

VOLUNTEERING: THE IMPACT ON CIVIL SOCIETY.

SANNI T. ADEBAYO
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION
KABALE UNIVERSITY
UGANDA
E-mail:tjdeen2001@yahoo.com
Phone:+256-784534402

ABSTRACT

The world is a global village where every man jack live. And no nation is independable; no one is above assistance. Volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others without being motivated by financial or material gain. Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity, intended to promote good or improve human quality of life. Some people also volunteer to gain skills without requiring an employer's financial investment.

Volunteering takes many forms and is performed by a wide range of people. Many volunteers are specifically trained in the areas they work in, such as medicine, education, or emergency rescue. Some others volunteer on various area, such as in response to a natural disaster.

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

According to the Microsoft Encarta Dictionary (2006), a volunteer is defined as "somebody who works for nothing; somebody who works without being paid." It also refers to "somebody acting without legal obligation: a participant in something who is not legally bound to participate and does not expect to be paid." In another perspective, a volunteer is therefore someone who offers to do charitable or helpful work without expecting any rewards either by way of payment or compensation for the service(s) rendered, for it is done out of one's freewill and not out of legal obligation or compulsion.

Safrit and Merill (1995) identified the four defining tenants of volunteering:

1. Volunteering implies active involvement. The act of volunteering involves active participation or contributions of time, energies or talents; it is never seen as the giving of financial or material resources as a donor/sponsor.
2. Volunteering is uncoerced. Individuals give of their time, energies and talents freely and for whatever motivation(s).
3. Volunteering is not (primarily) motivated by financial gain. Many program reimburse volunteers for personal and material expenses incurred during their service. These financial remunerations have been termed reimbursement, stipend or living expenses, but never salary. They are supplemental and not the main motivation for volunteering.
4. Volunteering focuses on the common good. Although reasons for volunteering may be individualized and perhaps even self-serving, the outcomes of volunteering are focused beyond the individual towards a larger, common good.

In 1999 the United Nations volunteers identified three defining characteristics:(a) Volunteering is done by choice, (b) without monetary reward, and (c) for the benefit of the community.

VARIOUS AREAS OF VOLUNTEERING

There are various area of volunteering, they are viz:

Social capital

The social capital represented by volunteering plays a key role in economic regeneration. Where poverty is endemic to an area, poor communities lack friends and neighbors able to help. This, voluntary mutual aid or self-help is an important safety net. This model works well within a state because there is a national solidarity in times of adversity and more prosperous groups will usually make sacrifices for the benefit of those in need.

Skills-based volunteering

Skills-based volunteering refers to volunteering in which the volunteer is specifically trained in the area they are volunteering in. This is in contrast to traditional volunteering, where specific training is not required. The average hour of traditional volunteering is valued by the Independent Sector at between \$18–20 an hour. Skills-based volunteerism is valued at \$40–500 an hour depending on the market value of the time.

Virtual-volunteering

Virtual volunteering, also sometimes called as eVolunteering, online volunteering or micro-volunteering, is a term describing a volunteer who completes tasks, in whole or in part, offsite from the organization being assisted, using the Internet and a home, school, telecenter or work computer or other Internet-connected device, such as a PDAs or smartphone. Virtual volunteering is also known as cyber service, telementoring, and teletutoring, and various other names. Virtual volunteering is similar to telecommuting, except that, instead of online employees who are paid, these are online volunteers who are not paid.

Environmental-volunteering

Environmental volunteering refers to volunteers who contribute towards environmental management. Volunteers conduct a range of activities including environmental monitoring, ecological restoration such as re-vegetation and weed removal, and educating others about the natural environment.

Volunteering in Schools

School systems around the world rely heavily on volunteers and donations in order to run effectively. Whenever the economy is down, the need for volunteers and resources

increases greatly.[2] There are many opportunities available in the school system for volunteers to take advantage of, especially if you have a special skill or trade. There are not many requirements in order to become a volunteer in the school system. Whether you are a parent, grandparent or just a community member most schools just require a volunteer form be completed. Much like the benefits of any type of volunteerism there are great rewards for the volunteer, student, and school.

These benefits include but are not limited to:

School Benefits- Provided with additional service without having to have added costs Teachers are given extra time for educational purposes and planning a positive relationship between the community and the school.

Volunteer Benefits- Parents become involved in their child's school and education. New talents that one never knew they had are discovered. A sense of personal satisfaction and ability to meet new people and develop new friendships

Student Benefits- Students are given a positive role model educational success is encouraged and improved.

Politics

In almost all modern societies, the most basic of all values is people helping people and, in the process, helping themselves. But a tension can arise between volunteerism and the state-provided services, so most countries develop policies and enact legislation to clarify the roles and relationships among stakeholders and identify and allocate the necessary legal, social, administrative, and financial support. This is particularly necessary when some voluntary activities are seen as a challenge to the authority of the state, e.g. on 29 January 2001, President Bush cautioned that volunteer groups should supplement, not replace, the work of government agencies.[3] Volunteerism that benefits the state but challenges paid counterparts raises the ire of labor unions representing the paid counterparts as in the case of volunteer fire departments, particularly in combination departments.

IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Volunteering Programme contributes to the development agenda by:

1. Strengthening the voice of civil society organizations so they can influence policy, both at local and national levels, for the promotion of sustainable development and the improvement of livelihood security.
2. Support communities to participate in development at local and national levels
3. Support communities to gain access to resources for local development and the improvement of essential services.
4. Support communities and organizations to respond effectively to the HIV pandemic through programmes of prevention, care and support.

5. Support communities to realise their human rights, especially those of women and children.

There are other impact such as viz:

1. Volunteering Programmes Strengthen the Voice of Civil Society by:

Meeting overseas partners needs by responding to requests for volunteering programmes from partner communities and organizations;

Enhances quality partnership relationships with overseas partners;

Increasing the depth of understanding of the problems faced by our partners in the developing world.

Operating a model which is participative and involves partners at every stage;

Enhancing, in some cases, the profile and status of our local partners;

Leads to an excellent context for sharing of best practice and lesson learning;

Creating opportunities for Shared Advocacy, synergy, new partnerships and new markets;

Building on ideas that emerge from volunteers;

Facilitating peer to peer capacity building amongst 20-24 year olds;

Mobilizing 15-24 year olds in pursuit of the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals;

Integrating youth participation into community development activity;

Advocating in favour of initiatives such as the African Youth Charter

2. Volunteering programmes support communities to participate in development at local and national level by:

Facilitating partnerships that fosters participation;

Implementing Global Citizenship initiatives whereby partners benefit from training opportunities in Ireland;

Establishing links between communities within and communities in the developing world;

Organizing on the ground expertise in communities rarely visited by development specialists;

Acting as a catalyst to mobilize local communities to engage in a participative approach to development;

Strengthening the spirit of volunteerism that is so essential to the success of so many development projects;

Engaging marginalized groups, especially young people in the development process;

Acting as an impetus for overcoming local stigmatization of marginalized categories of people;

Facilitating participative methods of completing socio-economic analysis of communities;

Developing the team skills and group dynamic capacity of partners resulting in community responses rather than individual responses;

Improving local communities knowledge and responses to the challenge of environmental damage and climate change;

Encouraging additional outreach to the most vulnerable sections of society;

Presenting opportunities to move away from a project approach to a strategic and Programmatic Approach;

Encouraging inter-generational development planning through dialogue and conversation with young people and their elders;
Developing and/or strengthening opportunities for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, promoting their social, political, development and environmental participation;
Encouraging and promoting youth associations through financial, educational and technical support and promotion of their activities;
Encouraging increased national, regional and international cooperation and exchange between youth organizations;
Facilitating “learning by doing” opportunities for young people and marginalized groups;
Boosting youth volunteering for development by engaging young men and women in a range of activities that can improve their participation and positively direct their energy, vigor and innovation towards the realization of national and global development goals.

Conclusion.

It is worthy of commendation that, volunteering is for those people with large hearts who see themselves as an individual who can make a change in the world. This is achievable only if the government throughout the world provides enabling environment where patriotism and national/international commitment can thrive and flourish.

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