



**FK Norway's triangular exchange project:** three orthopaedic clinics exchanging orthopaedic engineers between Malawi, Tanzania, Cambodia and Norway. Source: Liz Palm, FK Norway.



## Forum Discussion Paper 2016

# The interface between international and national volunteering and the implications for IVCOs (in a universal Global Goals world)

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The analysis of the data and the narrative in the paper, however, is the responsibility of the authors.

This is the eighteenth in a series of discussion papers produced by the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum), which follows on from our research work on trends in international volunteering and cooperation in recent years.

The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of Forum or its members, or of the organisations for which the authors work. The responsibility for these views rests with the authors alone.

## About Forum



The International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum) is the most significant global network of international volunteer cooperation organisations (IVCO). Forum exists to share information, develop good practice and enhance cooperation across the international volunteering and development sectors. It promotes the value of volunteering for development through policy engagement, mutual learning and by sharing innovative and good practices. Forum is a 'virtual' network, with a global membership that includes a range of organisations involved in international development, including non-government and state organisations.

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## Abstract

This paper is to encourage constructive discussion on the interface between international and national volunteering and the opportunities and challenges this provides for International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations (IVCOs) in a universal Global Goals world. It does this by following the historical evolution of IVCO activities and philosophy to the present day. From this base, the paper looks at possibilities for combining national and international volunteering for development, giving two specific examples from the UK International Citizen Service (ICS) and EU Aid Volunteers programs. It then considers the framework of volunteer infrastructure as a vantage point for understanding and promoting volunteering for development through international, national and community volunteering. The paper concludes by outlining some of the opportunities and challenges when combining international and national volunteering as well as touching on issues of equity and stipends. These can be important issues that are often left unspoken but are better discussed openly to make the best of constructive opportunities for IVCOs by combining national and international volunteering.

## Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present major challenges and opportunities to everyone concerned and engaged in addressing issues of poverty, inequality and (sustainable) development. Potentially it draws a line with the old aid and development paradigms, especially the notion of the Global North focusing on the 'problems' of the Global South and assisting to address them. IVCOs face significant challenges to historical ways of working if they are to engage effectively with the SDGs (Haddock and Devereux 2016). Relying on a North-South delivery model is unlikely to meet those challenges or take advantage of the emerging opportunities. Many IVCOs recognise this and have developed ways of responding by adapting current models of volunteering for development (V4D) or looking to innovate by applying existing experience and expertise to new spheres of operation.

It is clear the SDGs will require a greater focus on volunteering for development that connects international volunteering with national volunteering, and a greater recognition of the role of national volunteers in the process of formal and informal community development. This carries potential implications for both the role of international volunteers and IVCOs and offers the opportunity for reshaping those roles and the repositioning of IVCOs to grow the breadth of their portfolios.

The discussion below looks at one potentially important area – the interface between national and international volunteers in the same program space – which may potentially offer a new program model and also a new function for IVCOs. We recognise that while we only focus on a few examples, there are broad opportunities within the evolving context to investigate opportunities for synergies, for example with online volunteering and diaspora volunteering.

## Historical context

There is some evidence to suggest that IVCOs are increasing their engagement with national as well as international volunteering programs (Euler, Allum et al. 2016). Some international organisations have always relied upon national volunteering at some scale, and probably the Red Cross is the most well-known for this through its national societies and with volunteering recognised explicitly in its seven fundamental principles proclaimed in Vienna in 1965 (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2011, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2016). However, for international volunteering organisations focused on development rather than humanitarian responses, this has not been a major area of explicit activity, with the exception of UN Volunteers<sup>1</sup>.

Over the past fifteen years especially, IVCOs have attempted to address the challenges and opportunities of repositioning to adapt to the changing global context. The history of formalised international volunteering for development (IV4D) has been located in largely North-South aid and development paradigms, part of the channeling of aid, development support and skills transfer (or sharing). However, since its rapid growth in the 1960s, a number of external changes have posed some sharp challenges to IVCOs.

Of particular note is, firstly, the increasingly developed skills base and economic self-sufficiency in the Global South, with greater flows of workers between countries of the Global South and an emphasis on South-South and triangular cooperation. This (in some instances) has seen a decline in the relevance of mass skills input from international volunteers on development programs.

Secondly, volunteering was seen by some as an outmoded concept; the focus and language moved towards consultancy and expertise (development workers) because volunteers to some extent were seen as lacking professional and technical skills. This shift to higher-level technical skills probably helped to create an even bigger gulf between the expectations of international compared to national volunteers.

Thirdly, not unconnected to the above, there has been variation in donor interest and funding for IVCOs, although despite regular crises, volunteer funding has been largely sustained. Ongoing funding has imposed tighter control and calls for a stronger focus on development outcomes and 'value for money' together with special emphasis like shorter term, youth, IT,

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1 Terminology may be an issue here. People who volunteer through IVCOs may well find themselves in the same program space as others who are not defined in this way but whose role is not entirely as remunerated workers. Terms such as 'community mobilisers' or 'rural motivators' illustrate development program models by groups like Oxfam, World Vision or Save the Children which often pay a stipend to individuals undertaking activities in their projects which is significantly less than a normal wage. Yet neither the (I)NGO or the individuals define the role as a volunteer one. This is discussed later in the paper.

private sector or diaspora focus (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2014, HM Treasury 2015).

Fourthly, supply-side challenges in the Global North have prompted responses to recruit international volunteers for shorter terms and from the Global South to volunteer internationally in the Global South.

Finally, skills requests for volunteers in the program transformed what was initially more a young people's program to one of older, more skilled volunteers (Office of Development Effectiveness 2014). The emerging youth programs of the last fifteen years like the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program, the German Weltwaerts program or the ICS program in the UK in part revert to the traditions of youth international volunteering but also strengthen their skills to operate in a more globalised economy (Jones 2008, Fees and Gray 2011). There is also a growing emphasis on volunteering and 'public diplomacy' (Madeley 2011, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2016).

In short, up to the late 1990s there had been a gradual unravelling of long-standing models of international volunteering focused on a broad variety of development activities. In this context, the new overarching development paradigm of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provided a direction from donors where IVCOs needed to focus on repositioning for delivery against specific MDG objectives. This focus showed that national and international volunteers were often actually working in the same program space. For some, long disquieted about the one-sidedness of the IV4D model, this addressed the limited reciprocity in program and funding practice. For others, it posed questions as to the validity of using international rather than national volunteers (or locally paid staff). However, some IVCOs recognised they faced challenges of institutional survival if they simply retained the old approaches in the face of changing donor requirements and contexts.

There has not, however, been a uniform pattern of change. The traditional international volunteer model disappeared in some countries like the Netherlands, which switched to a consultancy model through SNV over 20 years ago. In other countries, the international volunteer model has grown perhaps as part of public diplomacy. In Korea, for example, its World Friends Korea program has grown and received large injections of government support over the last five years (Chung 2015). Also, IV4D models that are based in state-run (or funded) models of development cooperation have arguably been less likely to change unless explicitly dictated by government policy (often after program evaluations recommending change)<sup>2</sup>. But IVCOs have also been repositioning in a number of ways over the years: a move from skills-based service delivery to capacity building; a focus on specific volunteer groups, e.g. youth; to increase alignment with the development sector

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<sup>2</sup> One example would be the way in which DED was integrated into GIZ or how JOCV operates within JICA.

through redefining organisational purpose and/or pursuing ways to demonstrate impact. There has also been a move from just sending volunteers to a stronger development policy and advocacy role, reflected most recently in Forum's engagement with the post-2015 SDG agenda since 2011.

The development and adoption of the MDGs was an important milestone for the focus of IVCOs. For UNV, this was a reflection of the shift from a human resources program for UN programs to embracing a wider role of promoting the role of volunteering for peace and development (United Nations Development Programme 2013). The fact that UNV is a multilateral agency working to promote volunteerism with all member states and citizens globally has heightened, since its inception in 1972, an emphasis on V4D in all countries and all directions, not just North-South. This has strengthened the debate about the contribution of volunteering for development in both its international and national aspects. UNV has played an important role in addressing the institutionally separate worlds of national and international volunteering and the need for greater collaboration. The SDGs provide the international and universal framework for this and it is encapsulated in the UNV Plan of Action that will be discussed later.

## Current context

A recent survey of largely Forum members undertaken by AKLHUE suggests the current scale of IVCO engagement in North-South programs at less than 60% of their volunteers (Euler, Allum et al. 2016). It found models which embrace mobilising national volunteers either on national development programs or on South-North programs is at least 17% of all IVCO volunteer programs it surveyed.

This growing recognition of national volunteering for development is reflected in debates within Forum as to whether *international* volunteering remains sufficiently dominant in the programs of IVCOs. It also raises the question of how to embrace and adjust to what seems to be growing program diversity in the face of the evolving international development context. The available options are also affected by areas of donor institution/interest, e.g. by dictating whether funding from aid organisations can be provided for South-South volunteering or only citizens of their own countries. In parallel, there have been limitations on connecting national and international volunteering because generally national government departments could only spend funds on national matters. In Australia, for example, this meant funding for the Australian international volunteer program came from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT), while funding for national volunteering was from the Department of Community Services, which imposed constraints on where this could be spent. This is despite the fact that in recent years there was growing acceptance that departments beyond DFAT could productively work and receive funding for work in international settings, e.g. the national police force, agriculture or education departments

working in countries like Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands.

At the same time, the process and thinking behind developing the universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has taken the recognition and potential contribution of volunteering beyond the scope of its predecessor (the MDGs). All of these changes appear to point in one direction – growing recognition for the contribution of national volunteering programs across the globe. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are not just for the Global South, but for everyone – they are universal.

Taking into account that the SDGs provide greater recognition for the contribution of volunteering (United Nations General Assembly 2014) and will need voluntary contributions in order to succeed, this opens up a discourse about the scope and definition of volunteering for development as potentially including national programs in the Global North and South. We have concluded this has potential consequences both for the future role of the IVCOs and the nature of the contribution of international volunteers.

However, we begin by considering the propositions for programmatic models which aim to engage national and international volunteers within the same program space.

## Propositions for using national and international volunteers in development programs

In terms of programs, there are current examples of IVCOs mobilising national volunteers to deliver development programs (e.g. UNV) as well as international organisations such as Red Cross, which uses national volunteers extensively. There are also national-international volunteer exchanges, such as those provided by Canada World Youth or FK Norway; and of national and international volunteers integrated programmatically in the Global South, through the UK ICS program. Options for program models and their implications are discussed below.

### Responding to the SDGs and delivering development outcomes

The SDG process has changed the emphasis in V4D and challenges nation states to promote national volunteering or 'national volunteer infrastructure' (United Nations Volunteers 2004). This may well mean eventually (if not already) that using national volunteers to deliver the SDGs becomes the main mechanism for the delivery of development outcomes through volunteering. This poses challenges for IVCOs – as well as national volunteer programs – since international volunteering has been the volunteer program most commonly associated with development goals and practices and is often institutionally separate from other volunteer agencies. Bridging the separation could also provide new opportunities for both national and international agencies if accompanied by lateral thinking, collaborative action and a supportive enabling environment



from donor governments beyond previous national and international silos.

The SDGs process and adoption now implies a commitment to V4D in all nation states from amongst their own communities. It facilitates a renewed dialogue between the UN system and nation states in terms of the contribution volunteering can make and how member states can best engage with that. National volunteer programs exist in many countries, for example Togo, Liberia, Papua New Guinea and South Africa<sup>3</sup>. In many countries, this is taking place in the context of challenges of youth unemployment and a general lack of employment/earning opportunities but also as an opportunity to strengthen national identity (Caprara, Mati, Obadare & Perold 2012).

With the growing opportunity and logic for national volunteering programs to strengthen, IVCOs need to consider their own roles as organisations that have the experience and knowledge of running V4D programs. IVCOs could therefore, if agile, be well positioned to run or collaborate more explicitly on V4D programs in their own countries or support volunteer infrastructure in other countries. UNV has done this for some time; VSO and France Volontaires are also now contributing to initiatives in this space.

One potential proposition would be to facilitate volunteering at different scales using national volunteers, but this means the role of international volunteers may need to be redefined with more attention to complementarities with national and local volunteers, not just national partners. Otherwise, there would be a risk that international volunteers could increasingly be seen as taking on roles that national volunteers would or could have done; this would be a repetition of the challenge to IVCOs that international volunteers take the jobs that nationals would otherwise have done.

While it is important to recognise the potential change in roles in V4D, it is important not to lose the distinctive approaches of both national and international volunteers. In the likely models to emerge, we anticipate a growing emphasis on national volunteering as the agent of delivery of development outcomes. In this context, international volunteers could have an important role to play, but this is more likely in terms of contributors within state funded and managed development programs or as 'agents of change', bringing an external view and perspective. The engagement with the EU Aid Volunteers program pilot will be discussed later and demonstrates the sorts of opportunities that this can open up – even if it's not the main intention of the program itself.

Alongside this are other programs, characteristic of the youth experiential and learning programs, where models of engagement between national and international volunteering might generate mutually beneficial outcomes. Such outcomes may be in the areas of

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<sup>3</sup> Small regional schemes also exist such as ECOWAS and the African Union Volunteer Program.

knowledge, understanding and development of the volunteers, but are perhaps less significant in the most common direct practical provision of SDG objectives<sup>4</sup>. However, even in the SDGs, at closer look, there is room for these more nuanced practices and values propositions. For example, related to one SDG 2 target: “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.” This target resonates strongly with volunteering that focuses particularly on concerns like cross-cultural understanding, reciprocal exchange, global citizenship, reconciliation or peace.

### Added value in linking national and international volunteers in programs

Bringing international and national volunteers together within a program opens up new opportunities on the counterpart model. Historically, even when the role of the international volunteer was primarily service delivery, the importance of the counterpart model was expounded as a basis for sustainable development. The notion of strengthening the capacity of a local counterpart (while part of a mutual exchange process of skills, experience, culture and knowledge) was prevalent in program design.

However, the models of a formal counterpart were most likely to engage the international volunteer with a local employee, someone who would continue the role when the international volunteer departed. Informally, the international volunteer would link with many people inside and outside of the organisation they were connected to, but this would not necessarily be part of the program design and a direct link with other volunteers would not be formally identified. Local employees and volunteers would also assist the international volunteers to understand local social and cultural norms and often provide local wisdom about the local context.

Programs designed to link national and international volunteers represent an opportunity to *formally* connect the work of international and national volunteers. One such case study is ICS, where the model of bringing national and international volunteers together was based on the evidence of the VSO Global Xchange program and a values proposition that a

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to recognise the potential indirect impacts of learning and experiential programs in terms of regenerating societal-wide commitment in the Global North to support the Global South in achieving poverty reduction and economic and social justice.

youth learning program for the Global North should not be a one-way experience<sup>5</sup>.

However, within the ICS program framework, categories of international and national volunteers are not uniform. For example, the demands of donors for international volunteers to be more inclusive of their home society leads to levels of differentiation of international volunteers chosen to participate in the program along, for example, lines of ethnic origin, gender, disability and social class, amongst others. Tackling the lack of diversity in international volunteering participants is important, as reflected in the writing of critical development observers who have complained about international volunteering as affected by neocolonialism or neoliberalism (Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011). And while on any program the essence of the 'international volunteer' has been considered to be relatively undifferentiated, as discussed earlier, the 'national volunteer' could be either someone recruited onto the program from *outside* the host community or a *member* of the host community. This differentiation between 'national' and 'community' volunteers underpins divergent views on the purpose and aims of the program<sup>6</sup>.

These considerations open up issues beyond the counterpart model, to one of equity, diversity and interconnectedness. Where the intention to link international and national volunteers is essentially values driven or where the contradictions are more exposed by bringing them together, the challenge of equity emerges and it is difficult to resolve. These were highlighted in the IFRC Global Review of Volunteering (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015). It said:

*There is a particular need for more nuanced research and knowledge development in partnership with volunteer engaging organisations across the global South. Without such a process of learning, volunteering's universality risks being a smokescreen for ethnocentrism and unequal power relations, rather than something whose diversity can ensure a balance between a strategic global agenda, opportunities for global learning, and local ownership and effectiveness. (p.10)*

## Program case studies

At this point, it is useful to consider some case studies of programs that have provided some

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5 As set out in the case study below, DFID, as the donor for the program, were not interested in this component of the program in the early stages. ICS was an extension of NCS and therefore focused entirely on UK volunteers in its original concept. It is likely that, given the early internal scepticism about the program and its development outcomes, the introduction of a national volunteer element made ICS a more attractive proposition to the DFID development agenda.

6 National volunteers from outside the community may generate an experience closer to that of the international volunteer, but sustainability of development opportunities are arguably better addressed by engaging community volunteers who will provide continuity.

opportunity to insert the constructive interconnection between international and national volunteers. Neither program was designed to bring together national and international volunteers, but at least one allowed a successful leveraging to achieve this as a development opportunity and both have the opportunity to do so.

## Case study: International Citizen Service (ICS)

One example of the recent attempts to bring together national and international volunteers within the same program space is the UK International Citizen Service (ICS). ICS was introduced in 2011 as the international component of the new National Citizen Service, which was aimed at 16-17-year olds in the UK. The ICS element was aimed at UK-based 18-23-year olds to offer an international experience. Initially, although the program was located within the Department for International Aid and Development (DFID), it was closely supervised by the Cabinet Office, since it was of particular interest to the new Prime Minister.

In its pilot stage, there was no requirement to involve national volunteers. However, the lead member of the consortia, VSO, had a tradition of running youth volunteer programs which brought together national and international volunteers on an exchange model – Global Xchange had been a flagship program in this manner – and in its long-term programs had moved away from the North-South model, recruiting volunteers on a South-South basis and also engaging in diaspora programs.

In this context, VSO set a clear course that ICS would be developed as a program that encouraged the combination on placement of national and UK volunteers. While this was seen as a desirable objective in its second iteration, this was firmed up in its third iteration, which set out to make this a program that had equal numbers of national and UK-based volunteers. This was reflected in the promotion of the program in terms of the number of volunteers. It currently operates at around 7,000 volunteers per annum, of which 50% come from the UK and 50% in-country or national volunteers.

This was not a straightforward journey. On one hand, DFID had been required to run a program for UK volunteers and the funding, whether in its initial grant form or in the performance-based contract, related to the delivery of UK volunteers. When the program was established, DFID had asked the UK IVCOs to develop a model within some specific parameters, which did not include national volunteers. DFID needed to be convinced that bringing national volunteers explicitly into the program model was both important and desirable. On the other hand, VSO had to convince the consortia members of the merit of this model when a number of the agencies had not previously worked in this way and when the resources provided by DFID could not easily be adapted to funding national volunteers. The merits of the program model needed time to work through while the nature of the financial contract offered more flexibility around resource allocation. The experience of ICS indicates the role that IVCOs can, and perhaps need to, play in

developing the recognition of the contribution of national volunteers in the face of donor indifference and historic IVCO practice.

The mission of ICS embraces the approach of bringing national and international youth volunteers together. This is set out on the ICS website:

*It's a development program that brings together young people from the UK and developing countries to volunteer in some of the poorest communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. (International Citizen Service 2016)*

In the original VSO submission of 'technical evaluation', the proposed mission statement reads:

*We bring together young people from developing countries and from the UK to work alongside some of the poorest communities in the world. This work in partnership reduces poverty in those communities, and supports young volunteers to grow and develop towards a lifetime as active citizens, working globally and locally. (VSO 2015, p.26)*

*One of the most important elements of ICS is that all programs involve volunteers from the UK (UKVs) working alongside in-country volunteers (ICVs). Together they can achieve so much more than either might achieve alone. The UKVs are able to look at a situation with fresh eyes and ask questions that will prompt new thinking. The ICVs have much greater understanding of the local context – they know why things have been the way they are. (VSO 2015, p.44)*

While ICS contains a variety of program models, all are underpinned by a program philosophy which sees value both to volunteers and the local communities in:

*deliberately teaming up young people from different backgrounds and cultures... to harness the energy that is created from bringing 'insiders' and 'outsiders' together, energising change processes and kick-starting local efforts. The ICS model combines several strands of best volunteering practice and the growth of in-country volunteers across the programme over the past three years is one of the major success stories of ICS to date. (VSO 2015, p.59)*

## **The challenge of defining in-country volunteers or national volunteers on the ICS program**

One lesson that can be drawn from the development of the ICS model concerns the diversity of the role ICVs or national volunteers have in the program. This is recognised within the program where ICVs can be differentiated into *national* or *community* volunteers, who

must follow different processes, systems and rules.

*Delivery agencies and local partners recruit In-Country Volunteers (including team leaders) from either the communities in which the team are working, regionally or nationally. Nationally and regionally recruited volunteers follow a similar volunteer journey to those from the UK in terms of recruitment, assessment and training. (VSO 2015, p.59)<sup>7</sup>*

This is plausible for the program models which effectively bring both UKVs and ICVs from outside of the host community. However, for in-country volunteers (ICVs) who are drawn *from* host communities, there is by definition a different experience<sup>8</sup>. They are not on the program as a total experience and within ICS are expected to demonstrate a level of formal commitment in terms of the priority they give to the program, their engagement in activities and the time they allocate to ICS<sup>9</sup>.

This represents both a compromise and contradiction in the ICS model. For example, community volunteers in practice will not be subject to the same restrictions as the 'outside' volunteers in terms of movement within and/or outside of the community; they are unlikely to live in host homes; and fundamentally they will be within their own community. At the same time, they provide a potential for the sustainability of development activity when the 'outsiders' leave, whether UK or nationally recruited ICVs. One example of this concerns the ICS program in Lesotho:

*One of the hosting partners with the Skillshare International ICS program in Lesotho is the **Olympic Youth Ambassador Program (OYAP)** who are part of the Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC). OYAP is a youth lead program that uses sport to reach young people in disadvantaged communities with the aim of developing their life skills and addressing some of the many social challenges they face. Skillshare International assessed that OYAP had the capacity to host ICS teams*

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7 The term in-country volunteer (ICV) tends to be used in ICS to describe ICS volunteers recruited from the host country. The ICS distinction between UK volunteers and ICVs can be seen as a specific form of the categorisation of international and national volunteers.

8 The following discussion focuses on community volunteers, but nationally or regionally recruited volunteers are not unproblematic in the way this may be experienced by the sourcing communities. While in one sense the IVCO is seen as an agent of developing a community, removing young people onto programs elsewhere and so taking them out of their community may be seen as a contradiction in the practice of IVCOs.

9 "...in view of the range of existing responsibilities and commitments they will have in their home community, (community volunteers) must, for example, be in a position to make ICS their priority for the 10-12 weeks when they join the ICS team, with their family's agreement if appropriate; they must commit to working and learning with the ICS team for 5 hours a day, 5 days a week and be available to participate in ICS social and cultural integration activities. They should be in a counterpart pair with a UK volunteer throughout the placement. Other individuals from within the project community who engage with the ICS teams and project activities but do not meet these criteria are not considered ICS volunteers." VSO (2015). Youth Volunteering Scheme: Technical evaluation, VSO,, p.156.

*and OYAP nominated their assistant coordinator, Nthona Tsoanyae, to work as the ICS team leader, recognising her professional and leadership skills. The partnership with ICS has strengthened youth leadership within the LNOC itself as a result of the new strategies that Nthona introduced at OYAP. With support and regular meetings with the Skillshare International ICS project coordinator, Nthona and the ICS teams she has led have strengthened OYAP's presence at various networking forums and increased access to funding. Nthona is also able to support a growing group of ICS alumni in-country who have joined the local OYAP networks across Lesotho. OYAP's capacity to effectively operate as an ICS hosting organisation continues to grow. (VSO 2015, p.23)*

All volunteers involved in development typically look for the sustainability of what they have achieved, and for ICS volunteers on a short-term placement, this is especially acute. Using ICS to enhance volunteering by bringing community volunteers into the program offers the potential of improved sustainability and recognition of the contribution of all volunteers.

It is entirely possible that ICS could have been constructed to define community volunteers as outside of the program. Also, there will be other community volunteers who are linked to local partner organisations who sit outside the ICS definition, but who volunteer on the same program as ICS community volunteers. Programmatically, drawing the line as to who sits inside the ICS definition and who sits outside of it is not straightforward; but it also becomes significant if the programmatic interest is to maximise the contribution of volunteering for development, since the contributions of those outside of the ICS definition are at risk of being less recognised and less valued. Perhaps the ICS experience to date poses the question that if the UK volunteers are placed at the centre of the program, to what extent can the contribution of volunteering for development be effectively recognised and supported as whole?

### **Working together – the challenge of equity**

The challenge of equity – some would prefer equality – is not new in volunteering for development. Arguably there has been an historical unease about the extent to which the experience of international volunteers is more beneficial to them than to the communities and organisations in which they are placed. In some models, this concern is subsumed within the general perspective on who benefits from aid and development. In other cases, it has seen rigorous review of program models and, for example, a focus on issues such as reciprocity. In programs that bring together national and international volunteers, issues of equity are arguably much sharper.

To its credit, ICS is aware there are issues of equity and looks at ways this can be addressed.

*Challenges include not sharing a common language and the often different*

*perception of ICVs and UKVs by host homes and project partners. Each challenge needs to be recognised and worked through with the people and communities involved. ICS provides a program structure that delivers powerful results and it is in the support and guidance to help teams work through issues of difference and equality that powerful learning takes place. There is no blueprint to make diverse teams work alongside each other as equals but we know that as they work towards this, volunteers develop themselves and contribute more effectively to their project work and the wider community. (VSO 2015, p.60)*

One of the central strengths of a program such as ICS is the way in which it presents as a learning journey for volunteers, albeit one that gives little time for the processes to work their way through. As recognised, relationships between national and international volunteers may be difficult and have a significant impact on the outcomes of the program for local communities.

However, the program itself sets some of the parameters within which equity may emerge and may represent the form in which those issues are discussed. The focus appears to be on the issue of equity between UKVs and ICVs. As we have seen, attempts have been made to ensure the formal pathways are similar in terms of recruitment and preparation and this potentially extends to stipends and living arrangements. It is interesting to note, however, which issues are part of a conscious process of formal equity and which are not.

For example, on the volunteer journey, there is strong commitment, and indeed requirement, for UK volunteers to fundraise for the program<sup>10</sup>. Such a requirement does not apply to ICVs. In this context, it is not seen as an important part of the ICV journey. When volunteers meet, this poses two discussions: one amongst the UK volunteers about how much each volunteer raised in funds; another as to why the UK volunteers had to fundraise, but not the ICVs. The question here is whether what presents as a lack of equity is part of a learning process or a distraction; or perhaps a reinforcement of perspectives and practice of power in North-South relationships.

Another question concerns equity between ICS volunteers and wider communities. Significant requirements are placed on ensuring UKVs are representative of the UK population against a number of criteria. This stipulation does not yet apply to ICVs. In addition, establishing equity between volunteers within the program may mean a level of inequity with the local community. Paying stipends to ICVs may equalise with UKVs, but may then differentiate with the income of local community members. If medical insurance is provided to all ICS volunteers, does this achieve equity, even if it means community

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, the origin of this concerned the UK government expecting a level of financial contribution from financially better off households, but VSO channelled this into a model of fundraising.



volunteers secure a better arrangement than others in their community? The attempts to put in place formal arrangements for equality/equity can easily have the opposite effect, or at least pose sharp questions.

As noted earlier, the issue of equity has always been an issue; but it has been one primarily between international volunteers and the host community; what the ICS experience shows us concerns the greater complexity of addressing equity in a triangular relationship between UKVs, ICVs and the host community.

### **The ICS experience and repositioning**

The ICS experience has some significant learning about repositioning of IVCOs, some of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Oversimplifying, in its time, the ICS program has been delivered by two kinds of organisations: specialist IVCOs focused on development outcomes and specialist youth agencies focused on working internationally. Where ICS became located in those organisations owed something to those traditions. It is clear that for some of the consortia, this did involve a substantial repositioning. One example of this was recognised in the proposal for the ICS contract in 2015:

*Historically, consortium members with strong existing national volunteering programs had tended to organise their UK international volunteering recruitment very independently from their work with in-country volunteers. ICS has enabled the two sides to be consciously brought together more strongly. (ibid, p.32)<sup>11</sup>*

The impact of ICS has been to transform a number of UK-based IVCOs to have a volunteer program model that engages as much with national volunteers as with international volunteers. ICS has been a catalyst for change, leading to a major refocusing for a number of the consortia members as they have attempted to integrate ICS programming within their own program structures. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity, as IVCOs become the implementers of V4D using a significant input from national volunteers; and youth organisations have refocused on development outcomes. Such a process has resulted in organisational restructuring and changes in organisational culture in some instances, as ICS became the core activity for many organisations, which has knock-on effects on the viability of other program models. The demands from DFID to rapidly increase the size of the program exacerbated the effects of those changes (HM Treasury 2015)<sup>12</sup>.

This process is far from complete, but what it potentially offers concerns significant

<sup>11</sup> The ICS program had been managed within VSO separate to the other programs and was still being managed in this way at the time of this proposal. That has also changed in recent months.

<sup>12</sup> The Conservative party manifesto committed to a tripling of the program.

learning as to how IVCOs reposition to offer both international and national volunteering to contribute to development outcomes. This connects to what we have called volunteer infrastructure in this paper.

### Case study: EU Aid Volunteers program

The EU Aid Volunteers program gives a different case study of openings that are emerging for IVCOs and other volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) to demonstrate their expertise and open up new areas for collaboration and funding, in this case in the area of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid is not an area typically understood as a common area for international volunteers to serve in – let alone in collaboration with national volunteers. However, this has long been an area of significant work by UNV through its Peace Division working in conflict areas from Timor Leste to Sudan, Solomon Islands and the Balkans. There has also been significant work done in the interface between humanitarian aid and development to build resilience, reflected, for example, in Progressio's three year project after Hurricane Mitch in 2005 (Mowforth 2001, Devereux 2010) or UNVs work after the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 (Goodyear and Rofi 2007).

When the EU proclaimed it would set up a humanitarian aid volunteer program, the humanitarian aid community reacted with deep concern at the prospect of sending inexperienced volunteers into complex humanitarian disasters. They felt the priority needed to be squarely on the conflict or disaster-beset communities, not on novice helpers with interest and concern but potentially lacking specific and targeted expertise and experience. After some debate, it was agreed that the program would be best suited to activities once pressing humanitarian issues were resolved or preparing for them, rather than as a first response. There was also agreement to do a pilot program initially, to iron out any issues before the full program would be rolled out on a permanent basis. Forum member IVCOs France Volontaires and VSO successfully participated in the pilot of the new program<sup>13</sup>.

The EU Aid Volunteers program identified through its 2014 Needs Assessment workshop and survey that with scarce resources, humanitarian organisations would increasingly depend on volunteers. It also highlighted that technical specialists in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) as well as livelihoods and resilience/climate change adaptation were among those most in demand:

*global trends suggest a continuous need for humanitarian workers. With less funding, organisations may rely ever increasingly on volunteers. **Demand for specific skills sets/professional profiles:** technical skills largely disaster-specific; they are also a*

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<sup>13</sup> FOCSIV and Comhlámh were also involved in the pilot but information about their experience was not available at time of writing.

*group that is most difficult to recruit, yet with highest demand. The survey showed that technical specialist in WASH, livelihoods and resilience/climate change adaptation (R/CCA) are among the most in demand. (The European Commission's DG for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection 2014)*

In other words, there was a growing demand for humanitarian workers and an increasing reliance on volunteers, given resource constraints. This assessment provides a clear opportunity for engagement by some IVCOs in Europe, where they have mobilised expertise in this area. In addition, the rationale for the EU Aid Volunteers initiative explicitly highlights the domestic focus of most volunteering schemes in Europe and the value of going beyond that through practical solidarity to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities. This provides a particular niche for IVCOs with strong experience and expertise working in developing countries. As DG Echo says:

*The majority of existing volunteering schemes in Europe have a domestic focus and few provide opportunities to support humanitarian aid. The EU Aid Volunteers initiative will bring volunteers and organisations from different countries to work together in joint projects in areas such as resilience-building, early warning and disaster risk management, as a practical expression of solidarity with communities vulnerable to humanitarian crises. (DG ECHO 2016)*

Beyond the EU level niche there is also global recognition of the importance of voluntary action in proactively preparing communities and citizens to deal effectively with disasters. Their important contribution to disaster risk reduction is highlighted in the Sendai Framework for 2015-2030. It says:

*States should encourage ...: (a) Civil society, volunteers, organized voluntary work organizations and community-based organizations to participate, in collaboration with public institutions, to ... provide specific knowledge and pragmatic guidance ... and plans for disaster risk reduction; engage in the implementation of local, national, regional and global plans and strategies; contribute to and support public awareness, a culture of prevention and education on disaster risk; and advocate for resilient communities and an inclusive and all-of-society disaster risk management that strengthen synergies across groups, as appropriate. (United Nations 2015, p.23)*

The framework clearly recognises volunteerism's distinctive and crosscutting role in building a culture of public awareness and understanding to foster resilience and inclusive disaster risk reduction and recovery that enhances collaboration and synergies across the work of different groups. There is a distinction often made between local and expert assistance in emergencies, which does not always strengthen and affirm the preparation, resilience and voluntary action of local people. This is despite the fact that, in the immediate aftermath of disasters and for the long term, they play the most crucial role. As Dr Joshua Whittaker notes:

*In many cases the first people on the scene of an emergency or a disaster are the local volunteers. The initial response is often spontaneous at the local level by untrained people. Then later, the emergency services teams arrive and these initial efforts are often sidelined or stifled. At the other end of the incident, when the formal relief and recovery services have finished, the community is still there dealing with these problems, largely through its volunteers. (Bruce 2014)*

The main objective of the France Volontaires-coordinated project, Eurosha Volunteers, was to develop a framework guaranteeing the added value and the security of European citizens' commitment to international humanitarian aid through volunteering, in order to increase the effectiveness and inclusiveness of humanitarian aid (DG ECHO 2013).

26 young volunteers from different EU member states (Italy, Czech Republic, France, Slovenia, Hungary, Belgium, Poland, Bulgaria) and eight volunteers from four pilot countries (Burundi, Chad, Kenya, Central African Republic) were selected over the summer of 2012, trained in France in September-October 2012, and then deployed for six months from mid-October 2012 to mid-April 2013 to these four countries, as country teams of four/five European volunteers and two national volunteers in each country.

An independent evaluation conducted for France Volontaires by Groupe URD highlighted findings and lessons learned from the France Volontaires pilot. It noted the innovative and collaborative nature of the cross sectoral project as a "rich and rewarding experience" that brought together nine organisations from five different European member states and combining "their expertise in humanitarian action, volunteering and Humanitarian Information Management (HIM)" (Patinet, Lear et al. 2013 p.5). It said "The combination of EU volunteering and open data for Humanitarian Information Management (HIM), supported by a network of online volunteers, represents an **ambitious dual innovation for the humanitarian and volunteering sectors alike.**" (Patinet, Lear, Sarrat & De Geoffroy 2013, p.5). It achieved this while maintaining three distinct objectives, "including: testing volunteer management standards for the future EU Aid Volunteers programme, and conducting 'real' collaborative mapping projects for crisis prevention." (Patinet, Lear, Sarrat & De Geoffroy 2013, p.6).

The evaluation concluded that the project successfully responded to "emerging needs and challenges facing the humanitarian sector". It also highlighted the way the open source information management piloting "responded to the crucial need for increased mutual knowledge and collaboration between local and international emergency management actors. This pilot project succeeded in fulfilling the needs and desires of young European and African people to volunteer for the EU" (Patinet, Lear, Sarrat, & De Geoffroy, 2013 p.7).

While public documents reflecting on the project are limited in detail, the 2014 expert workshop summary makes clear the need for better grassroots assessment of local level needs from the perspective of hosting organisations and the local community (The

European Commission's DG for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection 2014).

Clearly, giving greater license to the long experience of IVCOs like France Volontaires and the opportunity to strengthen national volunteer engagement alongside EU volunteers could help in this regard.

Another pilot project, VinCaB, addressed the interaction of national and international volunteers directly in its design. VinCaB – Volunteers in Capacity Building Projects – was coordinated by the German Red Cross, with partners: Bulgarian, British, Finnish, Latvian, Croatian, Netherlands Red Cross, German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), Croatian National Protection and Rescue Directorate (NPRD), Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). This project organised for each EU volunteer to have a 'partner volunteer' in the target organisation, with the aim of contact before and during deployment and capacity building knowledge exchanged from volunteer-to-volunteer (DG ECHO 2013).

The main objective of the project was to create an effective European Voluntary Humanitarian Deployment at local partner organisations, focusing on resilience.

*The partners agreed to create, develop and to test a framework in which volunteers could contribute to capacity building projects and strengthen response and resilience capacities in third countries (partner countries were Paraguay, Costa Rica, Columbia and Kosovo).*

An additional Resilience Project was implemented by VSO International with partners and host organisations in the Philippines, Pakistan and India using EU Aid Volunteers (EUAVs) to strengthen local organisations' capacities in resilience, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster management (DM). Key project components included recruitment, preparation and deployment of 17 expert volunteers working with host organisations for a collective total of 135 months, provision of 82 capacity building workshops, and provision of online mentoring by seven EU-based mentors for seven host organisations and volunteers on local volunteer management systems.

The VSO assessment of this project suggested that, from the approaches tested in their pilot project, distance mentoring, e-volunteering, workshops and placements then in-country placements were the most relevant way to build capacity of local organisations. Other approaches by other kinds of organisations may well find other methods depending on the context and their prior experience and ways of working.

The pilot established that there is a range of areas where EUAVs can play a relevant role, including in the provision of expertise, technical skills and training, support to locally-led organisational development processes, introduction of innovative approaches and also through discrete pieces of work requested and acted on by the host organisations.



What is less clear is how the potentially distinctive advantage of connecting national and international volunteers can be used to strengthen the resilience of communities where EUAVs work both in the short term and the long term. The constraints of the pilots perhaps did not allow IVCOs to expand on these possibilities in explicit ways because this was not an explicit aim of the program guidelines. This is unfortunate as it may have brought a value-add for long term recovery and autonomy which linked relief to rehabilitation and development, through strengthening local volunteering.

The EUAVs provided a range of skills from technical expert disaster risk reduction skills to ones more relevant to organisational development processes. VSO's experience was that organisational development roles tend to need longer placements of nine months or more to enable the necessary relationship building and participatory approaches these entail. Its experience also suggested that the

mitigation and risk reduction phases of the disaster risk management cycle are the most appropriate phases for EUAV input (Hanley 2015).

The evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteer pilots highlights the value-adding of volunteers being well trained in both humanitarian principles and culturally sensitive ways of working that cement the principle of 'do no harm' with local communities. It also recognised that expertise and experience in development projects can improve the internationally recognised best practice of LRRD, or Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (ICF International 2014).

The new EU Aid Volunteer program commenced in 2016 with €147.9 million of EU funding for deployment, capacity building and technical assistance, network and communication (DG ECHO 2016).

The 2016 workplan for the EU Aid Volunteers program includes explicit reference in "Expected results" to, amongst other capacities like strengthening sending and hosting organisations "in areas such as disaster risk management, preparedness and response as well as linking relief, rehabilitation and development, **strengthening local volunteering**

**in third countries**". Also, under eligibility criteria, they require that: "At least one applicant or partner from countries participating in the program in each project must have been active **in the field of volunteer management for at least 3 years**" (European Commission 2015:9). They also highlight that Eligible activities include: Study visits of up to 3 months for **key paid staff or volunteers from third countries** to be based in European applicant/partner organisations" (European Commission 2015, p.8).

The workplan again explicitly highlights opportunities for 1. strengthening local volunteering, 2. recognising the importance of expertise in volunteer management, and 3. providing opportunities for reciprocal learning by giving national volunteers from developing countries opportunities to spend time with European partner organisations. This demonstrates new resourced opportunities for IVCOs beyond their traditional North-South operation and including national-international volunteer connections on the basis of their historical experience and expertise.

## Volunteer infrastructure

Volunteer infrastructure encompasses "the systems, mechanisms and instruments needed to ensure an environment where volunteerism can flourish" (United Nations Volunteers 2004:7). Volunteer infrastructure provides a way to understand the relationship between national and international volunteering. It is also a way in which IVCOs can identify their role in terms of repositioning, offering a related but different path to the options of simply focusing on program implementation or development outcomes at community or organisational level. Indeed, it offers a way to address the challenges of scaling up that contributing to the SDGs poses.

UNV has identified common elements that can work together to strengthen volunteerism as a strategic resource for development, grouped into four key factors<sup>14</sup>:

1. reaching a common understanding and appreciation of volunteerism;
2. establishing and nurturing an enabling environment;
3. adopting a diversity of approaches to mobilizing and facilitating volunteerism, and;
4. ensuring sustainable resourcing.

UNV suggests these are central for developing an effective volunteer infrastructure and helping meet development challenges. Volunteer infrastructure also provides an appropriate rationale to think about how national and international volunteering can work together in a more purposeful and conscious way.

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations Volunteers 2004, p.34

Experiences in a myriad of countries demonstrate the power of this approach. UNV has supported volunteer infrastructure in many countries with significant results (Haruna, Curtain et al. 2014) but VSO and France Volontaires have also made positive contributions in this space beyond the conventional international volunteer placement model.

In Rwanda, the government has explicitly tried at a policy level to “Establish a national coordination framework to effectively harness the national and international volunteer resources at the country’s disposal” (Republic of Rwanda National Itorero Commission 2012).

In Peru, the SVNN Soy Voluntari@ National Network (SVNN) creates a pluralistic setting for coordination at the national level that is a forum for dialogue among civil society and the public private and international sectors.

*The diversity of sectors represented in the network strengthens its architecture and enables greater impact. Civil society, public sector, international sector and private sector each find in the network an appropriate forum to share ideas, information and development projects that will make volunteers visible. (Perez Chueca and Artica Martinez 2015, p.25)*

UNV has been partnering in Peru through national and international volunteers to develop volunteerism and support the country in establishing legislation and enabling structures for volunteering.

*In July 2015, the new Department of Volunteerism, together with the new Regulations of the General Law of Volunteerism, were officially launched in a ceremony at the Presidential Palace with the Peruvian President. The new volunteerism regulation establishes a National Volunteering Commission to formalize regional volunteerism, register volunteer-involving organizations nationwide, and help volunteers qualify for housing and obtain scholarships, as well as health insurance, among other incentives. UNV has accompanied the process by presenting and promoting the Volunteerism Department and the new Regulation in seven regions of Peru where the Soy Voluntari@ National Network is present. (United Nations Volunteers 2016)*

Why is this structured bringing together of national and international volunteers important? A report by Comhlámh and VOSESA explains:

*Too often international volunteering is de-linked from the realities of local volunteer engagement. Rather than operating in isolation of or in competition with local volunteering, international volunteers should be encouraged to engage with local volunteers. Not only does this ensure that volunteering of all kinds is valued, but that it maximises the potential for mutual learning. There are a variety of ways in*



which VSAs may engage in promoting local volunteering:

- *Design opportunities for international volunteers to work closely with local volunteers;*
- *Invest in advocacy to promote and recognise the value of local volunteering;*
- *Invest in the promotion of South-South or South-North volunteering programs.*

This is supported by other research. Restless Development identified the specific lack of research of the advantages of “promoting international volunteering alongside national and community volunteering methodologies for development” compared to the individual benefits which were relatively well covered (Wijeyesekera 2011). Perold also spells out the lack of research and its importance:

*International volunteers often serve in host organisations alongside local volunteers who, on a daily basis, support the host organisations to provide much needed services in health care, education, renewable energy and other sectors to local communities. However, little is known about the process of engagement between the international and local volunteers.... In view of the growth of international volunteering worldwide, a number of questions must be asked about the context of international volunteering and its impact on all parties – international volunteers, local volunteers, beneficiaries, host communities and host organisations. (Perold 2011, p.XXIX)*

Recently, Perold has shone some light on this issue:

*(Community-based) forms of volunteering in Africa are often overlooked with greater attention being paid to international volunteers, volunteers who offer professional services, or employer volunteers. Yet it is these community-based or local volunteers who form the backbone of the volunteer force in many African countries delivering key services to their neighbours and fellow community members. (Perold and Graham 2016, p.125)*

The prevailing models of V4D do not effectively or explicitly address the contribution of national and community volunteers to IVCO programs, which often makes them invisible. By focusing on volunteer infrastructure as a central concern, this can enable the issue to be addressed, which the current paradigm seems not to have done. Volunteer infrastructure highlights the importance of an enabling environment for all types of volunteerism and recognition of its value and appropriate resourcing. It brings significant opportunities for IVCOs to position themselves to engage with the complexity of the interplay between the different forms of volunteering for development in a conscious and explicit way, promoting both the wider contribution and role of volunteering and so meeting the SDG agenda in ways more narrow approaches do not. IVCOs can engage with these opportunities through,

amongst other opportunities, engaging with the UN Plan of Action for the next Decade and Beyond for integrating volunteerism into peace and development (United Nations General Assembly 2015).

The **UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action** identifies three strategic objectives that would allow volunteerism to contribute effectively to peace, development and humanitarian efforts (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). These are:

1. Strengthen people's ownership of the development agenda through enhanced civic engagement and enabling environments for citizen action,
2. Integrate volunteerism into national and global implementation strategies for the post-2015 development agenda,
3. Measure volunteerism to contribute to a holistic understanding of the engagement of people and their well-being and be part of the monitoring of the sustainable development goals.

These themes are also discussed below in the next section on challenges and opportunities.

## Challenges and opportunities

In this section, some of the challenges and opportunities that arise from the above discussion are explored. These are not exhaustive, but open up some of the key issues to be addressed.

### Volunteering as an interconnected system

One area where the national-international interconnection poses a challenge – and opportunity – for IVCOs concerns the need to explicitly address the interrelationship of the different forms of volunteering, which opens up issues of values and strategic objectives. The traditional model of 'do no harm' has been to some extent modified to embrace a contribution to development objectives. But this is not unproblematic. For example, as Hacker et al. (2016) note in relation to Nepal:

*...the volunteering landscape has dramatically changed in the last 30 years. The rapid influx of NGO funding in the 1990s and the opportunities to volunteer with*

*NGO-led development projects greatly changed the nature of volunteer work.  
(Hacker, Picken et al. 2016, p.60)*

Given that IVCOs primarily operate to facilitate the movement of international volunteers to contribute to development objectives, it is not clear at what point the impact on the volunteer infrastructure in a given country is factored into decision making. But if IVCOs place the volunteer infrastructure at the centre of their perspective, the relationships will need to be *explicitly* addressed.

The case study of the UK ICS program indicates how a program model which embraced both national and international volunteers impacted on the organisations delivering the program by bringing together what would have been separate programs. It also exposed the limitations of the need to brand a volunteer an 'ICS volunteer', since other volunteers were not considered to have the same status in the program. While this may not be new, it does serve to pose more sharply why some participants are considered more 'valid' volunteers than others<sup>15</sup>.

Starting from the perspective of volunteer infrastructure provides the opportunity to provide a wider recognition of the contribution of *all* volunteers. It moves the discussion about formal and non-formal volunteering from a distinction that is conceptually important to make and understand (and try to measure) to one that is central to the work of the IVCO and its programs. The effective delivery of the SDGs arguably needs to start from this perspective. It demands clarity on the specific role of international volunteers, acknowledgement that national volunteers in national or community forms play legitimate and valued roles within program models, and a willingness to engage in discussions with donors to align their financial commitment with this approach.

One further challenge this exposes is the one of accountability. For IVCOs, the complexity of external accountability is a well-known balancing act between the communities where the volunteer is placed, the volunteer and their home community, and the donors funding the activities. In this model, the accountability to host communities is institutional. International volunteers are most likely to be accountable to the IVCO they are connected with, while the IVCO is accountable to the host community for the program – though volunteers can be considered distinctive to the extent they are accountable both to the facilitating IVCO and the community they serve (Devereux 2010).

However, when bringing community volunteers into the program, their focus on accountability

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<sup>15</sup> There is a wider link here to national legislation on volunteering and employment policies. In some country contexts, volunteers will gain certain rights if they work over a certain number of hours or will have the right to paid employment. This affects the degree to which IVCOs will work with volunteers and what status they give them.

is likely to be balanced in a different way, since they have an ongoing commitment to and engagement with their host community and consequently will have a level of ongoing accountability and obligation. Commitments and expectations from their local community will impact in a way it will not for the international volunteer. This means IVCOs will need to consider how to address this kind of accountability.

Such considerations will not be straightforward. The recruitment onto programs of nationally recruited volunteers may mean they are removed from their host community onto the IVCO program elsewhere. This might impact on the sustainability of the program in a given community, even if the individual volunteer may be exposed to new personal development opportunities. This implies that mechanisms for transparent and empowered downward accountability need to be integral to the positioning of program models in a way that may be different to past practice.

## Equity

The issue of equity has been a longstanding area of debate within IVCOs, with anecdotal feedback alongside research studies indicating the significant benefit to international volunteers but less conclusive on the hosting communities. Models to generate equity have focused, for example, on counterparts and the two-way mutual sharing process between international volunteers and counterparts/host communities. Other programs have not seen this as so problematic, since international volunteers were located in development assistance programs or projects, which defines the international volunteering contribution.

Nevertheless, the ICS case study and experience demonstrates the immediacy and complexity of this issue when looking at volunteer provision as a whole. If national and international volunteers occupy the same program space, then an understanding of what constitutes equity becomes critical. One challenge for IVCOs is how to translate what is essentially a socially determined concept that may change over time into a range of technically based commitments in the formalised volunteer agreement.

Each program needs to address this in different ways. If the restrictions on the movement of the UK ICS volunteers were not seen as equitable by those volunteers, national volunteers might point to a level of differential experience or terms and conditions. In the EU Aid Volunteers program, the respective roles of international and national volunteers present as potentially a knowledge transfer model, ultimately mobilising a European-level volunteer corps to assist in disaster preparation and relief. It will be interesting to see, as the main program rolls out, how issues of equity are addressed, not least between the large INGOs and local communities.

## Volunteering and stipends

An issue of significant controversy is the use of stipends in volunteering for development and this is an area that has often created animosity in high-income country national volunteering – most commonly when long-term international volunteers are paid a stipend to sustain their long-term work in overseas communities where they do not have their regular source of income.

National volunteer involving organisations have often stringently claimed volunteering meant unpaid service and so have often not accepted international volunteers as authentic volunteers, hence the growing use of the term ‘hybrid volunteers’ (Lough, Devereux et al. 2016). There was recently a change in the national definition of volunteering in Australia that removed the unpaid requirement, partly in recognition of the grey areas of stipends that can allow volunteering to be more inclusive (Volunteering Australia 2015). Lough’s research highlights, for example, that in the US, 88% of international volunteers were white and that nearly one in three volunteers lived in households earning incomes of \$100,000 or more. More income, he said, was a significant predictor of volunteer status (Lough 2010). This highlights the need for measures to improve the accessibility of volunteering opportunities to more diverse groups, including those with minimal resources or low incomes.

Stipends may promote inclusion of diverse populations in service, especially among those who have the desire to serve but face logistical barriers that prevent them from doing so (McBride, Gonzales et al. 2011). For example, there are opportunity costs to engage in volunteer service that is intense and of a long duration, and those who are of low income may be particularly challenged to serve (Moore McBride, Gonzales et al. 2009).

The IFRC Global Review of Volunteering highlighted the need for frank and open discussion to encourage interaction across a range of diverse volunteering ‘cultures’. This, they said:

*will demand bravery on the part of global organisations whose conceptions of volunteering may be firmly embedded and easy to manage and audit. But it will also have its rewards, leading to more nuanced approaches to volunteering and improved, long-term effectiveness for volunteer involving organizations.... How volunteering is remunerated and rewarded is a critical feature of the changing meanings and practices of volunteering. (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015, pp.10-11)*

There is growing disquiet about ‘paid’ volunteering (Wilson 2007, Lewis 2014, Lewis 2015). However, the IFRC Global Review of Volunteering noted that:

*remuneration of volunteering is more complex than headlines sometimes allow, and needs to be explored in its specific contexts. There is slippage between the languages used to convey forms of ‘payment’ and recompense, and this can relate*

*to strategic namings of work, including acting as a smokescreen for exploiting cheap labour. Aid project funding has taken particular advantage of volunteer labour, but in doing so, can undermine sustained volunteering at community level. (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015)*

This is also evident in recent studies of volunteering in Nepal and Kenya:

*The practices of national and international NGOs as well as international volunteer cooperation organisations (IVCOs) are also found to have created confusions around what it means to volunteer. In Nepal, for example, we see how the proliferation of non-formalised volunteering opportunities with international NGOs and IVCOs, many of which are accompanied with stipends/allowances, has created a divide between formal 'moneyed' volunteers, whose altruistic motivations are often questioned, and 'pure' volunteers who engage in more traditional forms of 'self-service' or 'social work'. (Hacker, Picken et al. 2016, pp.54-55)*

The findings in relation to Kenya are clear:

*...in Kenya, the emergence of a 'stipend culture' – something that has been perpetuated by NGOs – is observed to have distorted the notions of volunteerism, undermined the capacity of communities to lead their own development and created community distrust of the motives of volunteers. (Hacker, Picken et al. 2016, p.55)*

Looking beyond remuneration in the context of individual projects and in terms of issues of retention shows how differential levels of reward between organisations and projects is creating hierarchical volunteering economies.

*Remuneration shapes who is able to volunteer, intersecting with existing inequalities and potentially excluding the poor and the less socially and geographically mobile. Caution is needed around the ways remuneration features in policy development and debate, and there is a need for greater understanding of the complex and specific ways it shapes volunteering activity. (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith, 2015)*

Historically, IVCOs have attempted to engage with the issue of stipends in different ways and the remuneration of international volunteers has varied significantly across agencies. Arguably the way that IVCOs have situated international volunteers in-country has defined a clear in principle separation of the international volunteer (or in some cases, national volunteers) from other volunteers through the program model, e.g. volunteers that are located in programs run by specific agencies, e.g. governmental or multi-lateral programs. In other cases, the international volunteer has become an 'employee' at the point of placement, giving the international volunteer a hybrid status.

However, when considering the programming opportunities of bringing together international and national volunteers in the same program space, any difference in stipend practice inevitably becomes more exposed. If there is no explicit intention to create a hierarchy, and at least a nominal ambition of equity, the options from the Kenya and Nepal case studies seem either to bring volunteers together within a formal or institutional framework, and so defining others outside of the framework; or to start from a position of radically rethinking how volunteering connects to a given situation and build a program and remuneration model from that perspective.

## Better understanding what IVCOs do and what IVCOs could do in the future

Earlier in the paper we noted how community volunteering is often formalised by the use of new role titles, such as 'community mobilisers'. The intention in such programs is to introduce a level of differentiation that separates the 'community mobiliser' from other volunteers in the community. This provides a mechanism of program implementation and accountability through those designated in such roles.

The challenge for IVCOs when looking at a model that considers volunteering as a whole is that the terminology used and the way data is held or generated tends to obscure that contribution. The focus tends to be on the volunteers considered to be part of the program or project, and the rationale for where that line is drawn, as discussed in the ICS case study, may be a combination of principle and pragmatism. The result is that the interface between formal volunteers (regardless of what they are called – community mobilisers, community volunteers, etc. – and informal community voluntary effort is ignored. This is unfortunate, as the latent power of this can be more sustaining for programs and communities than the visible and counted ties. This is in part why social capital terminology was invented, to give these hidden social and other ties more recognition.

This issue matters on two counts: that if the intention is to demonstrate contribution to the SDGs of volunteering, why is the focus on some volunteers and not others; and if volunteers are 'redesignated', then what are the consequences and what happens to the volunteers who are not redesignated in this way.

This distinction may prove unaffected by variations in program models. Whatever the benefits of South-South volunteering, for example, this may take place within the same paradigm and may still represent a recognised 'international' volunteer operating within a community context where volunteering is less recognised by the IVCO (or obscured by calling volunteers by another perhaps 'more prestigious title'). Diaspora programs may also not be easily defined in terms of volunteer relationships, either by the IVCO or the participants.

It is not easy to find examples of the kind of repositioning we believe this implies. One way into understanding new forms of repositioning is to focus on partnership. In some ways, albeit in a bureaucratic framework, the EU Aid Volunteer program offers to resource partnerships focused on designed outcomes, rather than present a volunteer program<sup>16</sup>. Perhaps another example would be FK Norway, who present their program as one of promoting partnerships within which volunteering takes place. While this has greater chance of engaging with local volunteer infrastructure, it is also focused on institutional connections and operates volunteer programs from within the partnership models.

The Valuing Volunteering research (Burns, Picken et al. 2015, Howard and Burns 2015) uncovered many insights into these issues, and Jody Aked, one of the international volunteers doing the research, noted that it “demonstrated that the role of volunteering agencies to mobilise actors with different experiences and worldviews into the same space is not enough to achieve sustainable transformations to peoples’ lives.” She noted this is partly because “participation, empowerment and ownership are not automatic by-products of volunteering.” Jody noted the importance of reciprocity as an important part of “volunteer relationships for reinforcing a sense among people in poverty that volunteering is a resource that they can use to further their aims.” She concluded that “When reciprocity characterises the exchanges of a network of linked actors, people get to feel self directed as part of a wider group or collective effort... When the organisation of volunteers and their work is too individualised or when volunteers are regarded as ‘expert’ and local actors as ‘beneficiary’, reciprocity is rarely a feature of volunteer networks.” (Aked 2015). Specifically when Jody reflected on her research on volunteer contributions in the area of environmental education, she concluded that it “needs to adapt to the specific contexts of communities and changing external circumstances, making use of volunteerism in different ways. ...Environmental education programmes should think about how different volunteers bring different strengths to communication and outreach work” (Aked 2015).

Trans-border youth exchange programs such as the SayXchange program have elements that offer insights into new models, but with limitations. Jacob Mati describes two programs which “(redress) some deficiencies of the North-South model, emphasizing reciprocity, skills sharing, and recognition of southern capacity” (Mati 2016, p.132). Both programs cited are youth leadership programs but have a core component about developing not just leadership but identity in regional or African levels (Mati 2016, p.145)<sup>17</sup>. The emphasis placed on reciprocity, volunteer involvement and community-based host organisations

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16 This program emerges from the humanitarian aid tradition and essentially embraces humanitarian aid organisations. Although some IVCOs have found a way to connect with this program, IVCOs remain so far on the periphery of what is a humanitarian aid rather than volunteer program.

17 This is in some contrast to ICS, which as a North-South program relies on ‘active citizenship’ as a core concept around which the program is focused, necessarily more generic in its meaning.



and families provides a level of visibility that enables an exploration of social capital.

In some ways, the distinction between international and national volunteers may parallel that made between formal and informal volunteering. International volunteers who engage through IVCOs are recruited and placed by organisations – governmental and NGO IVCOs – which is part of a formal process. On the other hand, we know that a great deal of volunteerism is informal and “takes place through small local groups, clubs and associations” (United Nations Volunteers 2011:8). While national volunteers may also go through formal processes, this is most commonly the location of informal volunteering.

Consequently, the challenges for IVCOs concern not just how to reposition as organisations or through program activity that engages international and national volunteers, but to better understand how current programs and activities already do that, how that is recognised, valued and measured, allowing the implications for development and how this contributes to SDGs to be considered. In the words of one Head of Agency:

*We talk about ourselves as an international volunteering agency or an international development agency. In reality a significant part of our work is undertaken by community volunteers in the countries where we work. However, their contribution is only visible through project reporting. Unlike the international volunteers they are often not easily identifiable in organisational data and are only really known at country level. My estimate is that we have more national and community volunteers on our programs than international volunteers, but we don't have the data or systems in place to evidence that – partly because this is not a statistic funders want. (Anonymous 2016)*

## Conclusions

Our review of this area of V4D has led into both strategic and programmatic areas. At the strategic level, focusing on national and international volunteering has led to consideration of volunteer infrastructure and an opportunity for IVCOs to reposition. At the programmatic level, it has brought into sharp relief some new ways to focus on traditional V4D challenges.

The link between the two suggests, in our view, that successful program models that bring together different forms of volunteering are particularly likely to be successful in the context of an explicit focus on volunteer infrastructure. This implies less prescriptive volunteer models and resourcing and most likely a significant change in donor as well as IVCO practice. This represents a major challenge, but not to address this will diminish the contribution to the achievement of the SDGs and leave IVCOs with program models that do not keep pace with global changes or do not address the challenges of voices from the Global South (Sage Net 2011, Butcher and Einolf 2016).

Overall, we have found it challenging to identify examples of IVCO programs that have volunteer infrastructure as the starting point in meeting development/SDG related outputs and outcomes; though UNV has highlighted what is possible in this regard, both in its work and in its advocacy for the Plan of Action (United Nations General Assembly 2015). That indicates the size of the challenge but also offers a fresh and positive role for IVCOs in the new opportunities opened up by the SDGs and building on the developed volunteering models that underpin building resilience amongst communities.

## Discussion questions

The following areas we consider are ones for IVCOs to review and consider:

- To what extent do IVCOs consider and recognise the role of national volunteers in their V4D programs, and if not, why not? (Is it considered relevant for donor reporting?)
- To what extent are program models being developed with the relationship between international and national volunteers as a core element? What do national partners and participants want?
- Do you count national volunteers that work with your partners or volunteers? How can we improve our generation and recording of data to demonstrate more completely the contribution of diverse categories of volunteers connected with IVCO programs? Will this have any potential costs or benefits?
- Are IVCOs prepared to confront the challenges of stipends and equity? If so, what are some ways in which these challenges are being addressed?
- Is it useful for IVCOs to reposition to support a volunteer infrastructure approach? What would we expect donors to say about this? What would a repositioning imply?

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