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IVCO 2018 THEME PAPER

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE FOR YOUTH

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COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING FOR CHANGE PARTICIPANTS TOGETHER WITH COMMUTINY THE YOUTH COLLECTIVE (CYC) VOLUNTEERS IN NEW DELHI, INDIA.

By Harjono Djoyobisono, Courtesy of AVI

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Foreword

This paper has been produced for IVCO 2018, the International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations' Conference. It is one of a series of papers exploring this year's conference theme 'Women and youth: bridging the gap – volunteering for inclusive development'.

A Framing Paper provides an introduction and overview:

- **Inclusive development for women and youth: where are we at?**

Three Theme Papers address specific topics:

1. **Inclusive development policy for women and youth**
2. **Inclusive development practice for women**
3. **Inclusive development practice for youth** (this paper).

Note on terminology: These papers use the terms volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) and international volunteer cooperation organisations (IVCOs). IVCOs should be understood as a specific group or type of VIO.

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The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations".

(UN 2015, paragraph 53)

Introduction

Youth, as development actors and stakeholders, are a subject of both scrutiny and hope as the world works towards inclusive and sustainable development goals. This paper provides a brief summary of current trends in youth development, with a particular focus on volunteering for development. Case studies provide evidence from different geographical contexts about youth participation and inclusion in volunteering for development. The paper concludes by posing questions on youth and the volunteering sector to prompt debate, planning and action.

Where are the youth today?

Half of the world's population – 3.8 billion people – are under 30 years old (UNDESA 2017, p.1), and about 83% live in low and middle income countries (World Bank 2018a). The World Bank has warned of a 'learning crisis' in low- and middle-income countries such as India, Malawi and Uganda, suggesting injustice towards children and young people and vulnerability later in their lives (World Bank 2018b). Unemployment is on the rise at 201 million people, adding about 3 million every year (ILO 2017a, p.1). Youth unemployment is equally rising to 71 million (ILO 2017b, p.1). Under-employment is a bigger problem. In developing countries, 19 out of 20 youth work to earn less than the extreme poverty level of $1.90 a day (ibid.).

The Commonwealth's Global Youth Development & Index Report (2016) presents a more optimistic picture of youth making progress in areas of civic and political participation around the world. Of the 183 countries profiled for the period 2010-15, 142 showed an improvement in youth development in five categories (education, health & wellbeing, employment & opportunity, civic participation, and political participation) with the largest gains in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Central America and the Caribbean. The report, however, records deep inequalities in levels of youth development between countries, with the largest gaps being in the spheres of education and health services, financial inclusion and digital technology. Among the youth in low-performing countries, young females are much less likely to have these opportunities than their male counterparts. The report suggests that youth development tends to be highest in high-income countries where young people represent less than 20% of the total population.

Despite a predominantly negative trend, young people are optimistic about a better future for themselves and the world they live in (AIESEC 2016). Building a world that is more prosperous, resilient, inclusive and peaceful is dependent on how the youth progress. Youth are not merely a demographic statistic, but rather a significant opportunity to transform the global development trajectory (VSO 2018).

Diverse youth identity

Although familiar in development discourse today, the term 'youth' has no universal definition. Definitions vary, depending on culture, tradition and socio-economic conditions. Many international bodies also have differing definitions, as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1: International agencies' differing definitions of 'youth'

International Agency	Defines 'Youth' As Age:
UN Population Fund (UNFPA)	10-24
World Health Organization (WHO)	10-29
International Labour Office (ILO)	15-24
European Union (EU)	15-29
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	15-32
World Bank	15-34
African Union (AU)	15-35

Generally speaking, youth is a period of transition during which adolescents gradually enter adulthood. It is a period during which young people aim for personal independence while still maintaining their dependence on parents, community leadership and the state. Different cultural, socio-economic and political contexts influence the length of their dependency.

Recognition of the power of youth

Youth issues assumed high priority in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both through the role of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum in building the post-2015 agenda, and the role of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, created in 2013. At least six of the 17 SDGs relate to youth development. Key UN agencies have developed strategies to guide their work with young people; for example, a handbook on youth and the SDGs was developed by the East & North-East Asia office of the UN in 2017. Amongst bilateral donors, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) and the Australian Government all have youth strategies that inform their programming around the world.

Today, 190 governments have some form of national framework created for young people (Youth Policy Labs 2018), many of them with defined policies and dedicated resources for youth-related programs. Given this favourable political environment globally, why then is the youth development trend poor in terms of some of the basic development indicators noted earlier in this paper?

One key problem is that youth-related programs are seriously under-resourced in the national budgets of many low- and middle-income countries. For example, the youth in India (numerically the largest national youth contingent in the world) contribute about 34% of India's gross national income (Government of India 2014, p.3), but the government spends only about 5% on youth related programs such as skills and employability, basic education, health and protection.[1] Similarly, according to a budget review report by the Youth Coalition on Electoral Democracy in Uganda (2017, p.2), Uganda spends less than 6% of its budget on youth-centric sectors such as agriculture, social development, ICT, trade and tourism, while it has the second youngest population in the world (World Atlas 2017). In fact, 28 out of the top 30 youngest population countries in the world are in Africa, most of which are also amongst the poorest. This suggests that unless poorer countries with youthful populations allocate more resources to youth-related programs, they may lag behind in national development and in meeting the SDGs.

The youth around the world, particularly in the Global South, also contribute informally by volunteering their time. For example, the Government of Rwanda (2012, p.7) estimates that the value of volunteers' time was over 30% of GDP in 2011. It is unknown what percentage of this volunteering is by the youth, but it is likely to be significant, particularly since Rwanda has a dedicated volunteering program for youth called URUGERERO (Government of Rwanda 2011, p.9) and the fact that youth (age 14-35) constitute 40% of the Rwandan population (Government of Rwanda 2014).

The volunteering for development approach in inclusive and sustainable youth development

Volunteering contributes to inclusive and sustainable development. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)'s global review of volunteering (2015) found that 9 million out of 17 million volunteers are young.[2] The review argues that volunteering will be critical to achieving the SDGs. The VSO/IDS Valuing Volunteering research (Burns et al. 2015) involved a significant number of young volunteers. The research revealed eight complementary dimensions of change at the community level, affected by volunteers' intentional approach to relationship building: participation, inclusion, inspiration, collaboration, innovation, ownership & agency, social action, and quality & effectiveness. The 'inclusion' dimension is key: inclusion of disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised people is a necessary condition for participation, collaboration, agency and social action. Together they effect a change in the quality of services that poor and marginalised people can access.

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1 Estimated from the National Youth Policy (Government of India 2014) and Union Budget of India 2015-16 (Government of India 2015).

2 http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/volunteers/global-review-on-volunteering/.

Through the work of Restless Development in East Africa, youth are empowered to become resourceful action researchers (Mastercard Foundation 2016). They investigate and act on issues affecting their development, particularly understanding local entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, including the mismatch between available local opportunities and education and skills, and the influence of government and the private sector on youth employment. A study in Africa (Caprara et al. 2012) found that volunteering – particularly by youth – has contributed to social cohesion and peace building, and in the process helped to build strong social capital that has shaped inclusive community development. Inclusive communities develop better resilience, as the latest State of the World's Volunteerism Report suggests, based on evidence from 15 communities in 15 countries (UNV 2018). The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun recognised that volunteerism will remain a fundamental resource for resilience building, which needs to be leveraged and supported (UNISDR 2017).

Case Studies of youth volunteering and inclusive development

As a result of progressive youth policies and strategies by governments and civil society organisations over the past decade or so, youth all around the world are making a noticeable contribution in volunteering and in their own development. The following four case studies testify to that change process.

Case Study 1: Overcoming gender exclusion in Uganda

Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFFCAD) is a small, volunteer-based and youth-led organisation in a slum community in Kampala, Uganda.[3] It runs a vocational training institute which works with young people like Martha (not her real name), a confident 19-year-old woman. Martha, one of ten children, faced the daunting task of supporting her family after her father's untimely death. She dropped out of school as her family were living in extreme poverty and could not pay her school fees. Desperate to support her mother, she unsuccessfully searched for employment for two years. Despite progressive youth policies and programs in Uganda, Martha faced gender discrimination and cultural stereotypes against girls in her community.

A study conducted in East Africa by MasterCard Foundation and Restless Development

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3 http://www.affcad.org/. Information in this section comes from a visit made by the author to the work of AFFCAD in May 2018.

through youth volunteer researchers identified gender barriers that youth like Martha face against their inclusion and development (Mastercard Foundation 2016). Other research shows that youth in lower socio-economic categories are more likely to be expected by their family and community to work from an early age (Oaktree & ACFID 2016). Social and economic characteristics have a significant bearing on achievement rates in life, and there is a strong correlation between people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and low literacy and numeracy levels (Hirsch 2007; Taylor & Yu 2009; Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2015, ch.7; American Psychological Association 2018).

Driven by her desire to help others and to support her entry into paid employment, Martha volunteered within her community to gain experience. During this time she heard from AFFCAD's outreach volunteers about the vocational skill development program, and enrolled for a training course in graphic design. With her volunteering experience, she became a peer leader in her training group. Advancing quickly in a male-dominated vocation, Martha has now started using her skills to earn and contribute to her family.

Martha recommends that positive action must be taken by the government and vocational institutions to promote volunteering and build awareness to break down gender barriers so that girls are accorded equal access to opportunities, including within traditionally male-dominated vocations. AFFCAD, through its volunteering approach and youth-focused vocational skills training model, reaches out to marginalised youth like Martha in some of the most disadvantaged slum communities of Kampala.

Case Study 2: International Citizen Service (ICS), a large global youth volunteering program

International Citizen Service (ICS)[4] is a volunteering for development program funded by the UK Government since 2011 and led by VSO. The current phase of the program is delivered by a consortium of eight youth and development organisations: Balloon Ventures, Challenges Worldwide, International Service, Raleigh International, Restless Development, Tearfund, VSO and Y Care International.

To date, ICS has enabled over 34,000 youth volunteers to participate across 33 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America (ICS 2018a, p.2; pers. comm. VSO ICS staff, 13 July 2018). Youth volunteers with diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds from the UK work alongside youth volunteers in the Global South across a varied portfolio of projects in health, education and livelihoods, with civic participation as a key area of engagement.

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4 **https://www.volunteerics.org/**.

Central to ICS is the belief that diverse teams of young people can bring innovative ideas and perspectives to community issues. The program aims to remove barriers to entry for young people which exist in similar programs, and all volunteers are provided with dedicated support to reach their potential. This includes, for example, an Access Fund to support ICS implementing agencies in making adjustments to support all applicants to take part in the program. The diversity of UK volunteers is regularly monitored in terms of dimensions such as gender, geographical region, socio-economic background, ethnicity and disability. In 2017, 1.5% of the UK volunteers had a disability and 21% were from a minority ethnic background (VSO 2018; pers. comm. VSO ICS staff, 13 July 2018).
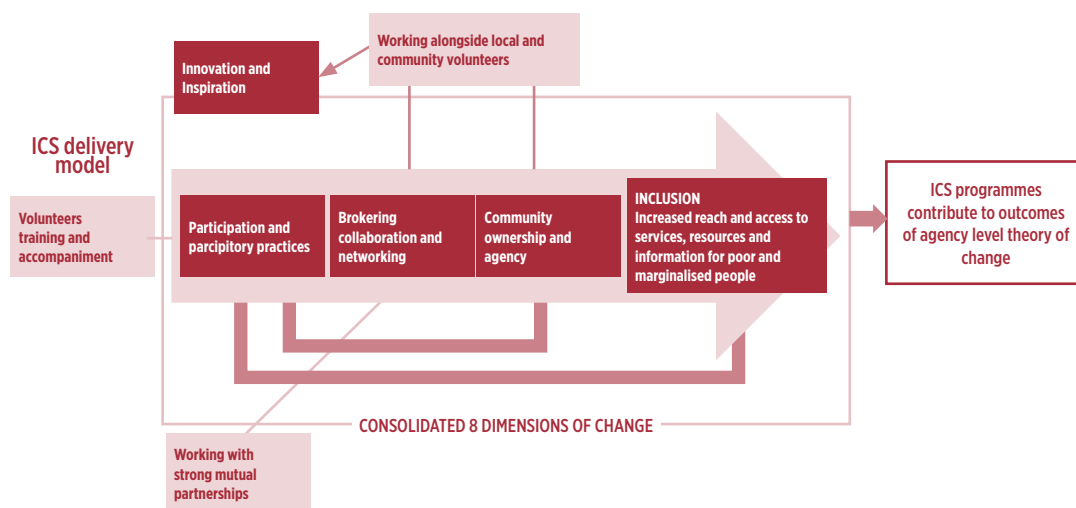
ICS and Development Outcomes

Figure 1: The ICS Theory of Change.

A mid-term evaluation (Trapani and Zhang 2016) highlighted five patterns of change in communities:

1. ICS increases access to information services and resources, builds community structures, and builds social capital and active citizenship by unlocking resources in the community, establishing relationships and fostering collaboration.

2. ICS strengthens community structures and promotes patterns of sustained active citizenship by bringing together outsider (ICS volunteers) and insider (community) knowledge.

3. ICS increases the reach and inclusion of services by bridging the gap between communities and decision makers and making the most of community participation.

4. ICS increases the reach of services by amplifying existing messages and

increasing short term functional capacity of organisations.

5. ICS challenges social norms and practices through the volunteers' presence, which generates increased community interest in the program activities.

All ICS volunteers are supported to develop new skills for their future. A recent survey found that the vast majority of ICS volunteers thought the experience was very useful for their personal development (99%) and professional development (97%) (ICS 2018b, p.1). This, combined with their newly gained knowledge of international development, prepares volunteers to become active citizens and change makers in their own communities. The findings of the mid-term evaluation also highlighted the role that community volunteers (predominantly local youth) can play in supporting community development projects. Local volunteers develop new skills and capacity to self-organise, and build new relationships that strengthen trust and social cohesion, and that contribute to sustainability and resilience of development outcomes in the community.

An earlier case study into community youth volunteering in Bangladesh (VSO Bangladesh 2015) found that young people who had engaged with the ICS program reported improvements in their personal development, particularly in terms of soft skills (i.e. personal attributes which help people interact effectively with others), which can be valuable in helping young people access employment opportunities. Community youth volunteers are also recognised as essential in supporting the delivery of ICS projects, through assisting ICS volunteers to access community networks and in helping them understand the community context. Because community volunteers are recruited from and based in or close to their own communities, this model offers great potential for sustained ongoing community ownership, if met with community support (Trapani and Zhang 2016). Recruitment of community volunteers is often less formal than other volunteering opportunities, and therefore more attention should be given to ensuring the recruitment of diverse young volunteers.

Case Study 3: Engaging Indian youth in the '5th space'

Pravah, a civil society organisation, and ComMutiny - The Youth Collective, work to engage youth in a peer space and encourage positive development outcomes in what they refer to as the '5th space'. Interconnected with the other four spaces in a young person's life (family, friends, livelihoods and leisure), the 5th space is about the young people themselves developing their leadership skills, to learn more about themselves as individuals, to build meaningful relationships with the other four spaces, and to impact the world around them.

An impact study with Pravah alumni in 2013 (Pravah 2013; pers. comm. Pravah staff, 20 June 2018) showed that participating in the 5th space program influenced Pravah alumni's:

- Career choices (77%), in particular influencing alumni to work on social issues by joining civil society organisations (46%) as well as making time to dedicate to a social issue (75%);

- Relationships (87%), including their immediate circle of friends (77%), and the breakdown of social barriers between groups;

- Understanding of themselves (83%);

- Performance at college and workplaces (85% improvement), including becoming self-directed leaners (87%).

The 5th space example suggests that giving youth a space for themselves has a positive influence, supporting young people's development as active citizens. It encourages IVCOs to see how a 'youth-centred approach' could become a more integrated part of youth-led program design.

Case Study 4: Peer power tackling violence against women in Philippines

A further example of inspiring peer-to-peer youth volunteering comes from an organisation called United Youth of Philippines (UnYPhil) and its wing that deals with women's issues, UnYPhil-Women.[5] Their main focus is to mobilise, organise and support women and girls to act against violence, sexual and physical abuse, trafficking and other forms of discrimination. They do this through a multi-pronged behaviour change strategy involving community volunteers, both women and men, and student volunteers (called peer facilitators) in schools. In 2017-18, the peer facilitators reached out to a total of 2,800 students in their campaign against child early marriage. Teachers in three participating schools confirmed zero early marriage amongst their students, and attributed this to the student volunteers' campaign. Interestingly, the student leaders volunteering in the campaign seem to have gained increased confidence and better academic results. This example, together with that of Pravah, suggests that youth-centric and peer-to-peer youth volunteering could lead to inclusive and sustainable youth development at scale.

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5 **https://unyphilwomen.wordpress.com/about**. Information in this section comes from a visit made by the author to the work of UnYPhil-Women in Cotabato region in July 2018.

What still ails youth volunteering?

Not everything goes right with youth volunteering and development. There are still areas for governments, civil society organisations and the private sector to pay attention to in order to make youth volunteering more rewarding and effective for inclusive youth development. For example, the negative effects of 'voluntourism' on local communities are hotly debated (Garrison 2015; Smith 2015), and these concerns are widely seen as a disincentive for university students and young professionals who might otherwise be interested in international volunteering.

The ICS mid-term evaluation (Trapani and Zhang 2016) identified some important program design and management lessons regarding youth volunteering. In Zambia, some ICS interventions impacted negatively on community agency and ownership. For example, existing local community health volunteers were displaced by ICS volunteers who, due to their lack of knowledge of how the community health system worked, disrupted the provision of locally owned services and reduced the frequency of health service provision due to gaps between ICS volunteer placement cycles. As a result, the community health facility became non-functional. Similarly, in Nigeria very limited evidence was found of change and improvement in the quality of services in volunteer organisations. Learning from the initial experience, mid-term changes in the ICS program were made to ensure that interventions were more locally relevant and owned. However, the impact of these changes was not yet visible when the evaluation was done, possibly because the organisation had only had one subsequent round of ICS volunteers.

The latest State of the World's Volunteerism Report (UNV 2018) highlights the limitations of and threats to local volunteering - which usually includes a significant element of youth volunteering. According to the report, the perception that volunteer labour is cheap or free potentially makes it exploitative and discouraging for public investment. It also shows how both coercive and self-organising volunteering could lead to further marginalisation of the poorest and most disadvantaged people.

Overall, the literature and program evidence reviewed in this paper suggest that youth are yet to have a meaningful and consistent voice in youth development programs, and that youth volunteering programs are still too centred on the Global North.

Lessons for IVCOs

What are some lessons for IVCOs here? One is around how national governments, local authorities, VIOs and local communities could collaborate better – both to ensure that youth volunteering is rooted in a good understanding of power, vulnerability and capability in

local communities, and to develop the skills of volunteers needed to support and promote inclusion. The other is the need to build youth volunteering effectively in to program design by carefully matching volunteers' skills, knowledge and attitudes to specific youth contexts that include youth voice. As the ICS and other case stories reflect, improved program design would also help VIOs to monitor, measure and continuously learn for quality youth-volunteering-led development results. Data around youth volunteering for inclusive youth development is currently patchy.

It is important that youth volunteerism specifically be clearly linked to national development objectives. By integrating volunteerism into youth policies, supporting youth volunteering programs and increasing training and capacity-building opportunities for youth, governments will enhance youth contributions to peace and development, yielding benefits for the whole society. Evidence suggests opportunities and recognition of youth volunteering by governments have contributed to significant youth personal development (Kantar Public and London Economics 2015). Youth participation and participatory practices are a key requirement for positive outcomes on social action, and increased effectiveness of services in terms of reach and quality.

Directions and questions

Four critical areas emerge from the above analysis.

- **Research:** There is increasing evidence to suggest that volunteering, particularly youth volunteering, leads to substantial and inclusive development gains at community level as well as at the personal level for youth themselves. What additional research do we need to demonstrate the connection between youth volunteering, inclusive youth development and the SDGs?

- **Program:** Intentional design of youth-led programs has the potential to strengthen inclusive and sustainable youth development. How can monitoring and evaluation systems be designed to better capture inclusion and volunteering outcomes in youth development programs?

- **Policy:** How can governments formally recognise youth volunteering in policy as a critical form of youth and adult engagement in the delivery of national development plans, and a critical contributor to achieving the 'leave no one behind' agenda of the SDGs?

- **Financing:** Wherever governments have invested in youth volunteering, this has led to noticeable youth personal development. How much finance is needed to

support youth volunteering and development, where can this come from, and how can governments (particularly in the Global South) prioritise this as a measure to achieve the SDGs?

In signing up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations committed to 'Transforming Our World' (UN 2015). With 1.8 billion young people and 1 billion volunteers in action, youth volunteering represents a significant form of social capital that can help achieve inclusive and resilient communities and societies. Governments, IVCOs and donors need to recognise this resource by adopting transformational steps in policy and practice. A recently released civil society report on SDG progress is a timely reminder that despite the wealth of resources in the world today we see growing inequalities within and between countries (Civil Society Reflection Group 2018). Could youth volunteering help address these challenges and lead the way for inclusive and sustainable development?

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**All the powers in the universe are already ours.
It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and
cry that it is dark"**

Vivekananda

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