



International FORUM on Development Service
FORUM International du Volontariat pour le Développement

Trends in International Co-operation and Volunteering

2001-2006

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A report for the IVCO conference 2006

Foreword.....	2
The international development context	3
How IVCOs are responding to these changes in the international development context.....	4
Impact of the global security agenda.....	6
Increased access to communications	7
Engaging with alternative actors	7
Private sector volunteer providers.....	7
The corporate sector	7
The military.....	8
Private funders and vertical funds	8
Major changes in the last five years for volunteer sending organisations: continuing preoccupations and newer issues	9
Short rather than long term placements	9
Increasing numbers of available volunteers?	9
Southern partners.....	12
Advocacy, development education and public engagement	13
Recruitment.....	13
Working with Diaspora communities	13
Relationships with donors	14
Evaluation and impact assessment.....	14
Overcoming funding challenges	14
Competition and partnerships	15
Increasing professionalism of IVCOs	15
Other possible challenges for the future (key points).....	15
Gender	15
Exclusion.....	16
Beyond 2015 to poverty elimination	16

Foreword

For a number of years FORUM has undertaken a survey of its members to understand and share what is happening in international volunteering throughout the world. We then found ourselves in a position to take a longer view and commissioned Development Initiatives to produce a review over a five year period. Development Initiatives had also undertaken an annual review in 2005 and have brought their considerable knowledge of development issues in understanding trends in international volunteering.

As a result of this process we realised the real enormity of this task of trying to reflect back all of the trends on developing international volunteering in essentially a short paper. We thank Development Initiatives for contributing their valuable insights which we encourage you to read and reflect on.

The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of FORUM or its members or of the organisations for whom the author works. The responsibility for these views rests with the author alone.



Cliff Allum, President of FORUM

About FORUM

International FORUM on Development Service is a network of organisations engaged in international volunteering and personnel exchange. FORUM aims to share information, develop best practice and enhance co-operation between its members.

FORUM's members include both non-governmental (NGO) and state organisations from around the world.

The main activities of FORUM include the following:

- We facilitate the sharing of information, through our website, news updates, sharing of knowledge and experiences.
- We commission and undertake research, as well as facilitating members' involvement in research into issues around international volunteering.
- We organise an annual conference for heads of agencies known as IVCO. This conference is primarily concerned with issues of change, redefining international volunteering and offering opportunities to learn about new models of activity.

The international development context

At the outset it is worth underlining the fact that the political environment on aid, development and poverty reduction has changed substantially over the last five years:

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) strategy has become a central focus for most official aid donors – and a factor, along with Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), helping to shape national development strategies
- The post 9/11 agenda has resulted in a preoccupation with (military) security and instability and to a lesser extent, issues of identity and cohesion
- The decline in aid has been reversed and several major donors have set timetables to reach the UN 0.7 per cent target
- Much stronger emphasis on demonstrating accountability and impact linked to the increases in aid and the Managing for Development Results process (see also Paris Declaration below)
- Poverty issues now receive much more media coverage and political attention than they did five years ago (witness Make Poverty History/The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, the Tsunami coverage, public and political concern over Sudan and the focus on development at G8 summits in Evian, Sea Island and Gleneagles)
- Aspects of globalisation have become a reality: access (for some) to information and increased mobility, global trade, finance and employment
- Emergence of World Social Forum process and increased civil society mobilisation around the G8
- Emerging approaches to development with an increased focus on poverty reduction, social and political issues. The renewed interest amongst some donors (such as DFID) in social protection is example of this – though the prevailing income-consumption, growth oriented development model remains largely dominant

As these rapid changes in the global environment impact on bilateral aid programmes and the international development context, International Volunteer Co-operation Organisations (IVCOs) are having to adapt.

Some of the main issues are listed below:

Aid increases – less pressure on aid budgets – potentially more money available for development co-operation and international volunteer sending organisations – but aid modalities are changing and pressure to show results is ever present

The Paris Declaration - governments have signed up to this aid effectiveness agenda which is impacting on IVCOs through engaging with fewer programme countries and focus sectors. IVCOs are also feeling pressure to find their place in the debate.

Engaging with alternative development approaches – As donors use alternative development approaches such as Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs), PRSPs, budget support etc rather than focusing on projects and programmes, IVCOs have to demonstrate their relevance.

How IVCOs are responding to these changes in the international development context

In the past, IVCOs typically focused on volunteer sending. Today however this mould has been broken and IVCOs are now engaging in a wide range of activities including advocacy, public engagement, focusing on South-South co-operation and a range of short and long-term volunteer placements. This evolution can, in part, be put down to IVCOs ability to respond to changes in donor practice and in the wider political environment.

Donor coordination and concentration are themes which have emerged in the last five years of IVCO surveys as donors increasingly focus on:

- Reinforcing developing country ownership and accountability
- The need to increase the effectiveness of Technical Co-operation (TC)
- Implementation of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness (which was agreed by donors, developing countries and multilateral agencies)

In response to these preoccupations, there are numerous examples of where IVCOs are aligning themselves with government priorities, focusing on fewer programme countries and also fewer sectoral interventions. But IVCOs also note that they have to date been largely left out of discussions on how to implement the Paris Declaration and how to establish their niche in relation to the aid effectiveness debate and in particular the role of volunteers (Canadian Crossroads International [CCI], CUSO, Uniterra). CCI suggest that there may be some fall out for NGOs as governments look at how to implement the Paris Declaration.

A key question seems to be how FORUM/IVCOs can engage with this process and highlight the importance of responsive aid programmes that support civil society relationships in the North and South.

Capacity development is a central concern to IVCOs. The 2005 DAC report observed the following on TC, to which donors allocated \$19 billion in 2004:

“TC and capacity development are by no means synonymous..... a good deal of what the DAC scores as TC has little to do with capacity development.

Too often efforts have focussed on upgrading the skills of individuals without paying attention to improving the performance of the organisations in which they work, let alone the broader institutional context in which organisations themselves exist.

A more strategic and longer term approach to upgrading key institutions may be required, into which programmes to improve the skills of individuals would then be integrated.”

In early 2005 the World Bank Development Committee meetings noted the lack of transparency in TC and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel of South Africa, asked the DAC to provide a breakdown of how much TC was allocated to different activities including: Consultancies and advisory services; Institution and capacity building (“project-type” TC);

volunteers and TC through multilaterals and NGOs. In the 2006 DAC Report published in early 2007, DAC Chair Richard Manning noted that tracking changes such as donor support to Southern based institutions requires disaggregating of DAC TC statistics – a process which was underway. But disaggregating TC into its component parts is very complex, and the results of this disaggregation are awaited. The figures will help inform further debate on how money spent on different kinds of TC can make an increased impact and reinforce local ownership. This debate – which will clearly include spending on volunteer co-operation, is already taking place. Given overall spending on TC by DAC donors in 2005 of \$21 billion (one fifth of ODA), it is clear that volunteer co-operation is a very tiny part of the overall category in terms of spending. But IVCOs experience might put them into a position to help influence future thinking on how this very large amount of aid spending could be made more effective. Just as IVCOs such as UNV have worked to show how volunteers can be used effectively to contribute towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, IVCOs should see the TC debate and Paris declaration process as important opportunities to again respond to the challenge of demonstrating their effectiveness. In the latter context, there is real concern on the quality of data being produced to monitor progress on the Paris declaration – and the indicators focus very much on easily measured aspects of effective aid. IVCOs could conceivably contribute some qualitative perspectives to the process.

In terms of working with alternative development approaches such as PRSPs and SWApS, there remain concerns that these are not usually conducive to IVCO engagement. Nevertheless IVCOs have responded to these changes with some seeing PRSPs as offering increased potential for Southern civil society participation. Furthermore, as more governments use direct budget support, IVCOs are now thinking about innovative funding schemes where Southern governments could potentially co-finance volunteer placements.

In the past, many NGOs have seen budget support as potentially limiting their involvement, contribution and access to funds. In May 2006 a major evaluation focusing on Partnership General Budget Support (PGBS) was published by the steering group of a donor consortium examining General Budget Support (GBS). It concluded inter alia that:

Moves to GBS have tended to be gradual

- GBS is 'present as an intention before it is realised in practice'
- It is more significant in the eyes of donors than partner countries
- PGBS has supported significant changes toward partnership – but these should not be exaggerated
- PGBS is not a panacea and should be seen as an addition to an array of aid instruments ('part of a family of programme-based approaches')
- That technical assistance and capacity building have been the least well integrated inputs to PGBS

The implications here for IVCOs seem to be that there is room for engagement on how volunteer co-operation can enhance capacity building to make GBS more effective.

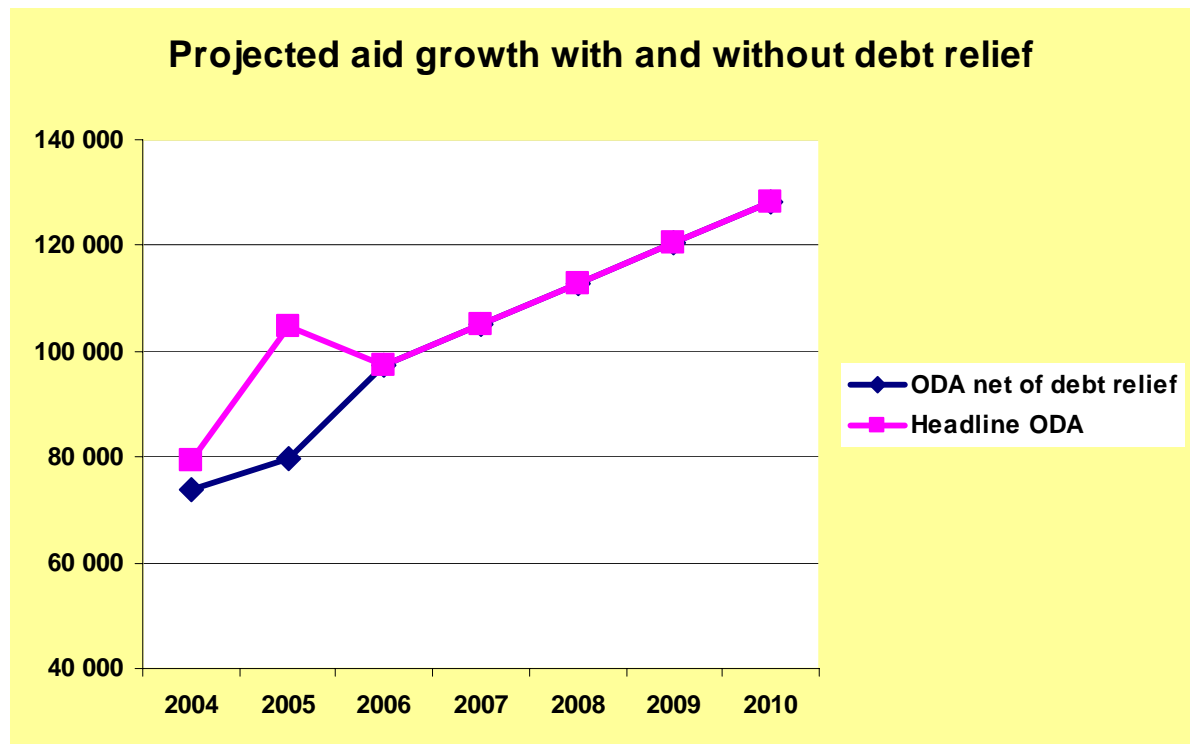
Growing aid volume

For the first time global aid topped \$100 billion in 2005.

As noted last year, the squeeze on aid budgets, which meant IVCOs having to argue their case in very resource-constrained environments, has now eased and overall aid volumes

predicted to rise to \$128 billion by 2010 – a rise of 61 per cent compared to 2004, provided donors keep to their promises. In 2007 Germany, holding the Presidency of the EU and chairing the G8, plays a key role in holding the major donors to their commitments.

From the perspective of IVCOs, growing aid should mean increased resources. But the detail of the picture needs to be looked at carefully.



The headline rise for 2005 is misleading – because it includes over \$24 billion in debt relief for Nigeria and Iraq. There is a real net benefit of \$1 – 2 billion to Nigeria in interest saved, which should be available for development spending by government. But this figure is far less than the headlines suggest. Because of continued debt relief, global aid is certain to rise again in 2006. **But beyond 2007 there are big questions about where governments will find the resources for the aid increases they have pledged. The big point here is that headline figures are not currently translating into substantially increased allocations for development spending at country level.**

Impact of the global security agenda

In 2003, IVCOs were asked in the annual survey how the global security agenda had impacted on their work. All of the agencies who responded stated this agenda had little impact with the exception of one agency who noted difficulty in gaining visas for Southern volunteers coming to the North as part of a South-North exchange programme. In 2006, the majority of agencies (nine in total) cited the global security situation and agenda as having the greatest impact on their work.

The effects of the security situation are manifold. Examples cited by agencies over the last five years include:

- Countries where volunteers are prepared to go;
- Increased importance placed on volunteer safety and security resulting in rising costs for volunteer placements;
- Dominance of global security on the development agenda;
- Suspension of volunteer programmes in countries affected by conflict;
- Militarisation of development co-operation.

Increased access to communications

Access to the internet and cheap travel have had a huge impact on IVCOs and volunteers in the past five years according to the 2006 survey. There are however positive and negative aspects to this which need to be explored.

On the positive side, access to the internet means that volunteers can 'shop around' for opportunities and gain a better understanding of the organisation and country before they embark on their placement. It also means that organisations such as United Nations Volunteers (UNV) can harness the potential of 'virtual volunteering', enabling volunteers to share competencies in areas such as research, design, proposal writing and giving legal or environmental advice from their homes. UNV currently has 5,000 volunteers providing online assistance. Other IVCOs note that volunteers are able to continue staying involved in development upon returning from their placements.

There were however some negative points raised by IVCOs. Cheap and easy access to the internet can mean that volunteers don't integrate so well into their overseas placement. Furthermore, IVCOs are now receiving more enquiries than ever which is impacting on their ability to respond effectively and is placing a strain on their human resources.

Engaging with alternative actors

Private sector volunteer providers

Engaging with alternative actors is another issue which has risen up the agenda. The number of private sector providers for volunteer opportunities has substantially increased over the last five years. These providers present opportunities for potential volunteers to take part in short or long term placements in an area of interest to them. The extent to which IVCOs should engage with private sector providers remains an unresolved issue. A trend that has been observed in recent years however is the increased 'professionalisation' of IVCOs, in part as a step towards setting themselves clearly apart from organisations who help potential volunteers 'do a little bit more than tourism'. **A challenge here is to present what IVCOs do for poverty reduction in a positive way, without denigrating alternative approaches** (provided they are at worst neutral in their development impact).

The corporate sector

There has previously been some resistance to the idea of working closely with the corporate sector. However, IVCOs are increasingly engaging and there are numerous practical examples of projects with the corporate sector within the FORUM membership.

Uniterra for instance have developed their 'Congé Solidaire' (leave for change) programme which provides short-term, well defined tasks for participants. Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO) (now in conjunction with British Executive Service Overseas [BESO]) and UNV are also operating partnership schemes with businesses such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, Accenture and Kraft. Fredskorpset are working closely with international consultancy firms and Oxfam Quebec have developed a partnership youth development scheme with Cirque du Soleil.

This wide range of activities shows some of the opportunities available when working with the corporate sector but common challenges do emerge which should be shared with IVCOs.

While private sector organisations can help to resource IVCO activities through providing funds, skilled volunteers and gifts in kind; they are often very focused on what they want to get out of the partnership which may not always be in line with the community or IVCO agenda. One point raised was ensuring the mutuality of benefits for both the private sector and the community or partner organisation. For the private sector organisation, the benefits include being seen as a socially responsible organisation as well as acting as a positive way of retaining and engaging their staff. For communities, it can mean the introduction of high level skills and an opportunity for capacity enhancement.

What emerged from discussions in Bonn was the need for IVCOs in this relationship. For the corporate sector, the advantage of working through IVCOs is their credibility and knowledge of issues on the ground and their track record of working closely with communities and partner NGOs in the South. Additionally, IVCOs can ensure private sector accountability.

An additional point raised by VSO in this year's survey was the fact that the private sector in Southern countries is often missed with more focus placed on Northern private sector organisations. This is certainly an area for more attention in the future.

The military

A further alternative actor noted in this year's survey was the military. Six agencies noted examples where development co-operation is becoming closer to forms of military engagement. For instance, CUSO point to an increase in funding for development programming linked to Canadian military engagement in Afghanistan. The Learning and Assisting Overseas Association (AKHLUE) have also noted a tendency for the German government to move towards closer co-operation between military and volunteer programmes. PSO and Volontari nel mondo (FOCSIV) also state what they see as the 'militarisation of development co-operation'. **This is an issue which should be watched closely and a possible question for next years survey to expand upon in more detail.**

Private funders and vertical funds

The last five years has seen a growth in both major private funders of development work and international funding mechanisms outside the UN structure.

The Gates Foundation has provided \$6.6 billion for global health work since its inception and has recently pledged almost \$7 billion to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for its work over the next five years.

Since it was established in 2002, the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria has approved grants worth over \$5.5 billion - becoming an important actor helping to shape how aid is being spent – and therefore potential for dialogue with IVCOs. A quarter of this spending has been disbursed through NGOs and a further 25 per cent through other non-governmental channels including affected communities.

There is increased recognition that IVCOs need to engage with these actors as not only do they have funds at their disposal, they also have a great deal of influence both within the development community and beyond.

Major changes in the last five years for volunteer sending organisations: continuing preoccupations and newer issues

Short rather than long term placements

This continues to be an issue and emerging trend in international volunteering. There are a number of factors at play here, volunteers are no longer always willing to go for two to three years due in some cases to economic constraints in their home country or improved job opportunities. Additionally, the sort of skills IVCOs want from volunteers mean that these people are often middle aged professionals, possibly with children, which restricts their desire to take up a volunteer placement.

Short term placements by contrast have increased as employers are often happy to allow their employees three weeks to a month of leave to take part in a volunteer programme. For IVCOs such as Mahitahi, this has had a positive effect and meant that they can draw upon a larger pool of expertise.

For NGOs in Hungary, the majority of people who are interested in volunteering are young people and they often want to take up short term placements of around two or three months.

Increasing numbers of available volunteers?

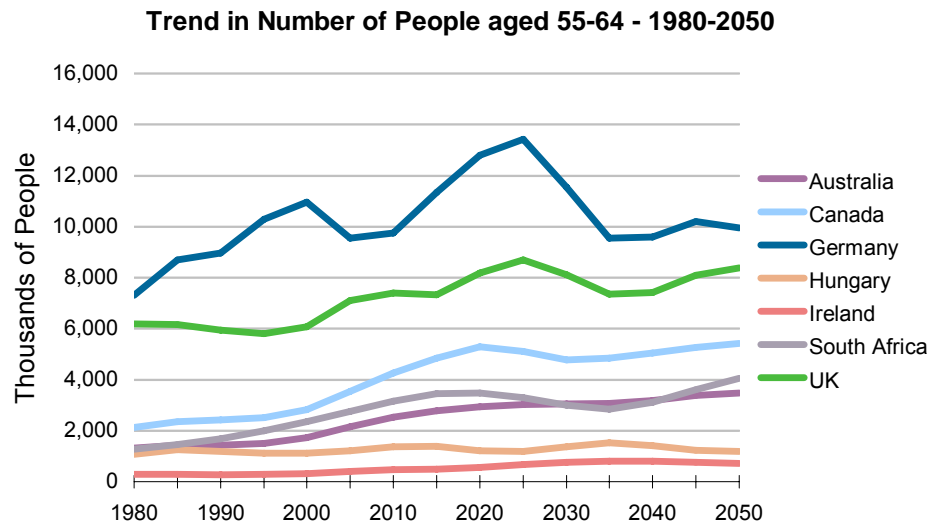
Whilst there may not be as many volunteers willing to take up a two year placement, there is evidence to suggest that more and more potential volunteers interested in working overseas. For instance, Peace Corps has 7,800 volunteers this year, the highest number for 30 years. Comhlámh have also noted an increased interest in volunteering from younger people who are keen to get into a career in development and see volunteering as a route to achieving their goal. VSO recently carried out a survey of their returned volunteers to see how international volunteering contributed to career progression within different age groups. They found that for young people and people based in the South, volunteering had a very positive impact. For other age groups however, volunteering was not necessarily good for their careers. It was agreed by IVCOs that there are a range of motivations for taking part in volunteering, both professional and also for personal enhancement.

Older people are also noted as a group who are increasingly interested in pursuing volunteer placements overseas. AKHLUE state that discussing volunteerism has increased within Germany and a possible contributing factor is the demography of Germany which is leading the government to become interested in getting all age groups involved in

volunteering. Fredskorpset have developed FK Senior and AKHLUE are currently considering how best to respond to growing interest from older people.

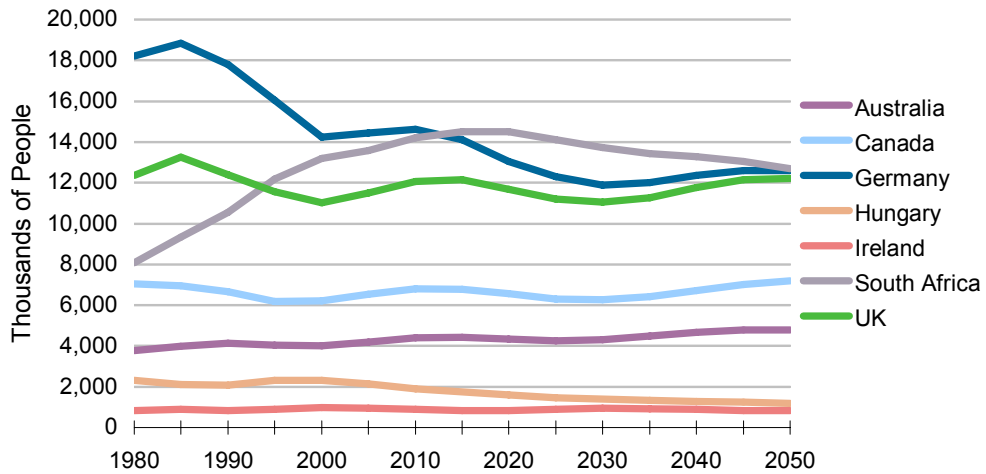
Looking ahead, demographic change may have significant consequences for IVCOs.

The graphs below show long term trends in 2 key age groups for volunteering: 15 to 29 and 55 to 64.



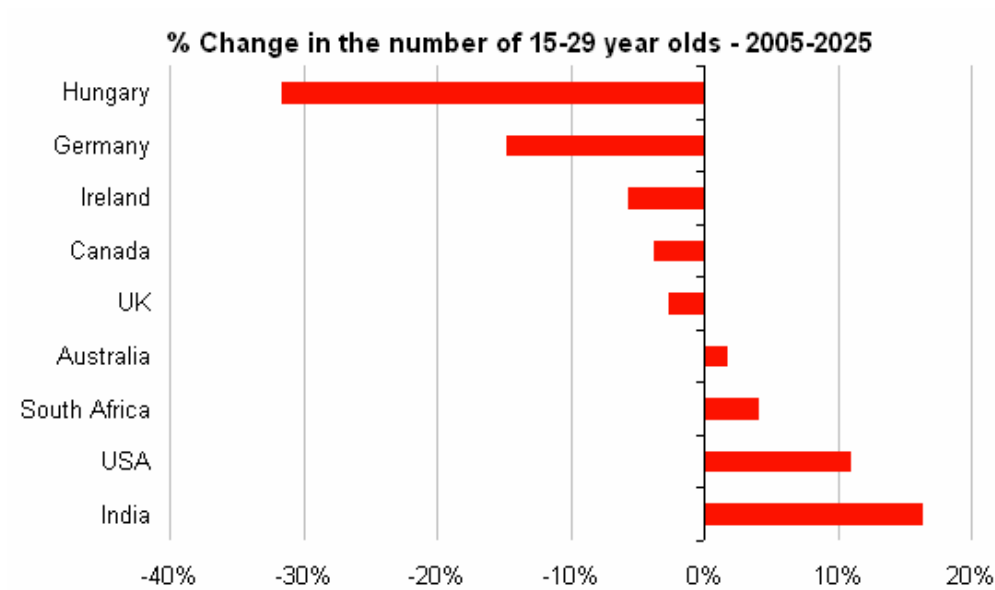
- The number of people aged 55-64 in Germany and the UK will peak in 2025 – when the ‘baby-boomer’ generation of the 1960’s reaches this age bracket
- The number of people aged 55-64 in Germany is forecast to stabilise at around 10m people by 2050
- Likewise, the number of people aged 55-64 in the UK will eventually stabilise at around 8m
- There will be some modest growth in the number of 55-64 year olds in the other countries shown
- In India (*not shown*) the number of 55-64 year olds was 38m in 1980, rising to 200m by 2050

Trend in the Number of People aged 15-29 - 1980-2050



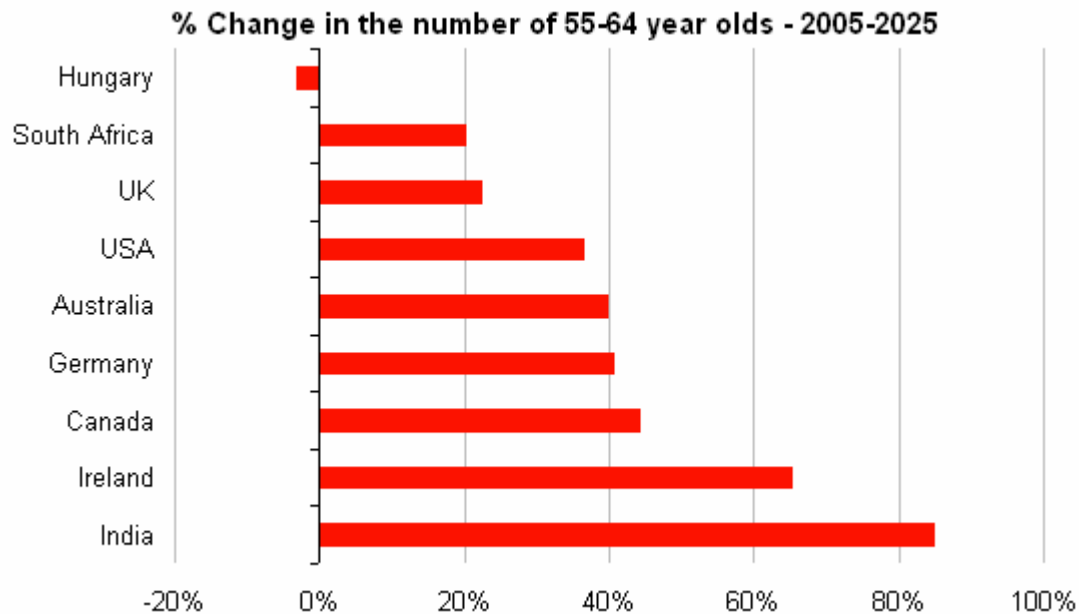
- In the countries shown, the number of people aged 15-29 will be either fairly stable or in decline in the period from now until 2050

Just looking at the shorter term over the next 20 years, it is clear to see in percentage terms what is expected to happen to these younger and older groups.



- In many European countries, the absolute number of people aged 15-29 will fall over the next 20 years
- For example, in Germany the number of people aged 15-29 is forecast to fall by 15 per cent (from 14.4m to 12.3m)

- Developed regions as a whole will see their population of 15-29s decrease by around 15 per cent in absolute terms over this period (*not shown*)
- In less developed countries, such as South Africa or India, there will still be modest growth in the number of people aged 15-29 for the foreseeable future.
- The number of people aged 15-29 in India is forecast to grow from 300m to nearly 350m (an increase of 16per cent)



- The number of people aged 55-64 is forecast to grow dramatically in all countries shown except Hungary
- The number of people aged 55-64 in India will grow from 66m to 122m (an increase of 85 per cent)
- South Asia will see its population of over 55-64s almost double over the next 20 years (*not shown*)

Possible implications:

- Number of 15-29 year olds in decline in some (especially more developed) countries
- May need to increase emphasis on recruitment of younger volunteers from less developed regions
- Number of 55-64 year olds increasing in almost all countries (at least in the medium term) - more opportunities to recruit older volunteers

Southern partners

The fact that Southern partners should be central in defining their skill requirements when selecting volunteers is not new. Changes have been reported however in the sort of skills requested by Southern partners. For instance, a move away from technical assistance and

'gap filling' towards concepts around exchange, capacity building and local skill development. Furthermore, AKHLUE note increased expectations from Southern organisations on the professional skills of volunteers. PSO also point towards a stronger possibility for South–North learning.

Promoting South to North exchange programmes was an issue discussed in 2002 and still remains a central concern in 2006. In 2006, IVCOs are still promoting South–North and South-South exchanges through working on relationships with Southern partners and as well encouraging and developing exchange programmes. CCI has been implementing a new model of volunteer co-operation over the past four years that builds partnerships between civil society organisations in Canada and civil society organisations in the South. Volunteer placements are based on the needs of the partners and the overall goals and can be North-South, South-North, and South-South.

Advocacy, development education and public engagement

An area where IVCOs have found a particularly strong niche is in development education, advocacy and public engagement. Many IVCOs maintain strong links with returned volunteers which gives them a large pool of individuals who are keen to remain engaged with international development issues. Returned volunteers can also play a role in supporting development education, especially through sharing experiences with other interested potential volunteers. CCI have strong experience in this area and have recently received additional funds to support collaborative efforts between nine Volunteer Co-operation Associations (VCAs) to carry out public engagement work and also to explore possibilities for closer collaboration in the field. Governments are often keen to support public engagement programmes to demonstrate the effectiveness of their aid programmes.

Recruitment

IVCOs are working on innovative recruitment processes in response to the changing environment. For example, VSO are now using NGOs in the Philippines and India to directly recruit skilled volunteers in addition to their usual recruitment methods. Skillshare also note that due to membership of the EU, they are not solely focused on recruiting British volunteers. This is also the case with other IVCOs who have found increased interest from potential volunteers from all over the world due to access to the internet and ICTs.

Working with Diaspora communities

The implications of migrant and diaspora communities for international volunteering were raised by IVCOs in this year's survey. VSO have recently set up a programme which targets diaspora communities and sets up volunteer placements in conjunction with partner organisations in the South. In 2006, VSO were able to place 100 volunteers under this programme.

Relationships with donors

Evaluation and impact assessment

On the whole, over the past five years there has not been a significant change in how governments and the general public perceive international volunteering. They value IVCOs experience of working with grassroots organisations, the positive aspects of face to face engagement and harnessing the potential for individuals to contribute to society. But in line with general pressure to show the impact of aid spending, there is increased need to measure and demonstrate impact of individual volunteer placements and international volunteering as a whole. It is agreed that all IVCOs are struggling with measuring and showing impact. In 2004, Development Initiatives conducted a study for FORUM drawing on experiences from IVCOs looking at the added value of volunteering using social capital as a way of explaining what it is that sets volunteering apart from other development activities. UNV have done a lot of work in this area with Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore and other FORUM members to produce publications for assessing the impact of volunteering. The need to evaluate programmes and measure impact is an issue UNV says all agencies will have faced already, and if not, it is something they will have to deal with in the future. Some of the tools used by IVCOs include individual evaluations and Most Significant Change (MSC) which is a methodology that collects stories and attempts to find themes to identify change. This tool has been utilised by IVCO members with differing levels of success. There is also an issue of demonstrating the benefit of human interaction and also unexpected learning; both concepts are difficult to capture in statistics.

Overcoming funding challenges

Fundraising and funding remains a key preoccupation evident and has consistently been an issue over the last five years. Whilst a number of IVCOs receive funding directly through government, many have to rely on donations and other funding sources.

Several IVCOs now receive direct programmatic style funding from their governments, often in the form of partnership agreements that specify levels of funding for the next four to five years. The benefit of these partnerships is two-fold, with secure, predictable funding guaranteed; these agencies are able to plan their activities. Furthermore, these partnerships often enable agencies to develop close working relationships with their governments with the potential to influence development policy. Challenges do arise for those who receive funding in this way however. Organisations in Canada for example state that the funding levels are likely to remain the same throughout the period of their agreements which can limit their plans for expansion.

Many agencies however still do not benefit from such favourable funding agreements with their governments – some receive no funding support at all. This is especially true for smaller IVCOs and for volunteer sending agencies in Hungary. This lack of financial support severely limits their ability to dispatch volunteers. Further, a lack of political support for volunteering overseas and need for public education means that their programmes receive little support at all.

As mentioned earlier in this report, there is the potential in the future for Southern governments to co-finance volunteers as more development assistance is delivered direct to governments through direct budget support.

Competition and partnerships

Competition between IVCOs for funding support remains an issue. One respondent notes that this results in IVCOs looking like each other rather than focusing on responding and representing the needs of their Southern partners.

However, there are examples of IVCOs collaborating and joining together. For instance, Uniterra links two organisations CECI and World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and VSO have recently merged with BESO. There are further examples of the positive aspects of such co-operation – one IVCO notes how co-operation with other IVCOs enables them to develop partnerships and also undertake joint activities such as producing communications on aid volumes etc. Another IVCO notes that due to the very low level of funding to IVCOs in their country, strong partnerships with other IVCOs means they can work jointly on advocacy programmes and raise the profile of volunteering.

Increasing professionalism of IVCOs

A wide range of IVCOs have contributed their perspectives to IVCO surveys over the last five years: long established agencies and relatively young organisations; IVCOs focused strongly on international volunteer co-operation and exchange – and those for whom this is only a part of a wider development remit; organisations with widely varying relationships with government.

But despite these differences, there is a shared sense of movement in certain directions: towards greater professionalism, towards more clearly defined roles and contribution to the development process. For instance, some IVCOs are pushing for stronger integration of volunteering into development and sectoral planning within national and donor governments. Whilst IVCOs continue to have to account for their contribution to development – as one agency puts it, the danger of IVCOs becoming marginalised in relation to other development interventions is not as strong as it was five years ago.

Other possible challenges for the future (key points)

Gender

In 2005 the world missed the first MDG. MDG 3 was to:

“Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by 2015”.

Despite commitment at policy level to closing the gender gap, mainstreaming gender appears to have dissipated attention. The modest aid (\$3.1 billion over the five years to 2003) earmarked to gender equality, has mostly focused on the social sectors – not recognising women’s contribution to productive economies or the benefits that accrue to women and families from infrastructure designed ‘as if gender mattered’.

Although gender is an organisational priority for some IVCOs, the issue has been barely mentioned in feedback for IVCO surveys over the last five years. Given that addressing gender is as much a matter of attitudes and relationships (where IVCOs have their forte) as spending money, it may be that FORUM members can reflect on what they can contribute

both in terms of more effective mainstreaming of gender concerns and initiatives specifically focused on the needs of women and girls.

Exclusion

One well placed commentator on aid has written that by 2040 the world may have tackled \$1 a day poverty, but may have as many as 2 billion people who, for a variety of reasons, are excluded from the mainstreams of their societies – North and South.

The debate on exclusion has much to do with the issue of identity and the forces that build the capacities of individuals and communities. IVCOs experiences in cross- cultural exchange should make it well placed to contribute to ongoing discussion in this area.

Beyond 2015 to poverty elimination

The world is more than halfway from the 1995 Social Summit – which agreed the objective of eliminating absolute poverty, to 2015 – by which time the proportion of people in poverty should be halved. Few people are thinking beyond 2015, to completing the job. As the debate on mapping out a post-2015 agenda develops, can IVCOs conceive of a world without absolute poverty? If so what conditions would need to be in place to make it a reality and what role can international volunteer co-operation play in bringing this about?

How can or should IVCOs organise to contribute on this or other issues?