

**Forum:** Youth Assembly- Action Paper 1

**Issue:** The Social Relevance of Volunteering

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## INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is one of the most crucial activities the youth can partake in. Apart from character-building, an amphydromous relationship with one's community is a significant outcome from which participants benefit. Generosity and most importantly awareness of political and social issues, which their area is affected by, are vital for consistent development and evolution.

Through volunteering, society and the environment are helped. For instance, public space cleanup activities can help by raising awareness of the repercussions of citizens' actions regarding the environment, such as not recycling and littering. Furthermore, taking advantage of volunteer opportunities in animal shelters, citizens can gain a different appreciation of empathetic actions. As a result, the 5th of December has been proclaimed the International Day for Volunteers, and the action of community service itself has become a widely validated and respected concept. Universities, schools and employers have begun to value volunteers and the qualities they can offer to their environment.

However, volunteering is not a modern concept. It can be traced back to as early as Medieval Britain, when local Christian groups and churches aided the poor and the sick. It serves as a constant reminder to people that giving back to society is advantageous to all and the practice has been sustained through hundreds of years of change on the global political stage.

Overall, giving back to one's community can be manifested in many forms of disability, and age restrictions and location do not curb the effort that can be made. Through creative thinking and interest in municipal problems, every individual can contribute to solving the issues at hand whilst also having personal benefits.

All the above forms of volunteering are of vitality to the global community. It is interwoven within our democracies, which are based on giving back to the people who empower it. Hence, whether an individual's selected type of community service is protesting or donating funds, it is equally important and deserves to be heard.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

### **Volunteer**

“a person who voluntarily undertakes or expresses a willingness to undertake a service”<sup>1</sup>

### **Community Service Learning (CSL)**

“CSL is a form of experiential learning that combines volunteer work with intentional learning goals and active reflection.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Happiness effect**

The “happiness effect” refers to research results, which have shown that when an individual conducts a volunteering activity, their empathy and future ambitions begin to revolve less around themselves and more around giving back to the community in which they belong.

### **Dāna**

In Buddhism, the concept of “dāna” discusses the issue of generosity and self-sacrifice for spiritual reasons instead of obligatory. Through personal volition, practitioners are to overcome selfishness and embrace empathy and compassion.

### **Corporate social responsibility (CSR)**

According to the Harvard Business School<sup>3</sup>, CSR is a business model focused on assisting communities with environmental, social and other issues that may burden them. CSR can be separated into four sections: Environmental, Economical, Ethical and Philanthropic.

### **Altruism**

Altruism is the “devotion to the welfare of others”<sup>4</sup>. In this particular situation, altruism can be a key motivating factor for volunteers to become more active regarding a specific cause. It is often associated with prosocial behavior.

### **Egotism**

Egotism is defined as “thinking only about yourself and considering yourself better and more important than other people”.<sup>5</sup> In volunteering, people with egotistic personalities, tend to volunteer as a means of self-promotion and socialization.

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<sup>1</sup> “Definition of VOLUNTEERING.” [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com), [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/volunteering](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/volunteering)

<sup>2</sup> Whillans, A.V. “Does Volunteering Improve Well-Being? - Article - Faculty & Research - Harvard Business School.” [www.hbs.edu](http://www.hbs.edu), 2016, [www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=52969](http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=52969)

<sup>3</sup> Stobierski, Tim. “What Is Corporate Social Responsibility?” Harvard Business School Online, Harvard Business School, 8 Apr. 2021, <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/types-of-corporate-social-responsibility>.

<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster. “Definition of ALTRUISM.” Merriam-Webster.com, 2019, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/altruism](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/altruism).

<sup>5</sup> “EGOTISM | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” Dictionary.cambridge.org, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/egotism>.

## ***Episodic volunteering***

When people cannot dedicate a lot of time to volunteering activities, they have the option of taking part in short-term, low-commitment volunteering prospects. The ultimate goal is to make an effective but not time-consuming contribution to a specific charity.

## ***Volunteer tourism***

In volunteer tourism, a person travels to another country to aid the natives with problems they may face and simultaneously, they get to explore the local culture. It can also be referred to as international volunteering.

# **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

## ***Historical Context***

The first volunteering trend was recorded in Medieval Britain, originating from large financial centers, such as the City of London. The concept became more widely accepted with the rise of groups such as the Young Men's Christian Club (YMCA) <sup>6</sup> and The Red Cross<sup>7</sup>. The YMCA's goals were more socially and educationally involved, while the Red Cross offered medicinal aid, especially during the First and Second World Wars (WWII).

With nations in the 20th century facing grave financial crises, unemployment, poverty and homelessness in Western economies was on a rapid rise. As a result, the more financially well-off contributed to helping the impoverished individuals and families when the local governments could not. Thus, the concept of soup kitchens arose, where families with unemployed members would go there to receive food in rations.

The term "soup kitchen" is used because the minimum wage was extremely low and the ingredients expensive. Depending on the number of portions to be served, water was added to the soup. After World War I many volunteer groups were created as means of resistance and assistance to the consequences of the war, one of those being the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) – founded in the 1970s to medically assist people in other continents.

## ***Characteristic Movements***

Over the years, many movements have been supported by volunteers whose morals align with the goal of the movement. Many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been created to support these various movements. Nonetheless, the movements don't need to be endorsed by registered organizations in order for their causes to gain support.

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<sup>6</sup> "Home." YMCA International - World Alliance of YMCAs, [www.ymca.int](http://www.ymca.int)

<sup>7</sup> ICRC. "International Committee of the Red Cross." International Committee of the Red Cross, 31 Aug. 2016, <http://www.icrc.org/en>

## Women's Empowerment and Rights

Discrimination against women can be traced back to Ancient Greece, in 400 BC, when women were not allowed to practice medicine, and all throughout history, similar patterns can be seen.

The 1848 "Seneca Falls Convention", organized by Elizabeth C. Stanton and Lucretia Mott, became the first gender-equality-based convention in history. The Convention recorded an attendance of 300 people, most of those being women. Later, during the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, women and civil rights activist Sojourner Truth delivered the first speech addressing gender and racial inequality. In 1860, Anna Filosofova, Russian philanthropist and women's rights activist, founded an association which provided support to the poor through affordable housing and decent work for women.

Thirty-three years later, New Zealand became the first country to grant voting rights to women, after a petition presented by Kate Sheppard, with 32,000 signatures. In Egypt, in 1951, women's rights were established, when Doria Shafik and another fifteen hundred women demanded full political rights, equal wages and amendments to personal status legislation. In 1973, social change activist Billie J. King, demanded the financial reward of the US Open championship to be equal, in an attempt to curb pay inequality due to sex.

In 2006, Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Peace Prize winner herself, founded the Nobel Women's Initiative to amplify women's efforts on peace, justice and equality. A decade later, in 2016, child brides Loveness Mudzu and Ruvimbo Tsopodzi filed charges against the government of Zimbabwe on the grounds of fostering child marriage.

Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court ruled in their favor, stating that evolvment in marriage before the legal age of 18 is illegal, marking a historical turn, since - according to UN statistics - more than 250 million women were married before the age of 15. With the above information as a compass, the UN launched the "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it Up!" campaign, which is led by the UN Women organization and it aimed at forming a world where all women and girls have equal opportunities and rights by 2030.

## Peace And Anti-War Movements

War is an occurrence that has always been plaguing the international community. It brings along casualties, harms the psychological health of millions, and exhausts valuable resources. These are just three consequences of conflict out of hundreds and many organizations have been established, aiming to eliminate war and assist those affected by it.

The League of Nations was the predecessor of the UN, and it was founded after WWI, under the Treaty of Versailles, to encourage international cooperation and accomplish peace and security. Now, the UN is the most active and internationally accepted organization, aiming to eliminate war and conflict, by peacekeeping operations, mediation and diplomacy. Its structure is such that for every goal there exists a corresponding body or agency responsible for its achievement.

For example, the UN Peacekeeping is responsible for all peacekeeping missions and is supervising other temporary organizations that fall under the same category. All the bodies are ultimately directed by the Secretary General.

## **The Internet and Social Media**

The internet has enhanced the connection people have, by serving as an instant means of worldwide communication. It facilitates immediate interaction with citizens all over the world and censoring is difficult to achieve when it is used. Subsequently, humanitarian, social, political and financial problems are shared. When a piece of information gets uploaded on a platform, whether that be a news blog or an Instagram Story, it becomes a digital footprint, connected to the persons mentioned.

This can be advantageous in oppressive environments, since even if something is uploaded and immediately removed, the message can still be shared. This way, action can be taken through simple screens, from people all over the globe. Depending on the number of followers and interactions a user has on apps such as Twitter and TikTok, their message can be promoted through specific algorithms interrelated to each individual's interest.

Hence, users who are involved in activism and are interested in community service, can broaden their horizons and help those in need from the comfort of their home. For instance, if a family needs money to support medical bills, they now have the option, not only to create a funds account but also to have involved parties donate and contribute to it, online.

Furthermore, organizations and individuals gain the ability to share future volunteering opportunities open to the public for interested citizens to join. Many municipalities, for example, offer people the chance to contribute to group reforestation activities, and their goal is shared via email and on their social media platforms and official websites.

## **Forms of volunteering**

### Formal volunteering

Formal volunteering is any volunteering activities planned by an organization, whether that be governmental or international. The context of the service provided is varied; nonetheless, for the activity to be considered formal, there are certain requirements. Firstly, the action, apart from being planned by a registered organization, must be a continuous event. Normally, there is a pre-arranged schedule regarding the timeframe, and there is a hierarchy of supervisory roles. Additionally, a screening process may be implemented in certain cases when specific skills are needed. For example, in healthcare organizations, doctors are prioritized over individuals with Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training, due to the former's expertise in the medical field.

### Informal Volunteering

In contrast to formal, informal volunteerism entails no specific certifications or planning. It is usually community based and it revolves around the sense of belonging its members have. A typical example is fathers coaching the local Little League team or older high school students tutoring younger ones, free of cost. The father does not have to be a professional athlete, but it is necessary to have basic knowledge of the sport.

However, volunteering where an individual wishes to informally volunteer in a section where they have professional experience is called *pro bono* volunteering, e.g., a chef who prepares and distributes food to homeless shelters, or a parent who becomes an active member of their child's school's Parent Teacher Association.

In combination with international volunteerism, informal voluntary engagement can be manual-labor-related. A demonstrative example is the activities being conducted in Brazil's favelas by the "Community in Action" organization<sup>8</sup>, which provides marginalized communities with infrastructure support. Usually, large groups partake in this action because cooperation and the aid of several volunteers is needed to ensure the activity's success.

### Social volunteering

Social volunteering, in a similar vein to formal volunteering, is when an exchange of services takes place, like when a student proficient in mathematics tutors a student proficient in chemistry and vice versa. Sometimes social volunteering is similar to formal volunteering opportunities, requiring a certain skill set and specific schedule, for instance, this is the case with Service Learning and CSL.

This form of volunteering occurs when students dedicate time to actively practice what they have studied in class through the form of community service. This type of volunteering can be local or international and, depending on the location, a different target group is reached. Medical schools and their students, for example, have the opportunity to help in local clinics by offering consultations.

This way students gather valuable knowledge, understanding of their material, as they get to learn how their field of study operates in practice, while communities profit, as individuals learn through experience.

### Environmental Volunteering

Climate action is a complex and relatively new form of volunteering and the ways of being active range from local to international and from extreme to moderate. Some are not afraid to actively and physically prohibit actions, such as deforestation, from happening by placing themselves in front of bulldozers, whilst others who prefer to take a less dangerous and more passive stand sign and promote the signing of petitions. Both actions are equally important.

### Corporate

This form of contributing happens when corporations try to engage their employees in helpful activities for their community outside of the office environment. Corporate community service can be in the form of fundraising events or auctions where the proceedings are dedicated to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Through corporate volunteering, communities may be supported financially or be offered supplies. Apart from getting personnel to engage actively, with the help of CSR models, companies can adjust their progress effectively and amplify their help. By holding themselves and their operations accountable, even more impact can be made, starting with something as simple as group volunteering in a soup kitchen or using renewable energy sources.

### **Motivation**

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<sup>8</sup> "Community in Action." *Community in Action*, <https://communityinaction.org>

A widely debated topic regarding volunteering is the motivational factor. A study by M. Kramer states<sup>9</sup> that when community service is being completed due to extrinsic pressure, it is most commonly a single event negatively associated with competence and purpose. On the other hand, when motivation arises from personal interest and the relationship participants had with leadership figures was unrestrained, volunteers are more likely to conduct community service again. Thus, a healthy atmosphere and sincere attentiveness are crucial to volunteers.

In 2023, George Tavola hosted a Ted Talk on “Find Meaning and Happiness through Volunteering”<sup>10</sup>. During his presentation, he mentioned that volunteering is based on three pillars: doing something without the expectation of receiving money, doing something to service one’s community out of personal desire.

### Egotistic and Altruistic Volunteering

Egotistic activism is conducted for self-centered reasons. For example, gaining self-satisfaction from the act of helping someone else. This can act as a confidence boost, making the volunteers feel good about themselves. Furthermore, some volunteers get involved in community service to socialize, expand their circle and get to know new people. In a business-like environment, professionals may engage in volunteering opportunities, such as hosting or attending fundraising events, to gain prestige associated with said events or socialize and form business acquaintances.

On the other hand, altruistic volunteering occurs due to an innate desire to support a certain purpose. The separating factor is that when one volunteers altruistically, they are indirectly benefitted rather than directly and thus gaining greater satisfaction. Because the volunteers’ personal reward is not the priority for them, they are more likely to be wholesomely fulfilled and the chances of their episodic becoming frequent volunteering are higher. Research by Stephen G. Post<sup>11</sup> suggests that the main motivators for adult altruistic behavior are boosted social integration, distraction from the volunteer’s personal concerns, an enhanced sense of purpose, which ameliorates the assessment of their competence and improvements in their psychological and physical health.

### Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial behavior is often considered one of the most outstanding qualities humans possess, because it is comprised of empathy and acts of compassion. This type of behavior can be conveyed through psychological or physical support. Psychological aid can be illustrated by comforting someone when they are feeling sad while being kind and supportive, whilst the physical can be disclosed by acts of volunteering, whether that be environmental, financial, or animal care. In this type of behavior, the person who acts prosocially does not have any personal motives for doing so.

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<sup>9</sup> Kramer, Michael W., et al. “Toward a Model of the Influence of Motivation and Communication on Volunteering: Expanding Self-Determination Theory.” *Management Communication Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4, 11 June 2021, pp. 572–601, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08933189211023993>.

<sup>10</sup> “Find Meaning and Happiness through Volunteering | George Tavola | TEDxAiLuqtaED.” *www.youtube.com*, 28 June 2023, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=chAgziP7Klg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chAgziP7Klg)

<sup>11</sup> Post, Stephen G. “Altruism and Volunteerism.” *Encyclopedia of Aging and Public Health*, 2008, pp. 109–11, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-33754-8\\_27](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-33754-8_27).

This type of behavior is generally characterized by five mannerisms. Namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and intellect. Prosocial behavior is interrelated with volunteerism because it is connected with an individual's social level.

## ***Importance of Volunteering***

### Effect on individuals

It is common for members of active volunteering groups to improve their social skills unconsciously. For a group to achieve the desired outcome, members must communicate with each other and work together for their joint goal. In the process of cultivating interpersonal communication skills, individuals establish networks, which could provide motivation and support for individuals over a longer period of time. What is more, particularly younger people cultivate their problem-solving, leadership and delegation skills. Responsibility is also taught, especially in community-related volunteer forms, where the volunteers and the public interact.

Completing an activity which impacts vulnerable social groups and people or even organizations in need, can help volunteers by serving as a means of boosting an individual's sense of purpose, which in turn improves mental health. For example, the older generations or people in need benefit through this action through their inclusion in this activity, allowing them to engage and not feel socially isolated.

Apart from the psychological and mental effects, volunteering, as proven by analyses, has an immediate impact on one's physical wellbeing as well. According to Harvard University, volunteers are 12% more likely to remain physically active in their lives<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, another study has shown that older adults who volunteer have a lower risk of chronic pain, heart failure and overall mortality.<sup>13</sup>

### Effect on communities

Despite all the above advantages, the public reaps most of the benefits. In cases where society's needs not being met by governments, NGOs and individuals can aid the communities. The volunteers have a say in where they dedicate their time, and donors have a general idea of where their funds are being spent on.

Through volunteering, communities can also be made more inclusive to people with neurological conditions and limited mobility. Both can be helped through community service because it fosters a learning atmosphere for all by hosting structural and social encouragement and allowing space for growth, vulnerability and confidence.

Furthermore, volunteering can help spread awareness over negative development in society but can also be used as a means of improving the situation as well. Participants in volunteering activities learn how to manage unprecedented situations, adapting to each occasion. As a result, society gradually accepts diversity, social inequalities are addressed, and resilience is built within communities.

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<sup>12</sup>Allen, Victoria. "Volunteers Who to Help Others Are 44 per Cent Less Likely to Die Early." *Mail Online*, 11 June 2020, [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8408749/Volunteers-sacrifice-time-help-50-cent-likely-die-early.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8408749/Volunteers-sacrifice-time-help-50-cent-likely-die-early.html)

<sup>13</sup>Western Connecticut State University. "Benefits of Community Service." *WCSU.edu*, Western Connecticut State University, 2018, [www.wcsu.edu/community-engagement/benefits-of-volunteering/](http://www.wcsu.edu/community-engagement/benefits-of-volunteering/)

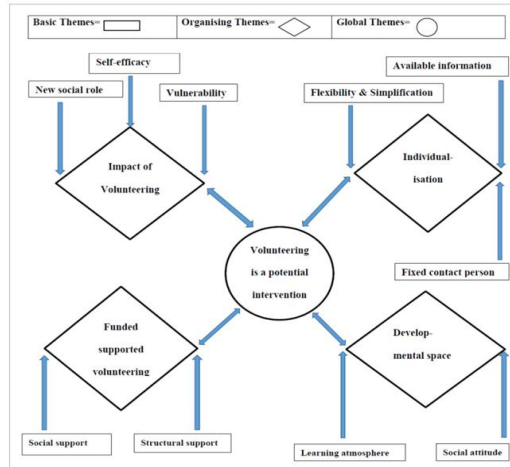


Figure 1: The impact of volunteering to persons with neurological conditions.<sup>14</sup>

### Effect on Organizations

NGOs, due to their codependent relationship with volunteers, are impacted by the number of available volunteers. Firstly, they face a drastic funding increase when donations are boosted. As a result, they have more resources at their disposal, making their work more accessible to the international and local community. In addition, when communities are more engaged, they have more personnel to work with and execute their resilience strategies. Without communication of an NGO's purpose and vitality, the chances of them accomplishing their objective decrease significantly.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### *United States of America (USA)*

Throughout history, churches and religion in the USA have played a crucial role in mainstreaming volunteering.<sup>15</sup> The Great Depression, an era of poverty for the common American, who worked only for the profit of his supervisor, was an especially challenging era for American citizens. However, the situation is different in the US now. Although the economy is thriving, the need for volunteers is even greater and yet, since 2012 the volunteer percentage has dropped by 1.6%.

Older volunteers, for example, who used to regularly donate their time before COVID-19, were afraid to maintain their old habit during the pandemic, to avoid getting sick. Simultaneously,

<sup>14</sup> Eisenhut, Helene, et al. "Exploring the Barriers and Facilitators to Volunteering as an Intervention for Those with Long-Term Neurological Conditions: How Make Therapeutic Volunteering Possible?" *Health Expectations*, vol. 27, no. 1, 15 Oct. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.13891>

<sup>15</sup>Gruber, Jonathan, and Daniel M. Hungerman. "Faith-Based Charity and Crowd out during the Great Depression." *Journal of Public Economics* 91(5):1043-1069, May 2005, [www.researchgate.net/publication/222814764\\_Faith-Based\\_Charity\\_and\\_Crowd\\_Out\\_During\\_the\\_Great\\_Depression](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/222814764_Faith-Based_Charity_and_Crowd_Out_During_the_Great_Depression), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2006.11.004>

the younger generations, plagued by debt and inflation, are often unable to donate time and resources. Nevertheless, the USA is the most active government concerning international humanitarian assistance, followed by Germany.

## Germany

In Germany, volunteering can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when men would join the Prussian, Bavarian and Austrian military corps to fight against the invading French in the Napoleonic Era, as was seen with Jewish-German soldiers. This was even depicted in the nation's culture, e.g. in Oppenheim's "The Return of the Volunteer".<sup>16</sup>

Today, approximately sixteen million German citizens, aged fourteen and older volunteer locally and internationally, in NGOs, such as the "Tatendrang"<sup>17</sup>, the oldest volunteering NGO in Germany, the most popular organization volunteers refer to for community service opportunities. It works by promoting democracy, diversity and national solidarity, allowing NGOs to communicate with and give access to their resources to interested volunteers.

Volunteering organizations get in contact with citizens who operate with the same compass and interests they are interested in, through the platform. This results in a practical way for NGOs to make their opportunities more accessible to everyone.

Since 2016, Germany has largely contributed to tackling humanitarian crises offering philanthropic aid to Ukraine, Africa and Afghanistan. In the case of Ukraine, the government focuses on assisting war victims, in Sudan the nation mostly aids the humanitarian sector. As for Afghanistan, the federal government has been focusing on ending women's oppression by launching a federal scheme which helps citizens flee their nation.

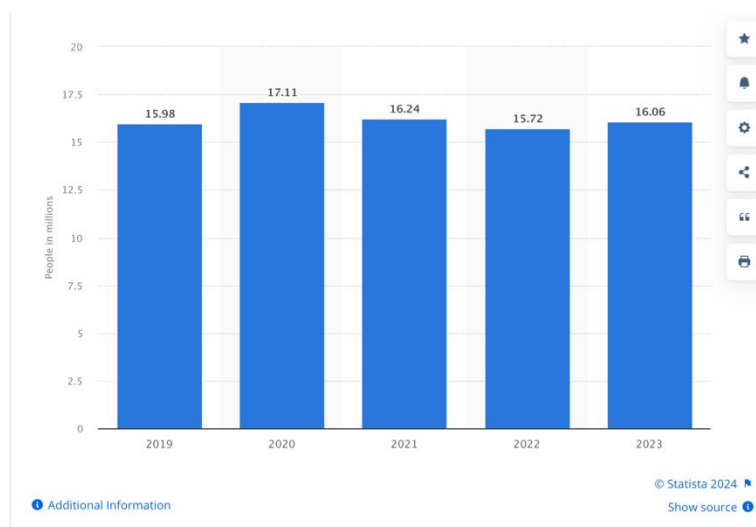


Figure 2: Graph on the Percentage of Volunteers in Germany from 2019-2023<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "The Jewish Museum." *The Jewish Museum*, <https://thejewishmuseum.org/collection/27124-the-return-of-the-volunteer-die-ruckkehr-des-freiwilligen>.

<sup>17</sup> "Ehrenamt Gesucht? Wir Vermitteln Freiwillige Engagements." *Tatendrang.de*, 17 Dec. 2020, <https://tatendrang.de>.

<sup>18</sup> "Volunteer Work Germany 2019-2023." *Statista*, [www.statista.com/statistics/1339096/volunteer-work-germany/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1339096/volunteer-work-germany/).

## **Ghana**

Ghana's population is currently facing inflation, underdevelopment and debt sustainability issues. This has caused it to require the most volunteers out of all African nations. According to a 2022 report by the United Nations Volunteer (UNV), 540 teachers had been appointed to increase literacy rates, "50.8% of children assessed confirmed to having storybooks in their homes, as against 13.5% during baseline"<sup>19</sup> and over 100,000 copies of supplementary readers had been distributed to schools and book clubs.

However, research has shown that many volunteers do not wish to assist and/or improve the situation in Ghana, but rather try to westernize the nation to fit with their perception of a "developed nation". These people have distanced themselves from the natives, grouping them under labels such as "underdeveloped"<sup>20</sup>.

The above is often seen in pro-bono volunteers. For instance, a person with an educational background may travel to Ghana to assist in teaching, which would be considered a noble action, had it no malicious intent. The natives, over time, were made to copy the habits of the teachers, as they were made to be "superior" to the locals. This dynamic, apart from being dysfunctional, led to power inequalities, categorization and western dominance.

## **Nepal**

Nepal is one of the countries most in need of financial and hands-on assistance, due to the natural catastrophes the nation has faced. Despite the hardships the nation has faced, the Nepali community is one of the most solidary. This was a necessity, since they have had to rebuild both physiologically and infrastructurally many times. In May 2023, 95 volunteers, including people with disabilities, and 9 partnering organizations of the UN Volunteer (UNV) were stationed in Nepal.

However, the external aid they receive could be harmful. Similarly to the situation in Ghana, the local culture and customs could be endangered by volunteers who seek to align the nation with their beliefs and practices, without aiding the communities. Many volunteers sent to Nepal have also been found to be unqualified and unskilled to assist the locals with infrastructure and educational problems.

## **Greenpeace**

Created by a group of Canadian activists in the 1970s, Greenpeace strives for a sustainable future with respect towards the environment. They first protested against nuclear testing by the US military in an island near Alaska, whose waters were inhabited by three thousand endangered sea otters and whose lands were home to bald eagles, falcons and other animals.

Despite their unsuccessful attempt, they founded the NGO with pacifism and peaceful protests as their guide. Their goal has always been a sustainable future with respect for the environment and their mission has spread worldwide.

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<sup>19</sup> "Ghana | Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism." *Knowledge.unv.org*, <https://knowledge.unv.org/country/ghana>.

<sup>20</sup> Söderberg, Frida. "https://www.diva-Portal.org/Smash/Record.jsf?Pid=Diva2%3A355124." *DIVA*, [www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A355124&dswid=3628](http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A355124&dswid=3628).

Currently, they are focusing their efforts on three main issues: Climate and Sustainable Energy Sources, Biodiversity and Sustainable Economic and Social Growth. The organization is calling on the global community to re-stabilize the global climate through practices including farming ecologically and choosing clean energy methods for implementing undertakings. By opting for sustainable energy sources, corporate energy systems are disrupted, and energy costs decrease.

More importantly, by reducing crude oil extractions the environment is readily positively affected, seeing as the use of oil and oil rigs is one of the main factors for forest fires, melting ice caps and extreme weather conditions, among other byproducts.

Regarding Biodiversity, they are protesting against deep sea mining, exploitative fishing and private jet use, among other causes. The above protesting missions are against some of the most menacing practices to the biodiversity of our planet. In greater detail, deep sea mining entails plundering the oceanic seabed to extract metals. This can endanger underwater ecosystems and trigger further environmental destruction. Overfishing damages marine life, since a disproportionate number of fish is being caught and later is not being consumed. This exaggeration of our society's fish intake depletes the marine life and restrains reproduction. As for the private jet usage, the carbon emissions being emitted are staggering and the environment is deeply and negatively impacted.

### ***Service Civil International (SCI)***

The SCI is considered the oldest international volunteering organization. It was established after WWI as a pacifistic and humanitarian movement. Its founder, Pierre Cérésolle, organized the first group volunteer project on the former battlefield of Verdun in 1920, to help rebuild the damages caused to the village. Because many participants were German, it served as a symbol of reconciliation between the German and the French.

Currently, SCI has forty worldwide branches, collaborating with over ninety organizations focusing on manual labor and raising awareness on peacebuilding, environmental sustainability, local history and culture, as well as ways to aid and empower the youth.

Additionally, the organization has also taken the initiative on ending discrimination, fascism and social injustice. This is achieved through training programs, seminars and workshops by volunteers who specialize on the topic. The quality of their work is maintained through their network of local and international volunteers.

### ***Doctors without Borders (MSF)***

“Doctors without Borders” was created in 1971 in France. Founded as a means for doctors and journalists to help the populations in Nigeria survive the war and famine plaguing them, the organization wanted to offer immediate humanitarian aid to those in need. At first, the association managed to gather approximately three hundred volunteers, consisting of nurses, doctors and logistics experts among others.

Currently, they are staffed by over sixty-five thousand experts and help people in over seventy countries, with a moral compass of impartiality and independence. In 1999, they were awarded with a Nobel Prize “in recognition of the organization's pioneering humanitarian work on several continents”. The organization uses its influence to condemn war and promote a platform

to aid those in need, as was depicted in their prize acceptance speech, delivered by Dr. James Orbinski.<sup>21</sup>

MSF is vocal about the issues that conflict and war instigate, namely the displacement of individuals, sexual violence, permanent physical harm and casualties. They stress that war restricts the access civilians have to medical supplies, food and water. Their work is of paramount importance since it limits disruptions in the distribution of said medical supplies, which mitigates the risk of disease outbreaks and death.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
July 28, 1914	The start of WWI, which commenced the decline of the global economy, leading to unemployment and increased need for social service.
1920	Establishment of the SCI NGO by Swiss engineer Pierre Cérésolle.
1929	The start of the Great Depression
September 1, 1939	The start of WWII, which worsened the condition of the global inflation and increased the need for volunteers and NGOs.
November 9, 1943	Establishment of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).
1962/1963	Creation of the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service (ISVS) with the purpose of promoting volunteerism and development
December 7, 1970	Establishment of “UN Volunteer” with the adoption of Resolution 2659 by the UN General Assembly (UNGA).
1971	Establishment of the “Doctors Without Borders” Organization.
December 17, 1985	The International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development was adopted by the

<sup>21</sup> Doctors Without Borders / MSF-USA. “Doctors without Borders 1999 Nobel Peace Prize Speech Animated.” *YouTube*, 9 Dec. 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?si=CYCZtvuwKRJbXnabr&v=odXqbUrHlko&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?si=CYCZtvuwKRJbXnabr&v=odXqbUrHlko&feature=youtu.be).

	United Nations General Assembly through Resolution <u><a href="#">A/RES/40/212</a></u>
2001	UN's Year for Volunteers
2026	International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development as proclaimed by the UNGA.

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### ***UNV – UN (A-RES-2659)<sup>22</sup>***

In 1970, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) established UNV as a sub-agency administered through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) through the adoption of Resolution 2659. Its action officially began on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1971, with the Special Voluntary Funds (SVF), responsible for the funding of its projects. In the same year, they obtained 35 volunteers to serve in different countries in collaboration with other UN agencies such as the UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

### ***The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)***

The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was founded after WWII, with the support of volunteers and the consensus of 44 UN Member Nations. It aimed to help young, displaced Holocaust survivors from concentration camps by providing them with housing, financial assistance and repatriation. The agency helped millions of Jewish people fleeing persecution in WWII. When it could not find the needed funds for its operations, it was succeeded by the International Refugee Organization (IRO).<sup>23</sup>

### ***International Refugee Organization (IRO)***

The IRO was created in 1946 as temporary special agency of the UN. Its goal was to tackle the issue of repatriation of homeless Europeans post WWII. Its work overlapped with the work of the UNRRA which led to its disbandment on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1952, with the adoption of Resolution No. 108, by the General Council of the IRO on the 101<sup>st</sup> meeting it held. Overall, it managed to achieve the resettlement of approximately 1,000,000 displaced individuals and it was replaced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>24</sup>

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

<sup>22</sup> "UNGA Resolution 2659 On: Establishment of United Nations Volunteers." *Www.unv.org*, 7 Dec. 1970, [www.unv.org/publications/unga-resolution-2659-establishment-united-nations-volunteers](http://www.unv.org/publications/unga-resolution-2659-establishment-united-nations-volunteers).

<sup>23</sup> "United Nations Treaty Collection." *Treaties.un.org*, [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=III-2-10&chapter=3&clang=e](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=III-2-10&chapter=3&clang=e).

<sup>24</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "UNHCR - the UN Refugee Agency." *Unhcr.org*, 2023, [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).

## ***Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP)***

Launched in 1973, the CYP's main initiative was to foster an empowering environment for young people between the ages of 15 and 19. In collaboration with governments, it wanted to assist the target group in embracing their creativity and productivity. Through the years, their goals were adjusted to the modern reality and included intercultural relations, diversity and fostering of dialogues. Moreover, it aimed at global solidarity and the cultivation of the youth's leadership skills and advocacy. Having adapted to the needs of the modern youth, the program is still active today, having managed to network and foster a collaborative atmosphere. Despite that, over the years, they have faced funding problems and difficulty in adjusting their work in different regions.

## ***The European Voluntary Service (EVS)***

This service was an initiative launched by the European Commission, with the aim of providing people between the ages of 17 and 30 with opportunities to volunteer internationally on a variety of forms, including environmental, in assistance of NGOs and foreign culture preservation. In theory, this would be a very effective program because the participants' living and travel costs, as well as spending money were paid by the European Commission. However, in 2016 it was replaced by the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), due to a variety of problems potential applicants faced, one being the extremely complex and unattractive to the youth application process.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### ***Increase in Community Engagement through Mass Media***

The use of modern means of communication, such as social media, can be a helpful tool to incentivize all generations to volunteer. Targeted advertisements could be made, and rewards could be offered. Although altruism would be the ideal motivator, today, egotism is more likely to be effective. Seeing the lack of community engagement, online campaigns funded and supported by governments, which would offer rewards such as scholarships to the participants, could be an attractive way to incentivize all generations to volunteer.

### ***Education for endorsing prosocial behavior***

Positive reactions are vital to create habits and achieve frequent engagement. Seeing as prosocial behavior is a habit; civilians need to cultivate it from an early age. Although it is innate to most people, all must learn how to find a way to convey it through creative and productive work.

This could occur through organized voluntary service from an early age, which would allow children to receive positive volunteering stimuli, leading to higher chances of regular engagement. Furthermore, through the creation of entertainment programs, such as TV shows, which endorse empathy and the acknowledgement of different emotions, the same goal could be accomplished.

### ***Specialized training of volunteers***

Through different ways of volunteering, the cultural elements of communities are sometimes distorted. This is a huge problem that Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) and their communities face. A colonialist approach to international volunteering, as seen

in Nepal and Ghana, should not be an option. Many a time, governments cannot provide the financial support needed and their priorities may revolve around external and internal affairs that require attention. Subsequently, vulnerable groups' heritages are on the verge of "extinction" due to volunteers with a faulty mindset.

Furthermore, it should be made clear that locals should not have the flawed perception that volunteers are superior to them. This problem can be easily solved if appropriately invested in it. If adequate and accessible training courses are created, the nature of volunteering will become more respectful and considerate. It is paramount to take into consideration that not all organizations have the funding for training programs. Consequently, they need to be widely accessible.

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