunteerism are expressed?
4. In what ways do influencing factors (such as norms and structures) support or inhibit gender equality in volunteerism for community resilience?

→ **Secondary literature:** To complement the collection of primary data and to inform the empirical findings, a review of secondary literature was carried out to better understand how the data intersected with different theoretical frameworks of gender analysis and to investigate its relation to the key values and contributions of volunteerism for development.

→ **Analysis:** A thematic analysis investigated how the theoretical framework informed two general aspects of the primary data: 1) The stresses and shocks perceived by local volunteers in each community (see Annex D), and 2) the volunteer responses to cope

with these stresses and shocks. In addition, data analysis considered these stresses through a gender lens reflected in the theoretical framework (see Annex D).

3.2 Limitations

It is important to caveat the analysis of this paper with the recognition of the limitations of the data. In particular:

- The gender data from the community reports and surveys was not always gathered with clear intention and should not be considered exhaustive. The findings of this paper are therefore limited by information gaps.
- The primary research was carried out in five very different communities in five very different countries. The communities were all populated by diverse groups with significant variation including relating to socio-economic status and ethnicity (see Annex C). As such, the findings of this paper should not be taken as representative of the five countries.
- The findings are not wholly representative of the communities nor even of volunteering in those communities. There was significant variation in population size (ranging from 150 people in Puerto Yumani to 23,000 in Milenaka) and representative sampling was particularly difficult in both the larger and the more remote communities.
- Finally, using the community as the primary unit of analysis limited the possibilities for exploring the diverse and multiple identities of local volunteers as well as their relationship with resilience. In short, the intersectionality of volunteering for community resilience has not been captured well and this paper is limited by a binary generalization of 'women' and 'men'.
- These limitations (see UNV, 2018 for further limitations) mean that the analysis and findings of this paper should be viewed as explorative and open-ended, and ultimately as an initial contribution to building empirical knowledge for future research on gender and volunteerism at the community level.

The analysis and findings of this paper should be viewed as explorative and open-ended, and ultimately as an initial contribution to building empirical knowledge for future research



SWVR researchers in Bolivia (UNV, 2017)

4

Analysis of Key Findings

The gender analysis conducted for this paper produced three key findings.

- The first key finding was that diverse forms of inequality and exclusion embedded in gender relations at the household and community levels underpin the complex mechanisms that undermine or promote gender equality in volunteering for community resilience.
- The second key finding was that the distinctive contributions of local volunteerism can help to promote and enhance the individual and collective empowerment of women in contexts of resilience under certain conditions.
- The third key finding was that there are important determining factors, particularly the influence of external actors, that both enhance and inhibit gender inclusion and gender equality in volunteerism for resilience.

without a
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of 'time poverty'

4.1 Labour and power relations define gender inequality and exclusion in volunteering for community resilience

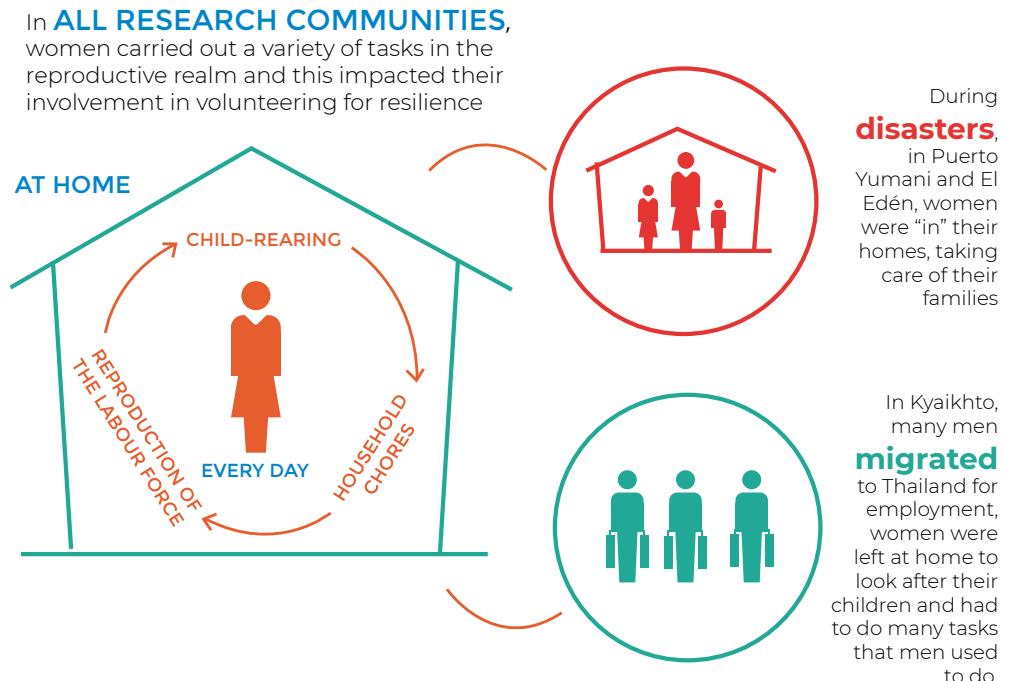
Women's position in the family and reproductive sphere can restrict their opportunities to engage in volunteerism for community resilience

Women's roles and responsibilities in the reproductive sphere, as well as the stereotypes and social norms associated with them, are a significant form of social, economic and political exclusion because they often restrict women's opportunities to exercise their rights.²⁷ In local volunteering for community resilience, this form of exclusion was evident in all the research communities in a variety of forms (see Figure 3).

As illustrated in Figure 3, the local volunteers in the study – both men and women – identified 'the home' and 'the family' as designated spaces for women, where they were responsible for reproduction and family welfare. This socially constructed norm confined women to their households and restricted their opportunities to connect with others and build social relationships outside the domestic sphere. In addition, without a fairer share of responsibilities, the burden of this extra workload took up a large amount of time. When other work was added to it - whether voluntary or paid - women became victims of 'time poverty'^{iv}. Indeed, across the five communities female volunteers often mentioned "lack of time" as a key barrier to participation in planned volunteer activities.

Also, as the findings in Figure 3 show, in two communities women indicated that during disasters they were 'in' their homes taking care of their families. This illustrates how women's responses to specific shocks - disasters – can be limited because their roles as caregivers obligate them to stay at home with their families. This aligns with

Figure 3 | Women volunteers' experiences in the reproductive sphere



studies which show that the care and protection of family can hinder women's own rescue efforts in any disaster.^{v28}

Women's volunteering is often undervalued but builds community resilience on a daily basis

In all the communities, women were responsible for the provision of water for consumption and daily use, and for the health and well-being of their families, mainly through spontaneous voluntary actions. In fulfilling these roles, women absorbed the impact of the lack of provision of 'basic' public services at the household and community levels. These vital voluntary actions contributed to building community resilience on a daily basis. However, the burden of this work was often unrecognized and tended to inhibit women from taking up leadership roles and participating elsewhere in the public arena.

As volunteers in the community management sphere, women often worked in dangerous conditions that exposed them to multiple risks which often increased due to shocks and stresses. For example, in the Kyaikhto community in Myanmar women were forced to walk further due to pollution in nearby water sources caused by illegal mining activities. Similarly, in the Dagag community in Sudan, women were reported as being unable to collect water due to the threat of violence.

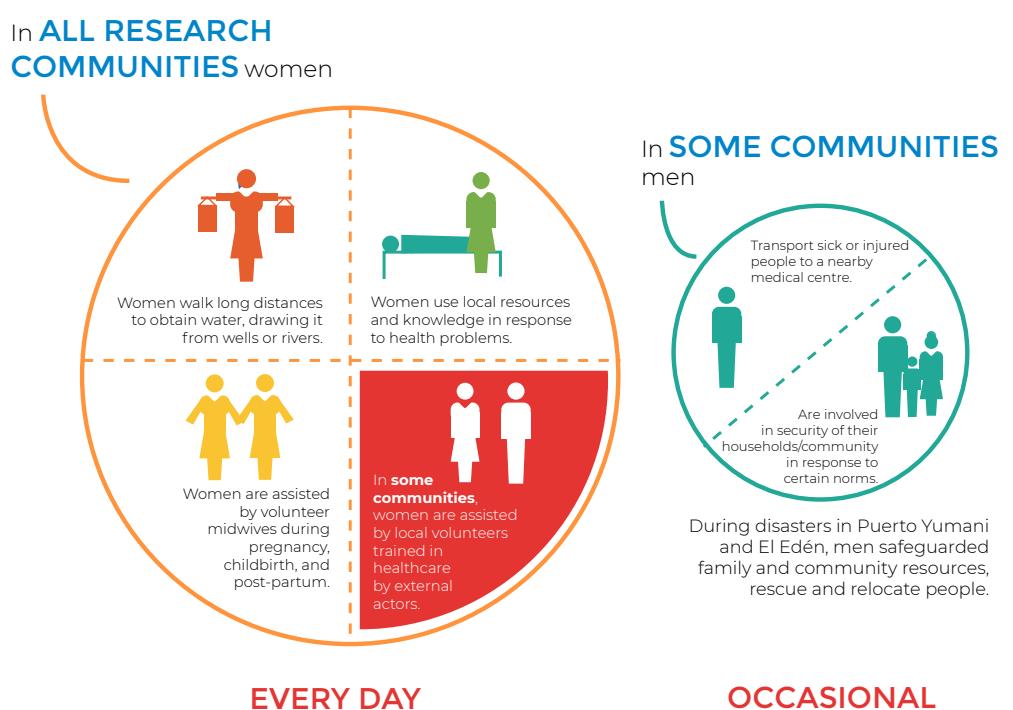
As Figure 4 shows, women's voluntary work in providing health care played an important role in preventing and reducing disease at the household and community levels. However, as some gender studies argue, this voluntary work is often ignored, devalued and exploited.²⁹ In this domain, external intervention can play an important role by training local volunteers in health promotion - particularly women. This was seen in some communities such as the case of midwife volunteers in the El Edén community in Guatemala. However, it is important to note that while this type of intervention enhances local capacities, it can also contribute to institutionalising a dependency on unrecognized voluntary work rather than promoting paid social services.

Finally, in all the communities men tended to contribute to community management work through physical labour, mainly as a volunteer response to the lack of infrastructure and in line with gender norms on masculinity. However, unlike women whose voluntary actions were regular, men's participation in this role was usually occasional. In some cases it corresponded to specific community norms. For instance, in El Edén all men above 18 years old were expected to spend several days a year working on the maintenance of community infrastructure including roads and school buildings.

iv Studies estimate that women do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work that men do. However while this work is rarely recognized as 'work' it is significant for social welfare and any economy to function (UN Women 2018b; UN Women 2018c).

v In the case of earthquakes, for example, women are more likely to die from being inside poorly structured dwellings, while men are working outside the home, either outdoors or in safer buildings.

Figure 4 | Women's and men's voluntary actions in the community management sphere



Women's voluntary actions in the productive sphere can lead to transformative changes but only if they have access to resources

In all the communities, most men and women confirmed that their foremost productive work was in accordance with the community's main livelihood (farming). In two communities, however, some women were additionally engaged in the productive sphere in diverse domains and through planned voluntary actions coupled with external support. For example, in Milenaka, women developed 'productive associations' around food, such as jams, bread and cheeses^{vi}. In Kyaikto women created 14 self-reliant groups (SRG) to manage microfinance loans, where the interest generated was used to finance community projects.

In both communities, unemployment was identified as a stress by both men and women. Interestingly there was no male involvement in any of the productive initiatives mentioned above. This may mean that external support did not include 'men' in their intervention, which is a good example of how the spaces for 'local volunteering' can be influenced not only by gender norms, but also by external actors. These actors may promote changing gender norms but also reinforce gender norms, this last one by promoting productive activities in areas that have traditionally been assigned to women such as food production.

The research in all the communities showed that women's voluntary actions in the productive sphere not only contributed to building resilience at the household and community levels, but also to transforming a practical gender need (employment) into a strategic gender interest (productive association). Such actions have not, however, been sufficient to attain these initiatives. In fact, the research evidenced that women's

vi In this paper, 'productive associations' or 'women associations' are understood as income generating groups created by women that may receive external support through training, materials and/or equipment or seed funding.

access to resources such as capacity building and seed funding provided by external actors have been a determining factor to harnessing this transformational potential. For instance, in Milenka a non-local volunteer working as part of an external intervention provided training and materials for women who created the productive associations. There were also cases where an absence of external support acted as a barrier, for example in Puerto Yumani female volunteers had plans to implement artisanal production initiatives, but these were not implemented due to lack of funding.

Women's voluntary engagement in community governance is significant but represents quadruple work for women

Women's participation and influence at the community governance level is crucial because it is at this level that many of the decisions that affect women's lives are made.³⁰ The term 'participation and influence' refers to the meaningful (and equal) participation of women in decision making. This means considering not only if women are represented but also the extent to which they are able to be actively involved and influence decision making processes through their participation (see Annex A for a glossary of key terms).

In all the communities, leadership and participation in decision-making spaces at the community level were unpaid roles and most were the result of 'planned' volunteer responses to stresses and shocks. Although men occupied most of these positions, with the exception of the Dagag community, specific cases were found where women have performed or are performing these roles (see Figure 5). However, it is worth noting that apart from El Edén, in the other three communities women's participation in this arena was driven by external actors through capacity-development support^{vii}.

As illustrated in Figure 5, women's contribution to building community resilience through their voluntary engagement in community governance was evidenced in different ways. For example, in Puerto Yumani community in Bolivia, during the term of the *Presidenta* (the highest position in the community), a raised wooden shelter was built for the first time in the community as a way to cope with recurrent flooding. In El Edén, the first women who participated in the Community Development Council (COCODE) – the community's main technical body - established a reforestation group where 5,000 saplings are produced and planted in the community forests every year. In Kyaikto, women's management of the SGR's interests contributed to funding community projects such as building roads, water drainage systems, school classrooms, and village meeting halls.

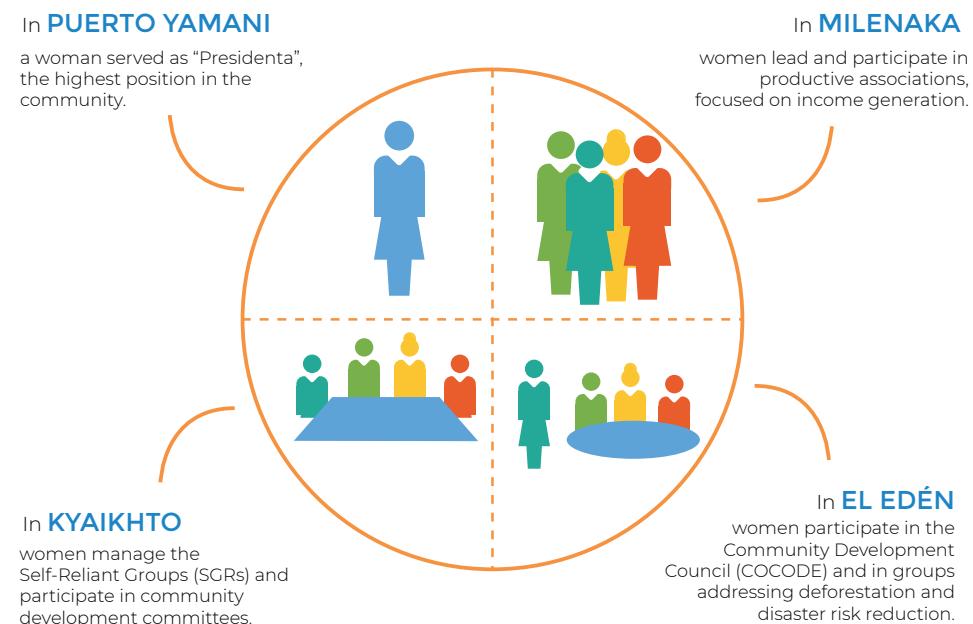
Women volunteers' contributions in community governance were therefore significant but came with high costs to women's lives as they were burdened with multiple roles and responsibilities in the private and public spheres. This confirms the rigidity of the gender division of labour, where the role of men remains unchanged, but the workload of women increases with expanded roles. For example, in Puerto Yumani the *Presidenta* noted that it was difficult to carry out her leadership role because of her childcare duties. In El Edén women occupying leadership positions could not attend

In the research communities women were found to be under-represented in decision-making processes in structures and institutions that governed their everyday lives

^{vii} Although this may be due to the sampling, as no communities were studied that did not have external support in some form.

meetings as they were often late in the evening and they needed to take care of their children and families.

Figure 5 | Women volunteers in decision-making spaces



For women's equal participation in volunteerism for community resilience, their position in society relative to that of men needs to be transformed

Box 1 | Women's position in their communities

 MILENAKA (MADAGASCAR) Despite the increased participation of women in social organization because of external intervention, women's voices were still controlled by men in public spaces, especially when they talk about their community. For example, it was difficult for researchers to get past gatekeepers and to interview women on their own.	 KYAIKHTO (MYANMAR) Although external intervention is promoting the development of women's capacities, many still suffer discrimination and violence. The researcher perceived that in rural areas the 'gender roles' are deeply rooted. In these remote locations, young women were much more afraid to talk in public than adult women or young men.
 DAGAG (SUDAN) When conflict erupts, men protect the community and women stay in the community, take care of children and provide food. Because of the conflict men take over women's role on water provision, however this change in gender roles is temporary and most women take over men's responsibilities while they are away.	 PUERTO YUMANI (BOLIVIA) The fact that a woman held the highest position in the community structure was perceived by women as an opportunity to change their status. The researcher, however, perceived that this 'opportunity' implied many sacrifices for this woman. In this community, women pointed out the lack of support for women leaders.
 EL EDÉN (GUATEMALA) Community norms on leadership and public representation favour men. As such, women can be excluded from community structures. In this community, the researcher noticed that women's voice in community meetings were controlled, not only by men, but also by women themselves.	

As gender reports state, women should have the right to participate in decision-making processes affecting their lives.³¹ Nevertheless, as evidenced in Box 1 women's position in their communities were defined by a low status, an unequal access to resources such as money, and unequal power relations excluding women from decision-making at different levels. As such, in the research communities women were found to be under-represented in decision-making processes in structures and institutions (both formal and informal) that governed their everyday lives. This undermined women's volunteer responses to stresses and shocks and other sustainable development challenges and perpetuated the subordination of women in the communities.

As demonstrated in this key finding, 'women's participation' (see Annex A for a glossary of key terms) at the community level can be promoted through volunteering for community resilience. As a result, volunteerism can be considered a means to transform the position of women at local levels. In short, a means of empowerment. Nevertheless, this transformative change can't be sustained through volunteering. This advance requires gender responsive and accountable governance to ensure that the gender interests and needs of women volunteers are reflected in the policies, institutions and service delivery at all levels.³²

Women's self-organisation around specific goals enabled them to give shape to their efforts and actions in creative and dynamic ways

4.2 Volunteerism's distinctive contributions can promote and enhance the individual and collective empowerment of women

Self-organization, connection and skills-sharing can promote and enhance women's collective action and empowerment

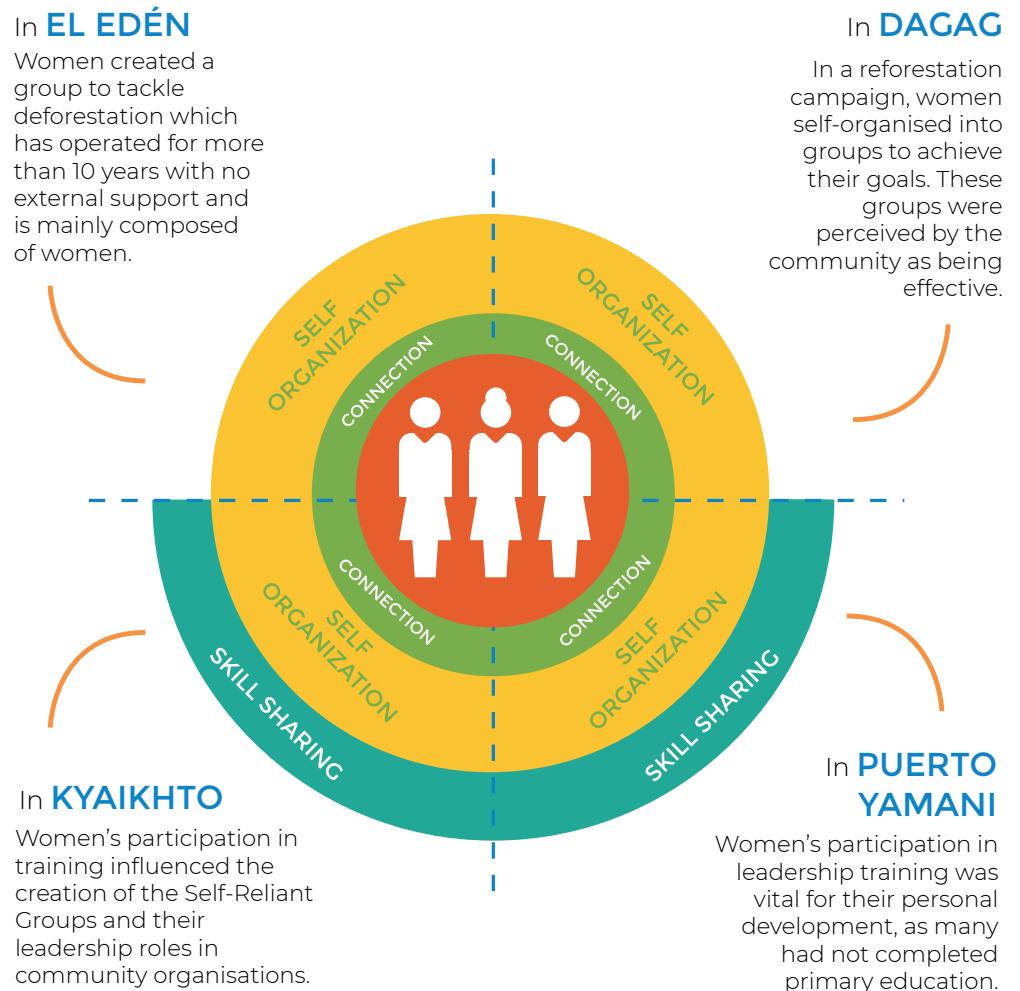
The SWVR 2018 evidenced two distinctive characteristics of volunteering for community resilience: 'human connections' and 'self-organisation'. By doing so, it demonstrated that social relationships developed through shared voluntary action can expand people's support base, reduce their vulnerability to shocks and stresses and enable capacities and coping mechanisms that are unavailable to people acting alone. Likewise, it confirmed that self-organization is a coping mechanism and a key strategy for marginalized groups whose needs are not adequately addressed by formal institutions.

Confirming these findings, in all the communities women's volunteering responses to stresses and shocks – and particularly the highly collectivised responses - revealed characteristics that promoted and enhanced the empowerment of women. For example, where women had directly or indirectly transformed their 'practical gender needs' into 'strategic gender interests' through voluntary actions, the relational attributes of volunteerism - such as connection, self-organisation, skills-sharing, trust and solidarity – had all contributed to their empowerment.

As the findings in Figure 6 show, in all the research communities the connections between women were cornerstones of their self-organisation. Women's self-organisation around specific goals enabled them to give shape to their efforts and actions in creative and dynamic ways. Through this process, they were able to promote mutual support, learning and sharing. Likewise, building women's capacity to use and build upon the knowledge acquired through skills-sharing contributed to their empowerment and the realization of their potential. In Kyaikhto, for example, women who had previously taken part in financial management and leadership training were

now participating in community planning together with men. As a result, vital issues, such as clean water provision, were addressed in community planning as a 'collective responsibility'.

Figure 6 | Examples of volunteerism's distinctive contributions to women's empowerment



Solidarity and trust enhance the empowerment of women by promoting positive relationships around values of equity and mutual support

As the findings in Figure 7 show, in the research communities the most significant outcomes from these relationships were the exercise of women's rights and the sharing of solidarity and mutual support among women. Studies on 'solidarity economy practices'^{viii} have shown that coexistence and shared values and interests are promoted through women's associations. This allows women to break out of situations of isolation and loneliness, and to create spaces for learning through mutual support.³⁴

Similarly, in the research communities, solidarity manifested through women's voluntary actions enabled them to develop positive relationships of mutual support around values of equality. From a feminist perspective, a principle that promotes

^{viii} Production, exchange and redistribution practices based on solidarity.

equality amongst women, in line with the distinctive contributions of volunteerism, is sorority. *Sorority* is a specific type of solidarity which occurs among women who (as heterogeneous beings) decide to eliminate patriarchy from their lives and join together to enhance their empowerment.³⁵ For instance, women from the reforestation group in El Edén stated: “Before we had nowhere to go and no way to participate, it was only ‘casa y casa’ (house and house). Now we have a place where we can talk, meet, relax and exercise our rights. In the plant nursery, we share our joys and problems. We are united.”

TRUST & SOLIDARITY



In PUERTO YUMANI

as the husband of a woman occupying a leadership/community governance role refused to look after his child, another woman had to step in order to allow her to attend to her leadership duties.



In MILENAKA

the trust between women and a non-local female volunteer supported their participation in training which fostered the creation of women's associations.



In EL EDÉN

women from the reforestation group stated: “in the group we share our sorrows and joys, and we help each other solve our problems”.

Figure 7 |
Solidarity and trust manifested through women's voluntary actions

Agency promotes and enhances the empowerment and resilience of women

Individual female volunteer's responses to specific stresses revealed 'agency' as a key characteristic that enabled some women in the community to achieve their goals and advance their own empowerment.

Agency is the ability to define one's goals and act upon them, even in the face of opposition from others.³⁶ It can be exercised by both individuals and collectives. For example, in El Edén's reforestation group, women reported that to attend their weekly meetings they had to first convince their husbands. To achieve this, women did their 'housework' very early in the morning so that their partners would not 'complain'. Women also argued that they were "doing nothing wrong but helping the community and that the trees will be of use to them in the future." While this demonstrates the challenges female volunteers faced when confronting gender norms, it also confirms that agency enables women to use their own voice to demand change and achieve their goals. A key factor to promote women's empowerment within resilience contexts therefore is the 'agency' of the women themselves.

Women's agency as a dimension of empowerment has been addressed in literature on gender and resilience. For example, a study in six countries demonstrated that

Solidarity manifested through women's voluntary actions enabled them to develop positive relationships of mutual support around values of equity

Studies looking at women's contributions to building resilience in fragile communities have shown that the most sustainable practices have been those which women themselves have promoted and led

the agency of women has been significant for their empowerment and ability to cope with and recover from disasters, which in turn promoted resilience in their families and communities.³⁷ This leads us to assume that when women face 'adverse situations' either in private or public spheres, their agency, and hence their power, can be re-shaped. In most cases, the manifestation of this dimension is through voluntary actions to achieve a specific goal. For instance, in Puerto Yumani, after a heavy flood in 2014 for which the community was evacuated for a fourth time, women volunteers decided that a raised shelter was needed in the community. Despite opposition in the community, they strived to look for external support to build it. As a result, a raised wooden shelter was built by the community with external support in 2015. As a female volunteer stated: "We have achieved the construction of the shelter. It has been achieved by us, the women". It is examples like this that show how 'agency' can be considered an attribute of women's volunteering that enhances their individual and collective empowerment and resilience at different levels.

4.3 External actors both support and inhibit gender equality and inclusion in volunteering for resilience

The 2018 SWVR stresses that many development actors draw upon local volunteers directly or indirectly.³⁸ This was confirmed particularly in Kyaikhto, Milenaka and Puerto Yumani. In these communities, external intervention was a factor that strengthened, but also inhibited, gender inclusion and gender equality in volunteerism for community resilience in different ways.

First, in these three communities external interventions promoted the empowerment and rights of women in the economic and public spheres, mainly through allowing access to diverse resources -such as capacity building, donation of material and equipment, and seed funding- which they may otherwise have had no access to. Women's involvement in these domains were as local volunteers, as such we can see that external actors (either knowingly or unknowingly) can promote gender equality at the community level through local volunteerism. Nevertheless, the interventions didn't challenge underlying structures of gender inequalities nor reduce women's workload in the reproductive arena. In fact, as was discussed earlier in this paper, in some instances they actually reinforced traditional gender norms.

Secondly, while promoting or engaging with 'volunteerism' was not an explicit component of these external interventions, the findings confirm that such interventions can define local volunteering spaces and gender relations. As such, external intervention can reproduce and reinforce gender inequalities and exclusion through local volunteerism, for example by not including men in their approaches (see Box 2). For example, the exclusion of men's perspectives can exacerbate gender inequalities and including men in interventions can make them more impactful and sustainable, especially if men are involved in the re-negotiation of gender relations.³⁹

Finally, external intervention contributed to transforming women's positions in their communities. Nevertheless, as Box 2 illustrates, this transformative process has not been sustainable in most cases. Studies looking at women's contributions to building resilience in fragile communities have shown that the most sustainable practices have been those which women themselves have promoted and led, despite external

support.⁴⁰ In this regard, two basic assumptions can be made. The first is that the empowerment of women can be considered fundamental to sustaining transformative change. In the research for this paper we can presume that this has promoted the sustainability of the reforestation group in El Edén, which has been operating for more than a decade without external support. This group was able to transform a practical gender need (reforestation) into a strategic gender interest (a community-based organization dedicated to reforestation where women empower themselves). The second assumption is that despite women being supported through capacity-building promoted by external actors, women may not take ownership of the transformative change when the process itself is not driven by women themselves, but by external actors. Evidence gathered by this paper demonstrates that women volunteers can question their 'practical gender needs' and their 'strategic gender interests' (see Annex D). However, the idea that women - as agents of change - are leading a transformation process needs to be carefully examined when external actors influence the process.

Opportunities

Women's empowerment was promoted in the community through the workshops given to women by the external volunteer. Women participants of the workshops said that it helped them to establish the productive associations and therefore contribute to their families' finances and to be independent.



MILENAKA
(MADAGASCAR)

Challenges

In this community, there were perceptions of monopolisation of the associations' benefits, as they focussed only on women. Likewise, some women noted that the younger generations were not interested in the productive activities, so it will be difficult to ensure their continuation.

Box 2 | The gendered impacts of external intervention on local volunteering for community resilience

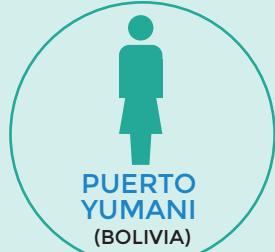
Women living near urban areas received training in leadership, planning, budgeting and organisational development. The knowledge acquired helped women in their roles within the development committees and Self-Reliant Groups.



KYAIKHTO
(MYANMAR)

Women living in remote locations and with young children were unable to participate in the training sessions. Furthermore, 12 of the 14 Self-Reliant Groups ceased operating because some women did not repay their loans and others withdrew their money.

Training in leadership and gender equality fostered the emergence of the first and only female 'Presidenta' of the community. For her, the training was a "window of opportunity" that opened both for her and for the rest of the women in the community.



PUERTO YUMANI
(BOLIVIA)

According to her account, whilst her workload at home discouraged her participation in training sessions and in her leadership role, so too did the lack of continuity of external support after her tenure was completed.



5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Local volunteering is an informal mechanism through which women can exercise their rights, empower themselves, and transform their condition and position

The 2030 Agenda stresses that the achievement of full human potential and truly sustainable development is not possible if one half of the human population continues to be denied equal access to opportunities and support.⁴¹ This gender analysis of volunteering for community resilience demonstrates that local volunteering, in addition to being a fundamental resilience strategy, can be a powerful mechanism through which women can exercise their rights, empower themselves, and transform their condition and position in the social, economic and political spheres. However, it also shows how local volunteering can reproduce and reinforce gender inequalities, and how this can be easily perpetuated in fragile communities. The analysis in this paper comes to the following main conclusions:

First, women's and men's voluntary responses to stresses and shocks interact and intersect with gender roles, relations, needs and interests. This juncture reveals that women's voluntary actions contribute significantly to building resilience at the household and community levels. However, their contributions are undermined by the unequal distribution of responsibilities in the gendered division of labour and the imbalance in gendered power relations which places women in a position of low

status. While these forms of inequalities perpetuate the subordination of women in their communities, they are also reinforced by the lack of public provision of basic services (such as safe water and health care) and social protection, and by the specific gender norms embedded in each context. Therefore, reducing gender inequalities in volunteerism for community resilience entails promoting gender responsive policies that prioritise addressing women's interests and needs at the household and community levels.

Second, ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership is a specific target under SDG 5. Through local volunteering, women –by themselves or with the support of external actors– participate and influence in decision making spaces and develop transformative 'bottom-up' changes in gender relations. Indeed, three lessons learned from the paper are; firstly, that transformative changes arising from women themselves tend to be more sustainable than those derived from external intervention. Yet, they can be also hindered by a lack of resources, such as capacity building and funding. Secondly, the distinctive characteristics of volunteering discussed in the paper (such as self-organization and solidarity) are coping mechanisms that women develop and value in the face of stresses and shocks. As they enhance the empowerment and resilience of women at individual and collective levels, women's self-organization and solidarity are fundamental for women-centred approaches aimed at achieving bottom-up transformation. And finally, that transformative changes can't be sustained through volunteering alone. Gender responsive and accountable governance, and women's equal participation in financial and political decision-making structures are needed to ensure that transformative changes in gender relations at community levels are sustainable, particularly in fragile contexts.

Lastly, this paper concludes that it is fundamental for external actors to collaborate with and support local governments and community governance structures because it is at these levels where decisions that affect women's lives are being made, and where women themselves are advancing in gender equality through their voluntary actions. Gender equality and gender inclusion in volunteerism for community resilience can be strongly promoted through effective collaborations and sustainable partnerships that include women's and men's equal participation in the development and implementation of policies and interventions aimed to build community resilience, and to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment at the household and community levels.

Considering these conclusions and the 2030 Agenda's pledge to 'leave no one behind', this paper offers the following recommendations to promote gender equality and gender inclusion in local volunteering for community resilience:

→ To Member States:

- Encourage volunteering legislation, policies and programmes that include gender equality, inclusion and the empowerment of women as specific targets.
- Integrate gender-responsive volunteering into national and sub-national development strategies to promote inclusive and participatory sustainable development.

Transformative
changes can't be
sustained through
volunteering alone

Gender equality and gender inclusion in volunteerism for community resilience can be strongly promoted through effective collaborations and sustainable partnerships

→ **To local governments:**

- Prioritise safe water and healthcare provision at the community level to reduce women's unpaid care and domestic work to enable them to engage in a full range of local volunteering opportunities.
- Ensure women's effective participation in decision-making at the community and local levels, particularly in resilience strategies.

→ **To UN agencies:**

- Advocate for volunteering not only as a cross-cutting implementation strategy for the SDGs but also as a transformative bottom-up method that can empower women and change gender norms.
- Identify and support an enabling policy and legislative environment that promotes volunteering for all people, and advances gender equality and the empowerment of women.

→ **To civil society organizations:**

- Ensure that volunteer programmes and organisational policies are inclusive to all and consider targeted programmes to increase representation of women and marginalised groups.
- Collaborate with local formal and informal volunteers, and local forms of volunteerism, in equitable and sustainable partnerships that maximize the potential of volunteering.

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Notes

1. UNGA 2001
2. UNV 2018, p. 12
3. Wallace et al., 2015
4. UNV 2018
5. UNV 2018
6. UNV 2018, p. 12
7. UN Women 2018a
8. Le Masson et al. 2015, p. 16
9. Dankelman 2010, p. 11
10. Smyth and Sweetman 2015, p. 409
11. Le Masson 2016; Le Masson et al. 2015
12. UN Women 2018b; UNV 2015; Moser 1993
13. Smyth & Sweetman 2015
14. UNV 2018
15. Lough; Smyth & Sweetman 2015
16. UNV 2014
17. UNV 2011; UNV 2015; UNV 2018
18. UNV 2018
19. Molyneux 1985; Moser 1993; Young 1997
20. Moser 1993
21. Kabeer 1992
22. Molyneux 1985; Moser 1993
23. March, Smyth & Mukhopadhyay 1999
24. Young 1997
25. Kabeer 1999
26. UNV 2018
27. Carosio 2008; Quiroga 2011
28. Neumayer & Plümper 2007
29. Chant & Craske 2003
30. GADN, GAPS & UKSRHR 2015
31. GADN, GAPS & UKSRHR 2015; UN Women 2018b
32. GADN, GAPS & UKSRHR 2015; Jackson & Wallace 2015
33. UNV 2018
34. Wanderley 2008
35. Lagarde y de los Riós 2012
36. Kabeer 1999
37. Fordham, Gupta, Akerkar & Scharf 2011
38. UNV 2018
39. Le Masson, Norton & Wilkinson 2015
40. Drolet et al. 2015; Fordham, Gupta, Akerkar & Scharf 2011
41. UNGA 2015

Annexes

Annex A: Glossary of key terms

VOLUNTEERISM, VOLUNTEERING, VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Activities undertaken of free will and for the public good, where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor (UNGA 2002).

COMMUNITY

A group of people who may or may not live within the same area, village or neighbourhood; who may or may not share similar culture, habits and resources; and who are exposed to the same threats and risks, such as disease, political and economic issues, and natural disasters (UNV 2018).

RESILIENCE

An inherent as well as acquired condition achieved by managing risks over time at the individual, household, community and societal levels in ways that minimize costs, build capacity to manage and sustain development momentum, and maximize transformative potential (UNV 2018).

SEX

The physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males and females (UN Women 2018a).

GENDER

Gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women (UN Women 2018a).

SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

The division of labour refers to the way each society divides work among men and women, boys and girls, according to socially-established gender roles or what is considered suitable and valuable for each sex (UN Women 2018a).

GENDER RELATIONS

Gender relations are the specific sub-set of social relations uniting men and women as social groups in a community, including how power and access to and control over resources are distributed between the sexes (UN Women 2018a).

GENDER ROLES

Gender roles refer to social and behavioural norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. These often determine the traditional responsibilities and tasks assigned to men, women, boys and girls (see gender division of labour). Gender-specific roles are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, occurrence of conflict or disaster, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions (UN Women 2018a).

INTERSECTIONALITY

Refers to how women and men experience inequality differently as a result of gender intersecting with other social markers, such as age, race, class, caste, religion, ability or sexual orientation. As a result, women and men face diverse constraints but also have unique opportunities (van Eerdewijk 2017).

EMPOWERMENT

The process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability (Kabeer 1999).

AGENCY

Agency is the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Agency encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or 'the power within'. Agency can be exercised by individuals as well as by collectives (Kabeer 1999).

VOICE

The capacity of women and girls to speak up and be heard and to shape and share in discussions and decisions—in public and private domains—that affect their lives (van Eerdewijk et al. 2017, p.17).

INSTITUTIONS

Institutions are the social arrangements of formal and informal rules and practices that enable and constrain the agency of women and girls and govern the distribution of resources (van Eerdewijk et al. 2017).

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Refers to women's ability to participate equally with men, at all levels, and in all aspects of household, public and political life and decision making, including activism (GADN, GAPS & UKSRHR 2015, p. 44).

PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE

The terms participation and influence refer to the equal and meaningful participation of women in decision making. This means considering not only if women are represented but also the extent to which they are able to be actively involved and influence decision making processes through their participation (GADN, GAPS & UKSRHR 2015, p. 44).

Annex B: Primary data collected in the five communities

Community	Focus group discussions				Key informant interviews		Total participants
	Number	Average size	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Puerto Yumani (Bolivia)	6	7.2	17	26	3	4	56
El Edén (Guatemala)	8	7.3	34	24	11	8	77
Milenaka (Madagascar)	8	7.8	26	36	9	2	78
Kyaikhto (Myanmar)	12	8.3	50	49	8	5	112
Dagag (Sudan)	7	7.6	29	24	2	2	59
Total	41	7.6	156	159	33	21	382

Source: UNV 2018

Annex C: Community context

Puerto Yumani (Bolivia)	Located within the Municipality of Rurrenabaque in the Department of Beni, this is an indigenous community of the Tacana culture comprising 43 affiliated families, of which 27 live in the community. It has an organic statute and internal regulations, as well as legal status and title to the community's lands. It has a semi-surge well with a manual pump that runs on solar energy. Water from the well is not potable, therefore drinking water is limited to rainwater. It has electricity. Medical care is received at a health centre in Rurrenabaque which provides general services to the population of the rural area. It is prone to disasters due to its geographic location in lowlands. In the past, the community has been affected by severe flooding.
El Edén (Guatemala)	This Mam indigenous community is located in the Municipality of Comitancillo. The community has a population of 656 inhabitants made up of 121 families. More than 50% of the population is below 18 years of age. The main economic activity is agriculture. Household economy revolves around agriculture, work on farms, and remittances from the United States. Access to the community is difficult as the roads are unpaved and are impassable during the rainy season. The community is prone to disasters, especially hurricanes and earthquakes. The community has electricity, although the cost of service is high. There is no community drinking-water system; instead, water is sourced from rivers and wells, as well as piped in from another community.
Milenaka (Madagascar)	Situated about 65 km from Toliara, the administrative centre of the region, this is an inland rural community, inhabited by the Masikoro ethnic group. Primary economic activities are agriculture and farming. According to UNDP data, there are nearly 23,000 people living in Milenaka, of whom nearly 38% are younger than 18. Milenaka is composed of 14 fokontany, or villages, the smallest administrative division in Madagascar. The fokontany are several kilometres distant from each other, and some of them are quite isolated. Many activities in Milenaka are organised at the commune level, but the communities define themselves primarily at the fokontany level: each has its own women's association, young people's association, and self-defence groups. Key stresses facing the local population include unstable employment, poor access to clean water, and security issues (often cattle theft).
Kyaikhto (Myanmar)	One of the 10 townships of the Mon State, located along the southeast coast of Myanmar, this area has an ethnically diverse population that has been subject to interethnic conflict. Communities and villages within Kyaikhto are both rural and urban. In Kyaikhto Township, agriculture is the main economic activity, although natural resource extraction has increased in recent years. The township has high unemployment and limited access to basic social services, poorly developed infrastructure, and high vulnerability to natural disasters – particularly flooding. Women face substantial challenges to engaging in civic activity; gender discrimination and gender-based violence are widespread problems.
Dagag (Sudan)	This community is situated 15 km from El Fasher, the capital of the province of North Darfur, and has an estimated population of 2,800, of which 25% are children (ages 0-14). Most community members maintain their livelihoods through farming and shepherding small flocks. The community consists of various tribal groups, and conflict continues to affect the population which includes some IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), displaced by the long-running conflict. There are a few brick buildings in Dagag, but most houses are huts made of straw, and there is no electricity or running water. Primary research was also conducted in Gedail Wagief, the closest village to Dagag that is near a freshwater source, after it became clear that access to water was one of the most urgent concerns in Dagag.

Source: Community reports of Bolivia, Guatemala, Madagascar, Myanmar and Sudan.

Annex D. Stresses and shocks related to gender needs and interests

STRESSES & SHOCKS (perceived by women/men)	DA	EE	KY	MI	PY	PRACTICAL GENDER NEEDS (women/men)	STRATEGIC GENDER INTERESTS (women/men)
Lack of safe water							
Lack of basic health services							
Lack of infrastructure							
Unemployment							
Disasters							
Conflict and violence							
Deforestation							
STRESSES (perceived by women)	DA	EE	KY	MI	PY	WOMEN'S PRACTICAL GENDER NEEDS	WOMEN'S STRATEGIC GENDER INTERESTS
Women's low status							
Exclusion from decision making							
Women's discrimination							
Lack of voice							
Unequal access to resources							

DA Dagad (Sudan)

EE El Edén (Guatemala)

KY Kyaikhto (Myanmar)

MI Milenaka (Madagascar)

PY Puerto Yumani (Bolivia)

 Shocks perceived by women and men in each community

Stresses perceived by women and men in each community

Stresses perceived by women in each community

Source: SWVR 2018 community reports data.

2018 STATE OF THE WORLD'S VOLUNTEERISM REPORT *THE THREAD THAT BINDS*

VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

This paper analyses data collected for the SWVR 2018 project in five communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to understand the relevance of gender roles, needs, and interests in volunteering at the community level. The 2018 SWVR is a United Nations flagship publication that presents new evidence on the role of volunteerism in strengthening community resilience.

It finds that communities value volunteerism because it enables them to create collective strategies for dealing with diverse economic, social and environmental challenges. At the same time, unless appropriately supported by wider actors, volunteering can be exclusive and burdensome for some groups. Alone, communities have limited capacities and resources to adapt to emerging and future risks. The report thus explores how governments and development actors can best engage with volunteerism to nurture its most beneficial characteristics, while mitigating against potential harms to the most vulnerable. In doing so, the report provides an important contribution to the evidence base on inclusive, citizen-led approaches to resilience-building.

