

VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA



CONTEXTS, PERSPECTIVES AND DISCOURSES

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced UNV volunteers, throughout the world. UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity, as well as the values that sustain it: free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity.

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VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA

Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses





जितेन्द्र सिंह
JITENDRA SINGH



राज्य मंत्री, युवा कार्यक्रम एवं खेल
(स्वतंत्र प्रभार) और
रक्षा राज्य मंत्री, भारत सरकार
MINISTER OF STATE FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS
(INDEPENDENT CHARGE) AND
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Foreword

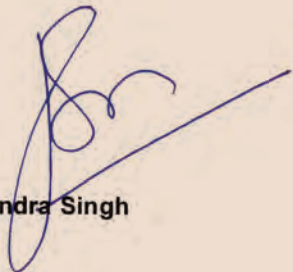
Volunteerism has long been an integral part of the Indian society shaped by traditions and value systems rooted in the religion and cultural interactions. The volunteers from diverse backgrounds have gone about celebrating the spirit of volunteerism in the best manner they know – rendering selfless service to their fellow beings and the community at large.

The observance of International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in 2001 underscores the importance of people-to-people relations as core values of volunteerism. The resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly to mark the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV+10) in 2011 rekindled the spirit of volunteerism and provided the opportunity to reflect on the status and growth of volunteerism worldwide. The role of volunteers in creation and development of social capital, civic engagement and social cohesion is now well documented. Against the backdrop of challenges, exciting new avenues for people to volunteer have opened up.

It is also significant to note the role of technological revolution and its contribution to new forms of volunteering like micro-volunteering and online volunteering. These are going to be the key in future forms of volunteering discourses. It is notable that eighty-seven per cent of people aged 15 to 24 live in developing countries. They can play an important role to achieve the Millennium Development Goals adopting various ways to engage.

Tenth International year of volunteers (IYV+10) offered the opportunity to the youth world over to further the volunteering agenda through their creativity, energy and commitment. Youth, the most vibrant and dynamic segment of India's population constitutes potentially its most valuable human resource. We must continue to endeavor to optimize their constructive and creative energies by engaging them in various nation-building activities through volunteerism. It also provided a platform for national constituencies and stakeholders to come together for planning the future role of volunteerism in India. Government of India (GOI) is committed to promote and recognize the important role volunteers could play in national development.

I am confident that the people of India would carry forward the spirit generated and nurtured by the tenth international year of volunteers and work towards peace and development through their volunteering. We must continue to strive to strengthen our network of volunteers.



Jitendra Singh

Preface

Volunteering in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses

traces the history of volunteerism, highlighting the contributions of volunteers to social movements, media, art and culture and Government policies and schemes in the area of volunteerism. This is the first publication by UN Volunteers in India, which is privileged to work with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, civil society organizations and key partners.



UN Volunteers is a global institution based on the belief that every day, ordinary people the world over can transform the pace and nature of development by willingly contributing their time, and through their creativity and courage, can work towards peace and development.

India has a rich and proud history of volunteerism. The tradition of shramdaan, offering to work in the service of humanity is practiced by millions of people who have been inspired by the great leader, Mahatma Gandhi when he urged that the “best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

As the largest democracy with one of the fastest growing economies in the world, India continues to address the challenges of inequality and uneven human development, with volunteers playing a critical role in ensuring that neighborhoods, villages and communities become a little better every day.

The United Nations in India is committed to supporting our volunteers and hopes that the insights documented in this publication provide guidelines for developing new policy and legislative frameworks for volunteerism in India.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lise Grande'.

Lise Grande

*UN Resident Coordinator
UNDP Resident Representative, India*

Message



We at the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme are very pleased that our office in India is publishing this special volume on volunteerism. We would like to congratulate them for this initiative to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers in 2011, and to bring attention to the dedicated community of volunteers.

Volunteering is an important expression of our common humanity and empowers change from the grassroots up. It is important to increase recognition of volunteerism, to support networking opportunities, to create the proper institutional arrangements for volunteerism to flourish and to encourage all people to make a difference through volunteering.

The challenges we face today — climate change, sustainability, achieving the Millennium Development Goals — all require that everyone participates and engages. Only then can we ensure the future we want, a future that we can all enjoy.

Volunteers are particularly important in India. Often they work among communities that are otherwise forgotten, and that is where they make a difference. Their contributions are essential.

It is also important to recognize that volunteerism may take many different forms. Its expression is determined by the culture in which volunteering occurs. It can be international volunteerism, or volunteerism through community self-help groups; it can be direct and informal, or through institutions.

But wherever it is, volunteering makes a difference. It is an expression of solidarity we should all encourage, recognize and support because this potential that people have is a renewable asset that needs to be tapped.

The full potential of volunteerism can only be unleashed when it is seen as a vital and powerful component of the social capital of every nation. The sound analysis and inspirational voices from India you'll read in this book put this beyond doubt.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Flavia Pansieri'.

Flavia Pansieri

Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers

Message

Placing people at the center of development processes is the key to inclusive and sustainable development. Through the past decades of partnership with India, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has, together with all its national partners, strived to achieve high levels of people's participation in different aspects of development work.

India has a rich history of people's participation through volunteerism. This is reflected in '**Volunteering in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses**', a unique and comprehensive compendium on volunteerism in India. This book is an excellent resource for understanding the various forms and aspects of volunteerism in India and their direct impact on the quality and reach of development interventions.

With the changing global role of India, UNDP continues to strengthen its role as a strategic partner and catalyst of ideas and solutions to the country's challenges, building on the opportunities and dynamism of India.

In this context, UN Volunteers play a crucial role in empowering communities to engage in development processes at all levels.

Even as India registers strong economic growth, significant challenges remain with regard to inequity, unemployment, food insecurity, natural disasters and climate change. Given these complexities, direct participation of people will increasingly play a transformative role. Volunteerism lies at the heart of this process.

We hope '**Volunteering in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses**' will ensure better understanding of the processes that promote and sustain volunteerism for peace and development.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caitlin Wiesen-Antin".

Caitlin Wiesen-Antin
Country Director,
United Nations Development Programme, India

Acknowledgements

Volunteering in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses presents the viewpoints and experiences of eminent people and volunteers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines on the ethos, tradition and diversity of volunteering in the Indian Context.

UNV would like to express sincere gratitude to everyone who participated to make this publication possible. Their involvement, commitment and encouragement are exemplary, and reflect the spirit of volunteerism and inclusivity that thrives in the Indian Society.

The publication was coordinated by a core team under the overall guidance and supervision of Alexandra Solovieva, Deputy Country Director (P) UNDP India, Nita Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Mona Mishra, Executive Officer, UNDP India, Philip Sen, Communications Officer, IYV+10, Office of the Executive Coordinator, UNV and Gul Berry, UNV Country Operations Associate.

The core team included Amita Dahiya, Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta and Vedabhyas Kundu, who identified and contextualized the issues on various topics related to volunteerism, approached eminent people, experts, organizations and volunteers on ground. The core team under the guidance of Mona Mishra, Philip Sen and Gul Berry critically reviewed all contributions. Amita Dahiya and Vedabhyas Kundu did the editing. Parul Lihla volunteered to provide valuable research and editing support. The idea for the cover page was by Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta and the Y-Man on the cover was created by Kuhu Dahiya.

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Acronyms

AIWC	All India Women's Conference
ASSEFA	Association for Sarva Seva Farms
BP	British Petroleum
CBO	Community Based organizations
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CDS	CDC Development Solutions
CII	Confederation of Indian Industry
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CNN-IBN	Cable News Network-Indian Broadcasting Network
CRS	Community Radio Station
CSC	Common Services Centers
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EID	Enforced Involuntary Disappearance
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
GMM	Goodness and Mercy Missions
GOI	Government of India
GRTF	Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Foundation
GSDS	Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti
GVS	Gramya Vikash Sangathan
HIV/ AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HPSDMA	Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority
IAVE	International Association for Volunteer Efforts
IBLF	International Business Leaders Forum
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICV	International Corporate Volunteerism
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IIM	Indian Institute of Management
IISC	Intel® Involved India Steering Committee
IIVET	Institute for Vocational Education and Training
INC	Indian National Congress
IT	Information Technology
IYV	International Year of Volunteers
JWP	Joint Women's Programme
LKP	Loka Kalyan Parishad
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gurantee Act
MoYAS	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
MSAB	Multi-Sect Oral Advisory Body
NCF	National Curriculum Framework

Acronyms

NCR	National Capital Region
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NLM	National Literacy Mission
NSS	National Service Scheme
NSVS	National Service Volunteer Scheme
NYC	National Youth Corps
NYK	Nehru Yuva Kendras
NYKS	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan
NYP	National Youth Project
PIDT	Peoples Institute for Development and Training
PNVSCA	Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency
PRIA	Society for Participatory Research in Asia
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RTI	Right to Information
RWA	Resident Welfare Associations
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
SGRCT	Sri Guru Raghavendra Charitable Trust
SHGs	Self-Help Groups
SIPC	Students in Palliative Care
SMS	Short Message Service
SOVA	South Orissa Voluntary Action
SP	Sishu Panchyat
SPIC-MACAY	Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth
SUPW	Socially Useful and Productive Work
SWVR	State of World's Volunteerism Report
TLC	Total Literacy Campaigns
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMC	United Nations Millennium Campaign
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UTA	University Talk Aids Programme
VANI	Voluntary Action Network India
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VO	Voluntary Organisations
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas
WHO	World Health Organization
YHRI	Youth for Human Rights International
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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Amita Dahiya



“

Swami Vivekananda

Volunteering is a distinct human characteristic. It is a socio-psychological bridge connecting the self and the individual consciousness to the collective consciousness of the community. On the one hand, it is an expression of free will of an individual, while on the other; it is an expression of a certain set of values imbibed from society values that enable an individual to locate her or himself in relation to others (Kundu, 2005 & 2010).

Volunteering can be either a conscious or an unconscious act. A large number of human beings unconsciously volunteer in some way or the other almost every day. Such unconscious acts of volunteering play an important foundation in the formation and survival of various processes of socio-cultural institutions. The conscious act of volunteering is often defined by socially and culturally evolved values. Therefore, when a person helps an elderly woman cross a busy road or feeds the hungry, all these acts are defined by a set of socially evolved values (Kundu, 2005 & 2010).

The socio-psychological need of every human being for a sense of belonging in relation to the other forms the basis of volunteering. The need for a sense of belonging also arises from the need for emotional well-being and for a socio-cultural identity. The need also propels human beings to go beyond the self to reach out to people and nature (Kundu, 2005 & 2010).

In the backdrop of emerging tensions and contradictions in our contemporary society where views of Charvak¹ who advocated hedonism and philosophers like Helvetius² who said self-love and egoistic pleasures were the only basis of human action seems to hold the roost, recognition and promotion of volunteering has become significant. For many of us who seem lost in the alluring world of symbols and images, it is critical to locate ourselves in relation to our 'self' and the society. Mahatma Gandhi's mantra, 'the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others' is definitely the best way to find our way back to the realities and understand our roots and traditions of a collectivist society.

The UN General Assembly resolution on Volunteerism³ calls on the need for sharing of experiences and good practices. To mark the tenth anniversary, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) as a focal point for IYV+10 played the principal and significant role to help coordinate, facilitate and extend capacity development assistance to strengthen the implementation of IYV+10 initiatives and results with support from UNDP India and in close partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS), Planning Commission, IYV+10 partners, networks, and volunteers from Kashmir in the North to Tamil Nadu in the South; Maharashtra in the West to Tripura in the North-East. It has been able to evolve itself as a platform for volunteers to come together to celebrate the spirit of volunteerism and add values to the indomitable essence of altruism. The overarching emphasis has been to upscale volunteering efforts in the areas of peace and development, and in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

To consolidate and further the achievements of UNV during IYV+10, a publication ***Volunteering in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses*** was considered. The aim was not only to capture the diversity of volunteering experiences, but also to highlight the ethos of the Indian volunteering traditions. Eminent people and experts from different disciplines were invited to share their viewpoints and experiences on different dimensions of volunteering in this part of the world. While some experts wrote on their respective thematic areas, others were interviewed. Besides, we carried out more than twenty-five case studies of innovative work by volunteers in different parts of the country. The writings, interviews and case studies definitely contribute to the repository of knowledge and action on ***volunteering in India***.

Volunteering in India begins with the interview of Naheed Haque, the former Deputy Executive Coordinator of UN Volunteers for a special issue of *The Peace Gong*, the children's newspaper, on Volunteerism. Ms Haque interviewed by Spandana Bhattacharya, a student of Class XI and Editor of *The Peace Gong*, pertinently points out that children's voices for a peaceful and livable world need to be heard and acted upon.

This is followed by a special message from eminent lyricist and filmmaker Gulzar who pointed out the Gandhian principle that 'service is not possible unless it is rooted in love and Ahimsa' truly describes a selfless volunteer. He emphasized that everyone need to make conscious attempt to volunteer for social causes. "Serving others selflessly is a great value and the individual definitely develops oneself in this process," he underscored.

1 A sage, Charvaka, is believed to be the founder of the Indian system of materialism, retrieved 25 January 2012 from <http://indianphilosophy.50webs.com/charvak.htm>.

2 Claude Adrien Helvetius was a Swiss-French Enlightenment philosopher, philanthropist and tax collector, retrieved 25 January 2012 from <http://www.utilitarianism.com/helvetius.html>.

3 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). (2002). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly (A/RES/56/38). Resolution adopted at the fifty sixth session- agenda item 108, retrieved 26 January 2012 from <http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2007/N0147881.pdf>.

The first section of the book captures the historical tradition of volunteering in India. It is noteworthy that the first chapter, The Role of Voluntary Social Work in India is by Natwar Thakkar, eminent Gandhian who has been a constructive volunteer worker throughout his life. The interconnection between Spandana's perspective and Shri Thakkar's work and philosophy establishes the inter-generational nature of volunteerism in India.

Mathew Cherian tries to explore on how early travelers like Ibn Batuta have written about the spirit of service and giving in ancient India. He underlines that *daanam* or the spirit of volunteerism and /or the courage to take action against wrongdoing continued in many forms as the times passed by and continues even today.

Outlining the philosophy of values in volunteering in Indian tradition, Biplab Loha Choudhury and Birajkanti Shome note the significance of *aparigrah*— the value of non-accumulation or of not keeping anything more than is necessary for one's minimal needs— for promoting the spirit of volunteering.

Dharmacharya Shantum Seth in his interview succinctly captures the notion of volunteering and self, how volunteering contributes to the learning process and it being accrued to be a state of mind. He also gives a detailed exposition of the essence of volunteering in different faiths.

Tushar A Gandhi takes the discourse on the volunteering tradition in India further as he articulates on the Gandhian perspectives to volunteering. He not only helps in understanding Gandhi 'the volunteer' but also his philosophy of selfless service. Gandhi's views, 'he who gives all his time to the service of the people, his whole life is an unbroken round of prayer' encapsulates his message of constructive volunteer work.

The second section explores the different socio-economic dimensions of volunteering in India. Tracing the link of the spirit of volunteering in the different social movements in India, Tarun K Bose argues that volunteering in the movements was directed at influencing agenda setting, policy making, decision-making and representation. He also talks about how new trends in volunteering have been promoted through new social movements post 1990s.

In her interview, Vandana Shiva avers on the need to promote "Knowledge Volunteerism" to recognize knowledge sovereignty of communities and ensure community rights over traditional resources, as volunteerism is about upliftment and evolution to a higher plane of consciousness and higher level of living in aspects that really matter.

Jyotsna Chatterjee in a nutshell links the role of volunteerism to the evolution of the women's movement in India. She talks about how women volunteers have been utilizing different platforms and fora to demand equal rights and justice for women with necessary legal protection, equal employment rights and right to decision making.

Volunteerism is the backbone of civil society in any part of the world articulates Rajesh Tandon in his interview. He underlines the need to initiate study centers for facilitating and providing more enabling environments related to volunteerism in India.

Volunteering in India makes a poignant effort to look at different dimensions of volunteerism. For an inclusive society, it is important to channel energies of all sections of the society to contribute to community building. Rohit Trivedi also argues for equality in terms of volunteerism and stresses the need to develop co-partnership by facilitating persons with disabilities to volunteer in the community.

The third section focuses on the cultural dimension of volunteering, media and

entertainment education. Celebrity danseuse Geeta Chandran talks about the role of volunteering in the promotion of art and culture. She pertinently points out that, “if volunteering is to be catalyzed by need, then believe me, the arts in India need the most number of volunteers!”

The role of entertainment education is not only to motivate individuals to volunteer for different causes but also to facilitate volunteerism. Anubhuti Yadav beautifully captures how entertainment- education can be a potent tool for volunteering in India. She cites case studies of different folk media, cinema, television serials and radio dramas in support of her claim.

Biplab Loho Choudhury points out how the media can be channelled to not only recognize volunteer efforts, but also to facilitate and network volunteering work. He dwells on both the role of print media in India as well as the digital media in promotion of volunteering. A significant impact of the proliferation of the new media is the advent of online volunteering.

Section four contemplates contemporary discourses on Volunteering. Javed Naqi and Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta capture the significant role of women volunteers in peace building and conflict resolution in their chapter on Women Volunteers in Peace-building: Stories from India. They share interesting examples of women volunteer’s in resolving conflict right from Kashmir to the Northeast.

Vedabhyas Kundu, exploring different perspectives of volunteering by children, traverses on how volunteering leads to inculcation of prosocial behavior. In the chapter on Children and Volunteering, through lucid examples, he points out that by volunteering children develop a spirit of humanism. Besides, recognition and facilitation of child-led volunteering efforts and child participation is essential for the strengthening of democracy and promotion of active citizenship.

Continuing to delve on volunteering and young people, the next chapter is on varied government initiatives to promote youth volunteerism. The contribution of organizations like Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) to encourage volunteering by youth in different parts of the country has been well documented by Rakesh Mohan.

Kamal Kumar Kar claims that impact due to a disaster can be reduced considerably if the community is well trained to handle such vulnerabilities. To support his claim he discusses the GOI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme and role of National Service Scheme (NSS) Volunteers on disaster preparedness and vulnerability reduction.

Pareesh Tewary and Amita Dahiya explore an important trend in volunteering which is gaining major ground in recent years — corporate volunteering. They talk about different notions of corporate volunteering and discuss some case studies to emphasize on the need to promote volunteering by employees in the corporate sector.

Sunita Godara, the 1992 Asian Marathon Champion, shares her volunteering experiences and discusses how sports can be used as a unique advocacy mechanism for social causes. Sports help break down social and cultural barriers as it does not differentiate between people because of caste, creed, gender or religion.

Ananya S Guha tries to link the notion of volunteering with skill building. With lucid examples, he points out how vocational education and training and allied skills development can be part of a volunteer social and developmental activity harnessing societal needs and targeting underprivileged sections of the society.

In the next section, Vandana Jena succinctly captures different policies and schemes of the Government of India (GOI) encompassing the spirit of volunteerism. She articulates how India has demonstrated the use of volunteer force in its aim to achieve the MDGs.

Harsh Jaitli points out that in the absence of a structured approach towards the voluntary sector in general and volunteers in particular, their contribution remains unaccounted. He argues for the need of a national policy for volunteers taking into account the different dimensions of volunteerism.

The same concern has been raised by Pooran Chand Pandey who opines that a national platform on volunteering supported by a policy would give boost to various forms of volunteering and act as a pivotal force in enhancing development effectiveness in India.

Raj K. Mishra in his interview puts across how volunteerism in different government policies and schemes could help promote a culture of volunteering amongst citizens and government employees to promote conducive environment for volunteerism.

The lack of sufficient platforms for volunteering, appropriate management systems, policies to support and appreciate volunteers and recognition of volunteer action hampers the growth of active citizenship summarizes Praveen Kumar G in his article on Approach towards accountable active citizenship.

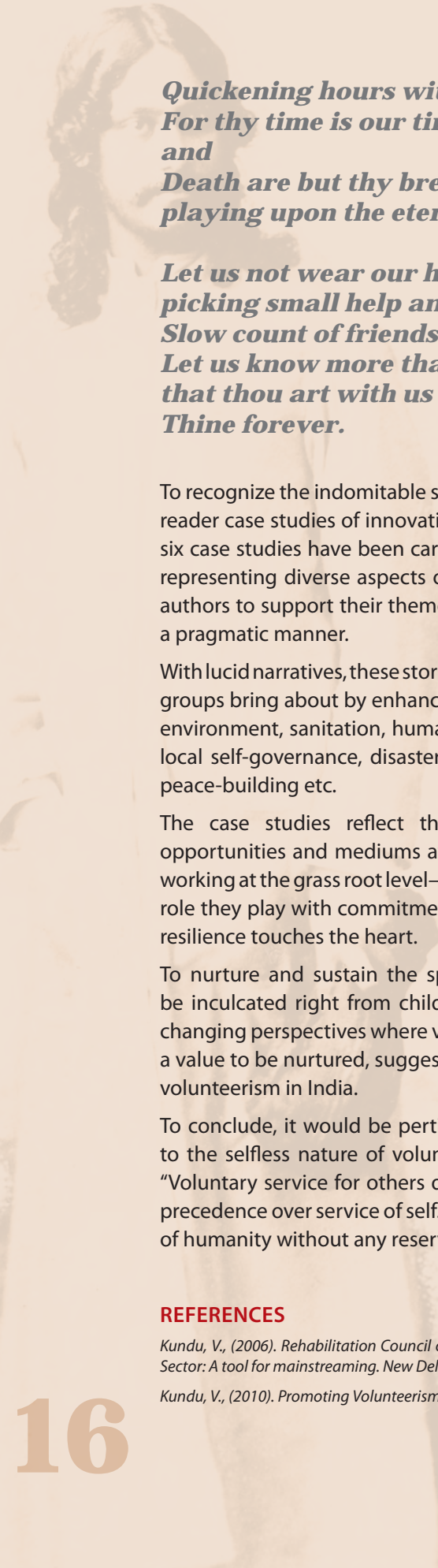
T K Thomas and Vedabhyas Kundu in the concluding chapter analyses the contemporary challenges and opportunities to volunteering. They talk about increasing individualization and secularization of the society which are roadblocks to volunteering; how different competing indulgences and competition have a restraining effect on people to volunteer. In the backdrop of the domination of market forces and growing inequalities, they argue, economic, market and social conditions have resulted in creation of new opportunities for people to volunteer. They also discuss about the influence of the digital revolution, which has resulted in the evolution of new forms of volunteerism.

In the backdrop of challenges and difficulties volunteers face in working to bring change in the society, the die-hard spirit of service and humanism lead them to continue their voyage. The committed volunteers remain undeterred by the difficulties and traverse their path, however rough it may be, with joy and inner satisfaction. In this context, it would be pertinent to quote the following lines of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore:

***Our voyage is begun.
Captain, we bow to thee!
The storm howls and the waves are
wicked and wild, but we sail on.
The menace of danger waits in the way
to yield to thee its offerings of pain,
And a voice in the heart of the tempest cries:
'Come to conquer fear!'***

***Let us not linger to look back for the
laggards, or benumb the***





***Quickening hours with dread and doubt.
For thy time is our time and thy burden is our own and life
and
Death are but thy breath
playing upon the eternal sea of Life.***

***Let us not wear our hearts away
picking small help and taking
Slow count of friends.
Let us know more than all else
that thou art with us and we are
Thine forever.***

To recognize the indomitable spirit of volunteers, each section of the book presents to the reader case studies of innovative volunteering efforts of individuals and groups. Twenty-six case studies have been carefully chosen from different geographical regions of India representing diverse aspects of volunteering, apart from the concrete examples by the authors to support their themes highlighting volunteer actions replication on ground in a pragmatic manner.

With lucid narratives, these stories give an insight to the value addition these individuals and groups bring about by enhancing community capacities in the area of health, education, environment, sanitation, human rights, women and child rights, rural development and local self-governance, disaster preparedness and management, conflict resolution and peace-building etc.

The case studies reflect the indomitable spirit volunteers demonstrate availing opportunities and mediums available — be it community radio, online volunteering or working at the grass root level— to them. It is also commendable to notice the inspirational role they play with commitment and dedication despite many hardships they face. Their resilience touches the heart.

To nurture and sustain the spirit of volunteering, small acts of volunteering need to be inculcated right from childhood and reiterated as a value of the Indian ethos. The changing perspectives where volunteerism is not seen as a resource to be exploited but as a value to be nurtured, suggests Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta as a way forward to promote volunteerism in India.

To conclude, it would be pertinent to quote Mahatma Gandhi, as this book is a tribute to the selfless nature of volunteering. In his Booklet, 'From Yervada Mandir', he writes, "Voluntary service for others demands the best of which one is capable, and must take precedence over service of self. In fact, the pure devotee consecrates himself to the service of humanity without any reservation whatever."

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INTERVIEW:

PREPARE CHILDREN TO VOLUNTEER FOR A GLOBAL NON-VIOLENT FUTURE

Naheed Haque is the former Deputy Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme, Bonn, Germany. As part of the special issue of The Peace Gong to mark IYV+10, Spandana Bhattacharya, Editor, The Peace Gong and student of class XI in Kolkata, interviewed Ms Haque through email. This interview is reprinted from The Peace Gong, April 2012 issue.

Q1. A large number of children fall victim to conflicts across the world. How do you think we can stop this?

People need to learn more about the rights and concerns of children, and greater efforts need to be made to foster a culture of peace and non-violence. The actions of volunteers, citizens and civil society (groups and institutions other than governments and business that work for the common good) are very important to ensure peace and development in all communities. Experience from different parts of the world suggests that volunteers often help take care of children caught up in conflict or other difficult situations, and they need as much support as we can give them.

At UNV, we have an important role in advocating volunteerism, not only for peace and the environment, but also for reducing poverty, disease and inequality – which we know as ‘development’. On 5 December 2011 we marked the culmination of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (we shortened this to ‘IYV+10’) and launched the first State of the World’s Volunteerism Report at the United Nations General Assembly in New York. We also celebrated the contributions of millions of volunteers all over the world for peace and development, and showed that volunteerism really makes a difference in people’s lives, including of children.

Q2. How do you think we can bring together children in different parts of the world who can volunteer to work for a non-violent world?

The tenth anniversary Year, IYV+10, helped volunteers and organizations to network and come together: for example, the World Organization of the Scout Movement and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, among others, were major partners working together during the Year. Children’s groups, schools, and organizations working for children still need to further unite for their common goals.

Gandhi rightly said, “If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.” So, to celebrate IYV+10, we asked children from many countries to volunteer their paintings and ideas for a children’s art book “Volunteering through Children’s Eyes”. Their creativity, inspiring stories and insightful quotes helped us to see volunteerism through children’s eyes. These children have understood the core values of volunteerism so well. Especially at this time of the year, they have reminded us about what inspires and motivates us in life: solidarity, tolerance and love. They reminded us that we can have a global non-violent future if we all try, including children, to make this a better and safer world.

VOICES OF
CHILDREN
need to be heard
for a MORE
PEACEFUL
AND LIVEABLE
WORLD.
Space and
opportunities
need to be created
so that children
can contribute
towards global
sustainable
development.

Q3. In many countries the rights of children to participation is not even recognized. So how can we even think of facilitating their participation as a volunteer force?

I recently met Felix Finkbeiner, a German boy who founded a global environmental campaign 'Plant for the Planet'. He is inspirational, and his voice is being heard, but he is lucky to come from a country where that is possible. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child highlights the importance of children's participation. We need to look at the world through children's eyes – they care as much about the future of humanity and our planet as adults do. Children's voices for a more peaceful and livable world need to be heard and acted upon through initiatives such as the environmental movement and the Millennium Development Goals. Because the future belongs to children, not my generation.

Q4. In today's competitive world, there is hardly time for many children to even think of contributing as a volunteer. We are burdened with studies and focus on our career goals. In such a backdrop, how can the spirit of volunteerism be instilled in the next generation?

Programmes and activities that inspire children and young people to volunteer should be integrated into school education: this was something that many organizations we spoke to this year agreed on. Volunteering should be promoted as a way for self-development of children and young people. Volunteering enhances young people's skill sets and employability, makes them see the importance of protecting our planet from war, environmental damage and climate change, and also prepares them to work for the sustainable development of their community.

Q5. The new State of the World's Volunteerism Report states, "Online volunteering, online activism through social media, and micro-volunteering are fast growing trends." What do you think is the growth potential of online volunteering?

There is great potential for young people and children to contribute to volunteering online through the internet. Social media and micro-volunteering are important means for young people and children to connect with each other, exchange views and promote a culture of peace, non-violence, solidarity, tolerance and love. We should encourage new media literacy amongst young people and children so that they can use new media to volunteer and contribute their talents and imagination wherever they may be.



“ If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children. ”

Mahatma Gandhi

A SPECIAL AND INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGE FROM GULZAR



Gulzar launching the Coffee Table Book 'Ek Prarthna' Braille edition at Arushi, Bhopal © Arushi, 2011

The Gandhian principle that, 'service is not possible unless it is rooted in love and Ahimsa', truly describes a selfless volunteer. S/he enjoys the role of serving others even in times of insurmountable challenges. The selfless tradition of volunteerism has been intrinsic part of Indian culture and tradition and reflects poignantly in different faiths and societies.

I am happy to learn that the United Nations Volunteers is coming out with a book, ***Volunteering in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses*** that traverses the different dimensions of volunteering in India. I am sure the book will contribute to the existing knowledge and literature and promote better understanding of the volunteering tradition of our country.

As a volunteer myself, it is heartening to note that the book will deal with so many varying dimensions of volunteering. I have been associated with Arushi, Bhopal since its inception. Here we are striving to bring back the confidence and smiles amongst children with disabilities. We have also developed posters to create awareness on disability. These posters were put at different visible locations like New Delhi Railway station, all the Shatabdi Express trains, schools and in every Panchayat of Madhya Pradesh and had very good impact.

We have also been able to advocate the inclusion of information and messages on disability in all school textbooks in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. One page on disability has now been included in each of these text books. This is a significant achievement and will go a long way in helping young minds understand the issues and concerns of disability.

Another noteworthy experiment has been to train individuals with disability in theatre. Arushi has been able to develop an inclusive theatre group that has performed in a large number of places including the famous Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai. Training in music has also been promoted amongst children with disability. Many children have been trained to sing several of my songs composed especially for them.

During the 2001 and 2011 census in Madhya Pradesh, we made films on disability to create awareness on the issue to ensure that the disabled too were enumerated. It has been a wonderful feeling to be part of these processes to empower the population who have mostly been excluded from society. Another important attempt for us has been to develop talking books for children with visual impairment. We have been working vigorously for more than a decade now to develop the talking books so that the visually impaired have access to literature and study material.

I strongly feel that each one of us needs to make conscious attempt to volunteer for social causes. Serving others selflessly is a great value and the individual definitely develops oneself in this process.

I hope this book reaches large number of people and brings awareness about different dimensions of volunteering tradition in India and inspires people to take to volunteering.

Gulzar.

Gulzar

Gulzar reading the Coffee Table Book, Ek Prarthna, to the children of Arushi during the Braille book reading session in Bhopal © Arushi, 2011



SECTION 1

VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

India is, the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only.

Mark Twain



THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

Natwar Thakkar

To maintain the health of the state and democracy, it is important that a band of selfless volunteer workers evolve who could influence the moral values of the society and act as conscience keepers.

In Indian culture, renunciation and charity are two highly venerated values of life. We also find that the *rishis* were put on the highest pedestal in ancient times. *Rishis* lived in forests away from major settlements and engaged themselves in penance, in training disciples in various walks of life and devoting time in meditation and spiritual pursuits. We also come across descriptions in epics that whenever a *rishi* visited the court of a king, the king used to vacate his throne to receive the sage and make him sit on his throne. The king then used to sit at the feet of the seer and seek blessings and guidance for the smooth and benevolent conduct of the affairs of the state. It appears that these sages and seers exercised a moral restraint on state power. The king also received the feedback from them about how well his subjects were faring in his kingdom. This shows that renunciation enjoyed a very high status in society. In other words, the virtue of renunciation was important and not the acquisition of wealth or power.

Indian culture also placed great emphasis on charity. Every individual or householder was expected to help the needy and the suffering. Even during the modern times, erecting drinking water platforms and feeding the hungry is practiced in many parts of the country. Construction of temples, dharmashalas, anna-satras (centers to serve food free of cost) were some manifestations of charity. It appears that during the British era and with the advent of modern education, donating wealth for construction of schools and colleges was also practiced. Similarly, the hospitals also used to be constructed out of donations and some of them were conducted as purely charitable bodies and provided treatment free of cost. Such hospitals are found to function even today in our country.

During the British regime, many Christian missionaries came to work in India. The primary objective of these missionary organizations was of course to spread Christianity. But at the same time, they undertook various activities like medical relief and running schools. The missionary organizations were so well managed and efficiently conducted that they were treated as models to follow. In spite of the fact that charity and renunciation were placed on a high pedestal in Indian culture, no cadre of workers mainly committed to social service was created until Swami Vivekananda emerged on the Indian scene. He could observe that the bulk of the Indian masses were deprived of even the basic amenities of life. Poverty, disease, and ignorance were widely prevalent. He could see that spiritual development can be brought about only after basic requirements for human existence are adequately met. This led him and his colleagues to give birth to a new order of renunciate social workers and it was named as the Ramakrishna Mission. Ramakrishna Mission has been instrumental in running efficiently a number of service organizations of high quality. Valuable services in the field of education, health, relief in the face of natural disasters and similar other spheres were conducted in the past and they are being conducted even today in various parts of the country. It is also

noteworthy that Ramakrishna Mission is also running various centers of service and spiritual pursuits in many parts of North-east India. The nation will justifiably look forward to continued and dedicated services from this order in days to come. Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of service to man is beautifully expressed in the following quotation:

**“ God is everywhere.
He sleeps in stones,
awakes in plants and speaks only in man.
Service to man, therefore, is the highest worship of God.”**

Other sects of Hindu background who also organized social service activities and organizations are the Arya Samaj and the Swami Narayana sect, which originated in Gujarat. There are other similar bodies also.

The unique leadership of Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle was instrumental largely in creating greater awareness about the role of voluntary or selfless service. He laid great emphasis on the role of voluntary social workers in nation building. A significant aspect of Gandhi's leadership has not been fully understood by many. Apart from the struggles conducted in a non-violent manner, he also had the ambition of reconstructing Indian society on spiritual foundations. Mahatma Gandhi is often described as a leader who attempted to spiritualize politics. However, a careful study of his life and work will show that he wanted to spiritualize not only politics but also every walk of life. On one hand, he led the nation in agitation Programmes or *Satyagrahas* one after the other, but at the same time he motivated many to simultaneously join hands in nation building Programmes. This was by way of generating awareness in the nation that we have to be self-reliant in rebuilding the nation. He also appealed to the youth in the country to take to the life of voluntary poverty and dedicate themselves in nation building Programmes. He wanted a large band of voluntary social activists to take up different activities related to removal of poverty, social inequality, disease and ignorance.

Mahatma Gandhi had prepared a blueprint of a plan of national reconstruction. He named it as 'constructive Programme'. There were 18 items in this Programme such as removal of untouchability, welfare of tribal communities, promoting production through Khadi and Village industries, prohibition of alcohol, spread of Hindi and several others. He firmly believed and explained that by implementing all the items of 'constructive work Programme', it will be possible to evolve a new India. He therefore appealed to the youth to come forward and work as full time voluntary servants of the people.

Responding to Gandhi's appeal, many idealist youths came forward and took up one or more items of 'constructive work Programme'. Many voluntary organizations came into being in different parts of the country mainly engaged in production of khadi and some items of village industries. It played an important role in development of the rural population. Through these Programmes, Gandhiji explained that rendering service merely in relief related activities was not adequate. For the first time, he educated the people that social service should primarily aim at socio-economic development and in promoting higher values of life. It will

The unique leadership of Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle was instrumental largely in creating greater awareness about the role of voluntary or selfless service.



be seen that it was mainly due to Gandhi's leadership and teaching that volunteerism and voluntary social service took roots in our country and is now recognized as a vital instrument of generating moral climate and of promoting overall well-being of the community.

It is generally believed that there are four pillars of democracy—Parliament, Executive, Free Judiciary and Free Press. But experience has shown that volunteerism and voluntary action is the fifth pillar of democracy! If we have a network of voluntary organizations conducted by dedicated selfless individuals, they could be not only the centers of socio-economic service but they can function as educators and conscience-keepers. Such workers according to Gandhian norm have to refrain from pursuit of wealth as well as power. Such devoted, selfless individuals and their functioning can act as effective moral constraint and wield healthy influence on the state power. The task of conscience keeping is also expected to be performed by a free and unbiased press, but it is now realized that it is not enough. The band of selfless workers ought to emerge as moral influence and conscience keepers. That alone can maintain the health of the state and democracy.

There is one more aspect that needs to be understood. In a more conscientious and healthy society, the power of the state should be reduced to a minimum. The state should evolve itself more as a facilitator and coordinator. In the ideal state of Gandhian vision, decentralization of power by promoting self-reliant, self-governing village units is essential to build non-exploitative, peaceful and progressive society. Once the importance of this goal is realized, the role of voluntary organizations will be better understood and gain more importance. Voluntary organizations and their workers

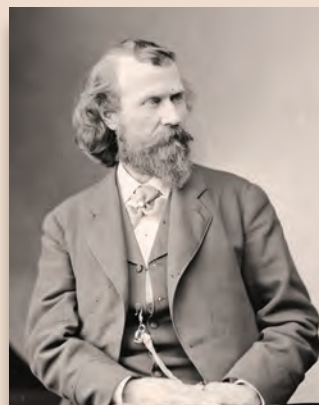
ought to promote self-reliance in all walks of life, decrease dependence on the state and continuously promote higher values of life.

To conclude, let me repeat that the existence and functioning of voluntary organizations conducted by selfless, enlightened individuals are most essential for the well-being and enlightened existence of a society and of democracy.

Joaquim Millers poem, Columbus aptly describes the die-hard spirit of eminent Gandhian, Natwar Thakkar.

**“ Brave admiral, say but one good word:
What shall we do, when hope is gone?
The word leapt like a leaping sword:
Sail on! Sail on! Sail on! And on! ”**

Joaquim Millers



A Gujarati, it was his strong conviction in Gandhian values and incredible determination that took him to Nagaland, in the North-East of India. This was in early 1955 when the state was rocked by insurgency. Even before he could start his constructive volunteer work, his activities were suspected upon and local functionaries in Chuchuyimlang where he was stationed thought he was a rebel and had come to aggravate the situation. There were several threats to his life.

After much struggle, Natwar Thakkar was able to give shape and concrete expression to his spirit of service by taking up various sustainable socio-economic development Programmes. He worked incessantly to promote charkha spinning, khadi, bee keeping, jaggery making, biogas and indigenous oil mills. The Nagaland Gandhi Ashram, which he set up, has been able to popularize modern bee keeping throughout the state. He also initiated vocational training centre for school dropouts, started trade of tailoring and carpentry and initiated Programmes for the persons with disability.

The Ashram has also been organizing a series of awareness generation Programmes on biodiversity and sustainable development for the past several decades and Mr Thakkar has been a strong advocate of the Gandhian approach to conserve nature. He keeps on underscoring what Gandhi had said, “The world has enough resources for our need, but not for our greed.” To create awareness, Mr Thakkar has been organizing seminars, group discussions, role-plays and youth action.

Natwar Thakkar, one of the pioneers of the Gandhian movement in the Northeast India, continues to do the work of emotional bridge building by trying to bring the people of the region to the rest of India. He continues his constructive activities in Chuchuyimlang though they have been disrupted several times by the insurgents.

Excerpts taken from: Kundu, V., (1999). India's Living Legends: Savants of Voluntary Action; Voluntary Action Network India (VANI).

VOLUNTEERING AMONG FAITHS – THE RELIGIOUS LEXICON

Mathew Cherian

The Indian civil society has utilized the CULTURALLY EMBEDDED VOLUNTARY SPIRIT to attract volunteers into the social development sector. Volunteers also fill human resources gap for many small NGOs in rural areas.

The quest for knowledge began thousands of years ago in 6000BC from the Harappan civilization. Harppan people had intimate knowledge ranging from the size and shape of bricks and the foundations of geometry to the binomial equations. India's gift to the world was numbers and more so the numeral zero, which has given binary logic and lead to the whole world of electronic computing. Similarly, philanthropy has its early roots in India.

In the *Upanishads*⁴, *Daanam* – giving/ sharing, the equivalent of philanthropy (philan-tropos-love of humanity) as in European literature has been set with certain cardinal rules. The rules have been that whenever one donates, he or she looks at *Desh*, *Kaal* and *Patra* – the three cardinal principles. This *Danam* is now ingrained and set in many Indians. *Desh* is the principle of region of need, where a particular state or province may be affected by a natural disaster or extreme food shortage. *Kaal* is the principle of time of need. Every person goes through the cycle of good times and bad times. The *Upanishads* indicate that one has to practice *Daanam* when people are going through bad times. The third principle of *Patra* indicates that *daan* is given whether the recipient is deserving or not deserving. This is in consonance with the principle of accountability whether the recipient charity is accountable to the *daan* it receives.

The *Upanishads* also indicate the gradation of *daanam* which is *Shramdaan*⁵, *Anna-Daan*⁶, *Vastra-Daan*⁷ and *Gyan-Daan*⁸. Islam has rules on giving which is *Zakat*. *Zakat* has its own governing rules and along with it *Fidiya* which is more like a fine imposed on those violating the fast in the month of *Ramadhan*. Christianity has its rules of *Tyeth* that is one tenth of the income to be set aside for charity. This is very similar to Sikh religion, which also has its *Dasvandh* that translates to one tenth for the poor and disabled.

The religions practiced in India all have a commonality in their philanthropic messages and in their lexicon. Where is the divide? Jesus Christ in his sermon says, "What you do

4 The word "upanishad" comes from the root word *upasana*, which means "to draw near," and is usually considered to mean that which was heard when the student sat near the teacher to learn the eternal truths. Atma Jyoti. *Spiritual Writings. The Upanishads*. Retrieved 23 February, 2012 from http://www.atmajyoti.org/spirwrit_upanishad_intro.asp.

5 *Shramdaan* is an offering of physical labor. Shri Ram Chandra Mission. Retrieved 23 Febrayry, 2012 from <http://www.srcm.org/bookstore/glossary.jsp>.

6 *Anna-Daan* means to donate food. Ishwar Bhakti. Hinduism. Retrieved 23 February, 2012 from <http://www.ishwarbhakti.com/hinduism.php>.

7 *Vastra-Daan* is the donation of clothes. Life Positive. Jainism - The gentle conquerors. Retrieved 23 February, 2012 from <http://www.lifepositive.com/spirit/world-religions/jainism/jain.asp>.

8 *Gyan-Daan* means the sharing of knowledge. Seven Pillars. (2009). Mahavir Jayanti. Retrieved 23 February 2012 from http://www.sevenpillarshouse.org/blog/article/mahavir_jayanti.

to the least of them, you do unto me.” This has inspired many missionaries to do service to the poor irrespective of religion, caste or creed.

In India, early travelers like Tavemier and Ibn-Batuta⁹ have recounted several *Dharamshalas*¹⁰ for weary travelers across the country, hospitality like never experienced before truly like *Athithi Devo Bhava* (Guest is God). The spirit of giving and sharing runs in the genetic code of many Indians down from the *Taittiriya Upanishads*¹¹, which said *Pitro Devo Bhava, Matro Devo Bhava*¹², *Guru Devo Bhava*¹³.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion began work in the Kartarpur Community in present day Pakistan. Here the traditions of *Kar Seva* based on the principles of *Shramdaan* were born. Voluntary agencies and social movements have been growing on the country's values and the spiritual lexicon of interconnectedness. The base of volunteerism and volunteering has been built on this tradition. *Shramdaan* is seen as an extension of work with your hands, which will provide spiritual awakening to the soul.

Daanam, is very much part of Indian civilization, culture and history and more so of the Indian subcontinent. Indian spiritual philosophy is perhaps unique in the value that the receiver has a more exalted position in providing the giver an opportunity to perform *daanam*. It has not only social and psychological benefit but also spiritual merit for the giver or donor, which in turn enhances the conscience of the donor and his power to distinguish between the right and the wrong, good and the bad.

Thus, *daanam* or the spirit of volunteerism and/or the courage to take action against wrongdoing continued in many forms as the times passed. Voices were raised by the social reform movements against discrimination by birth and gender and discrimination within religion. The formation of Atmiya Sabha in 1815 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one such example; later it became allied with Christian Unitarians and started the Unitarian Committee in 1821. Brahmo Sabha was established in 1828. Swami Sahjanand's Swaminarayana sect (1800) and Manohar Dharm Sabha (1844) of Gujarat, Paramhans Sabha, Prarthana Sabha, Kalyanonmayak Samaj and Hindu Dharm Sabha in Maharashtra had similar concerns. Many literary educational institutions such as the Royal Asiatic Society (1834) and Dnyan Prakash Sabha (1840) were also founded. The Faradi movement of Haji Shariatullah, founded in 1818 among the economically backward classes of Muslims, reflected similar concerns in the context of Islam. All these were volunteer-based organizations connected and interwoven with their respective religious lexicon. They wished to reform their own religions with constructive work.

This philosophy and ingrained culture motivates many Indians to engage in volunteerism and make monetary, time and skill contributions to many similar nonprofit institutions even in the current age.

Many concerned groups like the Isha Foundation have planted several million trees in Tamil Nadu with the help of volunteers and their name is in the Limca Book of Records.

9 Ibn Battuta, also known as Shams ad-Din (February 25, 1304 – 1368 or 1369), was a Muslim Berber Moroccan explorer, known for his extensive travels published in the *Rihla* (lit. “Journey”). Chughtai, A.S., (1990). *Ibn Battuta - the great traveler*.

10 *Dharamshalas* are Indian religious rest houses. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 11, 301.

11 *The Taittiriya Upanishad* is one of the older, “primary” *Upanishads* which describes the various degrees of happiness enjoyed by the different beings in creation. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1969), *the Bhagavad-Gita, a New Translation and Commentary*. Penguin Books. 41, 1–6, 461.

12 *Mother is Goddess, father is verily the God.* Lassi with Lavina. (2009). *Hindu Hospitality: The Gods Amongst Us*. Retrieved 23, February 2012 from <http://www.lassiwithlavina.com/faith/hindu-hospitality-the-gods-amongst-us/html>.

13 *Guru/Teacher is God*. Andaman chronicle. (2011) “*Guru Devo Bhava*”: *Guru's role*. Retrieved 25 February 2012 from <http://andamanchronicle.com/content/view/4576/62>.



Sharing time and knowledge: A senior social activist helping street children in Delhi to prepare for their exams ©JoiningHands

It initiated Project GreenHands in 2005 as a massive ecological initiative to prevent and reverse environmental degradation and enable sustainable living. Pooling extensively on people's participation, the project aimed to plant 114 million trees statewide to create 10 per cent additional green cover in Tamil Nadu. A mass tree-planting marathon was held on October 17, 2006, which resulted in setting a Guinness World Record of 852 thousand saplings¹⁴ being planted. They have almost a million volunteers across India and so has another organization called 'the Art of Living'. This not-for-profit, educational and humanitarian Non-government Organization (NGO) was founded in 1981 by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, which engages in stress-management and service initiatives with one of the largest volunteer bases in the world. Through diverse humanitarian projects in the field of conflict resolution, disaster relief, sustainable rural development, empowerment of women, environmental sustainability etc. the foundation has spread peace across communities.¹⁵

LESSONS FOR DEVELOPMENT NGOS IN THE 21 CENTURY

The resurgent phase of voluntary initiatives began after Independence. The first 20 years of Independence, until the mid-1960s, may be termed as the phase of nation building. Many people in social reform-based voluntary action and in constructive work joined together to tackle the emerging needs and tasks of nation-building, focusing on extension work in agriculture and health and on community development etc. One consequence was the funding by government of Khadi and Village Industries. It also resulted in the formalizing of work in education and health, and in economic activities, through government-sponsored cooperative movements.

Some social reform movements found expression in social work and in its teaching institutions set up to train young people in social work. The underlying aim remained

¹⁴ Project GreenHands. Retrieved 11 January 2012 from <http://www.ishafoundation.org/ProjectGreenHands>.

¹⁵ The Art of Living. Art of Living – Overview. Retrieved 25 January 2012 from <http://www.artofliving.org/in-en/about-us/overview>.

the same: 'to provide help to the needy' by starting with the analysis of the need and focusing on a welfare approach. Another expression of the social reform movement in NGOs was in field programmes focusing on relief, rehabilitation, welfare and charity.

Today, a strong Indian civil society with myriad NGOs – large, medium and small with an increase from 1.2 million in 2002¹⁶ to 3.3 million in 2009, and perhaps the largest in the world¹⁷ complement the government's macro social safety net using volunteers in many ways to tackle many of India's crying needs in human and social infrastructure.

Many of these NGOs use the religious lexicon in inducting volunteers and the principles of *Shramdaan* into their work. Most NGOs have small teams of staff, many of whom are volunteers providing their time free, out of sheer commitment to the cause/organization. This is particularly so in rural areas where many volunteers are still engaged in agricultural/watershed and agricultural operations and give part of their time to working for the NGO.

In urban centers, most of the volunteers are middle-class and upper class women. An NGO called Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) inducted many volunteers to rebuild the land donated to Acharya Vinoba Bhave during the land donation/ gifting "Bhoodan" movement in 1950s and 60s. To develop the barren and uncultivable wastelands, distributed to the poor/ landless farmers under the Bhoodan movement, was ASSEFA's initial mission¹⁸.

NGOs that are more oriented to service delivery generally rely on part-time volunteers and full-time staff. Full-time staff generally comprises local people who brim with a sense of purpose. As many of these individuals stem from student/ social/ political movements, they are highly committed to the cause. Thus, most of the field-based NGOs rely on this local staff, even though they often lack necessary competence/ educational background required by the organization. Therefore, specialization of staff, division of roles and organizational structures are weak in small and medium-sized NGOs, where a single person may be involved in many different tasks, including accounts/ bookkeeping. Additionally, distant locations of NGOs make it difficult to attract professional competence such as financial management/ programme planning or technical expertise in areas such as forestry, agriculture and health care. This niche is filled by Indian civil society by using the culturally embedded voluntary spirit to attract volunteers into the sector as a whole. Consequently, they are also able to engage human resources for many small NGOs in rural areas.

Despite the fact that the voluntary/ participatory ratio is very high in India, due to the absence of any precise statistics, it is very difficult to estimate the number of volunteers and staff of the NGO sector as a whole. Nevertheless, this is a growing field in which society's cultural traditions have made voluntary work an integral part of family life. However, the major challenge remains to channelize the energies and capacities of the volunteers effectively, enabling them to give their best without the hazards of commuting long distances or wasting

16 PRIA (2002). *The Non-Profit Sector in India*. Retrieved 12 April 2012 from <http://www.pria.org/publication>.

17 As established by a study commissioned in 2008. The study considered only NGOs registered under the Societies Act, 1860 or the Mumbai Public Trust Acts and its variations, so the number could even be higher. Shukla, A. (2010). 'First official estimate: an NGO for every 400 people in India'. Retrieved 15 January 2012 from: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/firstofficial-estimate-an-ngo-for-every-400-people-in-india/643302>.

18 ASSEFA 2010–2011. Retrieved 10 January 2012 from <http://www.assefaitalia.org/it/pdf/Annual-report-2010-11-inglese.pdf>.

INDIAN PERSPECTIVE AND THE TRADITION OF VOLUNTEERING

Biplab Loha Choudhury

Birajkanti Shome

One of the core foundations

One of the core foundations
of the volunteering
tradition in India
is *aparigraha* or the

VALUE OF NON-
ACCUMULATION
or of not keeping
anything more than

is necessary for one's
minimal needs. According
to this value, giving
something away (*pradan*)

is accompanied by the
inculcation or assimilation
of humility and respectful
acceptance of others
(*grahan*).

ensuring its 'trans-generational progress' through ages because of stoic detachment from
its own sense of belongingness to community and country and sacrifice. It is high time
we utilize our age-old volunteering values for "ecologically sustainable trans-generational
progress" (Loha Choudhury 2011) of our civilization.

INTRODUCTION

Volunteer (from French *volontaire*) should ideally be a person or organization who wants to serve people from auto-initiative and employing own resource. Indian equivalent '*svecchasebee*' stresses the urge of a person to serve people as an extension of one's own self. Rabindranath Tagore coined the term '*bratee*' for all students of his under-tree, open-air school (est. 1901) at Santiniketan who had to offer selfless service in villages around Santiniketan.

Bharat i.e. India has nurtured and perfected its own practice of volunteerism over thousands of years. From the poor to the king, men from every stratum of our society had their own joy of serving and giving to others. Contrast our age old practice of keeping an oil lamp lit up every evening in front of our houses (so that passers-by are able to find the path) to today's practice of saving energy and money by not lighting up the front in the evening as if it is only the government's duty to do so. The juggernaut of development is eroding much of the volunteering mentality that *Bharat* nurtured ensuring its 'trans-generational progress' through ages because of stoic detachment from its own sense of belongingness to community and country and sacrifice. It is high time we utilize our age-old volunteering values for "ecologically sustainable trans-generational progress" (Loha Choudhury 2011) of our civilization.

APARIGRAHA: THE CORE VALUE

Aparigraha, a Sanskrit word, is opposite to *Parigraha*, which implies the act to take or accept solemnly. *Aparigraha* denotes the practice of non-acceptance and the value of not possessing anything more than the bare necessity. The concepts of sacrifice and charity are posited differently in the Indian mind. When one gives away one's dearest possession to a needy person, this can be considered charity. If giving away something is for one's own self-purity, it is *tyag* (sacrifice) but not charity.

Subordinating smaller or self-interest to a larger interest, even at the cost of some inconvenience and suffering is *Tyaga*. This principle is found incorporated in *Hitopadesha*.

“

Sacrifice/subordinate –

individual interest to that of the family;

Sacrifice/subordinate –

family interest to that of the village;

Sacrifice/subordinate –

the interest of the village to that of the nation;

**Renounce all worldly interest if you want your soul to rest
in peace.**

”

Here, the stress is on how a human being can better multiple levels of human existence by way of sacrificing or subordinating own desire to consume and enjoy more and more alone. It is a duty of righteousness, not driven by aspiration to attain name and fame by giving after keeping much more than what is required. It is individualism par excellence, where right is consummated in duty. Contrast this with the Western notion of giving away something that one can do without, or that one needs less, or that one has much more than one needs.

The motivation for volunteerism in India has significantly been related to *aparigrah*. Coming under Western influence, many persons in urban and middle-class society do not believe in *aparigrah*. Still there remains a large number of Indians who do respect a volunteer following the principle of *aparigrah*. However, the solely money-centric approach of development pursued over last sixty years is playing havoc to this core value.

Volunteerism based on *aparigrah* has an interesting dimension – the willingness to receive knowledge from whosoever is knowledgeable. As the dictum goes – the respectful gets knowledge (*sraddhaban labhatae gnanam*), so giving something away (*pradan*) is accompanied by the inculcation or assimilation of humility and respectful acceptance of and from others (*grahan*).

THE TRADITION OF SERVICE

We never had dearth of kings like Harshavardana and Dharmapala, leave aside the great Asoka, whose personal donations towards building up great public institutions did not hamper the autonomy of institutions. Unlike modern world's practice of conditional donations entrenched in the sense of being resource owner and giver, their ideal of giving had never been exerting and intrusionist.

In our village-centric country (which Lord Metcalf considered as self-contained republics), there was no dearth of people's donations and people's management committees to offer service to the knowledge-seekers, needy, animals and the pilgrims. The ideal of such volunteering was different – one's service to them was considered the service to God, and others were considered one's extended self. This ideal is brought out with the illustration in the following verse:

“**The trees bear fruits to serve others. The rivers flow to serve others. Cows give milk to serve others. This human body is meant to serve others.**”

It shows that every creation exists to serve others without expectation. Therefore, man being the highest form of life serves others too; not only human beings, but also all living beings. Such a lofty ideal inspires every individual to regard their own profession or avocation as a scope of serving others.

Swami Vivekananda, through the Ramakrishna Order of Monks started reviving the same spirit in modern



An aristocratic lady coming out from temple and giving alms.

Raja Ravi Verma (1848–1906)

One infinite, broad duty - beyond thought
of self, beyond narrow selfishness -
beyond qualities - Shri. Ram. 1922



India. He recounted that renunciation and service have been our main national ideals.

He said:

"The National ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.

The Indian nation cannot be killed. Deathless it stands, and it will stand so long as that spirit shall remain as the background, so long as her people do not give up their spirituality.

Aye, a glorious destiny, my brethren, as far back as the days of the Upanishads we have thrown the challenge to the world - 'Na dhanena na prajaya tyagenaike amritatwamansshuh - not by wealth, not by progeny, but by renunciation alone immortality is reached'. Race after race has taken the challenge up, and tried their utmost to solve the world-riddle on the plane of desires. They have all failed in the past - the old

ones have become extinct under the weight of wickedness and misery, which lust for power and gold brings in its train, and the new ones are tottering to their fall. The question has yet to be decided whether peace will survive or war; whether patience will survive or non-forbearance; whether goodness will survive or wickedness; whether muscle will survive or brain; whether worldliness will survive or spirituality.

This is the theme of Indian life work, the burden of her eternal song, the backbone of her existence, the foundation of her being, the raison d'être of her very existence - the spiritualization of human race. In this her life course she has never deviated whether the Tartar ruled or the Turk, whether the Moghuls ruled or the English".

- India and Her Problems -pp.10, 12-13

Bharat Sevasram Sangha and many other organizations across the country are serving people from this Indian perspective of volunteerism.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is a trans-generational value inculcated in Indian society from the Vedic period. It includes both giving and receiving but without an iota of selfishness and greed. As Ellis (1989, p.1) puts it, "It is the giving and not the gift that is important." Eastern as well as African societies have evolved ways of keeping track of reciprocities. Take the example of a Gujarati marriage. The family of the bride receives gifts (in cash or kind) from invitees. The family keeps record of all these so that it can reciprocate in appropriate occasions. Ellis adds that reciprocities are characterized further by (a) wealth being equated with one's esteem or prestige in society based on giving behavior, and (b) the assurance of good return because many people owe it to the giver.

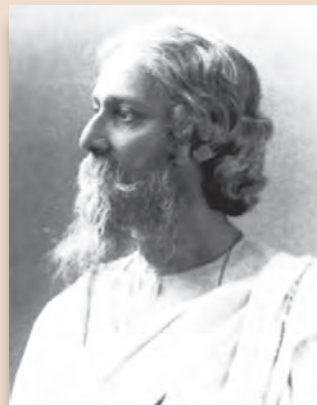
Just emphasizing the "giving" without "acknowledging" or "assimilating" the knowledge of the people often weakens people's self-help potential and curbs the growth of volunteerism among the people themselves. The institution-building process in society suffers when outside volunteers do not plan for their redundancy by developing local leadership.

GANDHI AND VOLUNTEERISM

Mahatma Gandhi applied this value of reciprocity when he formulated the trusteeship principle of offering and organizing service by the rich Indians. The essence of trusteeship emerges from the sense of belonging to the society and country, and the will to reciprocate with members of the society. Contrast it to the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that has travelled to our country from the other side of the world. Is it possible to inculcate the sense of belonging and reciprocity by law enforcement? Obviously not as it takes away the sense of assimilation of humility and respectful acceptance of others. Mahatma Gandhi's call to rich Indians to become trustees for the betterment of common person's condition generated much response from industrialists before India's independence. His call for *Gram Swaraj* through volunteering inspired and improved the volunteering tradition of India.

TAGORE: INSPIRING VOLUNTEERISM FOR PROGRESS

Rabindranath Tagore's rural reconstruction programme in Patisar and adjoining subdivisions in Rajsahi district, and Birahimpur Pargana in Nadia district of undivided Bengal during the first few decades of 20th century became successful due to high level of active participation of villagers and zamindars. Both contributed resource in cash and kind, which General Welfare Society of Kaligram utilized. There was astonishing sustained improvement in literacy, school education, agriculture, health, road construction, and commerce through cooperation. Village justice system turned villages peaceful and cooperation saved farmers from the clutch of moneylenders (Sen, 1943).



The Modern Review, the English magazine of national stature from Allahabad reported in December 1921 the poet's comment on his programme, "... When I found that nobody took me at all seriously, and when pedants discovered to their utter disgust discrepancies between my proposal and some doctrines of John Stuart Mill, then I took up, unaided, my village organization work, which at present moment is throbbing out its last heart throbs in a remote corner of Bengal."

BRATACHARI MOVEMENT

Gurusaday Dutta, a famous ICS officer of colonial era founded "Bratachari Movement" (1932) to inspire Indian youth to serve the cause of motherland's development, preserving folk- cultural media and to inculcate in them the virtue of physical labour. His *bratacharees* went from village to village in Bengal and South India to work improving agricultural and health condition selflessly. Dutta wrote (1937), *Bratachari* purports to present a complete synthesis of life, an integrated system of culture consisting of a complete philosophy of life, coupled with and expressed through a simple scheme of practical training and discipline for the building up of the inner life and character as well as the body, or in other words, for the simultaneous and harmonious cultivation of the body and soul of man. 'Brata' signifies a solemn or sacred purpose, ideal or objective that is pursued as a joyous rhythmic ritual simultaneously through an integrated employment of thought, word, and physical movement, and is used to signify the combined joyous integrated ritual itself. 'Chari' denotes one who pursues a purpose,

ideal or objective.The single *Brata* or solemn purpose and ritual of life is divided into five *Bratas* representing a five-fold path in the complete realization of life, which, however, must be pursued simultaneously, and not in separate compartments. The five *Bratas* are: Knowledge, Labour, Truth, Unity and Joy.

This movement aspires to inculcate nation-wide discipline of common citizenship among people of all sexes, all castes and creeds, and all ages. The way followed develops a high standard of character, physical fitness, truly voluntary constructive work, dignity of labour, a joyous community spirit, and love for countrymen and country.

There are hundreds of natural leaders in every society. They have a strong sense of taking the initiative and achieving excellence in skills that may be needed in society. However, middle-class conservatism prevents them from becoming entrepreneurs. Voluntary organizations do not consider fostering or nurturing such initiatives as part of their major role. The tremendous reserve of human energy that remains untapped by mainstream organizations generates frustration on both sides – the NGOs find bureaucracy stifling and generally unhelpful, and the “compliant” or “conformist” local leaders find no organizational or societal space for merging the pursuit of excellence with the search for socially useful innovations. Their linkage may increase society’s institutional capacity for self-renewal considerably.

Now-a-days, voluntary organizations that emphasize giving as the basis of a relationship with poor people are either seen as paternalistic by the people or seen as a source of external resources and skills. Hardly any voluntary organization tries to tap the historical reserve of knowledge (technical, institutional, and social) of the poor, leave aside local material resources. The term resource poor mask the “richness” of economically poor people. The graham or “assimilation” of knowledge from the poor, however, can bring down programme or project cost drastically, showed Assam University Rural Communication Project during 1998-2000 (Loha Choudhury, 2001).

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF VOLUNTEERISM



Volunteers preparing langar at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India

Concepts of volunteerism such as *gupt dan* (anonymous charity) among Hindus, *Kar Seva* (voluntary labour for the common good) among Sikhs, *zakat* among Muslims, and so on, are examples of the positive bases on which different religions build organic institutions.

The principle of “*Istabhriti*” introduced by Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra (1888-1969) teaches a disciple not only unconditional offering to the idol every morning but to feed two needy persons on every 30th day with utmost humility. Such feeding should be such that others are unable to know (Hauserman, 1961). Any type of publicity to such act defiles the practice. Contrast this to the Western approach to volunteerism.

CONCLUSION

Different Indian languages have words like *andi* (Haryanavi) and *dhuni* (Hindi), to express a person's obsession with working for the social good. Why has appreciation for this trait vanished? This vision is limited, because it denies the possibility of institutionalizing culture throughout a full range of institutions, not just voluntary organizations.

In Indian context, there is a strong tradition of volunteerism, which needs to be inculcated so that it further grows to instill 'human factor' among all citizens. It has not been widely appreciated that the roots of volunteerism are quite different in Eastern societies, in particular in Indian society, from those of Western societies. The result has been the implanting of an alien culture in most NGOs, no matter what their ideology is.

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INTERVIEW: AWAKENING THROUGH VOLUNTEERING –THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVES OF DIFFERENT FAITHS

CARING, HELPING,
CARING, HELPING,
SHARING,
SHARING,
CREATING
CREATING
ALLIANCES AND
ALLIANCES AND
ESTABLISHING
ESTABLISHING
COOPERATION on
COOPERATION on
the basis of solidarity
the basis of solidarity
rather than competition
rather than competition
or profit-these are the
or profit-these are the
core characteristics of
volunteerism, expressed
in a wide variety of situations
and across barriers of class,
ethnicity, community and
nation.
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in a wide variety of situations
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ethnicity, community and
nation.

Shantum Seth is a Buddhist scholar, practitioner and an ordained teacher (Dharmacharya) in the Zen lineage of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh. He has worked with agencies like UNDP, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and is active with Ahimsa - non-profit trust working on peace, cultural and environmental Programmes. Dharmacharya Shantum Seth in his interview to Vedabhyas Kundu succinctly captures the essence of volunteering in different faiths and notion of volunteering and self.

1. What are the core characteristics of volunteering? What are the traits of an effective volunteer?

Right motivation is the key to volunteering. A motivation coming from reducing suffering in oneself and for others in society, and trying to make yourself and others around you more peaceful, happy and fulfilled. Right volition arises from a sense of altruism, caring, sharing and realizing the inter-connectedness of all reality. To know that another's suffering is your suffering and another's happiness is your happiness is a significant aspect of volunteering.

To create alliances and establish cooperation based on this enlightened self-interest, cooperation rather than competition are the core characteristics of volunteerism, expressed in a wide variety of situations and across barriers of class, ethnicity, community and nation. Each one of us must learn to work not just for oneself; one's own family or one's nation, but for the benefit of all sentient beings. Universal responsibility is the key to human survival.

To be an effective volunteer requires a strong degree of commitment in which the volunteer extends to be of service to a wider cause. The spirit of selfless service runs high in volunteers since their motivation is not primarily for money, fame or power but is essentially based on altruistic values. The motivation is the good of others, based on love and non-violence and a desire to serve without personal reward and to bring about peace.

Effective volunteering requires the ability to listen deeply to the people with whom one is working. The process of becoming peaceful and building confidence can develop during social engagement. However, this requires taking time off for oneself, so as not to get 'burnt out' which is a bitter, common malady among peace volunteers. To be an effective volunteer, it is important to have peacefulness within, have a confidence in the knowledge of oneself and work with a sangha/group.

2. How volunteering benefits the self? Please share your perspectives.

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Volunteering is an act of working out of one's free will and in the process helping oneself in an enlightened manner. The self in Indian tradition is connected with everything else. When you

help others, you help yourself and vice versa. By helping yourself, you are bound to develop qualities like compassion, love and empathy. A volunteer by serving others feels a sense of joy and over time develops a sense of equanimity. This in turn helps the volunteer to remain balanced. These are significant indicators of self-actualization and self-realization. Volunteering can make an individual peaceful not only within oneself but also inculcates qualities of peaceful behaviour in their daily interactions with other fellow human beings.

For a volunteer it is essential to realize the connectivity between the self and the society. It is only when one works for others that we realize the inter-connectedness. This also leads to self-awakening and makes us better human beings. In addition, this enhancement of self-realization gives us the impetus to work further incessantly. The realization of the inter-connectedness of an individual with the society leads to enlightenment. Hence, I strongly feel that the act of volunteering is the best way for the realization of one's self and the path of awakening. Mahatma Gandhi had pertinently said, "The best way to find oneself is to lose yourself in the service of others." It is also significant to point out that all religions promote the spirit of volunteerism and service towards others as a path of getting nirvana and to be one with God.

Another significant benefit of volunteering is enhancement of self-confidence and self-esteem. Acts of volunteering helps an individual in the construction of a positive identity. If an individual develops feelings of self-actualization, has self-confidence and is inherently satisfied with the work towards the society which s/he is doing, the individual is most likely to develop a positive view of her/his life and future goals. In short, acts of volunteerism inculcate in individuals pro-social behaviours.

At a time when each one of us faces the complexities of a highly materialistic world, acts of selfless service helps a volunteer to find inner peace – an essential attribute of be in harmony with oneself and the society. Volunteering also helps an individual to strengthen her or his social relationships.

Acts of volunteering also facilitates our constant learning process. It is a path of learning about others, the life process and ultimately learning about oneself. I am always learning as I work amongst the poor and marginalized, it is a humbling experience.

3. Please elaborate upon on how volunteering enhances learning and educates us?

When we start volunteering in diverse situations, we learn to see the world through multiple lenses and develop capacities to embrace diversity. We then tend to expand our sensitivity towards different cultures and traditions, which is important to take us away from rigid worldviews.

Expansion of one's own inner education is a significant outcome of volunteering. As volunteers, an individual has to respond to different processes in the initiative they are volunteering. It gives them an opportunity to look at different biases prevalent in the society and over

the self in Indian tradition is connected with everything else. WHEN YOU HELP OTHERS, YOU HELP YOUR-SELF.

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a course of time gives them the wherewithal to respond to these in an increasingly skillful way.

By developing sensitivity to issues of concern, acts of volunteering help a volunteer learn a humane approach to these issues. For instance, if we see a beggar, a volunteer who develops a sense of humanitarianism, would see him as a teacher. It is important to reflect on what comes in our mind – feelings of compassion for the beggar, empathy, disgust, fear or generosity. It leads us to the action on what we do for the beggar. The crux is that a committed volunteer is always a student – both internally and externally. It is a process of reflecting on issues and acting on them, our emotional response to them and acting on them using our wisdom.

It is important to note that inner education leads to awakening and self-realization. So as volunteering is a source of inner education, it leads us to the path of awakening.

An important aspect of volunteering is that it develops our critical thinking ability and enables us to act out of the box. It is a constant source of life skill education as it helps develop within us the ability to negotiate myriad complexities of the modern world. Volunteering also often enables a volunteer to exercise skills and ideas that might have remained unused due to lack of space or opportunity.

One of the challenges to volunteering is that volunteers *many* a times start developing the notion that they are doing service for others. Whenever such thinking takes precedence, the learning process becomes static and we develop strong egos. Volunteers should develop the habit of constantly telling oneself that it is they who are benefitting from their acts of volunteering. It is crucial to remove the false notion of it is we, the volunteer, whose work is benefitting others. In this context, I think we should accrue volunteering to be essentially as a state of mind.

4. Please discuss as to how volunteering is a state of mind?

When we start to volunteer with our hands and we do it in a very mindful way, it itself becomes worship. Acts of volunteerism done with the mindful intention of serving humanity becomes a spiritual practice. In such a context, volunteering can be said to be a state of mind.

The importance of intentionality is extremely crucial in the goal of our volunteering action. It is important to reflect on whether our intention to volunteer for a cause is to harp our contribution and bloat our ego of having done something or it is purely a genuine effort to make others happy without thinking of the benefits that accrue to us from such an action.

The intentionality behind volunteerism leads to the significance of dedication and mindfulness that a volunteer puts in one's endeavour. With pure intention and dedication, the result of any volunteer action can be different from that which has selfish motives. Also, it is important to underscore that acts of volunteering with pure intention and service-orientation are a path of self-realization and awakening. It is also crucial to constantly reflect upon why we are motivated to volunteer. Does our motivation have an altruistic element or has it evolved out of some narrow self-interest? When we get motivated to volunteer for something out of narrow self-interest, it defeats the fundamental tenets of volunteerism and this can never lead us to the path of self-awakening.

It is when we develop a deeper sense of altruistic behaviour, we start becoming responsible, develop sensitivities and love for fellow living beings. Volunteering then becomes a natural state and gets ingrained in our psyche.

5. Can you reflect on the essence of volunteerism being promoted by different religions?

To promote peace and harmony, it is essential to develop understanding between people of different religions. The spirit of volunteerism and the essence of service towards all living beings are ingrained in all religions of the world. Let us try to explore how different religions promote the spirit of service.

A) SIKHISM:

One of the significant thrusts of Sikhism is community services and helping those who are needy. Sikhs are encouraged by the *Guru Granth Sahib* to perform *karseva*, which refers to selfless service. *Karseva* or *seva* is service performed without any expectation of reward or personal aggrandizement. A person performing such service is called *sevadar*.

The *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* stresses, "One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master." Selfless service, according to Sikhism, is not only good for community relations but also for the moral upliftment of the individual. Sikhs are found doing selfless service in *Gurudwaras*, in hospitals, and in many community initiatives. The *sevadars* wash, clean and selflessly perform all work in *Gurudwaras*. One of the most important expressions of selfless service in Sikhism is *langar* or free kitchen. Here food is offered without any discrimination and is designed to withhold the principle of equality amongst all people of the world. *Sevadars* or volunteers run the langars.

“Without selfless service are no objectives fulfilled; in service lies the purest action.”

Adi Sri Granth Sahib Ji, Maru, M.1, p. 992

B) BUDDHISM

*If, for my own sake,
I cause harm to others,
I shall be tormented
in hellish realms;
But if for the sake of others,
I cause harm to myself,
I shall acquire all that is magnificent.
By holding myself in high esteem
I shall find myself in unpleasant
realms, ugly and stupid;
But should this [attitude] be
shifted to others
I shall acquire honors in a
joyful realm.
If I employ others for my own purposes
I myself shall experience servitude,
But if I use myself for the sake of others
I shall experience only lordliness.*



*Budha on Lotus taken in Nha Trang, Vietnam.
© <http://photo.kruyt.org/?p=15>*

Shantideva, Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life 8.126-128

This verse from Shantideva captures the essence of volunteerism and service in Buddhism.

Buddha's feelings for others are beautifully described in the Bodhicaryavatara:

“So long as the sky and the world exist, my existence will be here for the eradication of the miseries of all beings. Let me suffer all the sufferings of beings and let the world be happy (and liberated) by dint of all merits of me, the Bodhisattva.”

The ancient Buddhist Jataka tales, which are 550 in number, underscore the importance of sacrificing life and wealth for the cause of others. These stories are also the reflection of the importance given to service towards all living beings in ancient Indian tradition.

Also in early Buddhist scriptures, lot of importance was given on the service for the sick and needy. Emperor Ashoka, who is strongly influenced by the Buddha Dharma enjoins his bureaucrats to treat their subjects like their own children. In short, Buddhism encapsulates the importance of selfless service and community development.

C) CHRISTIANITY

“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Mark 9: 35

The importance of serving others in Christianity is best exemplified by Jesus Christ himself. In John 13, he started by washing the feet of his disciples. He said that even though he was the Lord and Teacher, he still is serving them, showing that one must serve to be like him.

Galatians 5:13 asks everyone to “serve one another in love”. Meanwhile in Galatians 5:14 the reason for this is given, “The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Similarly, Galatians 6:2 tells that the law of Christ is to carry each other's burdens.

Christianity believes that since Christ gave away his life for love of entire humanity, people are expected to share that love with each other by serving others in whatever ways they can. In fact, Christianity emphasizes the importance of giving as an aspect of social justice rather than of individual charity. The commitment to giving, to helping others and being concerned about the poor, the weak, widows and orphans, was rooted in both the life and teachings of Jesus.

D) HINDUISM

Bhagavad Gita 3.10-26 eloquently captures the tradition of selfless service expounded by Hinduism. It says:

"Every selfless act, Arjuna, is born from the eternal, infinite Godhead. God is present in every act of service. All life turns on this law, O Arjuna. Whoever violates it, indulging his senses for his own pleasure and ignoring the needs of others, has wasted his life. But those who realize God within are always satisfied. Having found the source of joy and fulfillment, they no longer seek happiness from the external world. They have nothing to gain or lose by any action; neither people nor things can affect their security...Strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world; by devotion to self- less work, one attains the supreme goal in life. Do your work with the welfare of others always in mind. It was by such work that Janaka attained perfection; others, too, have followed this path.

The ignorant work for their own profit, Arjuna; the wise work for the welfare of the world, without thought for themselves. By abstaining from work, you will confuse the ignorant, who are engrossed in their actions. Perform all work carefully, guided by compassion".

The Hindu worldview underscores that all beings are interconnected as God dwells within all beings. To help and serve others is a way of serving and worshipping God.

According to Hinduism, the karma or duty to be performed is of a lot of importance. The karma yoga consists of completely selfless service where the ego is given up completely in order to serve the divine in everything, whether it is man, animal, plant or even an inanimate object. Swami Vivekananda eloquently sums up the essence of Karma Yoga, "How you see what Karma – Yoga means; even at the point of death to help anyone; without asking questions. Be cheated millions of times but never ask a question, and never think of what you are doing. Never vaunt of your gifts to the poor or expect their gratitude, but rather be grateful to them for giving you the occasion of practicing charity to them."

E) ISLAM

“O people of Islam, You are the best people ever raised for the good of mankind because you have been raised to serve others; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah.”



A 19th Century manuscript of the Bhagwad Gita

Library of Congress

The Holy Quran, 3:111

Islam lays great emphasis on the fundamental qualities that an individual must acquire to serve humanity or to develop a passion to serve mankind. These include love for humanity, kindness in the hearts for others, a charitable disposition, humility, honesty, a thirst for knowledge, a desire to share knowledge with others and a constant desire to strive in the cause of Allah by doing good.

Charity is not just recommended by Islam, it is required of every Muslim. Giving charity to those who deserve it is part of Muslim character and one of the Five Pillars of Islamic practice. *Zakat* is viewed as “compulsory charity”; it is an obligation for those who have received their wealth from God to respond to those members of the community in need.

F) JAINISM

Rendering help to another is the function of all human beings. *Tattvarthasutra* 5.21 also says,

“ **Compassion through charity for all living beings, especially those observing religious vows, self-restraint of a person with attachment and the like, blameless activity, forbearance, and purity cause the inflow of pleasure karma.** ”

The motivation to do a charitable act according to the above text is two-fold. Firstly, it is born out of compassion for others and, secondly, it is done to promote karma that brings about merit (*punya*) for the ‘doer’ or ‘giver’, consequently resulting in a more positive spiritual future for the doer.

Also, it is important to note that the central tenet of Jainism is compassion for all fellow living beings. Amongst the nine *tattvas* or principles of Jainism, the eighth *tattva* or *Nirjara* explicitly stresses on the importance of selfless service to the suffering and deserving and explains it as ‘*vaivavrata*’.

Jainism also lays great emphasis on *dana* or giving. It is called *Chaturvidha daan*, which means fourfold gifts from Jains to the society. These include giving food to the hungry, saving the lives of others in danger, distribution of medicine and spreading knowledge.

6. Given the understanding of the spirit of service and volunteering in different religions, how do we promote inter-faith volunteering?

We should promote inter-faith dialogue across communities to promote peace and harmony. For facilitating inter-faith volunteering, we should:

- (a) Develop understanding of each other’s faith through school curriculum.
- (b) Understand the essence of service in different religions.
- (c) If we can promote volunteering efforts across each other’s faith, we can develop harmonious relationship among different communities. For example, in our work as Ahimsa trust, working in nine villages around Shantiniketan, we work with people from the Santhal, Muslim and Hindu communities. We organize Programmes together, especially for the women, so they get to meet and know each other.
- (d) Visit each other’s homes and stay together, bearing witness to the other’s joy and suffering.
- (e) Get the opinion moulders of these communities to meet and share their perspectives.
- (f) Celebrate each other’s festivals.

GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE ON VOLUNTEERING

Tushar A. Gandhi

“He who gives all his time to the service of the people, his whole life is an unbroken round of prayer.”

M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*: Nov. 10, 1946.

Bapu believed that to serve the needy, society, nation, mankind or our environment was akin to prayer and those who did so voluntarily were dear to God. A life without service was to him a sin. For him service was the purest form of devotion. 'A life spent in service is the only fruitful life.' He said.

Volunteerism is the greatest form of selfless service. A volunteer expects nothing, is willing to do whatever is required and does everything to the best of his/her ability. The greatest virtue of volunteerism, its reward, is in the relief and respite it provides to the cause or to the beneficiary of that service. The greatest virtue of a volunteer is humility, Bapu averred.

After 1930, when Bapu left Sabarmati Ashram on his march to Dandi to break the Salt Monopoly of the British Colonial Power, he took an oath that he would only return to Sabarmati Ashram after gaining complete independence for India. Post the Dandi Kooch and the subsequent nationwide Salt *Satyagraha*, the search was on for a suitable location for a residence for Ba and Bapu and the other inmates of Sabarmati Ashram. Jamnalal Bajaj suggested that Bapu visit Wardha and see if he could find a suitable place to establish an Ashram there. Bapu visited Wardha, a small village in Vidarbha in the then Central Provinces. In his own words, Bapu found Segaon a small little hamlet infested with thorn bushes, scorpions and snakes. The local people were poverty-stricken and most were unable to do anything for themselves. Bapu chose Segaon to establish an ashram. He established *Seva Gram* as a village of service, in other words a venue for volunteers.

The idea behind establishing *Seva Gram* was to establish a place where volunteers for *Satyagraha* and volunteers for service in villages would be trained. Bapu believed that it was very important that volunteers were trained both in skills and in temperament. *Seva Gram* would perform both these very important tasks under the guidance of Bapu.

There is a story from those days. Those were days of nationalist fervor; people from all over the nation, gravitated towards *Sevagram* and Bapu. The son of one of his industrialist friends had recently returned after completing his higher education abroad. He expressed a desire to spend some time in doing national service before he joined his father's industrial empire. The father thought Bapu would be a good patron to chaperone his son in his quest to do something for his nation, and so he took the son to *Sevagram* and requested Bapu to advice and guide him in his quest to serve the nation. Bapu asked the father to leave his son at *Sevagram* and assured him that he

Mahatma Gandhi's *Satyagraha* is based on the spirit of volunteerism. The *satyagrahis* were essentially volunteers and Gandhi recognized and respected the power of the individual volunteer. FOR BAPU, A TRUE VOLUNTEER IS ALWAYS EMPOWERED AND SELF-RELIANT BESIDES BEING COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE.

would advise and guide him in his son's quest to serve his motherland. The next day Bapu asked the young man to tend to the toilets. In those days, the toilets in *Sevagram* were pit latrines with buckets. The toilet attendants would have to keep a watch and when the bucket was 3/4ths filled it had to be carried away emptied in the cesspit and cleaned and placed back in the pit. It was dirty work, but Bapu believed no work was dirty. As part of the young man's indoctrination, he was assigned to do this work. For a month, the young man cleaned toilets, many a times he went to Bapu to ask if he could do something worthwhile. But Bapu insisted that he clean toilets. Finally at the end of the month the young man went to Bapu and admitted that it was only after attending and cleaning toilets for a month that he realized that if one really wished to do service then one should be willing to do what was required and not what one wished to do. Having studied abroad, the young man wanted to find great solutions for India's woes and when initially he was assigned to clean toilets, he accepted it as a necessary but temporary evil. But it was only later that he realized that more than inventing rocket engines India required hygienic sanitation and he also realized that initially he wanted to serve the nation in an effort to please his ego but Bapu had taught him that the most important quality in a volunteer was his humility.

A few years back Ashutosh Gowariker made a beautiful movie on what volunteerism could achieve. The hero of his movie *Swades* comes back to India in his quest to find his Nanny. He locates her in one of those remote villages that even today make up the real India, a forgotten village where time has come to a halt. A village stuck in a time warp. He then identifies that what ails the village is the lack of electricity and proceeds to voluntarily build a mini hydel power generation plant, which generates enough electricity to illuminate every home in the village. This movie was based on a real life story where two engineers did a similar thing in a village in the Narmada valley. Even in the movie *Naya Daur*, Sunil Dutt works on a Dam project with a nationalistic fervour, ignited by the dream to create modern temples of Independent India as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister envisaged them to be. These dreams were all realized on the strength of volunteers.

As I grew up, I was exposed to the spirit of service and the power of volunteerism. My grandmother's younger sister Taraben Mashruwala was influenced by Bapu's call for the youth of India to go into the villages and volunteer to transform the lives of the villagers. She along with her friend reached *Sevagram* and volunteered their services. Bapu looked at the two young frail women and told them that they were to go and find a remote human settlement, very difficult to access, make it their home and start their work there. The two young women took this advice to heart and trekked the Vidarbha region of Western Maharashtra until they reached a small and very remote hamlet called Madhan in Amravati district. Even in my childhood, I remembered it was quite difficult getting to Madhan. When Taraben and her friend reached Madhan it was the last outpost of civilization. The villagers were concerned about the well-being of the two young women; they even urged them to go back. The two young women, both frail but with an iron resolve decided to stay back. This was in the mid-1930s. Initially Taraben and her companion lived in the shanties of the villagers and began work with the women and children, teaching hygiene and better nutrition for the children, and then they began providing basic education for the children of Madhan and the surrounding villages. Next was the campaign against alcohol abuse; this targeted the men and benefited the women so they found a support base amongst the women. Slowly they struck roots in the villages. Until their deaths, more than seven decades later both of them worked in Madhan. Today, Kasturba Ashram stands as a monument of their work in Madhan. It provides shelter and education to tribal children, girls in particular, it provides health services, education, secure shelter and other village



Mahatma Gandhi personally nursing the leper patient Parchure Shastri in Sevagram Ashram, India December 1939.

development programmes. In seven decades, they trained many volunteers who moved on and established their own spheres of work in rural India. Today the memory of Taraben, 'Ben' as she is fondly remembered, is enshrined in the activities of Kasturba Ashram at Madhan. My grandparents Manilal and Sushilaben Gandhi had worked all their lives as volunteers on Phoenix Settlement established by Bapu near Durban in South Africa.

Right from his early days Bapu believed in the efficacy of volunteerism, even when he worked and fought for the rights of his fellow immigrants in South Africa. When the plague broke out in Durban, he raised a band of volunteers to take care of the victims. To dispose of those who were killed, to tend to and nurse the afflicted and to clean up the surroundings in an effort to isolate the epidemic. He learnt basic nursing so that he could tend to the afflicted and provide them with care that is more efficient.

When war broke out between the British and the Boer in South Africa, Bapu raised a corps of volunteers to provide first aid and evacuation facilities to the wounded on the battlefield, The Indian Stretcher Bearer's Corps. He led a band of Indian immigrants and operated right on the frontlines administering first aid to the wounded in the midst of flying bullets and exploding artillery shells. They evacuated the wounded and walked carrying the wounded on stretchers upwards of 20 miles. The Corps and Sgt. Mjr. Gandhi were honoured for the services they provided. When the Zulu Uprising happened, Bapu once again considered it his duty to provide humanitarian service to the wounded and once again raised a body of volunteers and formed the Indian Ambulance Corps. When he saw the savagery unleashed by the Colonial forces against the natives he was moved to tears and when he saw that white Doctors refused to tend to the wounded Zulus,

he took it upon himself to tend to the wounded and nursed them back to health. Bapu believed that as a member of civil society, when one demanded rights one was obliged to perform one's duty towards society too.

If one looks at his *Satyagraha* model, one sees that he based it on the principal of volunteerism. The *satayagrahis* were essentially volunteers, volunteers for the cause of independence. Bapu was the first to recognize and respect the power of the individual and so he started the individual *satyagraha* where he made every *satayagrahi* responsible for our freedom. This is the reason that after the 1942 Quit India Movement was launched and though the British immediately cracked down and arrested the entire top Congress leadership the movement went on unhindered. It was because every volunteer who participated in the movement considered it as his or her personal battle and did not wait for commands to come down from the top. A true volunteer is always thus empowered and self-reliant. A volunteer is dedicated to a cause and committed to give the best to achieving the objective.

Peace, development and progress are better achieved when people with unique abilities and expertise volunteer their intellect, physical prowess, ability and dedicated commitment to a cause. A volunteer must unquestioningly follow the leader and give the leader a first opportunity to prove the efficacy of what he proposes to do. When Bapu first broached the idea of a salt *satyagraha* to the Congress leadership, a majority of the Congress leaders were opposed to the idea. They felt it was a madcap idea and that they

would open themselves up to ridicule. Many of the Congress leaders privately criticized the idea and expressed their opposition to the Salt *Satyagraha*. Motilal Nehru wrote a 21-page letter to Bapu cautioning him about the possibility of the failure of his Dandi Kooch idea and enumerated all the pit falls. He expressed his fear that the British would ignore Bapu's initiative and turn it into one generating ridicule and thus producing anger amongst the people. He said that the Congress and Bapu would be turned to a laughing stock and after that, it would be very difficult for the Congress and Bapu to win over the people's confidence and support. In reply Bapu sent him a one-line answer on a post card, it read, 'Motilalji, Please do it and see. M. K. Gandhi.' It was a very dismissive reply to a long and detailed letter and Motilalji could have taken offence to receiving what felt like a brush off, but being a loyal soldier he decided to keep quiet and do what Bapu ordered. After Bapu broke the Salt Monopoly in Dandi on 6 April 1930, he asked people all over India to do the same and defy the British. This unique protest caught the fancy of the world media and international opinion became critical of the British. Orders came from London to stop the Salt *Satyagraha* at any cost. The Viceroy decided to arrest all



Bapu with Tushar Gandhi © Tushar Gandhi

the Congress leaders and isolate Bapu. Motilalji called a public meeting in Allahabad, announced his intention to break the salt law in Allahabad, and as was the practice announced the date time and venue. When he reached home after the rally, the Chief of Allahabad police was waiting to arrest him. Motilalji requested for some time to take care of some personal chores, the last thing he did before going to prison was to send a telegram to Bapu, saying, 'Respected Mahatma Ji, I saw its power even before I did it.' This is the obedience a volunteer activist must have when volunteering for a battle of; 'Right against might', as Bapu referred to the Salt *Satyagraha*.

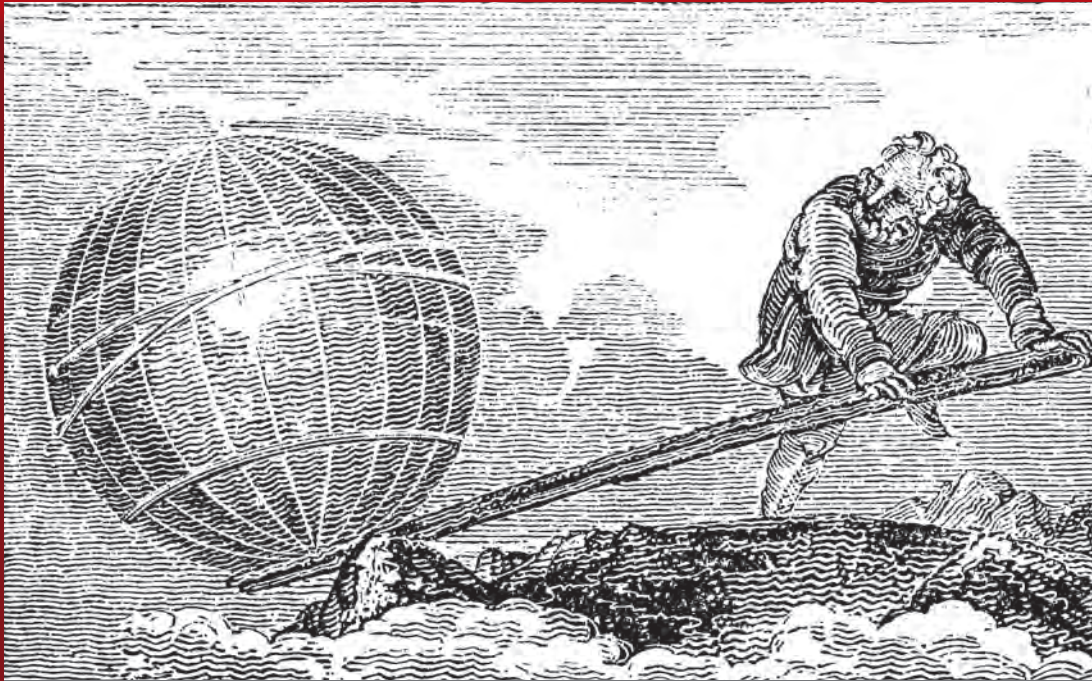
Volunteerism thrives in the world today. Many a times we see volunteers working across national boundaries as well as on both political causes and social ones. My nephew, a Doctor, along with his young bride volunteered to establish primary and specialized health care clinics in Cambodia and in Ethiopia specially to treat patients suffering from TB because of HIV. Many young Westerners take a year off to work as volunteers in underdeveloped and poverty stricken backward regions of the world. International volunteers were active in creating awareness of the discontent in Egypt and to keep the world informed about the Egyptian's struggle for democracy and their movement in Tahrir Square both to unseat the dictator Hosni Mubarak and to prevent the Military council to force the Egyptians to accept a nominee of the military who would function as their puppet.

Volunteerism is now also becoming organized. In Tamil Nadu there is an initiative where Western Volunteers pay to come and volunteer in community projects, they work for four weeks. The hosts provide them with accommodation and food and then they are given a one-week vacation at a tourist spot. In Ahmedabad there is an organization called Indicorps, which does placements in India for international volunteers. The YuvaUnstoppable movement is a movement of student volunteers who work on education and leadership grooming projects for underprivileged children and youth. Seva, the micro credit organization based in Ahmedabad, under its Seva Rural initiative places its volunteers in rural areas to work on its rural self-help projects. There are many more such Programmes all over India; I have just named a few. Ninety nine percent of successful NGO Programmes are due to the volunteers, it has now been proven that NGO projects become successful not due to the benevolence of its donors but because of the dedication and sincerity of its volunteer cadres.

Bapu said that those who spend their lives in service, their life becomes one of eternal devotion and worship. A volunteer is a spiritual servant of humanity; he/she serves humanity without any reservations or expectations. Bapu on many occasions became a volunteer nurse and nursed those who were refused medical aid and succour by society. When a patient of leprosy came to him seeking refuge since he had been driven out by society, Bapu welcomed him into his fold and began tending to him personally. It was a time when the political situation was in ferment; the viceroy Lord Wavell had invited leaders of the Congress and Muslim League to Shimla to discuss ways of arriving at a decision about India's eventual freedom. When a ten-day recess was declared during the conference, Bapu preferred to travel back to *Sevagram* so that he could tend to the leprosy patient. In those days, it took three days of train travel to reach Wardha from Shimla so the round trip would take six days giving Bapu four days at Wardha. When someone suggested that it was meaningless to travel so much for just four days and what difference was it going to make, Bapu said that even if it was just four days it would make a difference to the patient to receive care and treatment for four days. This is the kind of devotion that volunteers must have for the work they do.

When the Interim Government was sworn in to oversee the transfer of power in India, Bapu gave a talisman to the newly sworn in Ministers... he told them, "Whenever you contemplate doing something or implementing a new policy, recollect the face of the weakest of the weak and poorest of poor person you came across and then ask yourself whether the step you have contemplated taking will make any difference to the person's life. Will it restore to that person any dignity? Will it make them self-reliant? Will it allow them to regain their economic and spiritual independence and raise them out of poverty and squalor? If the answer to all these questions is yes, then believe that what you contemplate doing is worth it. Otherwise discard it as being of no use". This is a test all volunteers must submit to do to find out if what they propose to volunteer for is worth it or not.

Bapu believed that like wealth, intellect and time were properties that should be held in trust for the betterment of society. Like wealth, time and intellect after being used to provide for one's own need were to be utilized for the benefit of all of society and for our environment. We must be responsible for our society, our environment, for our homes, locality, community, suburb, city, region and nation; we must also be responsible for the health of our environment and ecology and to do this we must volunteer. As Bapu said, 'Be the change you wish to see in this world.' We become agents of that change when we volunteer ourselves to make our world a better place.



Give me the space to stand on, and I will move the earth – Archimedes

This an engraving from Mechanics Magazine published in London in 1824.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_\(Small\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_(Small).jpg)

A GLIMPSE ON VOLUNTEERING INTERVENTIONS

CASE STUDY/ASSAM:

SUROVI SHISHU PANCHAYAT: CHILD LEADERS AS HARBINGIER OF CHANGE AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

Shishu Panchayats or the children's councils are child-led initiatives empowering children in many states of India.

"Children too can bring a change in the society," says Supriya Dey, a class XII student and president of the *Surovi Shishu Panchayat* in Assam. "What is important is to come together and work for our own better future. *Shishu Panchayats* are a great platform for children to learn, develop their skills and contribute to the society," she adds.

The initiative is to promote child participation and facilitate their involvement in decision making at grassroots levels. The thrust is to bring children together as a group to contribute to community building. The first *Shishu Panchayat* was constituted in 2008 in Dibrugarh, Assam and now several of them have been constituted in Karnataka, Assam and Delhi. They are mainly constituted and sustained by the children themselves.

The *Surovi Shishu Panchayat* in Assam was launched in June 2009. It mainly comprises children from Chandrapur Block of Kamrup district in Assam. With the strength of 35 members, the *Surovi* children visit the families of team members and provide information on *Panchayat's* involvement in various issues under their "Home Visit Programme".

The first intervention of *Surovi* team was a field visit in September 2010 in two villages- Rajabari Chapori and Tamulbari to find out their existing problems. The team discovered that Rajabari

Surovi Shishu Panchayat members discussing issues that concern them © Surovi Shishu Panchayat



Chapori does not have a school and other basic facilities and a similar situation existed in Rajabari too.

The volunteers organized about ten meetings with the stakeholders within a month and came up with a resolution to develop a SUROVI Park in *Shiva Mandir* (temple of Lord Shiva) premises, in Tamulbari, which has now become the hub of all the activities of their work. Surovi members tabled the situation of both these villages during their monthly meeting in October 2010 to extend support to uplift the lives of people living there.

The members also conduct a mass awareness Programme where children impart information to the villagers and adults on child/ women rights, right to education, health and sanitation etc. They also have a one-day 'Field Study Programme', where members learn new concepts and techniques from farmers and growers, and about their culture and tradition from senior citizens and villagers. Surovi members also visit their associate schools on regular basis to share information and knowledge with their peers about different issues concerning children and community.

For constant monitoring and evaluation of their initiatives, each Surovi member collects feedback from villagers, schools and their respective guardians about every activity they undertake. This helps them understand the outcomes of their efforts.

Some of the achievements of these young change makers that need mention are the construction of a road under the leadership of Islam Ali (a student of class XII) in Kherbarhi village of Amgaon and a literacy drive in Shampathar, a tribal village under the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary. They also celebrate IVD each year and organized many activities to mark IYV+10.

Surovi children have brought about a visible change in their area and strongly feel that more children need to have access to such platforms. "If one *Shishu Panchayat* has helped achieve so much, imagine the change *Shishu Panchayats* in every village of India can bring about," underscores Islam Ali.

CASE STUDY/BIHAR:

SANTOSH KUMAR VOLUNTEERING TO ENSURE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL

Santosh is well qualified and can easily find a job in the city, but he has continued to live in his village for the development of his community.

26 year old Santosh Kumar is a first generation learner, and a dedicated and determined person. He lives in a small village of Rohtas district in Bihar, which is naxal (a term used for various militant communist groups operating in different parts of India) affected and still feudal in nature. Santosh has established networks with various rights based organizations, activists and experts working on human rights issues for achieving his goals of an equitable and just society.

He believes, "efforts made by us for dignity, justice and human rights are more effective and sustainable for the development of society instead of waiting or being dependent on someone for social change."

Santosh belongs to a Dalit community (a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable) and has faced discrimination several times in school and village during his childhood, but decided from an early age not to suffer in silence. The first time he raised his voice against injustice was when he was in class ten. He drew attention of the school management to the discriminatory behaviour at the school targeting him. This was the beginning of his fight against injustice and inequality.



Santosh (center) leading a rally on land rights organized by him © Santosh

Despite facing acute poverty and discrimination, Santosh completed his college education and subsequently started the movement for equal rights and development of his community. Since 2003, he has been engaged in raising awareness on constitutional rights. In 2008, he was selected for Advocacy Internship held by National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) in Pune. This internship helped him to connect with various groups such as dalits, tribal groups, women rights organizations, etc. and benefitted him immensely by inspiring him to work with more vigour.

With the support of his friends, Santosh started an organization called 'Jan Adhikar Kendra' in 2010, with the aim to help dalits and other backward communities to build their capacity to deal with problems often faced by them. Currently the organization is involved in exploratory research to create knowledge on issues related to backward communities, building capacities of women and youth and mobilizing community to demand their rights. Their engagement with youth, women and children has touched around 15,000 people in the area so far.

In 2011, Santosh and his group were selected for the Change Looms Programme of the NGO Pravah, which supports leadership and organization development of young change leaders. Santosh was also awarded the UNV Karamveer Chakra for his exemplary services to the community in 2011.

Santosh has a flair for writing. He has written more than 100 songs on social issues such as education, health, environment, women's rights etc., in Bhojpuri and Hindi. Some of his songs have become very popular in the area. He has also written many articles on human rights issues published in different newspapers and magazines, highly appreciated by the readers. His article on *Lingbhed evam samadhan ke liye badhte Kadam* (moving towards eliminating gender discrimination) was published in *Sandesh*, a Patna based magazine. He has also written, directed and acted in street plays in Bhojpuri and Hindi.

Indeed, he is a role model for the youth and a source of inspiration for all.

CASE STUDY/KERALA:

MOHAMMED SAIF CHANGING LIVES THROUGH PALLIATIVE CARE AND ENTERPRENEURIAL TRAINING

“Students in Palliative care (SIPC)” – a volunteering initiative started by Mohammed Saif not only links the patients to the medical facilities, but also enables them to step out of isolation and integrate with their communities.

Palliative care is a specialized area of healthcare that focuses on relieving and preventing the suffering of patients through care of the patient and family, pain and symptom management, disease-modifying treatments, psychological, social, spiritual and bereavement support.

Twenty nine year old Mohammed Saif mobilizes students to volunteer for the chronically and terminally ill patients through the SIPC initiative with a current army of 1,300 volunteers in Kerala working with him. These volunteers not only encourage and support the patients to be a part of get-togethers and recreation activities, but also motivate and train them for their livelihoods in umbrella making, bamboo art and handicrafts.

Maniyettan was the reason why Mohamed Saif began the journey to reach out to critically ill patients. He recalls his relationship with Mani, his neighbor, whom he affectionately calls Maniyettan (Ettan- elder brother in Malayalam). “I still remember childhood days when Maniyettan got me chocolates from the neighborhood shop and often walked me through the fields and the river passing through our village.” Mani had struggled a lot in his life. He could not complete his education because of family circumstances and had to work as a daily wager. Soon after his marriage, Mani left home in search of better work opportunities. But the emotional pressure took toll on his health and he was diagnosed with advanced stage of cancer. He remained bedridden, painfully counting his days.

Mohammed Saif (center) with Palliative care patients in Kerela © Pravah



Saif was 20 years old then and was studying pharmacy in Bangalore. He took a few days off from the college to visit Mani. When he reached home, he found a vehicle outside Mani's house with the words 'Palliative Home Care Team'. Saif had never heard the word "palliative" before. He saw Maniyettan sitting on his bed, smiling through his pain at the volunteers caring for him. That smile made Saif understand the essence of palliative care in its most powerful way, "it was that magical smile that illuminated my road ahead", remarks Saif.

Saif and his team's efforts have received extensive media coverage in his home state and have been selected to participate in NGO Pravah's Change Looms Programme that supports young social entrepreneurs across India. Currently, he also works as the state project manager, Palliative Care with National Rural Health Mission, Kerala and is the youngest national faculty in palliative care as per the faculty pool by Indian Association of Palliative Care.

As part of his work, he has traveled to many places within India and abroad in countries like Bangladesh and Thailand to share his experiences. Saif enjoys writing, is an avid-blogger, and loves to share his work through his blogs and Facebook. Saif is also one of the organizing members of the 'Jagriti Yatra', a 15 day annual train journey, and a national odyssey of discovery and transformation for hundreds of India's highly motivated youth to awaken the entrepreneurial spirit in youth.

CASE STUDY/ MADHYA PRADESH:

REVA DARIES OF RAVISHA MALL

Disillusioned by her environments, Ravisha Mall was seeking an experience that would enable her to understand developmental issues plaguing the country.

Ravisha Mall, a graphic designer by profession, is currently pursuing her masters in mass communication.

The passion to work with marginalized communities motivated her to enroll for the 'Youth of Development' programme of the NGO Pravah, after her graduation in 2011 and subsequently to embark on a voyage with Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) — a social movement against five dams built across the Narmada River. According to NBA, at least one million people and 65 villages are expected to be affected due to related displacements by the canal system and allied projects if the project is completed.

Ravisha reached out to individuals displaced due to the project, in an attempt to share the pain they felt at losing their homes and livelihood due to submergence of their lands. Through her interaction with the aggrieved villagers, she learnt that the post-project problems had not only destroyed people's livelihood and settlements but also their socio-cultural identity.

Unaware as she was of this face of development and the insurmountable price the farmers, fishermen, landless labourers and tribal people paid for the project, Ravisha was alarmed, that even the judiciary could not help these people much. In her words, "the experience shook my set beliefs and made me more aware of the blessed life I lead. It also made me realize I owe it to them to do my bit for their better tomorrow." She was guided on the court procedures, collecting affidavits, putting documents together, filing them in the court, briefing lawyers and filing Right to Information (RTI) petitions by NBA workers.

In November 2010, she helped mobilize and photo-document a massive people's rally in the town of Mandleshwar in which more than 20,000 men, women and children took part. From December 2010 to April 2011, Ravisha travelled across Madhya Pradesh, visiting remote villages to speak with people, obtaining information through RTIs and appearing in court hearings to attain stay orders to stop further construction of Maheshwar dam project. Her



Displaced villagers demonstrating at the Narmada Bachao Andolan © Ravisha Mall

photo-documentation was exhibited at Alliance Francaise, New Delhi in February 2011.

Moved by the plight of the people, she put together a group of 18 art practitioners working across various media, and organized a four day residential camp from 1- 5 April, 2011, Reva Diaries at Dharaji, one of the remotest villages on the banks of Narmada. The artists engaged with people from four villages, slated to be submerged in near future. They attempted to understand the psychological impact of the threat through activities ranging from drawing workshops, painting walls, to a traditional dance performance. It became a great learning space where activists and villagers could connect and discuss the issues of cultural loss caused by development.

The movement gets its share of volunteers, which sometimes prove inadequate. Ravisha, though loaded by her college assignments, continues to follow the project and lends a helping hand by contributing in small ways for the movement.

CASE STUDY / MADHYA PRADESH:

NATIONAL UN VOLUNTEER SANDEEP SAXENEA HELPS E MPOWER GRAM SABHA

Parivartan (change) – an information Programme has led to improved level of awareness and better organization of *Gram Sabha* (body of electors in electoral roll of *Panchayat*) in some of the villages of Madhya Pradesh (MP).

Panchayati Raj (local self-governance system at village level) Act 1993 gave special powers to the *Gram Sabha* to monitor and question the functioning of *Gram Panchayat*, and to make annual plans for villages to be accepted at the higher levels of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs). Since then, village development initiatives have improved manifold in MP leading to better implementation of *Panchayati Raj*.

Sandeep Saxena, a UN Volunteer, works as a District Support Officer since 2009 under UNDP-supported Capacity Development for District Planning Project in Rajgarh, MP. He was given a special assignment to monitor Social Audit process of MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National

Rural Employment Guarantee Act) at randomly selected *Gram Panchayats* as part of his assignment. .

He discovered that the concept of *Gram Sabha* has not been grasped clearly at the village level and that the system suffered from non-participation of rural people, affecting the development of *Gram Sabha* and benefits to the people.

So, Sandeep was given the task to develop a special Programme for strengthening the *Gram Sabha* in 2010. He designed 'Parivartan' - a short duration Programme of IEC activities to inform villagers and other stakeholders about the role and responsibility of *Gram Sabha* in randomly selected ten villages of most backward area of Rajgarh District called Tanwarwad. Sandeep developed and implemented a strategic five-phase IEC intervention Programme.

He organized various activities such as street plays and pamphlets distribution to create awareness with the help of local NGOs. Sandeep also participated in these street plays, and thereafter carried out open house discussions with community members for their feedback.

Capacity building workshops on the functioning of *gram sabha* were also conducted for PRIs/village committees; and a training Programme on the rights and duties of *gram sabha* was organized for elected representatives, *Panchayat* secretaries and voluntary groups using innovative ways. For e.g., the *Gram Sabha* Exercises were held using village dream mapping tool (PRA) to find out present and future village development needs. Also, all participants especially women were encouraged to express their problems, aspirations and vision, to make the exercise truly participatory.

Parivartan has improved communication and expression of problems by the villagers, as well as the development vision among PRI members. Community participation in *Gram Sabha* and village development is more visible and has led to better ground preparation for social audit under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS).

Another interesting development of the initiative has been that people of one of the villages filed a complaint regarding the non-organization of *Gram Sabha* Meetings in their village, to the Collector of Rajgarh, requesting for regular meetings of *Gram Sabha*.

Appreciating Sandeep's efforts towards strengthening the *Gram Sabha*, Collector M.B. Ojha (2011-12) remarked, "Successful implementation of development plans can be done only by empowering *Gram Sabhas*." Sandeep hopes that the change initiated by 'Parivartan' will have a long and meaningful impact.

National UN Volunteer Sandeep Saxena (right) discussing a plan with the villagers.

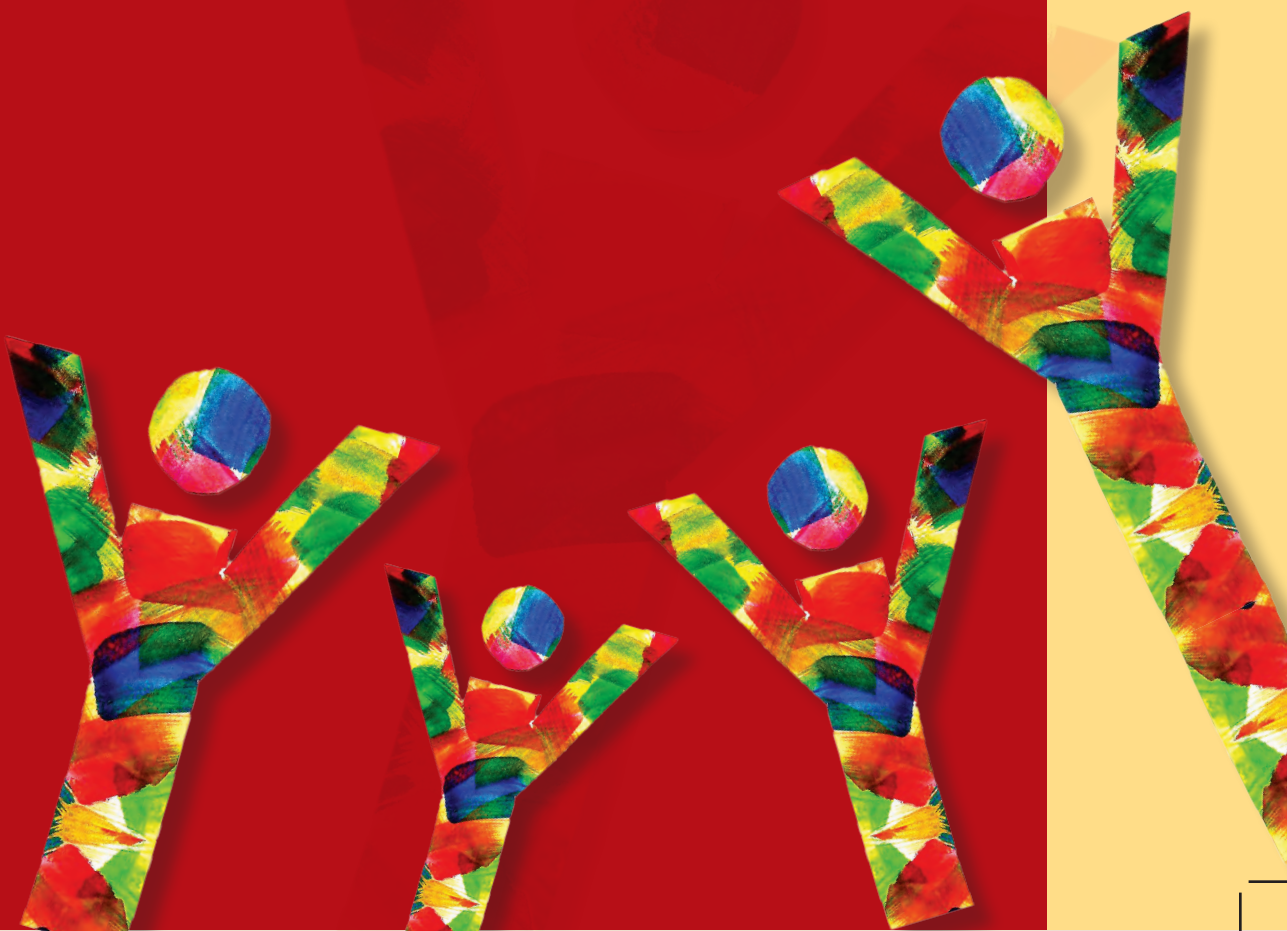


SECTION 2

SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF VOLUNTEERISM

“Wise men should never go into a country where there are no means of earning one’s livelihood, where the people have no dread of anybody, have no sense of shame, no intelligence, or a charitable disposition.”

Chanakya



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA AND VOLUNTEERISM

Tarun Kanti Bose

Contemporary social movements have led to the emergence of new avenues of volunteerism. Increasing alienation, powerlessness, contradictions and inequalities in the society facilitates the OPENING UP OF GREATER SPACE FOR VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM. These have a major role to play for facilitating people's participation in human development.

The social movements in India represent a varied and complex phenomenon, which are referred as grassroots movements, social movements, non-party political formations, social-action groups and movement-groups. These movement organizations differentiate themselves self-consciously and sharply from the welfare, philanthropic and such other non-political NGOs. A large number of them existed as fragments of the earlier political and social movements, which had their origins in the freedom movement, but were subdued and dispersed soon after independence when the liberal, modernist English-educated ruling elite began to dominate public discourse in India (Sheth, 2004). These were the groups, which had their lineage in the Gandhian, socialist, communist and social reform movements but, mostly, had stuck out as groups of party-independent social and political activists. They worked in small, stagnant spaces available to them at the periphery of the electoral party politics.

The new movements opened up new social and political spaces for several new groups of social activists. These social activists acted as volunteers and it was their strategy to foster people's participation in social change and human development. Alexis de Tocqueville had pertinently said, "The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens". In this context, the social movements in India have been able to bring together people from different sections of the society to take up different causes.

At this stage, it is important to note some significant social movements of the country in the past several decades. In the 1970s the prominent movements were the *Chipko* movement which championed the livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities in Uttarkhand, the Kerala Fish Workers' Forum which organized poor fisher folk in Kerala against the depredations wrought on their livelihoods by mechanized trawling, and the Shramik Sangathana which organized *Bhil adivasis* in Maharashtra around issues of agricultural wages, land control and forest rights (Nilsen, 2007).

Nilsen further notes that from the middle of the 1980s, "India's social movements increasingly came to be involved in a search for perspectives and agendas that could serve as a unifying platform for the diverse struggles that had emerged during the previous one and a half decades. For some movements, such as the Kerala Fish Workers' Forum and the Shetkari Sangathana, this revolved around addressing gender relations and feminist politics; for others, such as the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, it revolved around developing a red-green politics – that is, a worker-peasant alliance around the politics of social justice and environmental sustainability."

Sheth (2004) captures the changing trends of the movements in the 1990s as he notes, "In the early 1990s, the grass roots movements confronted an entirely new set of terms justifying the hegemony of the newly established post-cold war global order. The whole discourse on development suddenly changed globally and in India when the notion of alternative development was analytically formulated and propagated by the various global groups, clubs and commissions. Some concepts developed by these proponents of alternative development became buzzwords for activists of new social movements: appropriate technology, small is beautiful (a la Schumacher), pedagogy of the oppressed (a la Paulo Freire), eco-friendly life-styles, limits to growth (a la the Club of Rome) were only a few among them. This discourse of the new social movements in the west found a great deal of resonance among the social activists in India – particularly for the apolitical, westernized ones, for whom it had almost an emancipatory effect. It gave cultural meaning to their activism and even helped them re-discover their own alternative M K Gandhi."

The emergence of new forms of social movements post 1990s has led to the evolution of new types of volunteer initiatives like knowledge volunteerism for promotion of indigenous knowledge system. Parajuli pertinently points out, "New social movements are sites of creating and regeneration subjugated knowledge. Through these movements, indigenous people, women and other marginalized groups have reasserted their own knowledge which reflects their autonomy and identity." A large number of volunteers across the country are involved in efforts for regeneration of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems.

The notion of the spirit of volunteerism in social movements can be articulated as purposeful and change-orientated. Volunteering in the movement is directed at influencing agenda setting, policy-making, decision-making and representation. It also promoted social change by contributing to personal transformation, whereby individuals changed their beliefs, perspectives and day-to-day behaviours once they developed a new awareness or understanding about a particular situation.

Volunteering for social inequalities and exploitation, these movements were led by young men and women, quite a few of whom left their professional careers to join them. They took up issues and constituencies abandoned by political parties and trade unions, and those ill served by the bureaucracy. The organizational form they evolved for themselves was not of a political party or a pressure group. It was that of a civil-associational group, leading political struggles on issues articulated to them by the people themselves. The key concept they worked with was democratizing development through empowerment of the people.

These activists, who were relatively apolitical but were active in alternative development movements earlier, have become acutely aware of the role that politics of discourse plays globally and nationally in influencing policy choices of governments and international organizations. Consequently, some of them now are participating actively in shaping the terms of discourse globally on such issues as biodiversity, global warming, and construction of big dams, regulations concerning international trade and intellectual property rights and so on. In this process, they have become active in a variety of global 'conventions', forums and campaigns opposing the policies of the global power structure as well as in building more durable transnational alliances with similar movements in other countries, both in the south and the north. In performing this 'global role', they often explicitly articulate their long-term objective in terms of building and sustaining institutional processes for global solidarity.

Put differently, the aim of the volunteer activists in the contemporary society is to create global politics of popular (civil society) movements with a view to building an alternative

All social activism needs volunteers to support their ideas, to spread out the activities and to engage in these. The volunteers have time, prosperity, talent, ideas and enthusiasm, but need a vision, a place to contribute their efforts beneficially. That is, they need the social activists.

THE SOCIAL ACTIVISTS SHOULD PROVIDE THE VOLUNTEERS WITH CLEAR VISION AND BROADEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO PARTICIPATE.

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institutional structure of global governance, based on democratic principles of political equality, social justice, cultural diversity and nonviolence, and ecological principles of sustainability and maintaining biodiversity. The emergence of transnational movements following the globalization process has led to new awakening for citizenry action. In fact, as Batliwala (2002) notes, "With the emergence of transnational movements and campaigns, there have been both a broadening and a deepening of citizen formations. Individuals, groups, organizations, networks, and federations, with vastly different attributes, structures, and ways of functioning, can be found within each of these movements at different locations—from the local to the global. The focus of activity is also highly diverse: from lobbying and advocacy specialist groups, to research and documentation centers, to direct mobilization and organization of populations most directly affected by a given issue."

Leading this discourse globally, a group of Indian activists interpret global solidarity in terms of the ancient Indian principle of '*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' (Earth as one family) and link it to Gandhi's vision of *swaraj* (self-governance) and *swadeshi* (politics of establishing peoples' own control over their environment – economic, social and cultural).

In the new social movements, activist organizations have very few resources especially its community based organizations (CBOs), and often turn to volunteers to help implement their activities. Social activism also depends on the support of volunteers who serve on advisory groups, on organizing committees and as board members of civil society organizations. Volunteers at the local level are also fundamental to achieving the objectives of development and social change. For many people, changes at the local level are the ones that matter most in their day-to-day lives. Volunteering can also make the language of social activism more relevant and understandable at a grassroots level. Volunteers play a key role helping people by putting the issues in terms that were easy to understand and provide practical examples to which ordinary people could relate. To make social activism successful, we need the support of people. One of the most important people here are the volunteers. All social activism needs volunteers to support their ideas, to spread out the activities and to engage in these. The volunteers have time, prosperity, talent, ideas and enthusiasm, but need a vision, a place to contribute their efforts beneficially. That is, they need the social activists. The social activists should provide the volunteers with clear vision and broaden opportunities for them to participate.

Volunteers, who are integral part in the social movement, happen to be grassroots actors and their organizations define the politics of movements in direct opposition to the institutional framework of Indian democracy. In fact, they view institutional democracy as a necessary, though not sufficient condition for pursuing their parallel politics of movements through which they seek to raise social consciousness of people and democratize the hegemonic structures of power in society. In that sense, their politics is about working around and transcending the prevalent institutional structures of liberal democracy – rather than confronting them directly with a view to capturing state power.



Volunteers staging a street play in New Delhi as part of the Right to Education Campaign © Swechha

In a nutshell, the movements conceive of participatory democracy as a parallel politics of social action, creating and maintaining new spaces for decision-making (i.e., for self-governance) by people on matters affecting their lives directly. As a form of practice, participatory democracy for them is thus a long-term political and social process aimed at creating a new system of multiple and overlapping governances, functioning through more direct participation and control of concerned populations (i.e., of those comprising these governances). It is envisaged that through such politics the almost total monopoly of power held today by the contemporary (totality) state would be dispersed into different self-governing entities but, at the same time, the macro-governance of the state, albeit confined to fewer nationally crucial sectors, would be carried through democratically elected representative bodies, at one level overseeing the system of micro-governances and at another being responsive and accountable to them.

Volunteering and social activism are an expression of our common humanity and our shared stake in this world. Both forms of participation provide powerful vehicles for individuals from all walks of life to develop a lifelong engagement in their communities and the wider society. In this way, volunteering and social activism are an empowering and positive force for development and change. Volunteering can help people take their first step to long-term involvement in development, while social activism can provide leadership to individuals, define areas for engagement and mobilize people. Volunteering helps to keep social activism relevant to local communities and social activism in turn depends on volunteers.

Together, volunteering and social activism can help reduce alienation and powerlessness among individuals from varying cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. In the process, they strengthen social cohesion within local communities, at the national level

and across the world. Through a myriad of activities, volunteering and social activism can also enhance the efforts of governments to respond to situations of humanitarian crisis and socio-economic hardship, addressing the basic needs of individuals and tackling the underlying causes of poverty and inequality.

Volunteering and social activism have a fundamental role to play in broadening and sustaining people's participation in human development and social change. Integrate this understanding in organizational and sectoral values, policies and practices. With a shared understanding of the common and interdependent characteristics of volunteering and social activism, we can release the vast potential of volunteerism for advancing human development at local level as well as within nations and across the world.

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INTERVIEW: VOLUNTEERING FOR ECOLOGICAL SECURITY

Vandana Shiva in her interview to Vedabhyas Kundu emphasizes on the need to promote Knowledge Volunteerism for knowledge sovereignty of communities and to ensure community rights over traditional resources. Vandana Shiva is an internationally acclaimed ecologist, activist, editor, and author of many books. She is the Director of the Research Foundation on Science, Technology, and Ecology; and founder of the national movement, Navdanya to protect the native seeds.



A farmer talking about Seeds, photo from Navdanya's 'Story of the Seed' ©Navdanya, 2012

1. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest volunteers India ever had. How can we use Gandhi's creative humanism for inspiring volunteers across the world for ecological security?

The basis of all ecology movements in India is Gandhi. The *Chipko* movement, which started in late 1960s and early 1970s, was a historical movement inspired by Gandhian constructive volunteers. The movement's methodology and philosophy spread to Himachal Pradesh in the north, to Karnataka in the south, to Rajasthan in the west and to the central Indian highlands. It was a movement fuelled by the ecological insights and political and moral strengths of women volunteers and the initial catalysts were direct disciples of Gandhi- Mira behn and Sarla behn.

While the philosophical and conceptual articulation of the ecological view of the Himalayan forests as done by Mira behn and Sunderlal Bahuguna, another Gandhian constructive worker, the organizational foundation for *Chipko* to be a women's movement was laid by Sarla behn with Bimla behn in Garhwal and Radha Bhatt in Kumaon. Ghanshyam Raturi has brilliantly articulated the spirit of volunteering by the volunteers of the movement through his famous poem:

There is a need to
promote Knowledge
Volunteerism for
knowledge sovereignty
of communities and
to ensure community
rights over traditional
resources. The basis of all
ecology movements in India
is Gandhi. As Mahatma had
said that IF MILLIONS
COME TOGETHER AND
DO SOMETHING, IT
BECOMES CHARGED
WITH UNIQUE POWER,
there is need for such
numbers coming together for
ecological security.



Chipko Movement 1970

**“ Embrace our trees,
Save them from
being felled,
The property of
our hills,
Save it from being looted.”**

I became a volunteer with the *Chipko* movement in the 1970s and the vision and philosophy of Gandhi, the centennial ecologist has been the guiding force of my entire endeavour for ecological security. All my ideas and actions to defend life's freedom and diversity have come from Gandhi. Without his legacy, it would be impossible to even imagine a response to the totalitarianism built in the project of owning life, owning seeds and owning water.

In this backdrop, Navdanya was inspired by Gandhi's concepts of *swaraj* and *satyagraha*. For us, the seed, for the farmer, is not merely the source of future plants/food; it is the storage place of

culture, of history. Seed is the first link in the food chain and is the ultimate symbol of food security. It is in this context, we initiated the *bija swaraj* to defend the community rights to seed and biodiversity.

The importance of defending the rights of the community over seeds has made it the 'charkha of today'. To me, Gandhi's spinning wheel symbolized a technology that conserves resources, people's livelihoods and people's control over their livelihood. The spinning wheel is a challenge to the notions of progress and obsolescence that arise from absolutism and false universalism in concepts of science and technology development. In today's context, ecological erosion and destruction of livelihoods are linked to one another. Displacement of diversity and displacement of people's sources of sustenance both arise from a view of development and growth based on uniformity created through centralized control. In this process of control, reductionist science and technology act as handmaidens for economically powerful interests. The struggle between the factory and the spinning wheel continues as new technologies emerge. As seeds are being genetically engineered and patented, a crisis is being engineered for farmers and farming. Hence, we can call the seed the 'charkha of today'. In fact, Gandhi's spinning wheel has inspired my dedicating my life to saving seeds to save small farmers and protect life.

In his seminal work, *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi referred to *Satyagraha* as the policy of nonviolent resistance- as soul- force and passive resistance. It is a relentless search

for truth and a determination to reach truth. In the present context, we have organized farmers through the *Bija Satyagraha* movement to keep seed in farmer's seed varieties. *Bija satyagraha* is a volunteer movement, a grass-roots campaign on patent issues, an assertion to people's rights to biodiversity, and a determination not to co-operate with the systems of Intellectual Property Rights that make seed saving and seed exchange a crime.

Mahatma Gandhi had pertinently said that 'anything that millions can do together becomes charged with unique power.' The spinning wheel had become a symbol of such power. Today we need hundreds of volunteers to create such a unique power to save the indigenous seed from the genetically modified.

I strongly feel that Gandhi's legacy lives and gives us hope to shape ever-new instruments to keep life in its diversity free. Gandhi's legacy carries the seeds for the freedom of humans and all species. His legacy is humanity's hope.

2. How can we inspire volunteers to use soul- force against brute force to sustain our nature and tradition?

The Isho Upanishad says:

“A selfish man over utilizing the resources of nature to satisfy his own ever increasing needs is nothing but a thief, because using resources beyond one's needs would result in the utilization of resources over which others have a right.”

Not taking more than you need will ensure that enough resources are left in the ecosystem for other species and the maintenance of essential ecological processes to ensure sustainability. It also ensures that enough resources are left for the livelihoods of diverse groups of people. Those who are over utilizing the resources of nature more than they need are actually using brute force not only against nature but also against themselves. Thereby, they are committing sin. For volunteers to appreciate the importance of soul- force it is important to develop ability to distinguish between soul- force and brute force. It is important to not only imbibe non-violent action but also non-violent thought. All of us know that violence first germinates in the minds of people. So cultivating soul- force is essential ingredient of any ecological movement as violence against nature is violence against people.

The importance of the soul- force is the basis of '*Bija Swaraj*', i.e., defending community rights to seed, biodiversity and knowledge. A significant example highlighting the efficacy of soul-force was our victory in the *Neem* bio-piracy case after a 10-year old legal battle in the European Patent Office on March 8, 2005. *Neem* has been used as a natural pesticide and medicine in India for more than 2000 years. In the 1990s, W R Grace claimed to have invented the use of *Neem* tree for controlling pests and diseases in agriculture. We launched a challenge to the *Neem* bio-piracy and more than 100,000 people volunteered to join the campaign. Our success in defeating the claims for patents to traditional knowledge and biodiversity came because we combined research with action, and we mobilized and built movements at the local level.

3. There is a growing tendency to exclude the knowledge of indigenous communities in different parts of the world. Systems are vital for evolution and adaptation since they add to diversity and pluralism of knowledge. How do we promote volunteer initiatives so that the knowledge sovereignty of communities is recognized?

For me the uniqueness of transformation through volunteerism is that it is based on an ethical imperative for the privileged to join in freedom, solidarity and equality with those who are deprived and excluded. In the backdrop of the efforts to make people understand that there is only one kind of knowledge, which comes from the West, unfortunately all indigenous knowledge systems are denied the status of knowledge. This has resulted in two consequences:

- (a) Reductionist and mechanistic knowledge that has emerged in the West do not reflect the connections and complexities of living eco-systems. The reductionist knowledge system reduces the capacity of humans to know nature both by excluding other knower and other ways of knowing, and it reduced the capacity of nature to creatively regenerate and renew itself by manipulating it as inert and fragmented matter. Reductionism has characteristics, which demarcates it from all other non-reductionist knowledge systems that it has subjugated and replaced. This actually is a source of violence and results in bio-piracy. In this backdrop, we need to promote Knowledge Volunteerism and a cadre of Knowledge Volunteers. Knowledge Volunteers can help bring visibility and respect for indigenous knowledge systems. For ensuring community rights over resources and promotion of indigenous knowledge systems, we have been promoting a volunteer-driven initiative- the community biodiversity register. This register helps local and indigenous communities declare their knowledge sovereignties. The register is actually the documentation of the resources and knowledge of local communities at the local, regional and national levels by

The Spotted – STOP IT campaign volunteers organize a street play to create awareness on sustainable consumerism to support Environmental Sustainability and the Millennium Development Goal 7© Swechha



the people themselves for rejuvenating the ecological basis of agriculture and economic status of the farmers.

- (b) Knowledge Volunteers have also an important role to play in making people realize the importance of their indigenous knowledge and traditions and develop self-respect for that knowledge.

4. How can we promote volunteering amongst today's generation for ecological security?

Volunteerism is about a mutual upliftment and evolution to a higher plane of consciousness and higher level of living in aspects that really matter. We need to create conditions to enable young people to experience the joy of volunteering and work for common good. This could bring higher level of satisfaction and meaning in their life.

Mahatma Gandhi succinctly pointed out in the 'Hind Swaraj' that "the modern civilization seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so...Its deadly effect is that people come under its scorching flames believing it to be all good".

Young people today need to understand the futility of their ever-increasing needs and means of self-aggrandizement. They should realize that the current ecological crisis in the world is a result of unabashed industrialization. It is significant to note the industrialization of agriculture was aimed at producing more food and increasing 'our bodily comfort', yet a billion people are hungry today and two billion suffer from food-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

Youth who wish to volunteer in contemporary ecological movements must realize steadiness does not equal stagnation. Movements that strive to balance their work with nature's ecological process are not technologically backward, but rather use sophisticated methods that are essential to success.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERISM

Jyotsna Chatterji

FIRST BRUSH WITH VOLUNTEERISM

When I was a young lecturer of English Literature in Calcutta University from 1964 onwards, I was approached by the West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association to become a volunteer member of the Association. The Association's objectives were to highlight the discrimination faced by teachers in far-flung colleges and to demand a uniform pay scale for all teachers under Calcutta University. The West Bengal government was not willing to recognize these demands, and therefore, the Association felt there was a strong need to raise consciousness among teachers and mobilize them in order to pressure the government to meet its demands.

Since I was convinced about these objectives, I became a volunteer along with many others. We visited suburban colleges to create awareness among college teachers and to gauge the overall condition of the teaching community.

What followed was an organized mass movement by hundreds of teachers across West Bengal in the form of demonstrations, sit-down strikes, dharnas and refusal to correct answer papers. All these served to inform the government about the legitimate demands of the teachers and to request the government to accept the proposals of the teaching community. In due course, the government agreed to the demands.

Later, I was elected as member of the Calcutta University Senate and continued to serve the teaching community by highlighting the problems of teachers and students in the Senate meetings.

The West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association movement proved to be my training ground for volunteerism and justice concerns. Since, and even during that movement I had personally been especially concerned about women teachers and their problems, it also served as a foundation for me to be a part of the growing women's movement for equal rights.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The social reform movements of the 19th and 20th centuries led by male reformers like Vidyasagar, Behramji Malabari, Dayanand Saraswati, Vivekananda and several others had taken up the cause of women. Issues addressed were women's denial of equal rights, their secondary position in the Indian patriarchal society that controlled them (within the home and in society) and the resultant violence in the name of religion, tradition and culture. As a result, women began to be provided with support services

like ashrams, schools and hospitals. Gradually, women also started asserting themselves by demanding space and positions in the social movements. In effect, they began to transgress the barriers laid down by Hindu culture.

The Brahmo Samaj movement and the Arya Samaj had in the meantime initiated Programmes headed by male leaders for women in distress and started to include women in their movement through their exclusive women's wings. Schools and ashrams were established where women volunteers were invited to help look after widows and orphans and provide education and shelter. Gradually women volunteered to take up these services on their own and started organizations to provide services for the needy women and children. Many groups and women's welfare organizations were established like National Council of Women in India, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and several others. The women volunteers in these organizations were concerned with influencing government policies on women's issues related to education, health and safety, and their rights as individuals. These volunteers also became part of the women's movement for equal rights. Most of these women were from elite circles.

With the development of the Indian nationalist movement and Gandhiji's call to all citizens to join the *satyagraha*, women volunteers joined the movement. At the same time, the Indian National Congress (INC) recognized the prevailing situation of women and took a liberal position on women's issues. INC also supported women's right to vote, need to be educated and the necessity of legal reforms to ensure legal rights to all women.

These developments ensured that women's participation in public life was legitimized. Women volunteers came out of their homes, to participate in not only the national struggle but also the struggle for their own citizen's rights to equality and justice.

Gandhiji had wanted women to participate in public life for the national movement and to return to their homes as Indian mothers. But, the participation in the National Movement had set the trend and women volunteers now wanted their own equal rights and freedom from slavery and injustice.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AFTER INDEPENDENCE

With Constitutional equality being guaranteed for all, the women's movement began to address issues of gender justice - equal before law and equal protection of the law as the basis for action and struggle. Denial of equal rights in the home and society, in the sphere of employment and in the courts of law and order were major concerns; so were the increasing instances of sexual abuse and violence due to societal and cultural factors. Government had initiated Programmes, policies and schemes to ensure gender justice and assist to women and children. But implementation was weak and ineffective in the largely patriarchal society. Mechanisms put in place were hardly used and where they were, women were never informed about them. There was a growing need for women volunteers to bridge this gap.

With the advent of the Five Year Plans and special ministries being set up for assistance to women and children, several educated and informed women volunteered to attempt to empower women about available schemes and their legal rights. At the same time they advocated against gaps in implementation of existing schemes, policies and laws; they also demanded new legal provisions and action against those who violated the laws by exploiting women and exerting violence on them.

These volunteers started moving out of the cities and elite circles to join hands with other women and promote volunteers in rural areas to act against injustice and violence. The

study on the status of women “Towards Equality” had shocked all women into action. New women’s rights NGOs were formed to challenge the status quo and demand justice for women in all spheres - in the home, at the workplace and in society. Women headed these organizations and membership was open to both women and men.

THE JOINT WOMEN’S PROGRAMME (JWP)

Since many organizations and groups led by women for women were being created, the women’s movement was gaining in strength and spreading across India. These groups were attempting to ensure that society and the government, rather than just being doled out welfare schemes, recognized women as equal citizens with equal rights.

As these organizations began to establish themselves, campaigns and struggles were launched throughout the country for just laws and action against all forms of violence and discrimination against women. It was in this context that some of my friends and I joined small women’s groups and individuals and formed JWP. We were all volunteers, each of us being professionals, but concerned about women’s human rights.

JWP was, and remains true to its original manifesto – a movement of women from urban and rural areas striving together for their rights and justice as citizens of India and as women.

We began working with women in the slums and rural areas. Our objective was and continues to be creating a movement for equal justice for women and the building of a society where women and men are equal and informed partners in the struggle for justice for all those who are marginalized discriminated and abused.

The women’s question for JWP volunteers was a social question, which needed to be addressed by society as a whole. JWP became an open forum, a mass movement like many others who were struggling for justice and human rights.

THE GROWTH OF THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT

As the years went by, several other organizations of women volunteers developed. Many of them were also women’s wings of political parties. Membership of volunteers grew in strength and linkages were formed with other voluntary organizations having the same objectives in rural and urban areas across the country, creating a large mass.

With common aims and objectives to address violence and discrimination and to advocate human rights, networking became possible among all India and state organizations. The largest network that was formed in 1984 consisted of the All India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA), AIWC, Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS), Mahila Dakshta Samiti (MDS), JWP, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) and YWCA. Later there were other networks like SEWA, Working Women’s Forum, etc.

ONE HUNDRED MILLION STRONG THROUGH NETWORKING

Collectively, these organizations brought in more than a hundred million women volunteers on a common platform to demand equal rights and justice for women with necessary legal protection, equal employment rights and right to decision making in State Assemblies and Parliament. These volunteers believed that action against discrimination and violence needed to be addressed through a massive buildup of women and other supporters to protest on the streets and before Parliament and State Assemblies. They felt this was the way to draw the attention of policy makers, government officials and society to understand the concerns of women and thus formulate necessary changes in laws and policies and prevalent social attitudes towards women.



Team building and Empowerment at PIDT Lokshala, Jharkhand © PIDT, 2011

So far, as a network, protests have been against rape and the need for suitable laws against rape, dowry and domestic violence, trafficking of women and girls, sexual harassment in the work place, feticide, honour killings, child marriage, etc. A major demand has been for 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in State Assemblies and Parliament. This demand for 33 per cent reservation continues to be an ongoing struggle.

The network has grown to include more women, and men who have volunteered to join the cause of women's rights. This has been possible because volunteers create awareness through regular Programmes on gender justice, legal education and mobilization in the grassroots centers. This political training is carried out by every organization to create new volunteers for leadership and advocacy.

PARTNERING BEYOND WOMEN'S GROUPS

This strong network of the seven organizations mentioned above consisting of volunteers is often referred to as "Seven Sisters". Today the network has many more groups, networks, and has become a large movement for Women's Rights with many more sisters.

The women's movement is now linking up with other social movements such as the Forest Dwellers Movement, the Movement of the Indigenous People, Child Rights movements, Right to Food Campaign, Narmada Bachao Andolan and several others. All these movements have around fifty percent women volunteers.

Women volunteers have slowly been moving into more specific areas of concern like the War Widows Association, which is engaged in assuring the rights of widows of war and conflict, their pensions and other entitlements. The SEWA has become the first women's trade union to improve the condition of women workers in the unorganized sector. Nurses and Teachers associations respond to the problems related to their work conditions. Women from marginalized communities, while being part of the larger women's movement, also have their own Dalit Women's Movement and Tribal Women's Movement for Land Resources.

*From time immemorial, many roles she has donned,
Without uttering a word, Pain and suffering she has endured
Her Penchant for recognition, and fight for justice,
For self and other, Denied by generations,
Never let her bother.*

*Her wisdom to create harmony, between two or too many,
Speaking less and conveying more, getting less and giving more,
Shaping and guiding lives, Supporting and encouraging all times,*

Aren't these the traits, of a good volunteer?

Contributed by Shalini Gupta

There have been many small movements led by women, some of them localized to protest against selling of liquor, rising prices, denial of food security and consumer protection.

VOLUNTEERISM – THE WAY FORWARD

Today, we find a sudden build up of volunteers against sexual violence, rape and murder of young women and denial of action against known culprits. Issues such as corruption, environment pollution, etc. mobilize people to assemble on a common platform. Mass movements and demonstrations by young and old, men and women, students and workers have become a regular part of our life.

The women's movement, however, continues to grow and draw volunteers at every level. Violence against women, which is a present problem, and denial of representation of women i.e., 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in State Assemblies and Parliament by the government and political parties, continues to be an unfulfilled promise and forms today's main objective.

There have been lapses in the movement, as society has never really welcomed women's desire to change their status. Society, as a whole has still not accepted women's right to equality and blame women for increasing gender violence and conflict in the home. They also blame the women's movement for being exclusive and doing little for the improvement of the condition of the poor and marginalized women. What they forget is as citizens in a secular and democratic country, they too need to become volunteers in the women's movement in order to ensure just and equitable development of the Indian society.

Women volunteers continue the movement because they have realized that equality will not come easily to them. Every step forward that the movement has taken there has been a backlash. This has encouraged the women's movement to continuously grow and aspire for equal justice at home, in the work place and throughout their life.

INTERVIEW:

VOLUNTEERISM FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES AND RESPONSIVE CITIZENRY

Rajesh Tandon, founder of Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation), is an internationally acclaimed leader, practitioner of participatory research and development, and serves on numerous government task forces and committees. Volunteerism is the backbone of the civil society in any part of the world says Rajesh Tandon. He elaborates on the different forms of volunteerism that exist in the sphere of civil society and how diverse institutions could play an instrumental role to integrate volunteerism as a discipline in academics in an interview to Amita Dahiya.

1. What is the role of the civil society in promoting the spirit of volunteerism amongst the masses?

Volunteerism could be defined as a set of individual and collective actions aimed at some aspect of common public good. Volunteerism is the backbone of the civil society in any part of the world.

Volunteerism is interlinked with the local needs and opportunities, and can take up different forms. It could be an individual teaching another individual or a family providing support to educate the children of its employees. It could also be in the form of a group activity such as school students helping clean up slum areas, or creating awareness on various issues in the community through street plays.

What one does for their immediate family constitutes the private sphere. The sphere of civil society by its very nature falls outside one's immediate family as well as the government domain, and acts in the interest of public welfare mediating in a way between the community and government.

The one who contributes for the welfare of the society is termed a civic leader. In other words, civic leadership is an act of volunteering and civic mindedness a manifestation of volunteerism.

Both, formal and informal voluntary organizations operate in India. About 75 per cent of all these organizations are run by volunteers with no financial remuneration. Nearly half of these are not even legally registered. Examples of formal organizations are NGOs, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), and Women's Organizations etc. and informal are The Puja and Ramlila Committees etc. However, all these organizations function within the civil society sphere.

The beliefs and the values of many informal Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) influence the choice of the public good they associate with or work for. This is also determined by the needs, beliefs and the values of the respective civil society.

In retrospect, formally organized voluntary organizations like PRIA work in a formal structure. PRIA is an international center for learning, and promotion of participation

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and democratic governance. It has undertaken initiatives, which focus on capacity and knowledge building, participatory research, citizen-centric development, and policy advocacy. In Haryana, PRIA has imparted information, knowledge and built capacities of Rural Women's Organizations (RWOs) to work on the issues of violence against women and female feticide. Such initiatives are difficult to sustain in the long run without the support of voluntary organizations and volunteers on ground as social problems like these are deep rooted in the society. It is also noteworthy that voluntary organizations and their volunteers continue their work even in the absence of our regular support and honorarium.

2. There is not much research on volunteering in India. How do we facilitate researches so that it could add to the body of knowledge on volunteerism in the country?

There are two areas of concern. One is that there is no systematic research on civil society in India. There is absence of collective documentation on CSOs and their functioning.

The other concern is that unlike other societies, academic centers and academic Programmes on volunteerism have not emerged in our country. Governments' own statistical system is yet to take into account those initiatives/ activities which are not paid for. So, by definition what volunteers do is not captured by our statistical system. Thus, the problem exists both at micro and macro level.

Neither there is any data available on number of volunteers in our country, nor any institution working on such data. This serves as a limitation for various potential actions that could have been taken based on this factual piece of knowledge. In comparison, even small countries like Brazil and South Africa have much better systems in place that serve to enhance this academic discipline.

Efforts have been made to influence the statistical system by institutions like PRIA, UN and others. I would like to underline that 20-25 study centers were established in India by late 80's, as a result of a meeting, convened right after the Nairobi Women Conference in 1985, by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in New Delhi to carry out research on gender issues in India. But, there is a need to scale up these efforts. The most important determinant is the promotion of the idea of study centers on civil society in educational institutions around the country.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for bodies like the UNV to invite institutions such as Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and UGC to set-up study centers in this discipline in partnership with each other. A small initial investment would be sufficient for such an initiative. Also, educational institutions, professors, M.Phil. and PhD. students should be encouraged to research on volunteerism and related fields.

3. Is there any way to integrate volunteerism as a discipline in academics?

Several schemes already exist in our education system but how they are implemented is a challenge. The best existing integrative/disciplines to focus on the study of volunteerism is what has been historically called in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) model – the SUPW at the school level and NSS at the college level. However, these schemes need to be revised to promote and facilitate volunteering, keeping in mind the current needs of the society. Also, often the students are not aware of the volunteering opportunities that exist and how to be engaged. Therefore, the first requirement is to provide the right platforms to engage the youth more constructively.

Educational institutions could also consider introducing courses on volunteering at the school and college level and provide avenues for research and study. For this purpose, sufficient funding is available for infrastructure and training in educational institutions, but most often, the training provided does not meet the changing demands of the society/ times and fails to attract the students to register/ enroll for such courses.

To cite an example, the Haryana Education Department set up gender resource centers in all girls' colleges of Haryana about nine years ago. These centers were offering various courses on Beautician, Mehendi etc. During some interactive sessions conducted, it was learnt that not many students were interested in these courses. Instead, their interest lay in study/ field visits, where both learning as well as contribution to the society would be possible. Also, it came to light, that most of the students (above the age of 18) of these colleges were not even registered as voters. Based on the findings and suggestion of PRIA, the then education secretary of Chandigarh asked PRIA to train the college faculty and women, who in turn, on a voluntary basis started a campaign to get women voters registered as part of the *Panchayat* elections held in 2004.

4. India, one of the fastest growing countries economically, is also experiencing tremendous social mobility. Currently, India's population stands at 1.21 billion of which more than sixty-five per cent is below thirty five years of age. In your opinion, can volunteering offer tremendous opportunities to tap this social capital for community development?

Economically we are progressing at a good pace but we need a framework to allow a balanced growth in the social sector as well. Our situation is unique as well as advantageous with our huge youth population. The young generation is eager to get involved in social development but needs to be guided and provided opportunities, therefore, we must work together to find ways and means to tap their bubbling energy and enthusiasm.

The power of youth should not be undermined. Anna Hazare himself was overwhelmed by the response of youth during his anti-corruption campaign in 2011 demanding political reforms. From holding 'I am Anna' placards, wearing Gandhi caps with 'I am Anna' captions, to launching blogs and tweets, millions of Indians were involved in the campaign with the youth representing the majority.

Currently, interested youngsters learn about the volunteering opportunities, either through word of mouth/peer groups or through their networks. Only a few websites offer volunteer opportunities, of which most charge a registration fee. However, one has to remember that majority of these volunteers are students, who are not in a position to pay. Thus, these websites serve as a demotivating factor instead of bearing a motivational influence on them.

Therefore, there is need to provide platforms to facilitate networking between NGOs and potential volunteers. A Volunteer info-bank, an interface, where demand can meet the supply could be established to begin the process. This may not be enough but a process must be started especially keeping in mind the changing nature of volunteering.

TIME TO GET EQUAL IN VOLUNTEERING: DEVELOPING CO-PARTNERSHIP IN VOLUNTEERING

Rohit Trivedi

To ensure that all volunteer initiatives are inclusive, co-partnership in volunteering should be encouraged. CO-PARTNERSHIP IN VOLUNTEERING WILL NOT ONLY EMPOWER PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, BUT ALSO HELP IN ERASING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR ABILITIES TO CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY BUILDING. This will also help in mainstreaming them in the development process.

“To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. “I will drink the ocean”, says the persevering soul, “at my will mountains will crumble up”. Have that sort of energy, that sort of will; work hard, and you will reach the goals.”

– Swami Vivekananda

Historically, persons with disabilities have always been seen as ‘takers’ or ‘recipients’, and never considered as people capable of contributing their experience, skills or expertise to the well-being of others. On volunteering, the general belief is that only a normal person can help persons with disabilities. Few even today would like to believe that persons with disabilities could also be co-partners in any volunteering programme. Prevalent attitudinal barriers are the greatest obstacles in encouraging persons with disabilities to take to volunteering. Therefore, they are always grossly under-represented in any volunteering project. Attitudinal barriers aside, there is also discrimination against volunteers who are disabled. It is high time to change the situation and promote equality in volunteering. That is the only way to promote co-partnership in volunteering.

By not providing equal opportunities to persons with disabilities in respect of volunteering, an ocean of talent in society is being wasted. Rights of the persons with disability include their right of access to volunteering as well.

Why is co-partnership in volunteering important?

Besides being a catalyst in the mainstreaming process, co-partnership in volunteering or Inclusive Volunteering brings diversity to the entire volunteering programme. It ensures that people from diverse backgrounds and different abilities come together to work for a particular cause.

Also, volunteering in cross-disability issues must be promoted. Then a volunteer with visual impairment can know more about and work on the concerns of say a hearing impaired person. This will help develop a cadre of advocate on cross-disability issues.

By being involved as a volunteer, a person with disability can combat his feelings of personal isolation. It will also play a crucial role in empowering the concerned

individual as also playing the role of empowering other individuals, thus giving them the confidence and the skills to change their environment and themselves. While for some, it can open avenues for employment, for others, it could be an alternative to employment. Most importantly, volunteering can enable the disabled to become active members of the community.

Arushi, a not-for-profit organization in Bhopal¹⁹, works with and for disabled people to create opportunities and develop capacities in people with disabilities to empower them to make choices to lead better quality lives. Over the years, Arushi have been promoting inclusive volunteering in a big way and volunteers are the base of any programme that Arushi works on. One significant aspect of our volunteer promotion initiative has been the inclusion of other socially excluded population, like the inmates of a prison in developing talking books. With the help of volunteers in jail, since 1992, we have been able to do more than 20,000 hours of recording to develop talking books.

I strongly feel that Inclusive Volunteering can be a panacea for not only fighting but also addressing the causes of social exclusion. For this to happen, there should be promotional and publicity campaigns highlighting the importance of inclusive volunteering. Stereotypes of persons with disability need to be challenged and changed.

19 For more information visit: <http://www.arushi-india.org>.

An elderly volunteer doctor examining a differently abled child in New Delhi © Joininghands

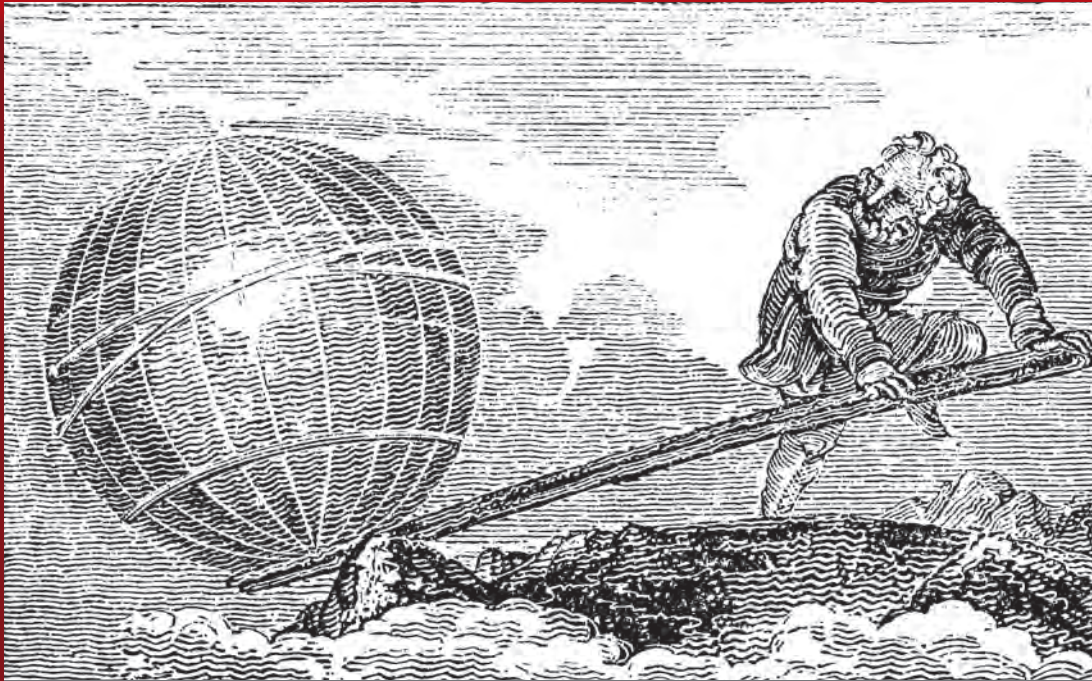


WHAT CAN ORGANIZATIONS DO TO PROMOTE CO-PARTNERSHIP IN VOLUNTEERING?

- (a) Organizations need to create an inclusive environment. While the work places need to be accessible, proper mentoring and understanding the needs of the person with disability who wishes to be a volunteer is imperative. The staff of the organization should be sensitized on the issues and concerns of persons with disabilities.
- (b) If Inclusive Volunteering or Co-volunteering has to be successful, organizations will have to try to fit the volunteers' job to the needs of the volunteer with the particular disability, rather than making the volunteer fit into the job.
- (c) Again, flexibility in finding or adapting roles to meet the volunteer's needs and expectations is important.
- (d) It is, also important that the organization does not focus on limitations of the volunteer but instead the focus should be on his/ her capabilities.
- (a) By encouraging inclusive volunteering, organizations working on diverse issues such as environment, education, rural development etc., can help break the notion that a person with a particular disability can advocate only on issues of his own disability. It is observed that a very high percentage of persons with disability who get an opportunity to volunteer, end up working, on disability related issues only. In fact, the tendency of such persons is to find only disability-related organizations to work for. If we have to ensure genuine inclusiveness in volunteering, both the organizations and the persons with disabilities themselves need to change their mindset.

While it is a challenge to ensure space for inclusive volunteering to become an integral part of any volunteer promotion effort, creating awareness on the rights and capabilities of persons with disability is the key to the mainstreaming process. Traditional perspectives need to give way to a rights-based approach so that persons with disability can play an equal role in the promotion, recognition and facilitation of volunteer initiatives in the country.

(Reprinted with permission from the Rehabilitation Council of India, Government of India)



Give me the space to stand on, and I will move the earth – Archimedes

This an engraving from Mechanics Magazine published in London in 1824.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_\(Small\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_(Small).jpg)

A GLIMPSE ON VOLUNTEERING INTERVENTIONS



Laila educating and mentoring the children of Wayanad and other districts in a media house studio © Laila

CASE STUDY / KERALA:

WOMAN VOLUNTEER IGNITING YOUNG MINDS

Coming from a region, where girls are generally married off before they complete school, Laila TP has come a long way.

Laila says, "I fought all my life to gain knowledge, I knew its value, and respected it. As my education changed my life, I wished the same for the children and youth of India and other developing nations. I have dedicated my life for the promotion of value-based education with the help of art, literature and culture. I dream of a sustainable world blessed with freedom, equality and self-realization."

Born in a poor conservative Muslim family in Kerala, Laila, is a journalist and communication trainer with rich knowledge on farm, water and developmental issues. She works selflessly to support minorities, tribals and farmers, and has helped uplift many lives in her community in Wayanad, one of the least developed districts in Kerala.

Laila played an instrumental role in founding the ambitious project Leadership Village Young Leaders Programme (YLP) in 2009. The Programme is striving to create the first 'Leadership Democracy' ever in the world with the support of the community by identifying and training potential leaders. She established a Living Library for the village children and youth and regularly volunteers her extra time there. In Living Library resource persons are volunteers, considered as 'books' and it is an avenue for knowledge sharing.

Laila organized many workshops and seminars for the students of Wayanad and other districts in the studios of the media houses. She also visits homes to create awareness on the importance of higher education. Laila actively participated in the Literacy Programme of Kerala to make the state 100 per cent literate during the 1990s.

As a journalist, her focus has been on capturing the social issues through documentaries on old age insecurity, sexual assault on women, girl child and the tribal population of Wayanad districts. She was the associate producer of the docu-fiction 'Return of the native' based on the issue of racial discrimination and conflicts. She also acted in the film.

Laila has touched many lives. Since 2005, she has been training children from the villages for their wholesome growth and learning. Mubeena, an ordinary Muslim village girl studying in high school overcame her fear and inferiority complex with Laila's care. Pooja Raj, a high school student, learnt and provided support to Laila's activities and was instrumental in organizing many events. Laila takes pride that Pooja and Mubeena presented papers on food security at an International Conference along with scientists, journalists and resource persons from India and abroad.

Ramsheena, then a 13-year-old girl from a conservative Muslim family, trained by Laila showed her excellence by becoming a blog writer. She represented her school in a state level educational reality show organized by Doordrashan, India's national television channel.

Akhin Sreedhar was a withdrawn and reticent boy when he came to the notice of Laila two years ago. With Laila's mentoring, he overcame his personality problems, and even organized and trained a group of 25 students. Akhin has a keen interest in science and many of his science projects have received state recognition. He represented his school and presented his views in a conference in which the former president of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was the guest of honour.

Laila and her team have featured in print and news media, which include the *Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, major newspapers of Kerala State, and LeadCap Microsoft Leadership Channel for their exemplary work.

CASE STUDY / NAGALAND:

HUTOI H. CHOPHY FIGHTING AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ITS ILL EFFECTS

"One's ability to retrospect is itself an art to evolve and forge ahead" quotes Hutoi H. Chophy, an emotionally committed social worker who is continuously reaching out to wide range of people with chemical dependencies.

Hailing from Zunheboto district of Nagaland, Hutoi is a grateful recovered social worker, an experimental counselor, film artiste and an executive member of the Nagaland Users' Network (NUN). He is actively involved in social work and is a former National Service Volunteer (2002-2003).

Hutoi H. Chophy taking a counseling session to help people overcome their chemical dependencies © Kripa Foundation



The life of Hutoi has passed across many dreadful, painful, however learning experiences. He says "Lord as I laugh today, do not let me forget that I once cried." He was the son, who made his parents and family proud because of his good performance in school. This good time turned into turmoil when Hutoi got entangled with intoxicants, drugs and alcohol abuse as he was about to finish high school. This not only ruined precious years of his life but also was devastating for his family; however, they never gave up hope and faith.

He was dragged behind the bars many times and different methods were tried to rid him of his bad habits with the support of his parents. But this did not help and painful days crept in his life again. His father tried several methods to correct him: got him jailed a couple of times, sent him to church camps to renew his life, however all the efforts were in vain. Ultimately, his father's decision to take him to a rehabilitation center finally worked for Hutoi in 2002 where he underwent treatment for six months. That was his first encounter with the Kripa Foundation, Kohima an NGO providing care, treatment and support through detoxification, de-addiction and rehabilitation. He was able to overcome his addiction to drugs and alcohol after many hardships and trials with the support of the foundation.

During the treatment, he underwent a retrospective period of understanding the root cause of the challenge, his behaviors, attitudes, character defects, and moral values, which led him in the dungeon of addiction. He expressed that he owed to his sponsor, counselor and the foundation who guided him tirelessly, giving him problem-solving techniques, helping him to stay on track, and overcome his doubt about self-worth.

Since then, he has been serving as a counselor in the Kripa Foundation, Kohima, Guwahati and Shillong, and was promoted as the Centre Manager of the Foundation in Zunheboto in November 2010.

Hutoi has also been organizing many street plays and awareness Programmes with the Doordarshan (national television) and AIR, sensitizing the community on drug abuse and its ill effects. He also wrote a book "Life Beyond Addiction" on his positive and negative experiences and lessons learnt, giving many valuable inputs to the society. He also compiled the Rehabilitation Centers Directory of India that anyone in need can approach easily. Hutoi continues to contribute to the society and the MDGs achievement through his selfless service to ensure that people do not get trapped in a similar problem as him.

CASE STUDY/ ODISHA:

NIRMALA VOLUNTEERING TO ERADICATE DISEASES

Nirmala decided, "For my village, Malaria is the real devil and I will work to overcome it".

Nirmala a 21-year-old woman from Darlipali, a small village about 90 Kms from Sambalpur in Odisha, joined the community-volunteering Programme "SQUIRREL" in 2010, a joint initiative of Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) India with Patang (a local organization in Sambalpur working on active citizenship).

'Squirrel' encourages citizens to volunteer for a period of six months in a community by taking up a project of their choice. Nirmala was a participant of the leadership-training Programme, in which young people identify and implement development projects in their own communities. She decided to eradicate Malaria from her village, which was undoubtedly a tough task.

When Nirmala started, she observed that villagers were not particularly concerned about sanitation and hygiene. Government officials had not visited the village for years despite several complaints about the spread of Malaria. Not perturbed, Nirmala moved on with



Nirmala (left) designing publicity material to eradicate Malaria in her community © VSO

determination and started a door-to-door awareness campaign on cleanliness and collection of data on Malaria patients.

This gave her enough courage and evidence to interact with the District Malaria Eradication Officer directly and her efforts started paying-off. Impressed with Nirmala's work, the officer immediately ordered bleaching powder for the village. Her intervention brought about a visible change in the attitude of both the villagers and the government officials, especially the government functionaries, who responded with great vigour. Nirmala's work also resulted in regular blood-testing camps; availability of Malaria tablets; regular visits to the village by concerned officials; villagers adopting healthy and hygienic practices and a much lower incidence of Malaria. The District Malaria Eradication Officer congratulated Nirmala for her work at a public gathering.

Even after her volunteering stint with squirrel initiative got over in 2010, Nirmala has continued to use her development learning and leadership skills to highlight development issues and has involved herself in the fight against poverty, along with shaping her life.

She took advantage of her newfound confidence and travelled to a community in Maharogi Seva Samitee, Anandwan, in Maharashtra. There she completed a course on health, which motivated her to choose a career in health. After completing her nursing course, Nirmala now works on raising awareness on HIV & AIDS for a local organization Gramya Vikash Sangathan (GVS), in Rengali, Sambalpur. GVS covers the area in 30 kms radius focusing on health promotion, educational programing & capacity building service to the rural community. Nirmala works with migrants and sex workers, two of the most marginalized groups in Rengali, in an industrial area. In the meantime, the local community in her village, as well as the local health officers, continue to act and address malaria prevention.

Breaking gender stereotypes, Nirmala has made other decisions not usual for young women in India, including marrying a man of her choice, who belongs to a different caste. Inter-caste marriage in a region where honour killing is rampant says a lot about her confidence and resilience in convincing her family and in-laws.

CASE STUDY/ODISHA:

CITIZEN'S ACTION FOR GOVERNANCE

SAMADHAN is an initiative to strengthen governance accountability by bringing citizens and the government on one platform using technology, which is user friendly, open source, accessible to all including poor and marginalized communities.

Samadhan in Hindi means resolution or redressal of an issue. It is a joint initiative between The United Nations Millennium Campaign (UNMC), VSO India Trust, South Orissa Voluntary Action (SOVA) — a local NGO in Odisha, and The Government of Odisha. Towards the development of Samadhan technology platform, UNMC commissioned TANGERE — a technology firm to create the website and interface. However, the challenge was to provide local technical support in Koraput, Odisha.

Corey Grone from the United States, a VSO Volunteer was selected for this assignment. He holds a degree in Computer Engineering and MBA and before coming to India, he had worked as an IT professional for a large public university for four years and for a mid-sized private company for a year. Since October 2010, Corey volunteered with SOVA as Management Information System (MIS) advisor and worked to strengthen the MIS systems in the organization and the Samadhan platform.

He made several contributions to the organization such as: providing back end support on technical requirements for the platform and Web interface; researching on alternative web interface as a low cost model for outsourcing; feeding in discussions and contributing to mobile application debates; testing mobile application and web interface; developing training modules for national community volunteers; constantly coaching and building

Corey explaining the technology platform “Samadhan” for enhanced governance at the district level © VSO



capacity of project coordinator; presenting the district collector and administration on the technology platform to answer queries; solving queries from TANGERE and supporting them closely to build the website with relevant inputs and information which is Koraput specific.

He has also contributed to *Samadhan* by developing step-by-step *Samadhan* user guide and videos for dissemination, developing the main power point presentation on *Samadhan*, technical troubleshooting assistance before and during the launch and conceptual and design inputs to the format of the launch.

More than 100 lead community volunteers have been recruited and trained on various aspects related to the Samadhan platform. These volunteers will mobilize over 900 community volunteers at the *Panchayat* level reaching out to all 226 *panchayats* in the district by disseminating information on the platform, MDG relevant entitlements and the rights of the poor and the marginalized; mobilizing community to participate in governance processes by using text and voice technology and providing hand holding support to people who are unable to use this platform; in order to ensure participation of citizens in monitoring services for quality and enhanced governance accountability at the district and *panchayat* level and for the poor and marginalized to have a voice in the development plans and processes undertaken in the district in addition to redressal of their complaints on time.

Corey has completed his volunteering placement with SOVA in November 2011 and believes that: "The SAMADHAN platform will be beneficial to citizens and will change the shape of governance at the district level".

CASE STUDY/PUNJAB:

KUSH KALRA ENLIGHTENING LIVES WITH HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITISM

A BA LLB (hons) final year law student in Punjab, Kush Kalra is a human rights activist. His actions have often resulted in authorities to take action.

He has filed many RTIs on various issues such as ragging, environment, and poor standards of education in schools and colleges.

Passionate about law, particularly, human rights and environmental law, he believes that education can make a difference. His basic philosophy of life is to "utilize every single second constructively for betterment of the society with hope and positive outlook. Just like a candle that burns itself to give light, volunteers enlighten lives."

Kush is the chapter coordinator for Youth for Human Rights, New Delhi for Saharanpur region in Uttar Pradesh, and the membership officer of International Bar Association, student committee. Kush started an awareness campaign on human rights at his own school in 2009 and has covered more than 30 schools and colleges so far. It all started when he happened to visit the website of Youth for Human Rights International (YHRI), U.S.A during his first year of college. Since then, more than 5000 youths have been trained on the rights mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (UDHR, 1948) across India due to his efforts. He has received commendation from YHRI for his commitment to human rights issues.

Kush is also a prolific essayist and has been awarded several certificates of merit for his essays on climate change, environment conservation, and education reforms by national and international organizations such as the National Knowledge Commission, Manupatra Legal Research, UNESCO, GoI Peace Foundation, and World Bank. He has also presented



Kush Kalra enlightening Lives with Human Rights Activism

papers in more than 20 conferences and his research papers have been published in many journals. His paper titled "Child Soldiers: An Innocent Victim of War Crimes and Armed Conflicts" was published in the Journal of National Law University, SCHOLASTICUS (Vol. 7 No.1 Issue February 2010, ISSN 0975-1157). For the last two years, Kush has been organizing a letter-writing marathon for Amnesty International for people whose rights are at risk. The aim of this marathon is to pressurize the governments to release illegally detained people.

At this young age, Kush has shown extraordinary commitment to bring about an affirmative change in society. He has been involved in Vastrasamman—an event of NGO Goonj— where he collects clothes from his colleagues for the poor people. He has also volunteered to create awareness on the harmful impact of poly bags. His conclusion about the project on poly bags ended with the observation that "poly bags below 30 microns should be put in construction of roads and roofs of buildings as they are non-biodegradable."

His volunteering has brought him a lot of recognition and awards at a young age, which include Gold Standard of International Award for Young people, 2011; finalist of Apeejay India Volunteer Awards, 2011; Kamla Chowdhary Fellowship from Centre for Science and Environment, 2011; Karamaveer Purushkaar, 2010; and Green Apple Award, 2010 etc. He has also interned with many organizations and eminent lawyers including Mr. Prashant Bhushan, Supreme Court Advocate and member Drafting Committee for Janlokpal Bill.

SECTION 3

CULTURE, MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERING

"People can only live fully by helping others to live. When you give life to friends you truly live. Cultures can only realize their further richness by honoring other traditions. And only by respecting natural life can humanity continue to exist."

Daisaku Ikeda



VOLUNTEERING TO PROMOTE ART AND CULTURE

Geeta Chandran

IT IS CRUCIAL
TO INVOLVE
VOLUNTEERS IN
LARGE NUMBERS FOR
THE PROMOTION
OF ART AND
CULTURE in the
country. Recognition and
networking of volunteers
in the field of culture will
definitely contribute
to strengthening the
cultural traditions of
India.

On a warm mid-February evening in the remote mountains of the Himalayas, atop the Kailasa peak, Shiva was stirred by the joy of existence. It was the perfect evening when the fiery reds of the skies merged into an awesome glow, the birds were returning to their nests and even as the sun was setting, the moon was emerging right over his head. Shiva expressed the joy of the moment through his ananda tandavam dance – the dance of incredible joy.

And as he began his dance, the other gods volunteered to get involved. Brahma took up the cymbals, Nandi played the percussion drum, Vishnu kept tala-time with his fingers, Saraswati played the veena, Lakshmi, goddess of aesthetics and plenty, micro-supervised setting up the space, the devas and devis in the heavens were the impromptu audience and Shiva's spouse, Parvati, was inspired to join him in the dance. All these volunteers added incredible beauty to the dance of Shiva.

As inheritors of that wondrous cultural tradition, the dance in India has evolved over centuries. But, alas! Where are the cultural volunteers today? Why did that incredible resource fall away by the wayside?

In all the discussions that we have had in this country about volunteering and volunteerism, the least space has been accorded to cultural volunteering which should be a natural act since culture belongs to the people and everyone is brushed by its golden touch.

Yet, our protagonists of culture – our dancers, musicians, instrumentalists, and theatre artists – are seen as being different entities, who are somehow different from ordinary people. The popular misunderstanding is that they are all privileged enough not to need any volunteer assistance. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The arts in India have survived not through moneyed patronage or systems of support, but through the passion and grit of the individual artists. Yes, the rajah-maharajahs of yore – and the systems of state patronage today – offer some oxygen. But in the main, the arts have survived through sheer dint and grit of the artists themselves, despite the dire economics that dogs their every step.

And if volunteering is to be catalyzed by need, then believe me, the arts in India need the most number of volunteers!

How can volunteers help the arts and artists?

Since all the arts in India have developed from religious/spiritual roots, the support systems for their promotion did not develop at all, as they did, say in the West. There impresarios and artist management companies professionally manage the entire gamut of art support services. The artist is fortunate enough only to create and perform.

But in India, nothing of that sort of infrastructure for the arts exists in our context. Here the artist does it all alone. From the research, creation, finding the right accompanists, to approaching sponsors, to identifying organizers for opportunities, to finding venues and coordinating dates of their availability, to designing costumes, sourcing fabrics, creating sets, supervising performance, handling pre-publicity and managing event publicity, arranging the intricate technical details for the show, light design, sound management, to performance and post-performance winding up, the individual artist does it all.

Exhaustion seems to be the perennial name of the game here!

The valiant artist's struggle to perform is not at all appreciated in India. How many people realize their strife? Isn't this reality situation crying for the urgent creation of volunteer cadres to support the arts?

Let me share a concrete example. For the past six years, around 29 April, the World Dance Day, I organize a Young Dancers Festival and Seminar to create awareness on dance issues and to provide a valuable forum for young classical dancers to display their talent. I organize this festival single-handedly with terrific family support. It cries for volunteers who can assist with so many little and big things connected to this event. Take a look at what all needs to be done:

- Months before, the artists need to be selected, verified and invited.
- The invitations have to be designed, addressed and mailed.
- During the fest, the artists need to be received at the airport, taken to their lodgings.
- On the day of the event each artist needs to be escorted separately to the venue.
- Their special needs including backstage need to be addressed.
- The stage needs to be aesthetically set.
- The sound and lights need to be coordinated.
- The hall must be managed smoothly and visitors need to be greeted and escorted to their seats.
- Media management is a huge task

None of the above are "specialized" chores. Anyone can volunteer for them. But do they?

What is needed in a cultural volunteer are humility and ability to listen and act according to the artists' wishes.

Also, if volunteers cannot offer the gift of time, perhaps they can offer the gift of petty resources that can make organizing cultural events turn more painless. Would the organizers perhaps need a car and driver? Can I arrange for the bouquets? Can I arrange for the photographer? So many small thoughtful gestures by volunteers can make culture vibrant, thriving, and less daunting for the artist. And the organizer who currently feels so totally orphaned doing everything on his/her own will feel cherished, and needed by the larger community.

**WHAT IS
NEEDED IN
A CULTURAL
VOLUNTEER
ARE HUMILITY
AND ABILITY
TO LISTEN
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ACCORDING
TO THE
ARTISTS'
WISHES.**

What amazes me further is another fact. Today, so many thousands of young people are learning classical music and dance. Yet their numbers do not translate to numbers that make for a potentially interested audience. Why don't they get inspired to at least watch other artists? Is there something completely wrong in why they are learning the arts?

In this darkness, has there been any light at all? I am happy to report, YES.

Kiran Seth's iconic SPIC-MACAY (Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture among Youth) has been a singular ray of light. Since its first lecture-demonstration or LEC-DEM in 1979, the SPIC-MACAY movement has gone from strength to strength, spreading its influence from Delhi alone at first to be firmly ensconced throughout India and is now even flying abroad.

But what is creditable is that SPIC-MACAY grew on the shoulders of several generations of college students who volunteered to support students being exposed to culture in schools and colleges. Many of its volunteers begin their volunteering in high school and remain volunteers to the SPIC-MACAY cause through their college life. I have crisscrossed the country performing for SPIC-MACAY in cities, towns and villages across India. But what has continued to inspire me is the amazing volunteering spirit of the young volunteers.

Right from their arrival at their place – often a train journey at extremely odd hours – the volunteers greet the artists with great propriety and then completely take over the entire organization and implementation of the performance. They become impromptu impresarios through the visit ensuring the complete success of the visit both for the artist and for the audience. And they follow up by sending the artist the media clippings! It is such a rare thing!

In fact, in its website SPIC-MACAY highlights its purported mission to catalyze volunteers to “the effectiveness of voluntary work in inculcating a spirit of service. This is, in fact, the hidden agenda of this movement. Volunteers come from all walks of life with varied aspirations and skills. They give some of their time to a cause, which is for the larger good and outside of their immediate self-interest. The emphasis is on participation without hierarchy and too much formalism.”

Why cannot the SPIC-MACAY model be expanded to outside educational institutions?

The part of the problem is with the artists themselves. Many a time their egos do not permit them to articulate or accept that they need assistance. They carefully nurture their public image of “completeness” and ability to do it all. That is sometimes foolish. Artists should create, and perhaps leave all the other nitty-gritty work to volunteers.

So this is a plea to volunteer for the arts. Support the arts. They need you. And even if you do not realize it fully, now, believe me, you too need the arts. The arts make living more beautiful in so many intangible ways. They remind us constantly that the human spirit was created to soar in amazing different ways. You will feel that pulse too if you volunteer for the arts. And if nothing else, do volunteer to be a committed member of the audience for arts.

ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION AND VOLUNTEERING

Anubhuti Yadav

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, many problems have plagued our country, which include poverty, illiteracy, rise in population, environmental issues, health problems etc. There have been attempts from the government and community to solve these problems. Many strategies have been adopted and one such strategy is entertainment education. World over this strategy has been used to trigger interpersonal communication about social issues engaging and motivating people to change their behavior. Entertainment Education theory could also be applied for the promotion and facilitation of volunteering.

The term Entertainment Education is used interchangeably with the terms like edutainment, enter-educate, prosocial entertainment, predevelopment entertainment and infotainment. The nomenclature might be different but the purpose is common which includes constructing entertaining messages to deliver the educational content. Here the idea is to both entertain as well as educate the target audience. The concept of entertainment education is not a recent phenomenon. World over, people from the community have been using it for the last so many years. In India the vast resource of folktales originating from various states and regions are the best example of Entertainment Education. All folktales before the advent of modern mass media were medium to entertain and educate. Each folktale teaches an important lesson about human nature. The moral lessons that accompanied the folk tales made them an important and very old form of Entertainment Education. Parents use them to teach their children important lessons that will prepare them to live with the deeper understanding of their fellow human beings. From *Panchatantra*^{20 21} to *Hitopdesa*²², from *Jataka*²³ to *Akbar Birbal*²⁴, these folk stories have been an important form of entertainment education, which is relevant to today's generation too.

ENTERTAINMENT
EDUCATION
HOLDS GREAT
PROMISE FOR
the promotion
and recognition of
volunteer efforts.
It can be used in
different media-
television, cinema,
radio and print
media- to inspire
and facilitate
volunteer action.

20 The *Panchatantra* is an ancient Indian inter-related collection of animal fables in verse and prose, in a frame story format. The original Sanskrit work which some scholars believe was composed in the 3rd century BC.

Jacobs 1888, Introduction, page xv; Ryder 1925, Translator's introduction, quoting Hertel: "that the original work was composed in Kashmir, about 200 B.C. At this date, however, many of the individual stories were already ancient."

21 Lessing D., (1999). *Problems, Myths and Stories*. Institute for Cultural Research Monograph Series, 36, 13.

22 *Hitopadesha* is a collection of Sanskrit fables in prose and verse written in the 12 century C.E. Orissa. Stories from the *Hitopdesa*. Retrieved 14 October 2011 from <http://www.orissa.oriyaonline.com/hitopdesa.html>.

23 *Jatakas* are the extremely popular stories of former lives of the Buddha. "Jataka." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Retrieved 07 March 2012 from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/301580/Jataka>.

24 The stories of Akbar and Birbal pertain to Mughal Emperor in India, Akbar the great (1542-1605) and one of his Nav Ratnas, Birbal. Akar Birbal. Akbar Birbal. Retrieved 7 March from <http://www.akbarbirbal.net>.

With the advent of modern media, the face of entertainment education has changed over the years. According to Everett M Rogers and Arvind Singhal, entertainment-education is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior. Manoff (1985) notes that like social marketing and health promotion, entertainment-education is concerned with social change at the individual and community levels. Its focus is on how entertainment media such as soap operas, songs, cartoons, comics and theater can be used to transmit information that can result in pro-social and altruistic behavior.

ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION: THE ORIGIN

Entertainment-education is based on the symbolic model, which states that individuals learn behavior by observing role models, particularly in the mass media. Imitation and influence are the expected outcomes of interventions. Entertainment Education world over is influenced by Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). According to him:

"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action."

The Entertainment Education approach based on Bandura's social learning theory was originally developed in Mexico in the mid-1970s and the entertainment-education approach has been used in many countries. Paradigmatic examples of this approach have been soap operas in Latin America (telenovelas) and in India that were intended to provide information about family planning, sexual behavior, and other health issues.

Entertainment Education has been a part of Indian culture for so many years. The modern and structured form of entertainment education might have appeared in 70s, but the use of folk media has been used from ancient times. The use of folk media by the community was not restricted to only entertainment; they were in fact schools of learning. The journey of Entertainment Education in India is very long. The use of Folk Media, Print Media, Radio, Cinema, TV, and New Media are the milestones in this journey.

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION, FOLK MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERING

Unlike mass media, folk media cater to small audiences at a time but these audiences are so engaged in these folk forms that the impact of them is very deep. It involves and invites peoples' participation. Volunteerism is the bedrock of folk media and promoters and performers of folk media are mostly volunteers. Across the country, folk media has been used differently to create awareness or to motivate people to act in a certain way. They are often packed with humor and drama but they do serve the purpose of educating people on various issues. Various social action groups are using folk media forms like Keertana, Nautanki Jatra, and Bhavai. Nondi natakam (morality plays), puppetry and street theatre to educate people. For example the nationalist Harikatha, which is one form of Harikatha in Maharashtra, is used by the government to educate masses on family planning, development activities, democratic values and

national integration with the help of kathakars or keertankars. Also Bhavai, a folk theatre from Gujarat, through its two main characters Ranglo and Naik talk about local leaders, make satirical comments on current affairs, and expose political and social evils.

Puppetry is also a popular form of entertainment education, which fascinated both children and adults. The Central Institute of Educational Technology, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) have used puppetry in education extensively. It has been promoting use of puppets to deliver classroom lessons as well as their use in educational Programmes to give it a touch of entertainment and thereby making it relevant and interesting to children. In addition, there are more than 7000 street theatre groups in different parts of the country. Social action groups, health and agriculture extension workers, student activists' political parties, religious reformers and women's organizations use this folk media for number of issues. In 1944 Bijon Bhattacharya, founder of Indian People's Theatre Association staged the play called Nibanna which was about the exploitation of peasants by the Bengal landowners (Kumar, 2007). Women's groups have used street theatre extensively to raise social consciousness on the issues like sati, dowry, sex determination, and education employment.

In this backdrop, it can be stressed that the use of folk media has been very effective in different parts of the country to attract groups and individuals to join different volunteer movements and volunteer initiatives.

ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION, PRINT MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERING

The print media, which includes newspapers and magazines, focuses on either information or education. The newspapers mainly offer information to readers whereas the other special interest magazines cater to the varied interests of the readers. One item that qualifies the entertainment education parameter is cartoons or comics. The best example is what the leading newspaper of India, Times of India offered its readers every morning since 1951. Through a daily cartoon strip featuring the Common Man, "You Said It" R K Laxman, has represented the hopes, aspirations, problems of an Indian. The common person not only brought a smile on every reader's face every morning but also very articulately used to put forth the issues of concern. Since comics are entertaining and clicks with both adults and children, lot of educational content has been converted into comics. Comics, though they may appear to be entertaining stuff, can prove to be a potential tool to bring about social change. In India through grassroots comics, this was made possible. Common people themselves make these comics. Mostly these are linked to some organization, activity or a social campaign. These comics are then photocopied and distributed to a limited area, which encourage local debate and volunteer action in the society. According to Sharad Sharma, founder, World Comics India

"Comics involve visual storytelling, which must follow local perceptions and visual culture in order to be understood correctly. Engaging local activists and artists to create the comics therefore makes sense, in getting across information to grown-up readers."

Through a daily cartoon strip featuring the Common Man, "You Said It"

R K LAXMAN, has represented the hopes, aspirations, problems of an Indian. The common person not only brought a smile on every reader's face every morning but also very articulately used to put forth the issues of concern.

Again, comic artists and activists who use comics to take up social concerns are mainly volunteers aiming to bring change using the medium.

ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION, CINEMA AND VOLUNTEERISM

Cinema is a craze in India. It is the most popular form of recreation. Its popularity is phenomenal. From Raja Harishchandra, the first film that was screened in 1913 until today the Indian film Industry is growing with a rapid pace. The low budget and sans star Peepli Live's success in 2010 showed that there is a demand for the strong content by the audience. Along with entertainment, the cinema needs to offer some serious content and food for thought. If the content is strong, it has a universal appeal. For example, *My Name is Khan*, which is based on terrorism, not only did well in India but till March 2011, the film had theatrical releases in 64 countries. From 1913 until now, Indian cinema not only entertained but also educated people on number of issues to facilitate volunteer action. There were and there are many directors who explored this medium for more than entertainment. Issues like sati, dowry, caste system, feudalism, child marriage, widow remarriage, poverty, children's' problem, youth turmoil, corruption, caste system, terrorism etc. has been handled by some of the directors very sensitively. These films definitely promote the spirit of volunteerism.

ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION, RADIO AND VOLUNTEERING

Despite the growth of TV and new media, radio still rules the heart of many. With the number of listeners increasing from 122 million in 2000 to 153 million in 2005 and the number of hours spent on radio on weekday increasing from 64 minutes in 2000 to 80 minutes in 2005²⁵, the radio has not only survived the visual extravaganza of TV, but also created a strong niche for itself. Radio in the past has been used extensively for education.

25 FICCI-KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report. (2011). *Hitting the High Notes. India: KPMG International*. Retrieved 14 October 2011 from <http://www.kpmg.com/in/en/issuesandinsights/thoughtleadership/ficci-kpmg-report-2011.pdf>.

Some of the films addressing social issues are:

Sati: Sati Sulochna which was based on Sati Pratha

Dowry: Teen Behenein

Caste System : Achoot Kanya, Sujata

Land Disputes: Mother India, Do Beegha Zameen, Parineeta, Damul, Godan

Child Marriage; Balika Vadhu, Water

Widow Remarriage: Babul

Poverty: Neecha Nagar

Youth Unrest: Zanzeer, Rang de Basanti, Three Idiots,

Corruption: Peepli Live

Terrorism: Roza, Mumbai, Wednesday, My Name is Khan, Fiza

Children's Issues: Tare Zameen Par, Udaan, Masoom.

Stanley ka dabba

Social Movement: Manthan, No One Killed Jessica



Koothaperumal Anand K (second from left) is a regular volunteer at Pudukkottai Vanni, the Community Radio Station in Pudukkottai © Pudukkottai Vanni CRS

In India, the most quoted example is *Tinka Tinka Sukh* the success of which demonstrated the effective use of the entertainment-education approach to bring about behavior change. It was a 104-episode radio serial drama broadcast in India between 1996 and 1997 by All India Radio (AIR), in partnership with Population Communications International (PCI). The 104 episodes of the drama lasted 20 minutes each and were broadcast twice weekly for a year. The drama was set in a farming community in North India. Chaudhri ('elder leader'), his wife Chaudhrian, and son Suraj represent an ideal family. They promote women's causes (anti-dowry, gender equality and women's empowerment) and the importance of creating a self-sufficient harmonious village. By contrast, Chacha's family is blindly traditional and ridden with conflict; his wife is the village gossipmongress and his son is a delinquent. The widow, Gareebo, and her three daughters are more transitional characters, who depict the trials of women in a tradition-bound, patriarchal society. The AIDS storyline is told through the character of Jumman, "a farmhand on Chaudri's fields. Momentarily swayed by urban glamour, he contracts AIDS and disrupts his family's harmony. But he finally accepts his wife's view that life's happiness lies in small things" (Singhal and Rogers, 1999).

The feedback to this Programme was incredible. One striking example was a two-by-three-foot "letter" signed (in some cases with thumbprints) by 184 residents of Lutsaan Village in Uttar Pradesh stating, "Listening to *Tinka Tinka Sukh* has benefited all listeners of our village, especially the women...Listeners of our village now actively oppose the practice of dowry - they neither give nor receive dowry" (Singhal and Rogers, 1999). This again underscores the role of radio in highlighting critical issues and inspiring volunteer action on these.

Community Radio also empowers people as they can create their own message, raise their own issues. It is modeled on the spirit of volunteerism involving local people to generate local content. One such example is the radio by workers from Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) record 'Rudi no radio' - a Programme that helps raise its listeners' awareness of health issues such as birth control, childcare, nutrition, as well as environmental and agricultural issues like organic farming and the seasons. They also cover topics of interest such as adult education, communal harmony, and traditional art and craft.

ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION, TV AND VOLUNTEERISM

The TV came in India with the purpose of education. One Programme that really made a mark in the history of entertainment education in our country is *Hum Log* (We the People) - Indian television's first soap opera. It began telecast on Doordarshan, India's national network on July 7, 1984, then the only television channel of India, and it quickly became immensely popular. Indian audiences loved the show and the characters became legendary and a common topic of discussion. *Hum Log* is the story of an Indian middle class family of the 1980s and their daily struggles and aspirations. Since 1984, many such Programmes and soap operas were made. The recent ones to join the bandwagon are '*Balika Vadhu*' on child marriage and widow remarriage and '*Na Aana is Desh Meri Lado*' on women's issues.

CONCLUSION

In the context of the above discussions on the role of entertainment-education, it can be stressed that there is great role for it to generate public discourses and discussions on social concerns. Also, it can be an inspiring guide for many to think and act on current

problems. The role of entertainment-education in volunteer promotion needs to be further assimilated and recognized so that efforts that are more concerted are made to use this in volunteer motivations.

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MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERING

Biplab Loho Choudhury

The media-
traditional, the
modern mass media
and the digital
media- all can play
significant roles in
promoting the spirit
of volunteerism.

POSITIVE
PORTRAYAL OF
VOLUNTEERING
EFFORTS CAN
LEAD TO A
CONDUCTIVE
ENVIRONMENT
FOR VOLUNTEER
PROMOTION.
LEAD TO A
CONDUCTIVE
ENVIRONMENT
FOR VOLUNTEER
PROMOTION.

SALUTING A REAL HERO

Heavenly flowers rarely bloom inside cowsheds, if ever. But a 26-year old science graduate from the city thought otherwise. It was 2003- India had reached the Cricket World Cup finals after a long wait of 20 years and Saddam Hussein was finally captured by the American forces. Far from the melee though, back in the sleepy tribal village of Pamohi, 20 kilometres off Guwahati, a young man by the name of Uttam Teron was busy cultivating his Parijats- the heavenly flowers and all that he had as resources were a pair of desks and benches, a paltry sum of eight hundred rupees that he had saved over the years and, of course, a cowshed. What started off as a class of four students has blossomed into a full-fledged school that aims to make sense of more than five hundred lives, and does it almost for free save for a nominal two rupees as admission fee. The school is named Parijat Academy- the only name that perhaps befits such a school..... Teron has a dream- he plans to open a residential school in Pamohi where kids from all over the state can study free. He prefers to call it a long-term goal as it is an uphill task to manage the resources but for this tenacious young man whose mother never went to school and whose father is a train driver, no mountain is high enough to detract him. Teron's efforts have started to be recognized by mainland India finally. Teron was one of the recipients of last year's CNN-IBN (Cable News Network-Indian Broadcasting Network) Reliance Real Heroes award. He had also been in the list of the popular magazine India Today's 35 youth icons of India.

*The Sentinel, Guwahati, February 5, 2012*²⁶

The inspiring story of Uttam Teron in *The Sentinel*, Guwahati reflects the important role of media in recognizing and highlighting volunteer initiatives and action. Stories like these give ideas and motivate hundreds of readers to possibly take up similar initiatives like that of Teron's. In fact such reportage can help in volunteer promotion on different issues of social concern.

Consider another story, 'A thumb's up for volunteer work' in *The Hindu Business Line* (September 19, 2011)²⁷. The story says, "For corporates, it is now well established that those perceived as socially responsible are not just preferred destinations for talent, they are also the choice of conscientious consumers." Quoting research by International Business Machines

²⁶ *The Sentinel*. Saluting a Real Hero. Retrieved 6 January 2012 from http://www.sentinelassam.com/sunday/melange_cover_story.php?sec=7&subsec=0&ppr=2&dtP=2012-02-05.

²⁷ *The Hindu Business Line*. A thumb's up for volunteer work. Retrieved 1 February 2012 from <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/features/newmanager/article2465250.ece>.

Corporation (IBM) and British Gas, Graff writes, “A reputation enhanced by corporate social performance can significantly improve a company’s ability to attract and retain investors, customers and employees.” She adds that employees whose employers support their involvement in the community ‘are more loyal to their employer and stay longer.’

At a time when market forces are dominant and neo-liberal economic policies are the norms, stories which argue the case of employee volunteering in a financial daily actually can facilitate the culture of volunteering in the private sector.

Indeed media, whether traditional, alternative, the modern mass media or the new media, is a powerful tool for stimulating volunteer activities. Positive portrayal of volunteering efforts can lead to a conducive environment for volunteer promotion (Kundu, 2004).

The role of media to portray volunteer efforts can be linked to the functionalist theory of the mass media and its normative role in articulating public interests. Mc Quail (2000) underlining the functionalist theory says mass media are essential to the society for:

- Integration and cooperation;
- Order;
- Control and stability;
- Adaptation to change;
- Mobilization;
- Management of tension; and
- Continuity of culture and values.

The functionalist theory clearly stresses on the positive role the media can play for a coherent and conflict-free society. It talks of the importance of order, the continuity of culture, values and stability and takes us to the notion of social responsibility of the media.

Off and on, newspapers and magazines report stories like that of Theron’s or the story by The Hindu Business Line arguing the case of employee volunteering. Besides, there are cases of reportage of different citizenry action and civic engagement. For instance, the story, ‘Resident lend cops helping hand’ in the Hindustan Times (April 26, 2011)²⁸ talks about how a group of residents volunteered to help policemen in managing the bustling traffic during peak hours in Gurgaon. However, these stories are mainly considered as soft stories and do not get the same priority as politics, crime or entertainment. Notwithstanding, some newspapers/ magazines whether in English or vernacular languages have some special columns or periodically come out with series of stories on people or groups trying to bring change in the society. For instance, The Hindustan Times recently, has come up with a series on India Awakened: Agents of Change every week²⁹ where it features an initiative or an individual who is promoting the spirit of volunteerism.

Similarly, for instance, in the electronic media, the CNN-IBN brings together inspiring stories of social change by individuals in its Real Heroes series. Its tag line is ‘ordinary fates, extraordinary feats’. In partnership with Reliance, it has instituted the Real Heroes award which is given every year.

Kundu (2004) points out that the media is an important channel to promote volunteering. “Media coverage of a disaster can mobilize many volunteers and help in rehabilitation

28 Hindustan Times. (2011). Residents lend cops helping hand. Retrieved 8 September 2011 from <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Haryana/Residents-lend-cops-helping-hand/Article1-689702.aspx>.

29 Hindustan Times. (2012). For India’s real heroes, the impossible was part of their everyday. Retrieved 20 August 2012 from <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/TopStories/For-India-s-real-heroes-the-impossible-was-part-of-their-everyday/Article1-839167.aspx>.

Bertha G Dkhar is one of Real Heroes Awardee in 2012

Bertha G Dkhar was born with failing eyesight. She lost her vision completely while in college. But in her loss, Bertha found the purpose of her life. Today for more than 100 blind students, her free school is their only hope. In spite of being new to Braille herself, Bertha invented the Braille code in Khasi, the local language of Meghalaya. Thanks to Bertha these students can read and write in their mother tongue.- Source: http://www.realheroes.com/winner_2012_east.php

process. The Gujarat earthquake in India (2001) was one such case where volunteers from far afield thronged to the affected areas after television coverage showed the extent of the disaster. Likewise, focused stories on literacy campaigns or disability issues build essential awareness in society and stimulate response.”

An interesting case in this context is the Teach India campaign of the Times of India. Consider for instance this story in the newspaper, ‘Over 200 Teach India volunteers get to brush up their language skills’ (Times of India, November 1, 2010)³⁰. It talked about Teach India volunteers postponing their overseas trips and taking leave to ensure they lived their dreams of teaching India by taking part in a ‘training the trainers’ workshop.

In the backdrop of some positive portrayals of volunteering efforts in the media, the general trend throughout the country is not very encouraging. While it is a challenge for volunteers and volunteer groups to locate spaces in the print media, it is even more difficult in the electronic media. In the context of today’s media landscape, the competition for readers, listeners and viewers in order to grab advertising has led to a dumbing down of content with sensationalism, trivialization, titillation and, sometimes, local or national chauvinism crowding out more serious and worthwhile content. Trial by the press and publication of unverified allegations against people, communities and institutions has become commonplace (Verghese, 2011).

Increasingly, we find the media, especially the electronic media becoming a part of the entertainment industry instead of strengthening the public sphere and taking informed debate on key issues of social concerns. Thussu (2007) notes, “The general shift from public to a ratings conscious television, dependent on corporate advertising and broadcasting to a heterogeneous audience, has implications for news agendas and editorial priorities. One result of the proliferation of news outlets is a growing competition for audiences and crucially advertising revenue at a time when interest in news is generally waning.”

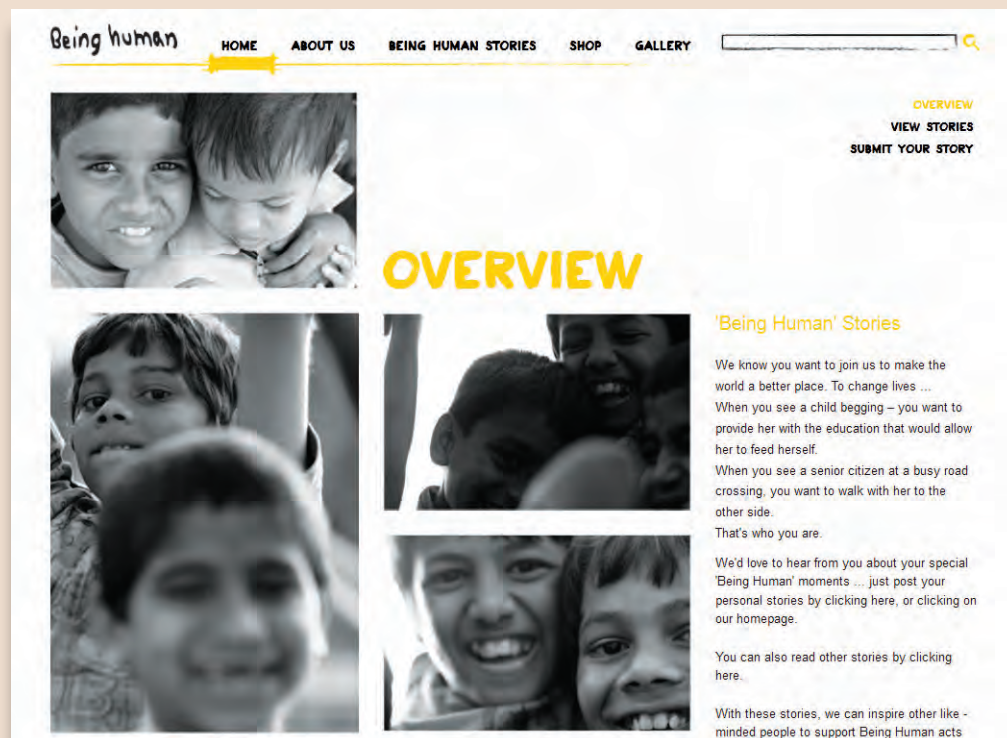
Katzu (2011) evocatively underscores Thussu’s observation when he says, “No doubt the media should provide some entertainment also to the people, but if 90 per cent of its coverage is devoted to entertainment, and only 10 per cent to all the socio-economic issues put together, then the sense of priorities of the media has gone haywire.’

Senior development journalist, P Sainath calls the scenario in Indian media as a ‘disconnect between mass media and mass reality’. Katzu (2011a) takes this discussion further when he says, “The real issues in India are economic, that is, the terrible economic

conditions in which 80 per cent of our people are living, poverty, unemployment, lack of housing and medical care and so on. Instead of addressing these real issues, the media often try to divert the attention of people to non-issues. Such as that the wife of a film actor has become pregnant, whether she will give birth to a single child or to twins, and so on. Are these the real issues facing the nation?"

Also in the context of volunteering, the bias of coverage in Indian media is evident. If Amir Khan becomes the brand ambassador of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) or actor Salman Khan is doing something there will be lot of reportage. Here Thussu's argument on the changing nature of news as more entertainment becomes pertinent. In contrast, stories of volunteer action by ordinary citizens especially those in remote areas or those from difficult background find it extremely difficult to get past media gatekeepers. Talking about this biased approach, Sen (2012) says, "Division that introduces a generic bias in Indian news coverage, related to the interest of the newspaper reading public, is more like one between a fortunate fifth of the population who are doing just fine on the basis of the economic progress that is taking place in India and the rest who are being left firmly behind."

While regular sensitization of the media is important, efforts needs to be made to make the media realize that they too are stakeholders of volunteer actions for reaching out to the underprivileged sections of the society. In this context, Kundu (2004) argues on the need to encourage volunteering amongst media persons themselves for different social and humanitarian causes. "This can help the media-person to develop in-depth knowledge on these issues leading to better reportage," he adds.



THE NEW MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERING

The new media provides enormous opportunities for volunteering. Digital platforms like the social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter; discussion groups, blogs, video sharing sites like YouTube, sites which facilitate podcasts – all play an important

The **UNV Online Volunteering** service connects volunteers with organizations working for sustainable human development.

Volunteers contribute their skills **online** to help organizations address development challenges.

Organizations collaborate with online volunteers **over the Internet** to strengthen the impact of their development work.



role in promotion and facilitation of volunteering. The use of the Internet has enabled new forms of volunteering to evolve. It is not only to take up social causes but most importantly during disasters, the new media facilitates volunteerism in a big way. During disasters, desire to help is greatly enabled by social networking tools like Twitter. They quickly help to create information and ensure its immediate movement that can be the basis of subsequent collective action. For instance during the Mumbai terrorist attack volunteers used tools like Twitter to not only pass on information but also express solidarity and collective action.

Online volunteering plugs the challenges of time and space. Now volunteers sitting in India can volunteer for organizations in Africa or elsewhere without ever visiting them. This has been the biggest gain of the evolution of the digital media.

Acevedo (2005) notes,

"Online Volunteering represents the free and targeted provision of information and knowledge in perhaps its purest form. Online volunteers typically use the simplicity of e-mail to communicate with their host organizations and remit that information and knowledge. They can also carry out online services (e.g. moderating an electronic discussion forum or managing a web site remotely), in which case they are managing information for their organizations. Using the ubiquitous nature of the Internet, they learn about opportunities for virtual collaboration emanating from any corner of the world."

An excellent example of cyberspace volunteering is UNV's Online Volunteering service³¹, which connects several volunteers from around the globe to contribute their skills online by volunteering their hours every day/ week over the internet with organizations working for sustainable human development.

CITIZEN JOURNALISTS AS VOLUNTEERS

Citizen Journalism is news stories created by amateur reporters or ordinary citizens who may not have any professional training in journalism. These amateur reporters or citizens are the audience, viewers or readers who too want to share their stories and concerns in the society in which they live (Awareness Programme on Citizen Journalism, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), 2011).

Case Study/ Goodness and Mercy Missions Team

Online volunteer Akanksha Shukla from India helped the Cameroonian NGO Goodness and Mercy Missions (GMM) improve its 'Children's education through women empowerment' project, which subsequently won the World Bank's Cameroon Development Marketplace Competition. The project, which aims to enable 100 women to secure their family income through palm oil trading and send their children to school, was the third among 15 projects that were awarded for their replicable innovative approach and high potential for development impact.

Initially, Akanksha was tasked with developing a funding strategy for the project. With her background in agriculture and business management, however, and having worked with women self-help groups (SHGs) in India, she immediately spotted aspects that could be improved. In close consultation with GMM she redefined the project framework and developed a self-sustainable income generation model. Through its collaboration with Akanksha, the organization expanded its knowledge in inclusive development project management.

After finalizing the project concept, Akanksha searched for potential donors and prepared the award-winning proposal. In addition to receiving funds, the winners were invited to a weeklong training to strengthen their capacities to implement the awarded projects. "It was a unique chance for the organization to gain recognition in a national platform as well as interact with and learn from other development organizations in Cameroon. This was the greatest exposure for the organization since its inception in 2007," says Teh Francis, the organization's founder and director.

Her contribution to affecting the lives of 100 women in Cameroon was a life changing experience for Akanksha. "This feeling can't be expressed in words, but I can just say that the joy, satisfaction, recognition and freedom that I had enjoyed working as online volunteer are unparalleled." Akanksha decided to shift her career from for-profit marketing to the nonprofit sector, where she would like to work as a fundraising consultant. She has already enrolled in an online course in International Development. http://www.onlinevolunteering.org/en/org/stories/2011_gmm.html

In different digital platforms like web editions of newspapers, citizen journalism sites or even in several news channels, citizen journalists volunteer to take up important social issues. This forms an important dimension of volunteerism and active citizenry.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERISM

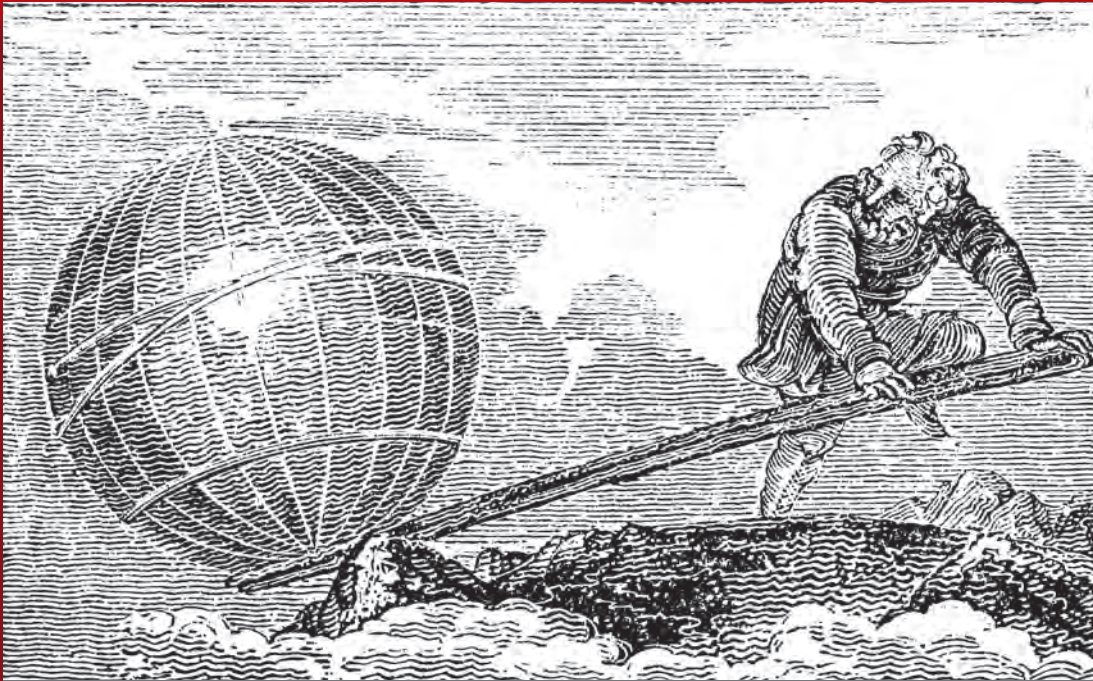
India has a long and rich tradition of traditional media. Use of different forms of traditional media like puppets etc. is being used to create awareness on different social concerns. They are important sources of inspiring local people and volunteers to take up social action on a variety of causes.

CONCLUSION

Volunteerism is the first step of participatory dimension of democracy and inclusive development. Our ancient tradition of feeling for others as an extension of the self (the advaita philosophy of equality) is sine-qua-non for success in sustaining democracy and progress. The broad spectrum of media, starting from traditional and folk media to print media to electronic media, and extending to the new media has opened up vast space and time to be devoted to promoting volunteerism and taking up causes espoused by volunteers.

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Give me the space to stand on, and I will move the earth – Archimedes

This an engraving from Mechanics Magazine published in London in 1824.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_\(Small\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_(Small).jpg)

A GLIMPSE ON VOLUNTEERING INTERVENTIONS

CASE STUDY:

PEACE GONG CHILDREN BREAKING ALL BARRIERS TO SPREAD PEACE AND HARMONY

Nobel laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore believed that it was not enough to pass on information, what was important was the ability to put to use what one has learnt and to develop curiosity and alertness of mind.

It is with this goal in mind that the Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Foundation, a national think tank of academicians, communication specialists, social workers and researchers has initiated *The Peace Gong*, a global children's newspaper.

"All of us have the light in us, a light powerful enough to purge the darkness around. We all have the spark in us, just waiting to be kindled! We are all peace warriors trying to work day and night for a better tomorrow. And that's exactly what *The Peace Gong* advocates – humanity," says the editor, Spandana Bhattacharya, a student of class XI on the spirit of volunteering promoted by the newspaper in her editorial (special issue of *The Peace Gong* on Volunteerism) on what Peace Gong reporters aim for.

Rather than just promoting the capacities of children to understand and express their views on different social concerns, *The Peace Gong* also encourages them to be the catalysts of volunteer initiatives. While Spandana herself works with children of prisoners in Kolkata; Nikita Mishra, a reporter in the Mumbai Bureau teaches a poor child; and Anuradha Roy, a Bureau member in Scotland volunteers in an old age home.

The Peace Gong by promoting media and information literacy aims to build bridges of friendship amongst children of the world and prepare them to work towards a global

Peace Gong Bureau member interviewing youth in Kargil © The Peace Gong



non-violent future. It is not just a platform for children to write on social concerns but is also a vehicle to promote child participation for community building.

Significantly, Ananya Roy, a Kolkata Bureau member took the lead in bringing together young people for a silent march following the fire in AMRI Hospital³² in December 2011 where more than 100 people died. Ananya says, "As a member of *The Peace Gong* and as a citizen of Kolkata I had to do something. This was the beginning of my initiative. On December 12, 2011, I sent out approximately three hundred text messages to students of various schools and colleges telling them that I would be in front of AMRI, sticking a few posters and lighting a candle as a mark of a silent protest. The message was forwarded to numerous people and I received a huge response saying that they wanted to join in too. They wanted to light a candle which would ignite the change in the prevailing darkness."

The Peace Gong has child reporters not just in different states of the country but also abroad. Media and information literacy Programmes especially for young people becomes significant as it develops their capacities and enhances their skills to not only use information but also use the media to take up social concerns.

Though it is a challenge to connect with children in villages and towns not only across India but also abroad to 'build bridges of friendship for a global non-violent future, Spandana's assertion gives hope that the children are determined to work towards it, "We the children of the world have woken up to the loud 'Gong' of responsibility, and not just thinking about making a change. We have started shaping the world in our own way."

CASE STUDY/PUDUCHERRY:

MAKING A DIFFERENE THROGUH THE COMMUNITY RADIO

Puduvai Vaani CRS was adjudged the First Runner up in the "First CEMCA (Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia) Community Radio Awards for Good Practices 2011" in the category of "Promoting Local Culture". The award was presented at the Community Radio Sammelan organized by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in New Delhi.

The credit of this award goes to Ms. T. Manjula, who voluntarily anchors this community development Programme called "Yeelo" representing life style of fishermen. Volunteers play a very significant role in the success of Puduvai Vanni Community Radio Station (CRS) in Puducherry, and have contributed nearly 1,000 hours of Programme materials since its inception in 2008.

Manjula is an under graduate student and belongs to the fishermen community. She has been volunteering with the Station for two and half years now. While hosting the Programme, Manjula encourages the listeners to volunteer and also helps bring volunteers for Puduvai Vanni CRS.

She has a keen interest in volunteerism and has been actively involved in various awareness Programmes since her school days. These include mass health education Programme on sanitation, mosquito control, and polio vaccination etc. She also helped the affected people when Tsunami hit India in 2004.



T. Manjula (third from left) at Pudukkottai CRS anchoring the community development Programme called "Yeelo" in Pudukkottai © Pudukkottai CRS

Manjula believes that volunteering has brought her empowerment, resilience and improved her skills in radio programming. It has also led to better recognition and popularity in her community. One of the happiest moments of her life was when a man from her village thanked her for his participation in the Programme hosted by Manjula and stated "the most joyful moment of his life was listening to his own voice on the FM (Frequency Modulation) Station."

Another inspiring volunteer at Pudukkottai Vaani is Mr. Koothaperumal Anand K , who started his media journey with the Station since its inception in August 2008. Like Manjula, Anand too started volunteering at a young age and was actively involved with National Cadet Corps (NCC), NSS, Rotary Club, Youth Club, National Green Corps and Blood Donation Club in his school and college days.

When Pudukkottai Vaani was inaugurated, Anand was pursuing his M .Phil. The exposure he got at the Station helped him to join post-graduation in mass communication. He is currently working as an Audio Assistant in Pudukkottai Vaani and puts in nearly 12 hours a day instead of his regular duty of eight hours.

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Anand dedicates these extra four hours to volunteerism. In his own words, "Radio is my passion and CRS is giving a remarkable chance to improve my knowledge in technical and content by exchanging knowledge with the community people".

Now he is an expert in Radio Programme production, technical aspects and training. Anand has also learnt about behavioral and ideological changes, and social interactions. Teaching how to upload the Programmes for transmission to community people is an unforgettable moment of his profession. In his view, volunteerism is “undertaking your responsibilities with personal interest without thinking about the future profit.”

Thanks to the volunteering opportunities offered at Pudukkottai Vanni, people like Manujula and Anand get a chance to learn and positively contribute to change lives of the people they can reach through new mediums like the community radio.

CASE STUDY/TAMIL NADU:

RAM SUNDHER VOLUNTEERS TO SAVE LIVES OF THE DEJECTED AND THE DISTRESSED

*“I thank Thee, Lord as a volunteer, for the chance to serve another year.
And to give of myself in some small way, to those not blessed as I each day.
My thanks for health and mind and soul, to aid me ever toward my goal.
For eyes to see the good in all, a hand to extend before a fall.
For legs to go where the need is great, learning to love—forgetting to hate.
For ears to hear and heart to care, when someone’s cross is hard to bear.
A smile to show my affection true, with energy aplenty—the task to do.
And all I ask, dear Lord, if I may, is to serve you better day by day.”*

— Ram Sunder

Ram Sundher (center) touching lives and inspiring everyone to get involved©Ram



Ram Sundher realized that his calling was helping people overcome temporary setbacks in life and to be able to find the will to fight and live.

Ram Sundher, 58, an electrical engineer, started volunteering as a student. He chose the NGO sector by will and dedicated his whole life in counseling and helping people, which brought him the Volunteer of the Year Award, AIVA 2011.

“If someone listens or stretches out a hand, or whispers a word of encouragement, or attempts to understand a lonely person, extraordinary things begin to happen. Believe me miracles do happen”, remarks Ram.

It all started in the 1980s, when the Ulsoor Lake of Bangalore was the choice location for dejected and rejected youngsters for reasons such as failure in studies, family problems, and teenage issues to commit suicide. Ram was a regular to the beautiful lake with friends to spend time. He decided to patrol the area on days leading to exams, days when the results were out, to stop some suicides. A few of the youngsters he counseled in those days are quite successful today and thank him for saving their lives.

Once he decided to pursue a career in the social sector, he got the necessary qualification required to be a counselor and started volunteering with Helping Hands, an NGO in Bangalore. Breaking the norm of regular counseling, he patrolled the places where people feel most stressed, like the corridors of National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), where no one realized the pressure placed on the near and dear ones of the terminally ill. Ram counseled the parents of disturbed/challenged children, used humour to release stress of these people, and was coined with being called “Humour Ram”.

He also noticed that a lot of unclaimed bodies in hospitals and morgues were not given a dignified burial/ last rites, so he started doing the last rites for unclaimed bodies as per the deceased visible religious affiliations.

Along with a few friends, he started Y21 Foundation which promoted inter religious meets and tours for young college students with an aim to promote religious harmony and to get rid of prejudices. Every year a group of students, from various colleges, of different faiths are taken on a tour to temple, Gurudwara, Masjid, Church, Parsee Fire Temple, Jain & Buddhist places and interactions with the religious leader of these places are encouraged. Students who never visited other religious places realized that all religions promote harmony, love and goodwill.

Ram in the last decade joined Bangalore Cares, a support organization to the social sector in Karnataka, and helped many NGOs in their functioning, from registration to planning and execution of their work. Over the last 25 years, he has also worked with over 200 organizations to help them in every way he can. People know that they can get in touch with Ram for “Anything from Birth to Death” and would not come back feeling disappointed.

CASE STUDY/TAMIL NADU:

VOLUNTEERING TO IGNITE THE YOUNG MINDS THROUGH EDUCATION

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Vaishnavi Srinivasan is a volunteer with Bhumi — a youth volunteer non-profit organization providing supplementary education to underprivileged children across India. Growing up in a lower middle class family, a large part of her education was funded through scholarships. This brought the realization in her to give back to the



Vaishnavi spreading joy, satisfaction and fulfillment she has gained through volunteerism
©Vaishnavi

society by donating her time and skills to educate the underprivileged. She believes, “volunteering is the change that begins within and empowers to bring about a change we want to see”.

It is with this understanding and willingness Vaishnavi registered to volunteer with Bhumi at the Chennai center to spend a couple of hours on the weekends educating children, while pursuing her post-graduation in Financial Economics in 2009.

Volunteering in different roles and working with children and volunteers at Bhumi over the last three years, has groomed her and added much value to her life. For her, nothing beats the sense of accomplishment than hearing from her students, “I want to teach children in my area just like you are teaching us”, who are becoming responsible and willing to uplift their communities. It brings immense satisfaction to her to know that in addition to learning various subjects in school, these children are also learning to give back to the society.

As a volunteer, Vaishnavi has thoroughly enjoyed her experience – engaging the children in activities, innovating new ways to explain established concepts, evaluating their understanding without intimidating them and becoming one among them. She had the chance to introduce new teaching aids and organize inter-center competitions to expose the talents of these. She also contributed to making the volunteering structure more robust – by providing opportunities to the volunteers at Bhumi to explore other classes and to learn best practices across Bhumi’s other learning centers, Programmes and track progress within centers to ensure quality is maintained.

Addiction to children’s smiles got her started on a new chapter for Bhumi in Bangalore along with a few other volunteers, within just a few months of her relocation from Chennai. In addition to teaching regularly, she has started working on the administrative aspects of volunteer coordination, resource gathering & management, etc.

Bhumi, being an entirely youth volunteer based organization, has given her immense freedom to innovate, lead and grow as a person beyond the two hours of volunteering that she signed up for. She has met so many like-minded friends and inspiring people through Bhumi who have changed her life in a positive way.

Though she aspired to join the armed forces in her childhood, she realized over the years that to serve the nation, one does not need the uniform. After joining Bhumi, this idea has grown stronger within her. She had the honour of being awarded the ‘Youth Volunteer of the Year’ Award 2011 at the AIVA, which has further motivated her to contribute with much more vigour and commitment. What was once her leisure time activity has now become a part of her identity.

CASE STUDY/UTTAR PRADESH:

MOBILIZING VOLUNTEERS FOR SOCIAL HARMONY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Hemant Kumar Yadav has been sensitive towards human emotions and values since childhood and believes that with the right guidance and support, youth could be involved in nation building.

Born and brought up in a small town of Mau in Uttar Pradesh, Hemant Kumar Yadav is a committed youth social worker. He was awarded the UNV Karamveer Chakra for his contribution and commitment to volunteerism in 2011.



Hemant Kumar (center) and other participants at Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavana Cycle Yatra from Sriperumbudur to Kanyakumari in 2010 © Hemant

Hemant has volunteered to serve humanity in his own ways for more than ten years now. He has served in 'National Service Scheme' for four years and also established 'Drishti Society' in 2006, an NGO with the sole aim of serving humanity, and to sensitize youth towards social and environmental problems. Drishti Society aims at developing the decision-making power among the youth.

Hemant also trains youth for decision-making capacity to enable them to solve the social problems by taking appropriate action. He says, "By selfless service one can serve community in the true sense." He regularly motivates the youth to volunteer for communal harmony and environmental conservation-two issues close to his heart. To spread his message, Hemant organizes unique activities to create awareness on health issues, peace and development, and environment among others. He organized a Sand Sculpture Show on river Ganga to bring people's attention to global warming and industrial pollution on the eve of World Environment Day in 2008.

Hemant regularly undertakes Cycle Yatras (Journeys) organized by MoYAS. To commemorate the 150th year of the Great Revolt of 1857 and to ignite the feeling of patriotism among youth, Hemant undertook 'Maharani Lakshmi Bai Sadbhavana Cycle Yatra' from Varanasi to New Delhi in 2007.

He also undertook 'Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavana Cycle Yatra' from Sriperumbudur to

Kanyakumari in 2010. This yatra was organized to promote national integration and environment protection among the young men from Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Pondicherry, Tripura and the participating members of NSS and NYKS. During the Cycle Yatras, Hemant met more than 10,000 youth with their own perceptions and ideas about social harmony. These ideas have helped him to know clearly about the emerging issues of conflict between two individuals or groups. These interactions have also helped solve minor conflicts and encouraged peace-building measures.

Hemant is passionate about photography and he feels that both volunteerism and photography have helped him connect with people and bring people's issues to public attention. He invests the profit earned from his photography for conducting awareness activities for the issues he promotes. His work has been highly appreciated and has received a lot of media attention in the leading national and regional newspapers.

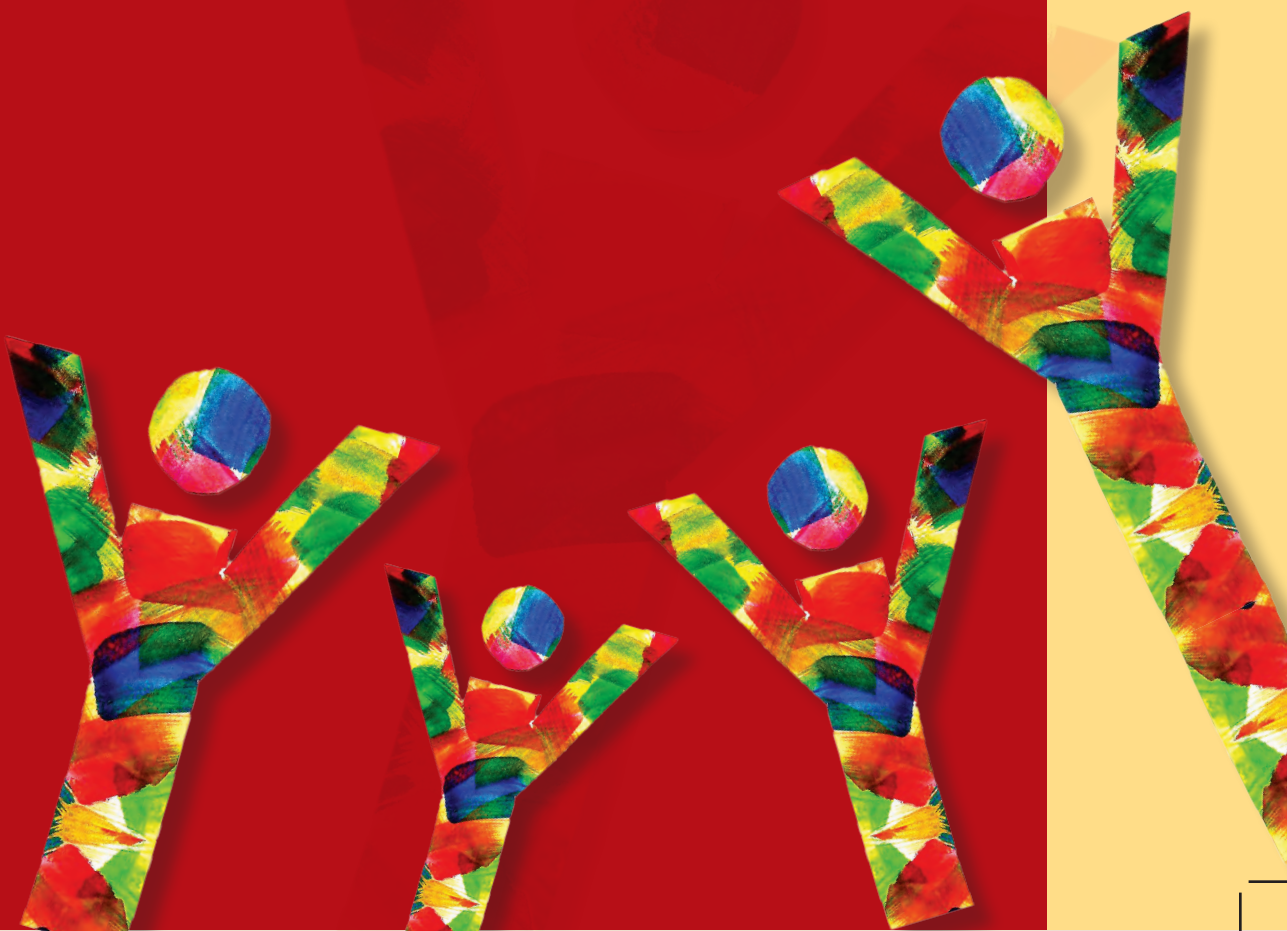
Hemant's extensive voluntary work for the downtrodden sections of the society, has won him many prestigious awards, including 'Indira Gandhi National Service Scheme Award' (2004-05), and 'National Youth Award' (2006-07). His work has connected him with people from diverse backgrounds.

SECTION 4

CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES ON VOLUNTEERING

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

Rabindranath Tagore



WOMEN VOLUNTEERS IN PEACE-BUILDING: STORIES FROM INDIA

Javed Naqi

Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta

EMPOWERING
WOMEN through
ENGAGEMENT IN
PEACE BUILDING
is the key towards
ensuring a safe and
more stable world.

“A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, must empty ourselves. The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace.”

– Mother Teresa

We live in a divided world. Any kind of conflict, whether armed conflicts or any other societal distress, is never gender-neutral. Whether it is ethnic violence, socio-economic deprivation and lack of governance, displacement, or violence against women, the costs of conflict are borne disproportionately by women and their children. However, even as victims, women often come out collectively to play a volunteer role in peace building or conflict resolution processes. This paper highlights the contributions of Indian women to peace building since independence and reveals why equal gender participation is essential for sustainable peace and security.

VOLUNTEERISM AND PEACE BUILDING

Individuals often aspire to be unique from the common and routine. It is such individuals who seek to communicate and reach out to others to gain a sense of satisfaction of one's existence. Often such individuals volunteer, to contribute for change irrespective of any material gain. The change could be protection of human rights, upliftment of marginal, peace building, conservation of biodiversity and natural resources. This altruistic act to contribute for change may be termed as volunteerism. The United Nations General Assembly (UN 2002, A/RES/56/38) defines volunteerism as “an act undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor”. It is the volunteerism, which provides the platform for everyone to be diverse and yet connected through the act of giving. Volunteers therefore could be a diverse representation of all age groups, children, youth, professionals and senior citizens.

When people or societies are faced with any form of conflict, they react and develop a will or instinct to change the status and bring peace. They voluntarily bring forth their best resources and engagements to play a role in catalysing conflict transformation and bringing peace.

There are four categories of peace building including efforts to

1. reduce conflict non-violently through activism and advocacy;
2. reduce direct violence through peacekeeping, relief aid, and legal systems;
3. transform relationships through dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and trauma healing;

4. build capacity through awareness generation, training and education, socio-economic development, military conversion, and research.

Women play important differentiating roles in each of the four categories of peace building.

WOMEN AND PEACE-BUILDING

Women are inherently more peaceful and they have always mediated for peace, be it in a family, community and between nation states. There are many examples of conflicts, where women have played a vital role to minimise the effects of violence by acting as peacemakers. This is why Haris Silajdzic, former Prime Minister of Bosnia rightly states “If we’d had women around the table, there would have been no war; women think long and hard before they send their children out to kill other people’s children.”

It is widely believed that women have special qualities, which equip them better than men for peace, and better for peace than for war. For instance, International Alert’s draft Code of Conduct (1998) stated that, “We explicitly recognise the particular and distinctive peacemaking roles played by women in conflict afflicted communities. Women and women’s organisations are often reservoirs of important local capacities which can be used in peace building activities”.

Participation of women in all spheres of public life is a precondition for peace and holistic development throughout the world. Evidences around the world reveal women’s spontaneous collective participation in decision-making of conflict resolution processes both in conflict and in post-conflict situations. History shows that conflict prevention processes are always strengthened by women’s collective decision-making role while simultaneously empowering women in fragile situations. The resolution of UN Security Council in 2000 on “Women, Peace and Security” also acknowledges the disproportionate effects of war and conflict on women, as well as the role/influence of women that can and must have impact in prevention and resolution of conflict, and in peace and reconstruction processes.

The social stability and sustainability explicitly refers to the issues of peace and security, well functioning of democratic governance, respect for human rights, social integration through multicultural approach and of course, actions for fights against corruption. The women in India are often seen as active volunteer agents in fragile situations in mobilizing wider community participations even if the conditions for their involvement are not always enabling, subject to gender role discrimination. Their role moves ahead of their everyday duties for economic survival, running household affairs smoothly.

WOMEN AS PEACE BUILDERS: STORIES FROM INDIA

India has repeatedly witnessed widespread women led collective movements for social stability, sustainability and peace. These initiatives are the result of different conflict situations and highlight diverse roles played by women in peace building.

Athwaas, a group comprising Kashmiri Muslim, Sikh and Hindu women, is one such initiative, which came into being in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India because of the decade long conflict. Athwaas is a Kashmiri word, which means a handshake or holding of hands as an expression of solidarity and trust. The prolonged conflict in Kashmir has resulted in untold suffering and enormous loss of human life, fragmentation

Athwas is a unique initiative in peace building, where women as peace builders, transcend boundaries and “enemy-lines” to work on initiatives that can replace the “culture of the gun” with a culture that supports coexistence and nonviolence.

of societies and devastation of economies. The initiative, facilitated and supported by the New Delhi-based WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace), brought together Kashmiri women from diverse background to search for non-violent, creative and inclusive approaches for conflict transformation in Kashmir.

As a part of Athwaas, Kashmiri women travel to different parts of the troubled region to

- Work towards rebuilding trust between Kashmiri Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and explore possibilities for reconciliation;
- Identify and nourish peace constituencies;
- Articulate the concerns of women to policymakers and government interlocutors.

The collective works through following four-pronged strategy (Basu 2004):

It builds awareness about:

- (a) People who have been affected by political violence;
- (b) Sexual assault on women by security forces and militants;
- (c) Coping mechanisms and existing support structures for trauma healing;
- (d) Areas of action for rehabilitation.

Samanbals, Spaces for Reconciliation, represents one of the most significant initiatives undertaken by Athwaas. Samanbal is a Kashmiri word used to describe a meeting point for women where they can express their trauma and hopes for the future. Through Samanbals, it sets up “learning and sharing centres” in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The centres also provide a space for many activities including income generation, capacity building, trauma counselling and literacy campaigns (Sewak 2005).

Athwas is a unique initiative in peace building, where women as peace builders, transcend boundaries and “enemy-lines” to work on initiatives that can replace the “culture of the gun” with a culture that supports coexistence and nonviolence.

The conflict scenario in the North-eastern region makes for relevant and informative study, where women are not visible as an epitome of various insurgent movements, but as an apostle of unique non-violent collective struggle for peace building/conflict resolution. It is noticed through transitional roles of Manipuri Muslim women behind the veil to public space through Manipur Muslim Women Organization which make door to door campaign for awareness generation, dialogue for peace and holistic development and walked hand in hand with Meira Paibis (a strong informal network of Manipuri women in 1980 as a response to large-scale counter-insurgency operations including cordon & search operations in the State of Manipur). The iron woman from Manipur, Irom Sharmila’s indefinite fast for around last ten years to repeal Armed Forces

Special Power Act. Irom Sharmila's indefinite fast provides lens to understand the roots of civilian discontent and possibilities of non-violent resistances. These protests in the contexts of increasing militarization are based on Gandhian forms of resistance within the nonviolent framework of peace building processes.

The apathy of the state being relentless, the Naga women's role in mediating dialogue among different fractions to sustain ceasefire, is exemplary. An enriching example of how being involved in long-term initiatives could reduce the potential for violence over time is the effort of Naga Mother's Association. Despite decades of tension and conflicts in Nagaland, the Association has played an important role in mediating among different fractions to sustain ceasefire. The group has been volunteering to encourage communities and tribes to form a broad constituency to support peace.

The Naga Mother's Association was formed in 1984, as a state-level voluntary organisation with the objective of fighting social evils confronting society at that time. Every Naga tribe sent its representative to the NMA. Neidono Angami, one of the founder members of NMA, who attended many funerals during the violent years, truly felt the gravity and depth of the pain of the Naga struggle personally. In all her speeches, she made a plea to the Naga men and leaders to stop killing their own brethren and spoke for thousands of mothers left to deal with the loss and pain. NMA appealed for total cessation of killings and offered to play mediator.

Angami also launched the 'Shed No More Blood' campaign, which led to a meeting between various Naga underground groups and NMA, giving the former an opportunity to meet and share the pain and grief of Naga mothers. In many situations, Angami and her colleagues virtually put themselves between warring factions and risked becoming victims of the senseless killings. However, it is because of these trust-building meetings, the government and the underground leaders are able to keep extending the ceasefire.

The 'Journey of Conscience', a people-to-people dialogue in 2000, is another remarkable initiative by Angami. About 70 Nagas travelled to New Delhi by train to meet civil society groups, officials and other people in Delhi. They felt that negotiations must go beyond negotiating rooms and that the people on both sides must get fully involved in the peace process. In her association with the NMA, Angami has also been instrumental in the emergence of several other establishments: the NMA Youth and Women Welfare Organisation (1986) to fight drug abuse and trafficking, alcoholism, and HIV/AIDS; Mt Gilead Home (1989), a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts and alcoholics, started by NMA was the first of its kind in India; the NMA HIV/AIDS Care Hospice (2001) and a paper recycling project with the Mt Gilead Home to assist in income generation.

The NMA joined hands with other mass-based organisations such as the Naga HoHo (the apex body of all Naga tribes), Naga Students

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Federation and Naga People's Movement for Human Rights to help nurture and sustain the ceasefire between the Naga underground groups and the government.

The NMA also took the initiative to collectively honour those who died in the conflict and whose bodies could not be identified. They worked alongside government agencies to prepare coffins and burial grounds. They collected Naga shawls from various churches and women's bodies to cover the dead with full Naga honour and organised funerals with local pastors. This act of honouring human life even in the face of death gave NMA the space to appeal for peace.

The most active member of the NMA Peace Team, Angami along with her colleagues made several visits to underground camps under very difficult situations to listen to the non-State armies and plea with them to come to the negotiating table. The NMA and its sister organisation, Naga Women Union of Manipur (NWUM) made personal visits to all the Northeastern states to meet civil societies and government leaders. These women played vital roles in trust-building and conflict prevention.

RECENT TREND & CHALLENGES OF WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN PEACE BUILDING IN INDIA

THE CASE STUDIES ON WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE PEACE BUILDING MOVEMENTS, RAISE A QUESTION THAT WHETHER WOMEN ARE INHERENTLY MORE PEACE ORIENTED THAN MEN.

The case studies on women's collective peace building movements, raise a question that whether women are inherently more peace oriented than men. In majority cases, it is seen that it is an inherent volunteering spirit in women that stimulate them to mobilize, get collective and act collectively for social stability and sustainability. Hence, women's collectives in India have recently fostered a multi-task approach to peace building/conflict resolution processes with a broad cross-section of civil society, including NGOs, media, the business community, educators, political leaders etc. Such approach plays a vital role in strengthening peace dialogue and holistic development for social stability and sustainability. For example, the Chetna Andolan and Phalenda Movement in Uttaranchal evolved from a process of creating awareness amongst the people and make them more politically and socially conscious about what was going on around them and spread peaceful protests against corruption and ill governance, to bring holistic development. The Indian women have proven themselves as successful peace builders so far despite facing lot of challenges.

FUTURES

Though the paper we have seen how women's role in peace-building in Kashmir, North-East region and other places have made significant influence in creating an inclusive platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogues but still there exists a lack of adequate recognition to the women efforts, perhaps because of their subsidiary position in society?

To strengthen and learn more from similar movements, it is imperative to increase awareness of women's role in peace-building, mobilise and expand capacity building programmes engaging more men and women groups in understanding the collective processes for peace-building. Indeed these non-hierarchical networks and movements hold a number of lessons for Volunteers and Volunteering efforts across the globe, who in many ways small or large are seeking to resolve conflict situations at various levels.

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CHILDREN AND VOLUNTEERING

Vedabhyas Kundu

"To ensure a global non-violent future, children should be encouraged to volunteer to build bridges of friendship amongst young people. Promoting children's participation in community building will not only contribute towards trans-generational progress of the society but also lay the foundation of an active young citizenry who are aware of their rights and duties." – Spandana Bhattacharya, class XI, and Editor, The Peace Gong in her editorial of the special issue of the children's newspaper to mark IYV +10.

Spandana (2012) in her editorial has clearly underlined the importance of encouraging children's participation for community building which she says is a significant ingredient of trans-generational progress of any society. Many children like Spandana across the world have been articulating through various means on the importance of child participation to ensure their volunteer contribution on issues concerning them and the society.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

The significance of child participation is well reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. The two articles of the Convention, which explicitly reflect these, include:

Article 12 : States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Article 13: The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

Meanwhile 13(f) of the Indian Constitution also reflects the importance of opportunities that should be provided to children. It states: Children shall be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth shall be protected against moral and material abandonment.

'A World Fit for Children' which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002 calls upon all member states to 'listen to children and ensure their participation'. It says that 'children and adolescents are resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. We must respect their right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and their maturity.'

The State of the World Children, 2003 underlines that 'promoting meaningful and quality participation of children and adolescents is essential to ensure their growth and development'. It further stresses, "A child whose active engagement with the world has been encouraged from the outset will be a child with the competencies to

develop through early childhood, respond to educational opportunities and move into adolescence with confidence, assertiveness and the capacities to contribute to democratic dialogue and practices within the homes, school, community and country.”

The importance of promoting child participation is linked to the notion of encouraging volunteering amongst children and their development as active citizens. For the evolution of participatory democracy and the role of young people in it, developing space for children to volunteer is essential. Hart (1992) describes participation as the ‘process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.’ Therefore, facilitating space for children to volunteer would enable them to articulate their views and contribute to the strengthening of democracy.

One of the arguments emphasizing the significance of enabling a conducive and safe environment for children to volunteer is to evolve them as active citizens. Lansdown (2002) points out that only by experiencing respect for their own views and discovering the importance of their respect for the views of others, will children acquire the capacity and willingness to listen to others and so begin to understand the processes and value of democracy.

American political scientist, Benjamin Barber notes, “Democracy depends upon citizenship, the emphasis then was to think about how to constitute a competent and virtuous citizen body.’ Besides, it should be noted that in the context of changing nature of citizenship, Schudson (1988 and 1999) points out that a ‘monitorial’ citizen is not an absentee citizen but watchful even while he or she is doing something else. Schudson’s concept of ‘monitorial’ citizenship’ is premised on the notion that he or she must know how to interact with information. By empowering children to participate and volunteer for issues of the community, they can develop skills to use information and critical thinking abilities for the betterment of the society.

The link between volunteering amongst children and citizenship is well articulated by Supriya Dey, a student of class XII and President of the Surovi Shishu *Panchayat*, Assam. Supriya (*The Peace Gong*, April 2012) says, “By helping drop-out children go back to school or working with villagers to see how problems in villages could be solved, we children are developing practical knowledge as how to approach concerns of our society. Our efforts are surely going to make us more active citizens of our country.”

In the backdrop of promoting volunteering amongst children for active citizenship are the other benefits they acquire when they are involved in volunteer initiatives. Lavanya Garg, a class XII student and volunteering with Arushi, an organization working for persons with disability (*The Peace Gong*, April 2012) says, “The amount of satisfaction I get by contributing to issues of persons with disability is unrivaled. Volunteering is a great way to do exactly what we are supposed to do: go beyond our own dreams and try to fulfill the dreams of others. As students, it is essential that we learn the higher values of life, which are not taught in our books, but beyond them. I started it and if ten of my friends join me too, imagine the kind of work that we can do!”

Lavanya not only captures the satisfaction which volunteering gives a school student like her, she also talks about the importance of volunteering to learn the higher values of life. Volunteering can actually nurture important life skills and values in children. She further notes, “If by sitting and surfing on Facebook a little less, or watching the television a little less, we all could record a book (talking book for persons with visual impairment) for even an hour every now and then, it definitely won’t affect our social



Global Xchange volunteers working with children in a village in Rajasthan. Global Xchange is an international youth exchange programme run by VSO-UK and Pravah. © Pravah

circle but will definitely affect our soul." It is pertinent that volunteering for a cause requires an individual give up some leisure time in order to reach some goals. For children like Lavanya who are in a world having competing indulgences like chatting with a friend over the social media or listening music using an iPod, delineating space out of one's routines for volunteering work is a challenge.

PRAXIS

In the context of Lavanya's contention of learning higher values through volunteering, Bekkers (2007) contends, "To the extent that children internalize prosocial values, they will be more likely to engage in volunteering behavior even when they grow up." Further, other researchers have also pointed out that volunteerism and involvement in community-minded activities have been associated with the development of prosocial characteristics in children and youths (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Pancer & Pratt, 1999).

Hastings et.al. (2007) notes, "Being involved in other-oriented activities leads youths to increasingly value kindness, caring, and altruism as important personal qualities to which they aspire; presumably this value shift would support future pro-social activities. This could reflect a kind of active internalization, of becoming prosocial by doing prosocial. Youths with more prosocial tendencies probably are more inclined to enter into voluntary helping activities, but such participation also seems to be facilitated by attentive parenting and targeted school programmes. Thus, encouraging adolescents' enrolment in volunteer work may be an effective way of promoting

their pro-social development, as youths may incorporate their prosocial activities as an element of their selves."

Hasting's contention on how prosocial or volunteering work by young people increases values of kindness amongst them is well captured by Anuradha Roy, a Grade 11 student in Scotland (*The Peace Gong*, February 2012) who has been volunteering in an old age home, "Every little drop of service helps, and if many more of us are inspired to give selflessly we can build a community of kindness and companionship- one that shall be

Children and Volunteering: Study by Ann Savina Devasia, Class XI

While underscoring the importance of volunteering for imbibing positive values and developing deeper understanding of society, a large number of children in different parts of the country expressed their desire to volunteer for causes and issues at local community level.

In a survey by Peace Gong reporters in November-December, 2011 in cities of Delhi, Guwahati (Assam), Kolkata (West Bengal), Solan (Himachal Pradesh) and Mumbai (Maharashtra), a majority of the children felt there were lack of opportunities and avenues for them to volunteer. About 100 children were interviewed in these cities.

The study also highlighted that students living in comfortable circumstances are not lagging behind and are ready to make positive contribution. Students across the country also think that children growing up in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad are aware about ground realities through broadsheets and other means of communication. They also feel that the real purpose of volunteering is to serve people, who are in dire need of any external support.

Most of the students consider that volunteering can bridge the gap between haves and have-nots. Besides they think by volunteering for different social concerns they can reduce the number of quarrels and conflicts between people.

For instance, 16- year old Surabhi Mitra from Delhi Public School, Ruby Park, Kolkata, feels that volunteering is reaching out to underprivileged people and that it can bring discipline in life if students make a time management plan to pursue their interests.



*Children of the Burari Shishu Panchayat in Delhi leading a rally on the importance of education
©Peace Gong*

– (*The Peace Gong*, Special Issue on Volunteering, April 2012)

constantly expanding. After all, it is not the gesture that counts. It is the thought that counts."

The internalization of prosocial behaviour is also reflected by the efforts of Mukhesh Rajak, a student of Anandalaya Public School, Madhupur, Jharkhand. Mukhesh, a first generation learner in his community is helping other children with their education by bridging information gaps. He and other students of the school are volunteering to develop micro-plan of the villages around the school.

THE SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Democracy is based on faith in the dignity and worth of every single individual as a human being...The object of a democratic education, therefore, the full, all-round development of every individual's personality...i.e. an education to initiate the students into the many-sided art of living in a community. It is obvious; however, that an individual cannot live and develop alone...No education is worth the name that does not inculcate the qualities necessary for living graciously, harmoniously and efficiently with one's fellow men (Secondary Education Commission, 1952- 53).

The Secondary Education Commission of 1952 underscores the objectives of education as to initiate students to the art of living in a community. Volunteering is a powerful force that gels individuals in a community to live harmoniously. Meanwhile the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 emphasizes on the need to connect knowledge to life outside the school and nurture an over-riding identity of children informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country. Encouraging volunteering for community building within the framework of school activities will go a long way in fulfilling of the guidelines of NCF 2005. Students volunteering for social causes will be able to connect to knowledge outside school curriculum. Volunteering in the community will also contribute to the development of a student's self-esteem and ethics- the other objectives noted by NCF 2005.

The CBSE in its publication, Work Education in Schools (2004), notes, "Over the past fifty years in our country and especially in the last twenty years or so, there has been an increasing appreciation of the need to include work as a vital component at all stages of school education. This has its roots in the perceptions about work education as a powerful means of restoring respect and dignity to all types of manual work, removing distinctions between manual workers and white collar workers, promoting self-reliance in meeting one's daily needs and those of the society, increasing productivity through the development of proper work skills and values, and accelerating the process of economic development in the country through community service and social work by students."

According to CBSE, Work Education is viewed as purposive and meaningful manual work, organized as integral part of the learning process and resulting in goods or services useful to the community, besides the pleasure of self-fulfillment. Meanwhile the NCF 2005 points out that through work one learns to find one's place in society. It further says, "Work involves interaction with materials or other people (mostly both), thus creating a deeper comprehension and increased practical knowledge of natural substances and social relationships....Pursued in an academic setting, work carries the remarkable potential of generating new forms of creativity and understanding while opening up the possibility of transforming the nature of work itself."

The NCF 2005 also cautions that “institutionalizing work in the school curriculum will require creative and bold thinking that breaks out of its stereotyped location in periods of SUPW, something about which all children and teachers are justifiably skeptical”.

Here it is significant to note that in 2001, the IYV team of UN Volunteers in Delhi did a study of 50 schools. These included Government, Government-aided, schools of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and public schools. The study focused on whether students were involved in any community work during SUPW periods. In majority of the schools the picture was the same – the SUPW periods were surreptitiously used to finish courses in subjects like mathematics, physics, chemistry etc. It was found during the study that in most of the schools the teachers were not serious to further the objectives of these periods. Notwithstanding this fact, of course there were several schools, which encouraged their students to be part of community volunteer work.

In this context, the NCF 2005 rightly points out, “Schools at present are not geared for work as a part of the curriculum in terms of infrastructure or learning materials Integrating work into the school curriculum would require a substantial amount of pedagogical understanding of how it would be integrated with learning and the mechanisms for assessment and evaluation.”

It stresses, “Productive work would need to find a place at the center of the curriculum in order to act as a powerful corrective to the bookish, information-oriented and generally unchallenging character of school education and, in turn, help relate the latter to the life needs of the child.” It also succinctly says that the school curriculum from the pre-primary to the senior secondary stages should be reconstructed for realizing the pedagogic potential of work as a pedagogic medium in knowledge acquisition, developing values and multiple skill-formations.

CONCLUSION

Hastings et. al. (2007) argue that encouraging adolescents’ enrolment in volunteer work may be an effective way of promoting their prosocial development, as youths may incorporate their prosocial activities as an element of their selves.

As discussed above in the examples of children taking up volunteering work in the community, it can be emphasized that volunteering not only contributes to their prosocial development but also help them become active citizens. Their actions and initiatives can also be useful in changing perception of adults on different social concerns.

The challenge however is to create space not only within the school curriculum but also in the society to provide adequate opportunities to children to contribute to community building. The mindset of adults needs to change and should take child participation seriously. This will go a long way in not only developing their critical thinking abilities and enable them to connect to knowledge outside the textbook but always lay the foundation of an active citizenry. At a time when hedonistic tendencies and materialistic gains seem to be the thrust of youth action, encouraging them to contribute to community building and altruism is a challenge. In this context, it is of paramount importance to recognize and promote child-led volunteer efforts like that of the Surovi Shishu *Panchayat* that more children are encouraged to initiate such endeavours.

Being a volunteer.....

***What makes me feel gutsy and worthy, What fills my heart with love and mercy
What makes me feel meek and polite, What makes me assist needy and deprived
What makes me optimistic and desirous, What makes an exigent phase vigorous
What makes me combat for a noble motive, What leads me towards common
positive***

***What makes me feel relieved and content, What teaches me to be zealous and
patient***

***What makes me feel sturdy and proud, What makes my vision clear and bright
What makes me break all the shackles, What makes me confront hard battles
What makes me feel reliable and selfless, What instills compassion and kindness
What gives me willingness and integrity, What develops the feeling of oneness
and equity***

***What rekindles the body and inner soul, Being a volunteer, nourishes me as a
whole!***

(Reprinted from The Peace Gong, April, 2012)

*– Falak Lone & Afifa Lone Govt. Girls Higher
Secondary School Amirakadal, Srinagar*

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THE ROLE OF YOUTH CLUBS TO PROMOTE VOLUNTEERISM

Rakesh Mohan

INTRODUCTION

Youth are major human resource for development and thus key agents of social change, economic development and technological innovation. Youth in all ages have been in the vanguard of progress and social change. They have the right and obligation to participate actively in national development and in shaping the destiny of the nation. This calls for an integral and interdisciplinary approach, involving both Government departments and organizations, and sectors outside the government such as family, educators, leaders, and voluntary agencies and youth organizations.

In the National Youth Policy, 1988 it is envisaged that the Programmes will be undertaken to offer opportunities to the youth for leadership training through personality development and character building, and for motivating them to voluntarily commit to social and community service.

VOLUNTARY ACTIONS OF YOUTH CLUBS

Youth clubs are village level voluntary youth organizations established on democratic norms. The office bearer of village level youth clubs are elected periodically by youth members in the village. The Youth Clubs prepare and implement their annual action plan keeping in view the need and requirement of their village and aspirations of young persons.

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)³³ has the privilege of a network of 2.5 lakhs youth clubs at the village level and about one crore voluntary members enrolled through these youth clubs. The youth clubs are the main catalytic agents in developing Programmes initiated by NYKS under the aegis of Ministry on Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS). NYKS has been strengthening Youth Clubs by mainstreaming its Programmes for their capacity building through the Youth Clubs Awards, Financial Assistance to Youth Clubs, Capacity Building Programmes for the members and many more to support youth clubs and to strengthen them.

The Youth Clubs are affiliated to NYKS at district level and registered under Societies Registration Act 1860. The clubs participate in nation development Programmes by undertaking various developmental schemes and projects of the government. All the

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³³ NYKS is the largest grassroots level voluntary organization; one of its kind in the world. It channelizes the power of youth who are in the age group of 13-35 years on the principles of voluntarism, self-help and community participation. For more information visit NYKS website at <http://www.nyks.org>.

activities are carried on voluntary basis and voluntary spirit. Further, in order to identify the potential of youth clubs and to train the youth volunteers to take up responsible roles in their community/ village, capacity development Programmes are organized at regular intervals.

Volunteers of the youth clubs, have always risen to occasions, be it super cyclone in Orissa, Earthquake in Bhuj and J&K, flood in Bihar and Assam or velour march to commemorate 1857 freedom struggle.

ACTIVITIES OF YOUTH CLUBS TO PROMOTE VOLUNTEERISM

NYKS has been working at various fronts of youth development and making effort to build a strong and effective network of Youth Clubs at the village level with the help of well-trained 20,000 National Youth Corps (NYC) Volunteers, about 3311 Youth Development Centers (YDCs), 221 Rural Information and Technology Youth Development Centers (RITYDC) and 2053 Rural Sports Centers (RSC).

In order to sustain, nurture and motivate the voluntary spirit among the youth as well as to cater to their needs and aspirations, NYKS organizes regular, special and coordination Programmes and projects under the guidelines and support of MoYAS from local to the national level.

These include: Mentor Youth Club Project; Work Camps; Youth Employability Skill (YES) Project; Skill Up-gradation Training Programme (SUTP); District Youth Awards, Skill Development Training Programme under National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT); Block & District Level Folk Cultural Festival; Celebration of Important Days & Weeks; Exhibition for Youth on Handicraft (Yuva Kriti); State Cultural Festival, State Youth Award and National level Programmes etc.

NYKS also mobilizes resources for various projects of youth development through various ministries and international agencies like UNICEF, UNDP, and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) etc. Some of the major special Programmes and projects are Adolescent Health and Development Programme, Awareness and Education for prevention of Drug Abuse and Alcoholism in Punjab and Manipur, Awareness Programme for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, National River Conservation Plan, and Tribal Youth Cultural Exchange Programme.

These Programmes and activities are organized through the village level youth clubs involving the youth volunteers and youth club leaders on regular basis for the systematic overall development of youth. Another objective is to involve the rural youth in nation building activities and to develop responsible and productive citizens for national development activities.

MENTOR YOUTH CLUBS

The Mentor Youth Club Project has been undertaken by NYKS and regular training is conducted to build capacity and skill development of the members. As per the scheme, two most active youth clubs from each block of the district are selected as Mentor Youth Clubs. The clubs are identified based on their proven record of accomplishment of work and capacity for hand holding of other youth clubs situated near cluster of villages.

In this manner, it is planned to recognize and develop a strong network of 10,000 Mentor Youth Clubs in 5000 blocks of the country. This will enable NYKS to realize its long cherished goal of establishing a self-reliant youth club in every village in India. Thus, every identified Mentor Youth Club will be supported by NYKS for achieving the following goals:

- Work for making the non-functional / inactive youth clubs active;
- Form new youth clubs in uncovered villages of the country and provide them constant guidance and support;
- Develop a strong and dependable network of self-supporting/ self-reliant youth clubs.

YOUTH CLUB DATABASE

A nationwide Youth Club mapping exercise for survey of all Youth Clubs was undertaken by NYKS with the help of 12,000 NYC Volunteers and NYKS officials during the financial year 2010-11 spanning over a period of seven months. The exercise was spread over almost three lakh villages, which meant that every second village of the country was visited by a NYC volunteer under the guidance and supervision of District Youth Coordinators for capturing the data pertaining to Youth Clubs. The process of capturing the data and its online entry has been completed in three parts. Part one dealt with the particulars of the Youth Clubs, Part two with the Youth Club Activities and Part three dealt with Youth Club's Village profile.

The Updating & Validation of Data of Youth Clubs of 501 districts have been completed with certification of validation and updating of Youth Club data by concerned Youth Coordinators and concerned Zonal Directors, NYKS. A comprehensive Data Base of 2.51 lakh Youth Clubs which includes 1.05 lakh active youth clubs having a total membership of 42.71 lakh has been established. For easy location of the youth clubs, the names of the concerned villages can be viewed at NYKS website³⁴ along with the name of the youth clubs.

IMPACT OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT BY NYKS UNDER THE VOLUNTARY FRAMEWORK

Youth development essentially means competency formation. With the youth work activities defined and implemented by the provisions of MoYAS in its youth policy 2003 and through its scheme, the competency formation activities generally fall in three categories.

1. Value formation, strengthening and sustenance;
2. Information and awareness on all subjects concerning youth locally, regionally, nationally and in the contexts chosen by the Ministry from time to time, or those chosen by the Ministry through the convergence of subjects and resources from different sectors of development; and
3. Skill generation activities for the youth.

Youth Empowerment is a process having various dimensions and operational values, behavior, practices and the individual and/ or group strengths. The process develops power within the individual or groups. Power thus gathered helps the empowered

³⁴ The details of Youth Clubs database can be viewed on NYKS website <http://www.nyks.org>.

individual or the group in exercising rights over the choices available in the society. These choices can be of various orders - interactive, transactional, behavioral, negotiations, carrier oriented rights and just oriented etc.

In a holistic management study of NYKS in 2009 by the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, it was remarked, "Youth empowerment and inculcating the spirit of nationalism are the most important aspects in strengthening the youth club movement in the country".

The study further states, "perception of youth clubs members about their own development and empowerment was significantly higher than that of those youth who never took part in any youth club related activity. The youth club members also acknowledged significant benefits in terms of personal development, being able to participate in community activities and generally becoming more aware."

The study supports the perception that youth empowerment and inculcating the spirit of nationalism and volunteerism, working with consensus, creation of employment facilities and opportunities for more interaction among youth, community and authorities are important aspects in strengthening youth club movement in India.

VOLUNTEERS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT – ROLE OF NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

Kamal Kumar Kar

Impact due to a disaster can be reduced considerably if the community is well trained to handle such vulnerabilities. Volunteers can play an important and crucial role in the aftermaths of a disaster. The GOI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme (2002) is one such Programme on disaster preparedness and vulnerability reduction³⁵. The volunteers mobilized by the DRM project of UNDP in the 2008 floods in Bihar³⁶ provided great support for the rehabilitation of the displaced communities. Another example is The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) agencies³⁷. Similarly, Civil Defence volunteers are a distinct volunteer group that provides great support during disasters³⁸.

National Service Scheme³⁹, the largest student volunteer organization in the world is a unique Programme, which gives many opportunities to the student youth of the country to develop their personality through community services. Starting from the date of inception (24 September 1969) the Programme has proved a wonderful tool for the students of Higher Education in the field of extra-curricular activities as well as personality development Programme. The activities of NSS have two components:

1. Regular Activities in which a student has to devote a time span of 240 hours in two years to devote his/her time to undertake various community development activities in fields like education, health, environment, adolescent health, HIV/ AIDS awareness, malnutrition, soft Skills etc.

35 Government of India – UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme 2002 – 2009: Evaluation and Review of Lessons Learnt. Prepared by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre. Retrieved 19 November 2011 from http://www.undp.org.in/sites/default/files/reports_publication/DRM-Report_0.pdf.

36 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Community Volunteers instrumental in Bihar flood. Retrieved 5 November 2011 from http://www.undp.org.in/community_volunteers_instrumental_bihar_flood.

37 Aga Khan Development Network. Post-Disaster Rehabilitation Activities in India. Retrieved 7 January 2012 from http://www.akdn.org/india_rehabilitation.asp.

38 Bharat Rakshak. (September-October 2001). Civil Defence Capabilities of the Indian State. Bharat Rakshak Monitor, 4(2). Retrieved 6 December 2011 from <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/LAND-FORCES/Civil-Defence.html>.

39 National Service Scheme, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports Govt. of India, was launched in 1969, in 37 Universities involving 40,000 students with primary focus on the development of personality of students through community service. Today, NSS has more than 3.2 million student volunteers on its roll spread over 298 Universities and 42 (+2) Senior Secondary Councils and Directorate of Vocational Education all over the country. From its inception, more than 3.75 crores students from Universities, Colleges and Institutions of higher learning have benefited from the NSS activities, as student volunteers. For more information visit NSS website at: <http://nss.nic.in>.

VOLUNTEERS COULD
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IN CONSIDERABLY
MINIMIZING THE
IMPACT OF A PRE,
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-NATURAL DISASTER
IF THEY ARE TRAINED
WELL TO MITIGATE SUCH
VULNERABILITIES. As a
result of mainstreaming
disaster management
in the National
Service Scheme, the
NSS volunteers have
been instrumental in
minimizing the loss
of life and property in
situations of natural
disasters due to their
linkages with affected
people, rescue team and
local administration.

2. Special Camping activities in which the volunteer has to undertake a residential camping of 7 days in one of the adopted slums or village near the institution. During this period, they undertake a number of Programmes in the community designed as per the need, wherein the community members take active part in implementation of the Programmes.

The students are not only imparted skills on personality development, but also trained in awareness of various contemporary issues related to health, hygiene, superstitions, alcoholism, gender equity, HIV/AIDS etc. The field of Disaster Management is one of them and NSS has its mandate to mainstream the activities of Disaster Management to the main framework of NSS activities. NSS, year after year has contributed a lot in the field of relief, rescue work during the national disasters be it earthquake in Gujarat, Super cyclone in Orissa, flood in Bihar, Aila in West Bengal, Tsunami that devastated South India and Earthquake at Tangdhar(J&K).

While training on Disaster Management, the primary concern is the magnitude of the incident and loss of lives as well as property in the affected area. It is not a disastrous thinking but a reality with a cruel picture. As stated earlier, NSS had a vast experience in the Disaster Management sector and the past as well as present scenario depict the involvement and commitment of NSS towards sensitization of the community and creation in addition to carrying regular relief and rescue work.

A Disaster Management Training in progress© UNDP



Volunteerism plays a key role in the Disaster Management initiatives as it demands quick action with minimal chances to think of any special plans to mitigate the disaster in the chaotic conditions of the affected region. In addition, the place and time of the disaster is also never certain. Under these circumstances, the role of the volunteers becomes very crucial as:

1. Haphazard movement of affected people cause more inconvenience for the rescue managers;
2. Accessibility to the affected area by skilled rescue & relief workers takes more time depending on the location;
3. Absence of trained manpower in the affected area causes more casualties and loss of property;
4. Lack of proper knowledge of the type and degree of the disaster makes all the affected people more vulnerable;
5. All have the motive to escape from the distress without thinking of others;
6. Some may volunteer, but the lack of training sometimes ends in Chaos.

The volunteers are expected to exhibit the following during a disaster:

They have to remain calm, make the affected people understand the gravity of the situation, provide first-hand information regarding rescuing and safeguarding one's own life, get the people evacuated to a place more safe as per the training received by them and assist the rescue team to get proper access to the location as well as a location map/ idea for the smooth management of the operations and post disaster complications.

In the Post Disaster period they are also helpful in mobilization of local resources and help to facilitate the rescue and relief operations, assist the disaster management squad/ team to plan proper relief and rehabilitation /reconstruction works, sensitize the public and peers to the techniques and information on disasters and how to get out of it, to serve the society by saving lives as well as property worth an unimaginable value.

Educational institutions play a vital role in propagating the idea of disaster mitigation and NSS being a part of the institutions as well as the communities are spearheading this cause since a long period.

The community is another pillar in the implementation of Programmes of all kinds and is especially important as far as Disaster Management is concerned. A community is the first responder to every emergency in real-time and locational context. It is also the first sufferer in every disaster. Further, the community has institutional knowledge base of traditional coping mechanisms and is a vulnerability mapper by 'default'. They also become the best damage assessor in sight. Thus, for sustainable risk reduction NSS being an integral part of the community, must undertake disaster management activities in a positive and fruitful way.

During the activities of NSS, the volunteers are required to conduct pre-camp survey through which they assess the needs, study hazard and vulnerability scenario, and carry out resource mapping and coping capability analysis. They also interact with the members in the community to identify their priorities, concerns and 'gap areas'. The volunteers facilitate contingency planning at the community level and help people to find answers. This is necessary as the community plan is to be 'owned' by the community itself for sustainability, while NSS volunteers help in conception, planning and implementation. Responsibility to core group for rehearsing, training, developing skills and activating

the plan is also one important segment in the community planning which is already taken care by the volunteers, as they are also a part of that area. NSS mainly creates awareness before taking up any of the Programmes, as lack of awareness in Disaster Management is the fatalistic mind-set. Regular interactions and activities designed to instill knowledge, attitude and skills for disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness enhance the capabilities to cope with any emergency. Our volunteers disseminate the information about do's and don'ts, and focus on structural and non-structural elements of disaster management/ mitigation.

NSS has been traditionally in the forefront of supporting national endeavors in disaster response. NSS Volunteers have developed specialized skills in first aid, search and rescue, trauma counseling, relief management etc. NSS has also established pre-disaster linkages with State and District administrations and training is imparted to NSS volunteers in specialized institutions.

NSS AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT- PAST EXPERIENCES

Super Cyclone in Orissa (1999)

The NSS Volunteers, Programme Officers and key functionaries jumped into action on 30 October 1999, the second day of the super cyclone in Orissa. Volunteers at Paradeep conducted rescue operation at the coastline. Large number of dead bodies and animal carcasses were recovered from the sea, canals, and fields and burnt / buried. NSS Volunteers were the first to assist the Air Force for air dropping the relief materials and assisted army using motor boats for rescue work at Ersama Block. NSS Special camps were also organized in affected areas and a large number of volunteers were engaged in the relief as well as the rehabilitation Programme.

Gujarat earthquake (2001)

NSS Volunteers immediately came into action right on the morning of 26 January the day of the deadly earthquake. They removed debris, provided medical facility, ran community kitchen etc. NSS adopted Morvi taluka for the rehabilitation work through work camps and the volunteers became lifeline between the affected people and local administration. More than 71 lakh Rupees were deposited in the Prime Minister's (PM) Relief funds by NSS.

Tsunami (2004)

NSS Volunteers and the Programme officers assisted the district administration for relief operation, rescued people stranded on housetops, trees, provided food, drinking water and temporary shelter to the victims. They also helped in the evacuation of people to safe places during the second warning of Tsunami. Clearing of the debris and collection of damaged fishing nets and other gears was also undertaken by the volunteers.

The volunteers, in association with the district administration, carried out collection and mass cremation of dead bodies, identification of dead bodies and shifting the wounded to the hospitals. They organized free medical camps, free kitchens for the victims and distributed medicines and blankets. They have also assisted the affected people to fill up the compensation form and helped to get compensation from the district administration, made temporary drainage arrangements at the relief camps, and managed traffic at the relief campsite and during evacuation. They were also engaged in rehabilitation works. The volunteers from Andhra to Kerala actively organized shelter camps and relief camps followed by post disaster counseling. The Programme coordinators of the Universities showed a remarkable involvement in the activities. One hundred volunteers from Madras University were air lifted to Car Nicobar where they worked for the administration for 15



Volunteers learning to provide First-Aid during disasters © UNDP

days. The major involvement was the trauma counseling of the victims in the states. More than 6500 Volunteers from 110 institutions were Involved in three states covering 16 districts.

In November 2004, a National Seminar was organized at YASHDA at Pune that was inaugurated by Late Shri Sunil Dutt, Hon'ble Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports. All the key functionaries of NSS across the country participated in the workshop. It was the initial step into mainstreaming the activity of Disaster Management into the NSS Programme. It was followed by an extensive training at the National level, which was organized at NIDM where all were trained on various aspects of Disaster Management including the basic lifesaving skills. This resulted in formation of various empowered groups at various levels.

Heavy rain in Mumbai (2005)

More than 2100 NSS Volunteers were mobilized to provide help to the affected people in Mumbai's heavy rain. They provided food packets, first aid and medical assistance and distributed food grains. They also sprayed DDT and chlorine powder for disinfecting the drinking water sources.

Earthquake in J&K (2005)

NSS Volunteers provided relief at Tangadhar, Baramula and Uri districts at the remote area, established makeshift living arrangements, provided medicines and precooked food and worked in close association with the civil administration during and after the earthquake in J&K.

Not only during natural calamities, but also during other disasters like boat capsizes, train

accidents, fire, heavy crowd during fairs etc., the NSS has shown remarkable contribution which was appreciated by all corners of the society.

NSS has started a training Programme and orientation of their functionaries starting from its own officers to the grass root level, to the Programme officers and volunteers in a systematic manner with MHA and UNDP participation. Three Zonal training workshops at Dehradun, (involving personnel from UP, Punjab, J & K, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Bihar), Shillong (All North Eastern States including Sikkim & West Bengal) and Trivandrum (Kerala, Andhra Pradesh & Tamil Nadu) were the milestones of the NSS Disaster Management Programmes where the members of NSS fraternity were imparted unique training on various key issues of DM and as a result these people had shown remarkable progress in the Disaster Mitigation work. Be it the potential blood donor's group, disaster response team or Ham Radio operation, NSS Volunteers and Programme Officers were enriched from these trainings. These trainings resulted in timely and proper response during disasters as these young people live in the society and can respond first hand to the disaster. Six state level workshops in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Andhra, Nagaland, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh contributed to empowering the NSS functionaries. It resulted in the initiatives by DDMA to include NSS Volunteers in their team for disaster management responses.

NSS has shown more synchronized way of reaction to disaster after this series of training. These are:

1. Regular training of volunteers at institutional level;
2. Seminars and workshops on disaster management by various agencies for the NSS volunteers and Programme Officers;
3. Training of Programme Officers in ETIs where DM is a component.

NSS has a massive strength of 1.6 million volunteers all over India, which can become a tremendous force with dedication and commitment for vulnerability reduction Programmes. NSS volunteers render their selfless services to the nation during their period of study as well as during the natural calamities.

In the present era the number and diversity of disasters is increasing affecting a vast population in widespread geographical areas. So an organization like NSS is well placed (in the community) to work in times of Disaster Management.

NSS mainly undertakes the following activities during disaster management:

1. Training on various skills like CPR, rescue;
2. Mock Drills;
3. Institution evacuation plan;
4. Survey of the communities and building community based safety plans;
5. Awareness Programme in the community;
6. Interaction with various agencies in Disaster Management.

Voluntary Programmes like NSS unquestionably contribute a lot to the society during and post disaster scenes. The motto of NSS is always expressed in these activities and shown in the selfless and dedicated service that is NOT ME, BUT YOU.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING: ACHIEVING HIGHER EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paresh Tewary

Amita Dahiya

“We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles, rather than by the quality of our service relationship to humanity.”

Martin Luther King, Jr

In the 21st Century, social development no longer remains the domain of charitable and religious organizations⁴⁰ as even the private sector increasingly has taken a keen interest in various development initiatives. Organisations now encourage and provide many volunteering opportunities to their employees as part of their CSR activities—also referred to as corporate volunteering or “employer supported volunteering”⁴¹.

The term CSR is linked to the ‘concept of Triple Bottom Line Reporting (TBL), which is used as a framework for measuring an organisation’s performance against economic, social and environmental parameters’⁴². Organizations are not isolated from the communities and have realized that these parameters have a major influence on their operations and relationship with their clients. Therefore, CSR as a management priority is gaining importance in India as in other parts of the world.

This has led to a favourable environment to promote volunteerism. The recent example of this is ‘The UN Global Compact’⁴³ that plays a catalytic role to encourage its member

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Corporate
volunteering is now
better promoted
and regulated,
and functions as a
vital philanthropic
initiative of many
organizations in India
aligning organizational
goals with sustainable
development.

40 As an example, the 1992, 1990, and 1988 Gallup surveys on volunteering in the United States show that a significant portion of volunteer efforts went to government organizations. BRUDNEY JEFFREY L. (2000). *The Effective Use Of Volunteers: Best Practices For The Public Sector*. Retrieved 17 December 2011 from <http://www.law.duke.edu/journals/62LCPBrudney>.

41 United Nations Volunteers (UNV). (2011). *State of World's Volunteerism Report*, -33. Retrieved 17 December 2011 from <http://www.unv.org/en/swvr2011.html>.

42 Corporate Social Responsibility. (2004). ASOCIO Policy Paper. Retrieved 11 September 2011 from <http://www.asocio.org/policy/Corporate%20Social%20Responsibility.pdf>. Also see, Bhattacharyya, D. & Kumari, P. (2011). *Corporate Social Responsibility –It's Practices In India, Initiatives, Mechanisms, & Issues & Challenges – A Multilateral Approach To The Subject*. Retrieved 2 February 2012 from http://www.mmbgims.com/docs/full_paper/16_DIPAK%20BHATTACHARYYA_pp.pdf.

43 Established in 2000, UN Global Compact promotes human rights and labour, environmental and anti-corruption principles in the private sector. United Nations Volunteers (UNV). (2011). *STATE OF THE WORLD'S VOLUNTEERISM REPORT*, 2011, 33. Retrieved 17 December 2011 from <http://www.unv.org/en/swvr2011.html>.

companies, among other things, to mobilize volunteers for contributing to the MDGs⁴⁴. The Tata Council for Community Initiatives⁴⁵ and Tata companies jointly endeavoured a systematic approach for focused sustainable development. Since 1994, the Council has promoted volunteering amongst Tata Group employees and provides volunteering opportunities with more than 50,000 NGOs. "Commitment to the welfare of the communities our companies serve has been a key tenet of the Tata Group", says Ratan N. Tata, Chairman of Tata Sons. To give an example, Taj Hotel employees provided technical support to the NGO Pratham⁴⁶ by helping in content development, training and infrastructure for the state-of-the-art facility in Maharashtra⁴⁷ for training young people in hospitality from rural Maharashtra. So far, about 70 youth from the region have been trained with 100 per cent job placements⁴⁸.

Similarly, the Aditya Birla Group reaches out to 3,000 villages in India, covering around seven million people annually. The FICCI⁴⁹ (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) Aditya Birla CSR Centre for Excellence has been set up with an aim to promote 'ethics-based business practices in India and across the globe for sustainable development'⁵⁰.

"Our aim is to actively contribute to the social and economic development of the communities in which we operate. In so doing, build a better, sustainable way of life for the weaker sections of society and raise the country's human development index."— says Mrs. Rajashree Birla, Chairperson, The Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development⁵¹.

CSR is not a new phenomenon in India and businesses have been driven by corporate philanthropy in the past (Mohan, 2001). Mahatma Gandhi used the term trusteeship to define businesses (Sudhir & Kumar, 2005) and advocated that the rich must consider themselves as caretakers or 'trustees with an obligation to use their means primarily for the good of society as a whole' (Femida et al, 2011). He believed that organisations should voluntarily commit to public welfare (Kumar et al, 2001). Gandhi's philosophy had an influence on many business houses such as the Tata, and Birla Groups (Femida et al, 2011), who took up pioneer work for community development in the early twentieth century by incorporating CSR as an intrinsic part of their business that continues even today (Mohan, 2001).

Influenced by Gandhi's philosophy, Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata established Jamshedpur in Jharkhand in 1908. It is the first planned city of India and a major part of the city's

44 UNGC, 2011.

45 Focal point for the United Nations Global Compact in India.

46 Pratham is an NGO providing education to under-privileged children of India. Pratham. Retrieved 9 January 2011 from <http://www.pratham.org>.

47 Ibid.

48 United Nations Volunteers (UNV). (2011). *State of World's Volunteerism Report*, 33, Retrieved 17 December 2011 from <http://www.unv.org/en/swvr2011.html>, retrieved on 5 January, 2012.

49 Established in 1927, FICCI is the largest and oldest apex business organisation in India. Its history is closely interwoven with India's struggle for independence, its industrialization, and its emergence as one of the most rapidly growing global economies. FICCI has contributed to this historical process by encouraging debate, articulating the private sector's views and influencing policy. Retrieved 26 November 2011 from <http://www.ficci.com/about-ficci.asp>.

50 FICCI Aditya Birla CSR Centre for Excellence. Retrieved 26 November 2011 from <http://www.csrfce.org/our-focus.htm>.

51 Aditya Birla Group. *Reaching Out*. Retrieved 27 November 2011 from http://www.adityabirla.com/social_projects/overview.htm.

administration is still managed by the Tatas. Government of India⁵² declared it as the seventh cleanest city of India in 2010. Jamshedpur has also been selected for the Global Compact Cities Pilot Programme by the UN from the South-East Asia region to develop innovative development solutions in collaboration with diverse stakeholders⁵³. “The first name that comes to any Indian on the subject of CSR is that of the Tata Group,” says N.R. Narayana Murthy, Chairman Infosys Technologies—the company that was crowned the most respected company in a survey by BusinessWeek in 2009⁵⁴.

A well-structured corporate engagement could create a win-win situation, both for the organization and the communities; as they both are dependent on each other for a sustained economy. Corporate activities with the community also help understand the emerging markets, promote out of the box low cost solutions, and innovative business models. Therefore, an active volunteering arrangement not only increases the well-being of the communities but also benefits the organization with a better corporate image and visibility.

Recently, ten employees of Dow Corning⁵⁵ representing different country offices were selected to participate in the International Corporate Volunteerism (ICV) Programme. They spent four weeks with a local community in Bangalore, through Corning’s Citizen Service Corps⁵⁶ working on three different projects. One of the group spent time improving the manufacturing process of Sustaintech—local clean cook stove producer. In its efforts to create a global marketplace for these cook stoves, Dow Corning has now announced a five million dollar commitment to Global Alliance for Clean cook stoves— a public-private initiative for clean and efficient household cooking solutions⁵⁷ “The one-month trip to India produced ten people who now have the equivalent of a Harvard MBA, forty new innovation ideas, and goodwill from a community standpoint,” says Ed Colbert, Director of Talent Management. “If we look back ten years from now, some of these people will be leading Dow Corning’s presence in the world, and hopefully, some of those products will be in market⁵⁸.”

A WELL-STRUCTURED CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT COULD CREATE A WIN-WIN SITUATION, BOTH FOR THE ORGANIZATION AND THE COMMUNITIES; as they both are dependent on each other for a sustained economy. Corporate activities with the community also help understand the emerging markets, promote out of the box low cost solutions, and innovative business models.

52 Rank of Cities on Sanitation 2009-2010: National Urban Sanitation Policy. (2010). Retrieved 10 January 2012 from <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/others/2010/may/d2010051103.pdf>.

53 TATA. (2004). UN spots Jamshedpur for global cities project. Retrieved 13 October 2011 from <http://www.tata.co.in/company/Media/inside.aspx?artid=SUI2Ut3iDDk>.

54 Reputare. (2009). Trust and Corporate Social Responsibility: Lessons from India. Retrieved 17 November 2011 from <http://www.reputare.in/related-articles/corporate-social-responsibility-articles/trust-and-corporate-social-responsibility-lessons-from-india>.

55 White, D. Realized Worth. A Story of International Corporate Volunteering. Retrieved 8 January 2012 from <http://realizedworth.blogspot.com/2011/10/story-of-international-corporate.html>.

56 Corning’s Citizen Service Corps is a skill based volunteer programme in which the company sends employee teams on pro bono assignments in emerging markets to work with local NGOs and social entrepreneurs. Retrieved 8 January 2012 from <http://realizedworth.blogspot.in/2011/10/story-of-international-corporate.html>.

57 Realized Worth? Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves. Retrieved 24 November 2011 from <http://realizedworth.visibli.com/404aa0813e3a3004/?web=cd2d34&dst=http%3A//cleancookstoves.org>.

58 White, D. Realized Worth. A Story of International Corporate Volunteering. Retrieved 8 January 2012 from <http://realizedworth.blogspot.com/2011/10/story-of-international-corporate.html>.

Transforming Communities Through Employee Volunteerism

Launched in 2002, the intel® involved in the community Programme started as a small-scale informal employee initiative, which focused on activities such as tree planting and blood donation drives. However, increasingly more interested and enthusiastic intel employees started to participate in the programme, resulting in the formation of the intel® involved india steering committee (iisc). The iisc conceptualized the charter and mission statement for the programme, identified best practices and forwarded the need to recognize the programme's achievements. By 2004, intel involved was fully incorporated into the company's corporate culture through the development of team volunteering activities.

One initiative was the intel involved matching grant Programme. Launched in 2005, this is a volunteer-based community programme through which intel employees devote some time in specific educational institutions. For every 20 volunteer hours logged by employees, the intel foundation donates us\$80 to the educational institution that goes towards infrastructure or learning tools such as libraries, science labs or sports equipment.

The asha center for developmental disabilities was one school that benefited from this Programme. The school's mission is to teach physically and mentally disabled children between 4½ to 18 years. Intel volunteers interacted with the students through the educational programme, such as teaching music, group dances and other extra-curricular activities. Meera ravichander, principal of asha said, "it is a huge impact for the children as intel volunteers bring the outside world to them through teaching, music and yoga, playing games and showing how to use computers. All of the volunteers have changed the lives of these kids." "The children look forward to saturdays when intel volunteers visit. They would rather miss their regular hospital check-ups than the activities with the intel volunteers," she added.

The sheela kotawala institute for the deaf was another school included in intel's volunteer Programme. Jessy samuel the principal at sheela kotawala institute for the deaf said, "the children used to target finishing only secondary education and taking vocational courses. However, the constant interaction with the volunteers, as well as their exposure to the outside world, changed the children's mindset. Now, the students are inspired to continue their college education and want to become computer engineers. They now have a different perception of the future."

According to sonia shrivastava, csr head intel south asia, the key strength of the intel involved Programme was the effective matching of the volunteers' skills and passion with community needs around them. Intel also collaborated with the indian government to undertake volunteer activities in solid waste management and tree planting initiatives. In the first year, 29 institutions participated including government high schools, special needs schools and the intel computer clubhouse in the bangalore area.

"The volunteering Programme provides a viable and easy platform for employees and managers to channel their passion to make a positive impact in the community around them. Intel employees are able to develop their leadership skills, as well as the confidence and practical skills to become team managers", says sonia.

One of india's most crucial projects was the arcoduthurai village development project, launched after tsunami hit india in 2004. The village development project was a two-year endeavour (2006-2008), which focused on infrastructure development. During its first year it included the establishment of primary and secondary school buildings with a vocational training center, a computer center, a play school and a community center. In the second year, the project focused on education, the environment and the community programmes, and activities that provided the necessary skills to children, the youth and the community in general.

"Volunteerism gives us all the opportunity to give back, while making a difference and having some fun. Volunteers are the backbone of our interactions with our communities," said shelly esque, director regional corporate affairs at intel.

<http://www.intel.com/cd/corporate/csr/apac/eng/community/casestudies/cs1/397682.htm>

International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) is a partner in 'Business Call to Action initiative' and has promoted many interesting projects such as providing the rural poor in India access to telecom and financial services with the support of the telecom and financial services companies⁵⁹. According to Graham Baxtar, Global Programmes Director IBLF, "over the last decade, many leading multinationals have gone out of their way to focus on the excluded in the community through their social investment and employee engagement initiatives".

Aligning with the development challenges, many organizations are also focusing on environmental protection as their CSR key concern area. 'My Earth My Duty' campaign, launched in 2010, by Zee News is a social initiative with an objective to spread awareness on climate change by a corporate.

Since its launch in 2010, the campaign has reached out to a whopping 100 million people across India. In 2011, the group, supported by UNDP and UNV, endeavored to spread awareness about the threats emanating from climate change, awakening the people and soliciting public response by inspiring them to take concrete actions to save the environment from further degradation. "Generating awareness about the environment and sustainable development issues will be crucial to global efforts to combat climate change. Campaigns such as 'My Earth My Duty' can play an important role in highlighting the simple choices we can all make in our daily lives that can contribute to building a sustainable future for all" noted Ms Alexandra Solovieva, Deputy Country Director (Programme), UNDP in her message.

Projecting the good image of an organization through CSR activities on one hand and failing to factor the core values and ethics on the other, can sometime be very damaging for the credibility of an organization. In his article on 'Corporate Social Responsibility Can Cloak Irresponsibility'⁶⁰ Swaminathan SA Aiyar, discusses how the wrongful projection proved to be very harmful for British Petroleum (BP). BP topped the Annual CSR rating by the Fortune magazine in 2004, 05 and 07, and won many awards in China and Malaysia for its CSR activities on environment during 2007. As it turned out, the CSR initiatives were just a makeover of a company that cut costs and neglected safety issues resulting in an explosion in a poorly maintained refinery in Texas in 2005⁶¹, leaking of 2,00,000 gallons of crude oil in Alaska in 2006⁶², and the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010⁶³. Thomson-Reuters columnist Chrystia Freeland, in response to the Alaska spill, called CSR "a fetish encouraged by the philanthropies that feed off it, and funded by the corporate executives who find that it serves their bottom line"⁶⁴. Therefore, CSR should not be a postscript, but an integral part of the business planning of an organization.

59 International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF). *The Leadership and CSR Blog* from IBLF. Retrieved 11 March 2012 from <http://blog.iblf.org/2011/10/18/the-big-question-why-should-companies-care-about-%e2%80%98inclusive-growth%e2%80%99>.

60 *The Economic Times*. (2010, July 25). *Corporate social responsibility can cloak irresponsibility*. Retrieved 15 December 2011 from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-07-25/news/27587968_1_macondo-corporate-social-responsibility-solar-panels-and-wind.

61 *In BP's Record, a History of Boldness and Costly Blunders*. Retrieved 5 January 2012 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/business/energy-environment/13bp-risk.html?pagewanted=all>.

62 *BP to pay out \$25m for 200,000-gallon Alaska oil spill in 2006* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/may/04/bp-25m-north-slope-oil-spill>.

63 *Size of Spill in Gulf of Mexico Is Larger Than Thought* Retrieved 5 January 2012 from Retrieved 5 January 2012 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/29/us/29spill.html?pagewanted=all>.

64 *The Economic Times*. (2010, July 25). *Corporate social responsibility can cloak irresponsibility*. Retrieved 15 December 2011 from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-07-25/news/27587968_1_macondo-corporate-social-responsibility-solar-panels-and-wind.

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“GENERATING AWARENESS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES WILL BE CRUCIAL TO GLOBAL EFFORTS TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE. CAMPAIGNS SUCH AS ‘MY EARTH MY DUTY’ CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN HIGHLIGHTING THE SIMPLE CHOICES WE CAN ALL MAKE IN OUR DAILY LIVES THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR ALL”
noted Ms Alexandra Solovieva, Deputy Country Director (Programme), UNDP in her message.

Research indicates that well-structured volunteer programmes are more productive in monetary value than organizations spending (Gaskin, 2003). Corporate Volunteering also helps boost the morale of the employees and increases job satisfaction⁶⁵.

CDC Development Solutions (CDS) leverages public, private and volunteer resources to strengthen organizations that drive economic growth in emerging markets⁶⁶. In a recent survey by CDS on International Corporate Volunteerism(ICV), it was highlighted that more than 90 per cent of the volunteers feel more motivated, resilient, invested and acknowledged that volunteering will have positive impact on their daily work and on their company⁶⁷.

The survey also found that the number of the ICVs have also grown from 6 in 2006 to 21 in 2011 involving about 280 in 2006 to 2000 employees in 2011. The same has been endorsed by IAVE's (International Association for Volunteer Efforts) Global Corporate Volunteering Project, which further supports that 'employee community engagement is being used as a strategic asset to help achieve business goals and the importance of sustained and consistent measurement and evaluation'⁶⁸. Along with considering this a good business strategy, employee volunteers are also being recognized as an important and crucial resource in development planning. According to volunteeringaustralia, "Companies need stable, healthy communities to prosper and many recognize that volunteers play a key role in developing and maintaining healthy communities."⁶⁹

Volunteers are a valuable and vital resource for the VIOs and communities, and mostly work amongst groups that are often overlooked. Therefore, it is also vital that efforts are recognized in various forums to inspire them and motivate others to get involved. In 2011, IBLF collaborated with The Apeejay Surendra Group to launch The Apeejay India Volunteer Awards (AIVA)⁷⁰, pioneered by the Group on its centenary. AIVA was created to identify champions in volunteering in India, raise awareness, celebrate, promote, and drive volunteering as a mainstream interest in Indians.

65 United Nations Volunteers (UNV). (2011) *State of World's Volunteerism Report, 2011*, 33. Retrieved 5 January 2012 from <http://www.unv.org/en/swvr2011.html>.

66 *Realized Worth?*. CDC Development Solutions. Retrieved 7 January 2012 from <http://realizedworth.visibli.com/404aa0813e3a3004/?web=cd2d34&dst=http%3A//www.cdcdevelopmentsolutions.org/>.

67 CDS provides International Corporate Volunteer programmes to IBM, Dow Corning, Pfizer, FedEx, Deloitte, Novartis, Pepsi, and others. CDS guides and manages these initiatives from start to finish, from programme design, to in-country partner and assignment identification, to monitoring and providing support to corporate teams, to assessing the effectiveness and lasting impact.

68 International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF). *The Leadership and CSR Blog* from IBLF. Retrieved 11 March 2012 from <http://blog.iblf.org/2011/09/30/clinton-global-initiative%E2%80%99s-top-five-trends-in-employee-engagement>.

69 Retrieved 11 March 2012 from <http://www.lifeline.org.au/Support-Lifeline/Corporate-Engagement/Corporate-Volunteering---Fundraising/Corporate-Volunteering---Fundraising>

70 The Apeejay India Volunteer Awards. Retrieved 27 January 2012 from <http://www.indiavolunteerawards.com>.

Speaking at the inaugural session of Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII's) Annual Summit, 2007⁷¹, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, expressed that CSR should be defined within the framework of a

"corporate philosophy which factors the needs of the community and the regions in which a corporate entity functions. This is part of our cultural heritage."

He further added

"The time has come for the better-off sections of our society to understand the need to make our growth process more inclusive—to eschew conspicuous consumption, to save more and waste less, to care for those who are less privileged, to be role models of probity, moderation and charity. Indian industry must, therefore, rise to the challenge of making our growth processes both efficient and inclusive. If those who are better off do not act in a more socially responsible manner, our growth process may be at risk, our polity may become anarchic and our society may get further divided"

It has also been recommended that CSR activities be made mandatory in India in the Companies Bill ⁷², which is likely to be introduced in the Indian Parliament in 2012 ⁷³.

The increasing role of the private sector, increased stakeholders' awareness, requirements of better transparency, and competitive markets are some of the factors that have made the interface between the companies and the communities become broader. CSR is a growing trend and it is hoped that it will continue to evolve with good standards, implementation guidelines and monitoring progress. It is also envisioned that CSR reporting be made mandatory to arrive at statistical analysis of the combined outreach and impact.

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71 This is an excerpt from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's speech on May 24 at the inaugural session of CII's Annual Summit, 2007. *Partners in change*. (2007) *Ten Point Social Charter*. Manmohan Singh. Retrieved 7 October 2011 from <http://www.picindia.org/system/files/PM's%2010%20Point%20Charter%20for%20Companies.pdf>

72 Ministry of Corporate Affairs. (2011). Bill No. 121 of 2011. *The Companies Bill, 2011*. Retrieved 27 January 2012 from http://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/The_Companies_Bill_2011.pdf.

73 Kably, L., (2012, January 27). *The Economic Times*. Budget 2012 may make Corporate Social Responsibility mandatory for companies. Retrieved 2 February 2012 from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-01-27/news/30670652_1_csr-activities-companies-bill-corporate-social-responsibility.

INTERVIEW: SPORTS AND VOLUNTEERISM

SPORTS PROMOTE
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COMMUNAL
HARMONY

AND SOCIAL
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children and youth. Many organizations around the world are involved in supporting development initiatives using sports as a medium for their intervention Programmes.

UNICEF engages with children and youth in many countries with the help of their local partners. UNICEF has many world-renowned sportspersons as their Goodwill Ambassadors and engages them to mobilize communities for various campaigns such as immunization against HIV/AIDS etc. The Delhi Daredevils players wore blue ribbons during the IPL 2012 matches to support the 'Dare to Care' campaign of UNICEF to empower the girls in India⁷⁴.

In 2010, a three-day cricket camp was organized in the war-torn Afghanistan by Afghan Youth Cricket Support Organisation (AYCSO) supported by UNICEF to address peace and gender issues⁷⁵. In South Africa, the THINK WISE partnership between International Cricket Council (ICC), UNAIDS, UNICEF, The Global Media AIDS and ECHO⁷⁶ works to create awareness on the AIDS epidemic and HIV prevention amongst all those who are involved in the game of cricket⁷⁷. Therefore, sports not only improve health and well-being, it also helps address many social issues.

Sunita Godara, a marathon legend, is the 1992 Asian Marathon Champion, Arjuna award winner and holds the record of the most number of marathons run by an Indian woman. Sunita now runs her own NGOs – Health Fitness Trust since 1994 & Health Fitness Society since 2002. She is a volunteer, yoga and athletic trainer, fitness consultant and speaks on various issues including sports sciences, marathon, women's and children's rights. Sunita shares her volunteering experiences and discusses how sports could play a greater role to address development challenge in her interview with Amita Dahiya.

1. How have sports been able to promote volunteerism both in India and abroad?

Thousands of sportspersons around the world engage in various sporting events daily with millions of viewers and audiences. This aspect provides a great opportunity to use sports as a unique advocacy mechanism for social causes, dissemination of social messages to a larger audience and mobilize volunteers.

Sporting events could incorporate many program-mematic interventions to reach out, especially to the marginalized children and youth. Many organizations around the world are involved in supporting development initiatives using sports as a medium for their intervention Programmes. UNICEF engages with children and youth in many countries with the help of their local partners. UNICEF has many world-renowned sportspersons as their Goodwill Ambassadors and engages them to mobilize communities for various campaigns such as immunization against HIV/AIDS etc. The Delhi Daredevils players wore blue ribbons during the IPL 2012 matches to support the 'Dare to Care' campaign of UNICEF to empower the girls in India⁷⁴.

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74 The Times of India. (2012, March 30). Delhi Daredevils players to wear blue ribbons during IPL 2012. Retrieved 31 March 2012 from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/cricket/ipl-2012/news/Delhi-Daredevils-players-to-wear-blue-ribbons-during-IPL-2012/articleshow/12472534.cms>.

75 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2010, November 15). UNICEF supports a pitch for peace at cricket camp in war-torn Afghanistan. Retrieved 23 February 2012 from http://www.unicef.org/sports/afghanistan_56835.html.

76 ECHO helps provide anti-retroviral therapy for some 10,000 South African children.

77 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2009, October 13). Cricket stars raise awareness about HIV in South Africa. Retrieved 23 February 2012 from http://www.unicef.org/sports/southafrica_51408.html.

Volunteers are increasingly being used to help during the various sporting events globally. More than 30,000 volunteers supported the Commonwealth Games in India in 2010; around 100,000, in the Beijing Olympics Games in 2008 and around 70,000 volunteers were involved involved during the London Olympics, 2012.

I have participated in various International Marathons in the 1990s in Malaysia, Macau, Belgrade, London, America and in many Asian Countries and was greatly inspired by the concept of combining Marathons/ Runs with social causes in these countries. I followed their example, and have been organizing similar events for various causes for the last 15 years in India.

I club sporting activities with International Days to achieve the twin objectives of engaging the audience for promoting sports and creating awareness on social and health issues. Some of the issues I work for, with the help of volunteers and partners — World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNFPA, UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Women & Child Development on Health etc. — are HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, girl child, no tobacco, population control, and healthy aging etc.

I have been organizing Run against Drug-Abuse every year since 2004, supported by the Social Welfare Department, NISD under Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and Narcotics Control Bureau, and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). Such efforts not only help to bring together the people of these organizations but also people from all lifestyles. My events also get a lot of media attention, as I am also able to bring many celebrity friends to these events. Publicity campaigns for these promotional events also enable mass outreach to the people who do not participate.

2. How can we use sports to bring people together and build friendships to promote social cohesion and peace?

Sports promote peace, equality, communal harmony and social integration, and help break down cultural barriers, as sports do not differentiate between people based on caste, creed, gender or religion. In a sports event, many people are involved ranging from players (be it individual game like tennis or a team game like cricket), audience, cheering squad, coordinating staff and show/ stadium maintenance staff. In case children are playing and participating, their parents also get involved. Thus, the involvement/ interaction ratio of people is much higher leading to friendships and social cohesion.

In most conflict situations, sports can be used as a means to create favourable conditions for peace and harmony. The game of cricket or cricket diplomacy, as popularly called, has been used many times to normalize relations between India and Pakistan. These Friendly cricket matches have helped to restore bilateral-ties and peace as they allow dignitaries and cricket fans from both the countries to come together during these matches. The diplomatic efforts also saw the revival of test matches between India and Pakistan in 2004 following a gap of about 15 years with both sides relaxing visa regulations to allow people to watch these matches⁷⁸.

Sports are also innovative ways to engage the targeted audience. To promote a culture of non-violence and peace, I had organized Satyagrah Run with (Gandhi Smriti and

⁷⁸ The New York Times. (2005, March 11). India ties cricket diplomacy. Retrieved 23 February 2012 from http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/10/world/asia/10iht-singh.html?_r=1.

SPORTS CAN ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES. For e.g. at the Save Yamuna Campaign, I coordinated runners from all-over India. Apart from these volunteers, I also engaged around 100 school-children who displayed the placards carrying messages for saving Yamuna River to protect the environment in February 2012.

I HAVE ALSO WORKED ON THE ISSUE "SAVE THE GIRL CHILD" WITH THE HELP OF MARATHON RUNNERS, WHERE UNFPA WAS ONE OF THE PARTNERS.

Darshan Samiti) GSDS in 2008 to bring attention to Mahatma Gandhi's teachings for peace and development. In 2011, I clubbed an awareness run of 3,000 volunteers at Talkatora Stadium, Delhi with an on the spot open-house discussion and quiz which led to a very informative awareness session of the volunteers with WHO staff and doctors from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). I also arrange the Ehsas Van at my events for free HIV Testing, especially on World AIDS Day. In 2003, UNAIDS Representative, after seeing the HIV/AIDS Awareness programme commented, "I never thought that this issue can be highlighted in such a colourful manner in India with 10,000 Children." So sports can prove to be a very useful means of creating awareness.

3. How does sports volunteerism contribute to sustainable development?

Many initiatives have been undertaken to utilize the potentiality of sports to speed the progress in achieving MDGs but a lot still needs to be done. We need to contribute towards mainstreaming sports for development to promote health and healthy societies. I have been associated with the WHO for the past ten years for the World Health Day celebrations and have been organizing Programmes involving around 4,000 volunteers for these events leading to a remark by the WHO Chief, Dr. S.J. Habayab, Country Representative, India, 2006 – 2010, that "This NGO is not commercializing social causes and is doing the work on its own initiative contributing immensely to the work of the Health Ministry!"

Sports can also contribute to environmental causes. For e.g. at the Save Yamuna Campaign, I coordinated runners from all-over India. Apart from these volunteers, I also engaged around 100 schoolchildren who displayed the placards carrying messages for saving Yamuna River to protect the environment in February 2012. I have also worked on the issue "Save the Girl Child" with the help of Marathon Runners, where UNFPA was one of the partners.

4. How can sports person contribute to community? Please share your experiences on volunteering.

I have been volunteering for the last 37 years now. Even though I am well recognized in the sports circle, I feel privileged to have been accepted as someone who is contributing to the well-being of my society.

The Physical Education colleges of India regularly invite me to give fitness lectures to school students' in Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR). I am also a consultant cum elite Indian Coordinator for International Events. Through my efforts, I have also been able to raise champions from financially weak sections of the society at national and state levels. These include Soni Sachdeva, Ayesha and Neera from the Kalkaji slum community who have won Gold Medals in the fifth National Taekwondo Poomsae Championship held in Guwahati, April 6-7 April 2012. All this brings me immense satisfaction, happiness and a sense of purpose.

To promote health, fitness and community welfare activities, I founded the Health Fitness Trust in 1994 & Health Fitness Society in 2002. I conduct

Health and Fitness related workshops for the children and elderly people. Apart from these workshops, I organize taekwondo and martial art classes; yoga and self-defense certificate courses; health, nutrition and legal awareness camps; dance and vocational training, and mass events etc. Last year the Delhi Healthy Urban Project, 2011 supported by the WHO and SIAES in collaboration with my NGO Health Fitness Trust was a great success. Health Fitness Trust regularly follows up the programmes mentioned in recommendations at the cluster and mass events focusing on social issues with logistic support from the Government and financial support from the UN agencies & WHO. I have also tied-up with Delhi Legal Service Authority, which gives free counseling and legal aid to women, children and men during the Legal Advice Awareness Camp for the slum dwellers for the past six years.

A sports person can volunteer in several ways. The first time I worked as a volunteer was in college when I volunteered to be the cultural secretary of my college, even though I was a sportsperson. Even now, I engage in various volunteering activities. Every day, I give one-hour free fitness lessons to the joggers at the Lodhi Garden in Delhi, give free fitness lectures, and dance lessons as required. I not only voluntarily participate in the marathons and runs, but also mobilize many volunteers for various events through my networks in the Police, Army, Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) etc. Recently, I mobilized more than 220 student volunteers from a school to perform a dance show on HIV/ AIDS Run in 2012. I also help mobilize volunteers for the Airtel half-marathons and other related events.

I have been able to mobilize many volunteers through social networking websites too. Facebook has helped me find many volunteers who contribute their time and knowledge on weekends to teach computers to the underprivileged children in the slum areas targeted by my NGO.

It is important that voluntary efforts are recognized and appreciated. I appreciate my volunteers by a memento or a certificate to praise their efforts. In the big marathons like the one organized by Airtel, voluntary activities have been able to get very good coverage. Despite such promotion and recognition, barriers still exist. Currently, I am struggling to get permission to give free martial arts to slum girls in a public park, and to engage student volunteers of government schools. I feel barriers like these hinder the spirit of volunteerism.

5. What role could sportspersons play to promote peace and development through volunteerism?

Sports persons could set very good examples by engaging meaningfully with the community. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador David Beckham⁷⁹ helps highlight issues of street children through the 'Village for Youth' center in Manila, Philippines. Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar and his team members promoted health and hygiene campaign for the Global Hand Washing Day in 2008.

Sportsperson also need to move beyond campaigns and events and must get involved in concrete work to help address some of the crucial issues by supporting sports

⁷⁹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2011, December 2). UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador David Beckham highlights issues of street children on Philippines visit. Retrieved 23 February 2012 from http://www.unicef.org/sports/philippines_60794.html.

academies and organizations at the grassroots level. Some famous sport personalities run sports training centers/ companies for high performance level sports and are earning well. I think they should also lend support to grassroots initiatives. This would not only help address and prevent some of the problems like drugs and substance abuse, violence against children etc. but also provide meaningful engagement opportunities to our children and youngsters. Furthermore, this will also promote the culture of sports, social cohesion and creation of more jobs.

The Taekwondo Academy I run for the underprivileged has produced many state and national level champions as mentioned earlier. I also arrange for scholarships, and give loans to my students for their Black Belt exams. We are also teaching self-defense and martial arts to 200 slum girls.

If I together with my network of volunteers could contribute so much, then imagine how much change the combined efforts could bring!

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & VOLUNTEERISM: “REACHING OUT TO PERIPHERIES”

Ananya S Guha

“Dependence on material needs shows the inadequacy in the mental attitude. Beauty and discipline lies in one’s mind. ...The opportunity to use the available variety of possessions and knowledge can suitably come at an advanced age. But the education for the proper utilization of useful things and for inculcating inner strength, which should start from childhood, has been neglected in our country.”

Rabindranath Tagore, Aashramer roop o vikas (Ashram and its development), republished by Visva-Bharati Publications, Santiniketan, 1951.

The Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore rightly pointed out the importance of education that could be the foundation to do useful and constructive things. The link between education and moral values is essential for inculcating the spirit of service amongst students. This should be one of the aims of our education- whether elementary, higher or vocational education.

Further, the Radhakrishnan Commission on Education of 1964-66 noted, “For achieving change on a grand scale the only effective instrument is education. Education does initiate changes in social institutions and sub-systems, and this affects the social situation of the country.”

In the backdrop of the importance of education in nation and community building, this article will focus on how education as a social building and developmental activity can serve as a voluntary activity or volunteerism in the best and finest sense of the term. It will also dwell on the link between skill-based education and the notion of volunteering.

THE LINK BETWEEN VOLUNTEERING AND EDUCATION IN INDIA

Historically, whether in the pre-Independence period or after Independence, volunteerism and community participation has played a significant role in the promotion of education in India. Volunteerism is the bedrock of the literacy movement in India. Many innovations in education – both teaching and learning – have been spearheaded by volunteer initiatives, and the movement against increasing commercialization and corporatization of education is being facilitated by volunteer groups.

The passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) in 2009 was a landmark effort to ensure the rights of children to quality elementary education. According to estimates, in 2009, there were eight million children aged between six to 14, who were not enrolled into schools in India. Ensuring education for all of them along with the school-going children is an enormous task. As reaching

Education is crucial for laying the foundation for individuals to contribute to the welfare of the society. THERE IS INTRINSIC LINK BETWEEN EDUCATION AND THE VOLUNTEERING TRADITION IN INDIA. Also, it is significant that vocational education system in the country promotes social skills and contributes to the development of social capital.

the unreached is the overarching goal, the spirit of volunteerism has to be one of the key features if the provisions of RTE are to be realized.

UNICEF suggests that families and communities have a large role to play to ensure child-friendly education for each one of the estimated 190 million girls and boys in India who should be in elementary school today. The active involvement of families and communities for promoting education is linked to the notion of volunteering. Also to reach out to such large number of children, there is a need for an increase in the number of teachers. Approximately 1.2 million additional teachers need to be recruited to fill this gap. Currently, about one in five primary school teachers do not have the requisite minimum academic qualification to ensure children's right to quality learning. Promotion and facilitation of volunteer teachers is significant to fill the gap between teachers and students.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND VOLUNTEERISM

To review volunteerism and vocational education vis-a-vis skills development would be first, to pin point some kind of a theoretical framework or scaffolding for volunteerism. In other words, what is volunteering? Is it an isolated act of helping someone in financial distress with some money or some kind of material benefit and action which gestures volunteering or volunteerism? Is volunteerism purely altruistic? Or are there hidden motives in volunteering with an eye on gaining something whether it is recognition or any dividend, material or non-material? So is there something apocryphal to volunteering? This article attempts to show how the benefactors of volunteerism can gain in terms of learning skills and make themselves ready for the world of work. In other words, the world of learning and the world of work (read employment) are carefully linked and connected. If we target certain disadvantaged sections of the society such as the mentally and physically challenged,

Voluntary workshop for Prison wardens for the rights of the accused and conflict management conducted for better humane treatment towards the prisoners and the accused in Alwar Prison, Rajasthan © JoiningHands



domestic workers, street children, drop-outs, the educated unemployed, the uneducated unemployed, then volunteering is for a social cause and towards developmental activities to make socially and economically weaker sections of the society employable or gear them towards definite employment objectives.

This article will focus on how education as a social building and developmental activity can be volunteering or volunteerism in the best and finest sense of the term. Moreover, the article also gives examples of CSR as a significant trend in educational paradigms today, enmeshed though it is at times with vitriolic attacks and polemics. Volunteering could also be 'disinterested action' for community welfare. It may not matter if the persons engaged in volunteering are working in the governmental sector but the ends of volunteering matter, specifically in this case skills development and acquisition of employment.

Mishra (2002) notes technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should include both social and productive skills. The list of different skills and knowledge areas needed is endless, but the point that highly skilled personnel are needed in the foundations of a developed society today cannot be missed. In our complex society, the process of development involves all people, and all must be skilled and educated for this process.

Further, the challenges of vocational education in an Open University are many and impinge upon the very mechanisms and methodologies of a Distance Education and Open University such as IGNOU. These are: technology aided instruction, the use of broadcasts, telecasts and the internet for delivery services. However, in vocational education and, training, face-to-face mode of instruction and especially skill-based activities also need to be emphasized. Such activities are also fraught with the implications of volunteering in the best sense of the term, and in letter and spirit. Skills Development Initiatives and Vocational Education must quintessentially possess the spirit of 'social work' and volunteering. IGNOU is also developing a course on volunteering with the active help and support of the Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Foundation (GRTF) and UNV. If one takes a close and critical look at the National Skills Mission Statement (Department of Labour, GOI, 2008) – volunteering is envisaged as a humanitarian mission not only for the educated unemployed but also for divergent sections of the society such as: school and college drop-outs, street children, domestic workers, the differently abled etc. In fact, currently Institute for Vocational Education and Training (IIVET) is conducting two month vocational training for street children and computer literacy in collaboration with a voluntary organization and Shelter Home in Shillong, Meghalaya. This has been undertaken in the spirit of community service and volunteering.

The article will now attempt to relate vocational education and training (VET) to reach out to peripheries in multiple ways and means. For that, we also need to have an innate understanding of what vocational education and skills development largely means, or attempts to objectivize. Surely, employment generation or self-employment is an avowed objective but it is not an end in itself. The means are equally important if not more and to achieve them is to synergize social, cultural, community and academic crosscurrents. In the course of this article, there will be case studies to sustain my contention that

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our activities in the mode of skills formation and open learning are essentially community based, community developed and voluntary. Yes, physical, economic and infrastructural resources have to be shared with various stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, if we are to realize our objectives of continuing education and building communities. The challenge of VET is to mobilize such resources in the entire North East India and to reach out to societies within which women and children are included. Small and Medium Enterprises also play a pivotal role here but the larger concerns of the society have been and will continue to be the logistics of well-being and humanitarianism.

Vocational education has to be viewed from different multi-layered practices. One is of course the 'hands on' training component. The other is employment generation and sustainability, whether the training Programmes or courses can lead to employment/self-employment. If so, there have to be follow up measures to see what the participants in a vocational training Programme have achieved and whether there has been a progress in terms of employability and income generation. Also, whether any industry has employed any participant, especially when this has been in the plan or in house training. Another perspective of VET is studying a course on vocational education in a college or a university with the hope that the certificate will lead to an acquisition of job. Development of social skills is another important dimension of vocational education. How students of such skill-based education system can contribute in community development is another area which needs careful examination.

Skill development is one of the components and outcome of VET but training Programmes should concentrate on unskilled workers giving them an opportunity to learn and earn. The unorganized sector is also a catchment resource in areas such as retailing, marketing and micro businesses.

In North East India there are hardly any industrial houses worth the name. The local industry in terms of agro based products and raw material remains untapped, the potential being exploited by intermediaries. Jute, rubber, bamboo and cane, ginger, turmeric are grown in the different states but how are these to be encapsulated as micro units to generate employment?

Coming again to the context of the North East Region, indigenous knowledge such as weaving, textile making, music and arts, performing arts, oral tradition, and medicinal plants can be brought into the gamut of trades. However, with the increasing modernization and the technological wave many of such indigenous methods are on the verge of becoming extinct. One can only strive for a revival. Technology has no doubt led to the creation of a global community, one world, but it has exacerbated the tension between the local and the global. Local needs are to be addressed perforce as community needs especially in a country with low literacy rates. Compared to the country literacy, the literacy of North East India is fairly better; thanks to the Mizoram boom, which serves to be a marginal advantage. Yet literacy levels for women are strikingly low in some states and it is here that vocational education training Programmes can intervene as basic literacy Programmes to earn livelihoods.

Livelihoods have also to do with living in good if not salutary conditions. Floods in Assam every year are cataclysmic but precious little is done to take long-standing measures to combat this problem. Flood control management – how to live intelligently with floods, could well serve vocational and training needs of the common populace who ultimately endure the most of such disasters.

VET in the North East Region can be integrated into a whole, complex process, since we have to trace it to components of agriculture and the current despair of the educated

unemployed or even to the plumber or the technicians eking out a living. This is of course true of the entire country but in a region where industrial development is in backwaters, then education becomes the strength given the presence of some very good academic institutions in the Region. These institutions (whether general colleges or professional colleges) should come forward in partnership to re-appraise vocational education in the context of the small industries and local habits mentioned above. More than having vocational education courses, short term training Programmes will benefit the people keeping in mind the changing order of the 'world' market such as repair of mobiles and computer hardware

IGNOU's intervention into the area of VET could well be a benchmark for revival (indigenous knowledge) and survival (linking such knowledge with trades) as well as looking into contemporary realities and the need to keep in mind the training factor. The target group is the youth in particular and the public in general, taking also into cognizance rural women. In addition, of course the oeuvre of distance education technology is always there as a ready support system.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: SOME THOUGHTS AND 'CHALLENGES' (VOLUNTEERING EFFORTS KEEPING IN MIND DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL RELATED PROCESSES: SKILL BUILDING APPROACHES)

Even as recently as a decade ago in India, Vocational Education was looked upon with condescension, and those who pursued this stream of studies were considered 'weak' students who otherwise would not have got admission into any other discipline. The point is that cognitive skills were given undue precedence over what is known as psychomotor skills or aptitude. Our views on education were then stereotyped and straight jacketed into insularity: namely, that only those who were 'bright' especially in the science subjects vis-a-vis performance in examinations were the ones who were endowed with professional skills and aptitude. Again, there was a highly nuanced but forced distinction between what is 'professional' and what is 'vocational'. Hence, those who were good at 'menial' work like that of carpentry, electrical repair, masonry were the ones who could pursue vocational education! This was a highly prejudiced and un-holistic view of education, with a distinct 'class' prejudice.

Today, in the country, thanks to the publication of National Skills Commission Report (2008), there is a paradigmatic shift in our thinking, by which the above postulates have been declassified, de-codified and, thankfully demystified. This also had a lot to do with the fact that adult and continuing education was not encouraged. However, with the popularity of Distance and Open Education, the mystique surrounding the 'what' of education was gradually subverted.

This brings us to the 'why' of education. It is this: Skills, not only mental but physical are equally important for learning and 'doing'. Skill competencies are linked to the market and work force is needed to fill the void regarding competencies whether it be, manual labour, various 'petty' trades and the like. The fact is that we need people for repair of refrigerators, electrical wiring, as well as masons and carpenters.

Now, the emphasis is on vocational education and skill, learning and earning, and this learning is a marked shift from the tautology and shrieking hysterics of conventional classroom learning and teaching- learning by rote.

A lot now is discussed about skills gap, the hiatus between supply and demand in trades. This is markedly present because Vocational Education was sub categorized and almost

VET has to be understood at various levels right from Technical Vocational Education to Soft Skills, Computer Literacy, Communication Skills, Aesthetic Skills and Indigenous Practices such as Weaving etc. They should be the bedrock of any lifelong learning process. Such lifelong learning not only facilitates enhancement of competencies but also contributes to social and civic cohesion.

an anathema. The National Skills Commission Report has contributed to re-ordering this parenthesis on education that Vocational Education is an 'if'.

Regarding VET and Skill Development a number of interventions can be are being made by IGNOU such as adopting the Tele Centre model in collaboration with BASIX India (Livelihood Division, B-ABLE) in the Common Services Centers (CSCs) of Meghalaya. Right now, a cluster of 50-60 CSCs has been taken up to train the youth in Computer Literacy and Personality Development.

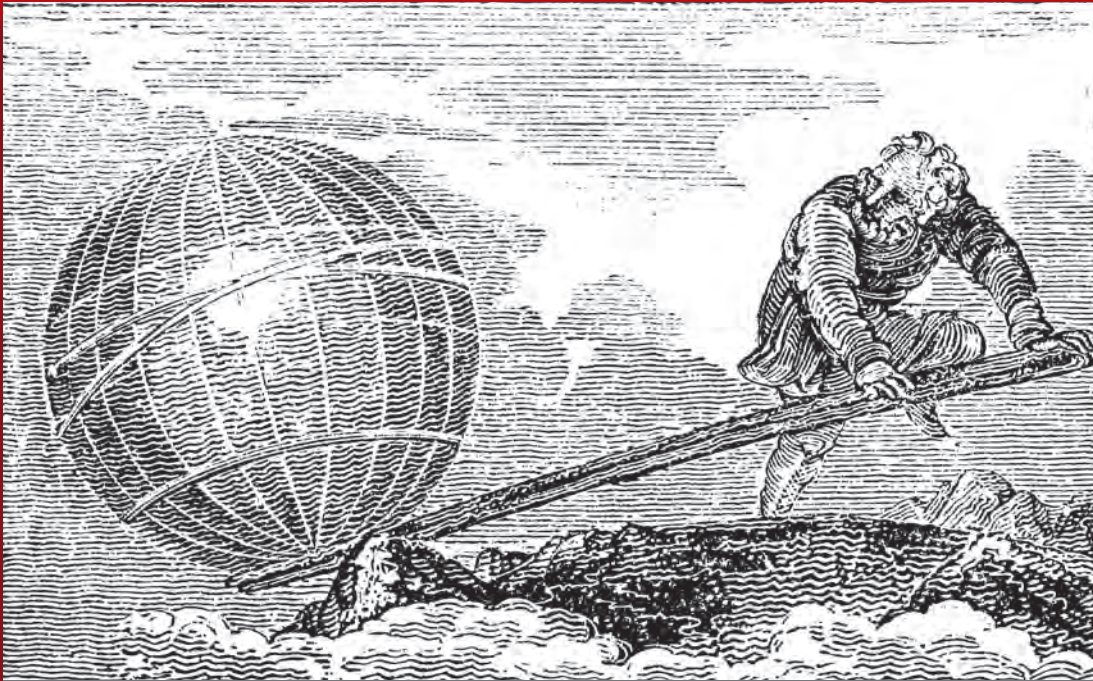
Vocational Education and training, and allied skills development can be part of voluntary social and developmental activity harnessing societal needs and targeting underprivileged sections of the society.

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IIVET has adopted consciously a model of volunteering in partnership with like-minded organizations and Voluntary Organizations (VOs). Even if collaborations are with government organizations and corporate houses, the thrust is on development and social responsibility. The emphasis has been multi-pronged: collaborations, certification, sourcing need based course material to relevant target groups etc. It has been targeting Below Poverty Line (BPL) categories and the economically weaker sections of the society and addressing the problem of 'drop-outs' an expression hitherto used in a condescending manner. Again, the emphasis has largely been on social and developmental matters in attempting to wean away disgruntled and unemployed youth. Adapting volunteering for mobilization of relevant target groups for skill development Programmes in different parts of the country like National Academy of Construction Hyderabad and Rustomjee Academy for Global Careers for electrical house wiring, hospitality, customer relation and automobile repair is also part of an active volunteering agenda. Working together with International Voluntary Agencies such as Aide et Action for imparting vocational training to the poorer sections of the society in areas such as Electrical House Wiring, Hospitality, Customer Relation and Automobile Repair are part of meeting need-based demands of the society. The entire concept of volunteerism and reaching out to the marginalized and peripheries is the mission and vision of IGNOU IIVET, Shillong.

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Give me the space to stand on, and I will move the earth – Archimedes

This an engraving from Mechanics Magazine published in London in 1824.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_\(Small\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_(Small).jpg)

A GLIMPSE ON VOLUNTEERING INTERVENTIONS

CASE STUDY/JAMMU AND KASHMIR: CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING THROUGH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Disturbed by the violence in Kashmir, 23 year old Rahul Pawa volunteers to do his bit for restoring peace and stability in the region.

Rahul Pawa is a young and enthusiastic youth development and new media activist working on conflict resolution in Kashmir. As the disputes in Kashmir stem from political, social and borderline conflict violent clashes amongst youth activists and governing bodies often result in loss of life or serious injuries.

To minimize such loss, Rahul has been devising methods (since 2008) to turn youth away from terrorist groups and outfits operating in Kashmir. He counsels children and young adults informing them about employment opportunities, developing leadership qualities, and engaging them in activities that encourage communal harmony and unity. Rahul believes that, "courage is not the 'will to take action' but to take action every time you are tested!"

He is an important member of groups and associations in Kashmir working on rehabilitation and recovery of traumatized youngsters from the on-going socio-political conflict. Recognizing that Enforced Involuntary Disappearance (EID) is a systematic and predetermined crime which can be confronted only through a collective response, he

Rahul(right) conducting a training session on journalism © Rahul



is an active volunteer and promoter of Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) – founded in 1994 and relentlessly campaigns against EID in Jammu and Kashmir.

Rahul was offered a UN Youth Ambassador Representation in 2009 for his contribution to youth development in Kashmir, but since India is not a youth general assembly participating country, he was not eligible to avail the honour. However, it further encouraged him to continue his work with exemplary dedication and indomitable will.

Rahul has been involved on issues as diverse as human rights, conflict resolution and gender inequality in the state. Closely working with youngsters from the valley he has organized workshops focusing on human rights, raised voice on domestic violence for women, stressing the need for moral renaissance – challenging maltreatment of women and campaigned against custodial killings.

Foreseeing the significant challenges this region faces, he has produced many short films in public interest. An avid blogger – he writes on issues of social relevance and investigative journalism. A keen learner and researcher, he initiated the first ever-holistic study on modern Kashmir and peace building in 2009, which aims to further strengthen a better understanding of the Kashmir conflict for global community. In 2011, pioneering the concept of global conferences in Kashmir, he introduced TEDx (an American think tank) and independently organized TEDxSrinagar and TEDxYouth@Srinagar as one of the youngest TEDx curators. These gatherings aimed to foster continued generation of tantalizing ideas, bold innovation, and hope.

Rahul has also worked in Bihar to support rural women journalists by training them and raised over half a million Indian Rupees to support their work. Rahul was selected as the Youth Ambassador for 2010-2011 by the Mission Eye International service for his selfless and exemplary work to promote women empowerment in Bihar. He was also awarded with the UNV Karamveer Chakra in 2011.

Juggling between activism, innovation and peace studies, Rahul is also the founder of the United Youth of India foundation – an independent, non-partisan, youth led and run national non-profit organization in New Delhi.

CASE STUDY/MADHYA PRADESH:

YOUTH REACHING OUT TO THE UNDER-PRIVILEGED CHILDREN

The voluntary efforts of the elite school students in Bhopal have led to better school attendance and enhanced learning for underprivileged students. It also helped student volunteers to develop leadership qualities, and problem-solving abilities.

“The inspiration behind volunteerism for us was that not every individual can create a big change, but every individual can take small steps which would add up and become a big step” quotes Saurav.

Saurav Poddar, Shreya Mishra and Neeraj Jain from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and Kanpur have helped change the lives of underprivileged children in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (MP). The group introduced an innovative education model ‘We the Children’ to involve school students to help address social issues like lack of quality education in primary schools.

As Shreya says, “most schools in India have two hours of mandatory socially useful productive work. I thought that with millions of students it was a lot of productive hours that could be channelized in one direction to create a large impact.”



Saurav Poddar interacting with kindergarten children in a slum in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
© Saurav

The student development Programme designed by them was launched as a citywide campaign from October-December 2010, with an aim to sensitize and mobilize school students to address education related issues in Bhopal. The campaign mobilized students from class seventh - ten from ten elite schools of Bhopal. Each school adopted one or two Anganwadis (kindergarten school). The student volunteers visited these Anganwadis for a few days and identified difficulties that plagued their set-up— ranging from quality of education imparted, to malnutrition etc. The volunteers also taught the underprivileged children and helped fill the gap created due to lack of quality teachers and resources.

The volunteers also helped design effective solutions for pre-teaching devices to make learning more interactive, creative and playful to create interest in learning; organized periodic medical check-ups by requesting doctors (who were associated with the school in some way e.g. as parents) to volunteer for free check-ups. While this initiative directly helped Anganwadi students, it also instilled a sense of social responsibility among students of elite schools.

A training camp was also organized for more than 30 Anganwadi teachers by the efforts of these volunteers and with the support of Educomp Solutions—a globally diversified education solutions provider and the largest education company in India. Also, Shreya made use of her technical skills and designed a low-cost man-powered machine for preparing peanut butter-based health food for malnourished children.

Education, MP. The campaign won the 'ITC Classmate Ideas for India Challenge' in 2011 out of 60,000 applications received pan-India and has been recognized by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. It also featured in the December issue of 'The week' — a famous newsmagazine.

Encouraged by the response received by the campaign, the team has now launched a monthly magazine and has a strong team of more than 30 volunteers.. This magazine will focus on holistic development of school students, increasing their awareness and exposure level to help bring about positive changes in the society. The group believes people's participation is crucial to resolve most of the development issues in India.

CASE STUDY / CHANDIGARH:

FORMER NYKS AND NSS VOLUNTEER CONTINUES HIS MISSION TO ERADICATE HIV/AIDS

From a humble beginning in a small village of Punjab to making it to the Buckingham Palace, London, to meet Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Gaurav Gaur has come a long way.

Awarded with the UNV Karamveer Chakra in 2011 for his exemplary contribution to volunteerism, Gaurav has undertaken various volunteering assignments with NYKS, NSS, and Scouts & Guides volunteer. Gaurav is committed to the cause of HIV/AIDs by spreading awareness on HIV/AIDS in Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab.

Gaurav uses unique methods to spread awareness on HIV & AIDS © Gaurav



Gaurav firmly believes, “No matter how many hardships you have to face, but consistent efforts without expectation can surely fetch you success”.

To convey his concerns, Gaurav has adopted unique and innovative methods such as inscribing messages on his shaved off head, body, bicycle, and even on his personal vehicle. His work and ideas have been recognized by various national and international agencies. Gaurav was appointed the Commonwealth Youth Ambassador for Positive Living on HIV/AIDS (CYAPL) Asia Region in 2006, for his commitment to help other using innovative techniques.

Gaurav has undertaken a campaign ‘JUNOON: The Passion to Fight against AIDS’ and regularly holds exhibitions, interactive sessions and short documentaries on HIV/AIDS in various schools and colleges of Chandigarh. Currently, he is focusing on empowering the HIV infected people by training them on skill enhancement and is supporting one of the groups (HIV+ widows) from Punjab in organizing sale-cum-exhibition of items made from recycled paper. He is also on the panel of trainers and external technical evaluators for various State AIDS Control Societies in India and extends technical support to various NGOs on voluntary basis.

He promotes campaign for safe sex and has distributed thousands of condoms and IEC material like leaflets, brochures, posters etc. Gaurav recently promoted SAAVDHAAN—a movie on HIV/AIDS, supported by UNAIDS, by screening and distributing copies to various educational institutions and organizations working on AIDS.

Apart from his activities on HIV/AIDS, Gaurav regularly holds exhibition of the self-clicked photographs from Chandigarh, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh on the theme “Uses, Misuses and Abuses of Water” for creating awareness on Water Conservation among the masses. With his photography skills, he is contributing photographs worldwide through John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA for voluntary use.

Gaurav also mobilizes people for pledging their eyes, especially targeting the youth in colleges in coordination with the Department of Ophthalmology, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) Punjab, and has been able to collect more than 300 pledges so far.

He has been honoured with District Youth Award 2001-02 by NYKS, Chandigarh, for his Voluntary Work. Gaurav has attended various International and National Conferences, Programmes and Workshops etc. and represented India in the training Programmes for Young Leaders in Japan and Malaysia during 2009.

Currently, Gaurav is working as an Assistant Professor, Centre for Social Work, Punjab University, Chandigarh and working hard for creating a Brigade of Young People who can come forward and take-up the challenge to fight against various social evils. Gaurav feels volunteers have strong will power that motivates them to work for the cause they believe in.

CASE STUDY/ PUNJAB: CRICKET AND VOLUNTEERISM TO ENHANCE PEACE AND COMMUNAL HARMONY

The aftermath of partition has only made H.S. Talwar more compassionate and sensitive to human emotions.

H.S. Talwar is a 72-year-old dedicated and devoted volunteer. In his words, “The circumstances and the situations in my life inspired me to become a lifelong volunteer to spread the message of peace.”



H.S.Talwar (left) receiving honour for promotion of peace and harmony during the International Youth Peace Festival, 2011 in Chandigarh © Yuvsatta

Mr. Talwar was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1940. Seven years later, during India's partition in 1947, he and his family became a victim of catastrophic riots that claimed the lives of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike. He vividly remembers how his family endured displacement and violence before taking refuge in Ambala and later moving to Solan in Himachal Pradesh. Mr. Talwar shifted to Chandigarh in 1958 to set up dairy farming. Soon the business grew and today he owns two well-reputed shops in Chandigarh.

For more than 30 years now, Mr. Talwar has also been involved in community volunteering. In 1988, Peoples' effort 'Shramdan' was mounted exhorting people of Chandigarh to render voluntary help in the removal of silt from the lakebed of famous Sukhna Lake through manual labour. Mr. Talwar provided free milk and sweets to all the volunteers. In the following years, many school and college students joined this movement and Mr. Talwar kept offering free refreshments undauntedly to all the volunteers.

During the Indo - Pak match to be played in Mohali in 1999, Mr. Talwar expressed his willingness to host a family from Pakistan at his house in Chandigarh. In response, three couples from Pakistan enjoyed the hospitality of the Talwar family. Mr. Talwar describes the match as a benevolent movement, which strengthened the bond of friendship and proved as a useful step towards peace building process between both the nations. These friendly ties grew even stronger when he and his family visited these Pakistani friends in Lahore. The Talwars are now part of the extended family of the Pakistani hosts. This great association was also featured on CNN television. He reckons the fact that people in India as well as Pakistan, have suffered equally, and thus it becomes necessary to work together for the better future of both the nations.

Mr. Talwar is also associated with the Chandigarh based NGO Yuvsatta for about four years. He provides free refreshments in all the awareness camps organized by Yuvsatta and has been voluntarily hosting delegates from other countries during International Youth Peace Festival held in Chandigarh every year from September 27 - October 2. His free refreshments are not just limited to the awareness camps but also reaches the blood donors and community events organized in villages/schools/colonies & slums of Chandigarh.

Mr. Talwar has been honoured on various occasions for his contributions to the society. On 15 August 1993, Chandigarh Administration honoured him with a medal and commendation certificate for his outstanding services in the field of dairy development. In 2001, he was recognized and honoured for his services by Save Sukhna Lake Society.

CASE STUDY/KARNATAKA:

CORPORATE VOLUNTEER TRANSFORMING LIVES OF CHILDREN IN RURAL INDIA

M.S. Prashanth realized at an early age what ails his roots - the many development challenges in India's villages.

This realization also led him to do his bit. From organizing a fundraiser with his friends to buy a solar water heater for a blind children's hostel, to committed volunteering with a school for disadvantaged and displaced children run by an NGO, Prashanth has come a long way with his volunteering.

"The happiness derived from volunteerism cannot be explained but experienced!" conveys Prashanth. He grew up in a village but despite many hardships, he attained an engineering degree. An IT professional for over six years now, Prashanth started his career with Infosys and currently works with Thomson Reuters.

During his childhood, Prashanth happened to overhear an elderly person in the family say, "Human beings are benefited immensely from the society in innumerable ways and thus each of us must give back." This saying had a lasting impression on him and he grew up with a desire to work for social causes. The difficulties he faced in his education because of his rural background made this desire stronger with time and throughout his childhood, he kept himself engaged in social causes.

Prashanth was also inspired by the commitment to community development by Sri Guru Raghavendra Charitable Trust (SGRCT), a rural NGO to educate children, despite huge challenges faced by the organization. SGRCT is located at a tiny hamlet called Lakkasandra in Doddaballapur Taluk about 65 kilometers from Bangalore city and covers around 40 villages in the radius of 15 kilometers by providing free education and Programmes in rural employment, health care, women empowerment and other socio-economic activities.

Realizing that education is the key to development and to support the work of SGRCT, Prashanth began assisting the organization four years ago as a volunteer to educate the poor children from remote villages. He feels that majority of individuals think of helping the society, but rarely acts to turn their thoughts into reality. "Though it is difficult to move out of the comfort zone, lasting commitment to a cause could offer a new comfort zone to an individual, as experienced by me," adds Prashanth.

He has formed a team of like-minded friends, and a core volunteer group for SGRCT. The group has been working for the trust for more than two years now. A lot has been



Prashanth taking a tutorial session for the rural children © Prashanth

accomplished in a short span of time thanks to their dedication, commitment and efforts. These accomplishments include setting up a computer lab with the funding from Cognizant Foundation, school uniforms from Oracle Volunteers club, construction of toilets, reading and writing books from Rotary Club and many individual donors, science lab equipment from Honeywell etc.

Prashanth received the Community Champion Award for his activities from Thomson Reuters in 2010 and was one of the finalists for AIVA in 2011. He feels that these awards and accolades have helped him bring recognition to SGRCT's work and many organizations have come forward to lend their support to SGRCT in various ways.

SECTION 5

LAWS AND POLICIES ON VOLUNTEERISM

**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful
committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's
the only thing that ever has."**

Margaret Mead



LAWS AND POLICIES ON VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA

Vandana Jena

The Government of India is committed to strengthening the Voluntary Sector. Its commitment resonates well with the various policies, schemes and programmes of the government that have CREATED A VAST NATIONAL NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS INVOLVING MILLIONS OF PEOPLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO NATION BUILDING.

Volunteerism has been defined in various ways, ranging from work done on behalf of charitable or non-governmental organizations, to work done by an individual for the benefit of others. The UN General Assembly, embracing an open-ended concept of volunteerism, defines it as "a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor."

Volunteerism has been recognized the world over as being a major contributor to peace and development. While the UN International Year of the Volunteer in 2001 has given a major boost to volunteerism globally, in India volunteerism has been a part of India's rich tradition. Indeed, it is embedded in the country's cultural ethos. Philanthropy and individual acts of social service have, historically, been the main forms of voluntary

activity in India. Institutionalized social service activities existed largely within the domain of religious institutions: Ashramas and Maths among Hindus, Waqfs and Khanqahs among Muslims and Gurudwaras and Deras among Sikhs⁸⁰. Mahatma Gandhi further developed the tradition set by these early voluntary religious organizations. According to Gandhiji "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

The need for Volunteerism has been advocated in the successive Five Year Plans, in the National Youth Policy and in the Volunteer based Programmes of the Government. However, the National Policy on Voluntary Sector in India was announced only in 2007. The Planning Commission formulated the Policy. The Planning Commission was set up by a Resolution of the Government of India in March 1950 in pursuance of declared objectives of the Government to promote a rapid rise in the standard of living of the people by efficient exploitation of the resources of the country, increasing production and offering opportunities to all for employment in the service of the community. The planning commission along with other functions, formulates, executes and monitors the five year plans to determine the government's development priorities most effective utilization of resources⁸¹.

This article would confine itself to three aspects of Volunteerism in India:

80 Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). *Steering Committee Report for the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)*.

81 Planning Commission. *History*. Retrieved 19 January 2012 from <http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/history/index.php?about=aboutbdy.htm>.

1. Policy pronouncements on volunteerism in India.
2. Schemes and organizations of the Government to promote volunteerism in India like NSS, NYKS, and NYC.
3. National Level Volunteer based Programmes. Literacy Volunteers of Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) under the National Literacy Mission, (NLM) and Volunteers under Disaster Management Programme.

POLICIES ON VOLUNTEERISM

National Policy on the Voluntary Sector 2007

Essentially the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector visualized the evolution of a “long term sustainable and institutionalized collaboration between the Government and voluntary organizations”⁸². This Policy is a commitment to encourage, enable and empower an independent, creative and effective voluntary sector, with diversity in form and function, so that it can contribute to the social, cultural and economic advancement of the people of India. The specific objectives of the policy are:

- To create an enabling environment for VOs that stimulates their enterprise and effectiveness, and safeguards their autonomy;
- To enable VOs to legitimately mobilize necessary financial resources from India and abroad;
- To identify systems by which the Government may work together with VOs, on the basis of the principles of mutual trust and respect, and with shared responsibility; and,
- To encourage VOs to adopt transparent and accountable systems of governance and management⁸³.

In recognition of the work being performed by volunteers and the impact made by them on the society at large, the National Policy on Voluntary Sector 2007 emphasized the importance of volunteering, with the aim of strengthening the Voluntary Sector. It stated, “The Government will encourage involvement of volunteers in public services, such as, at family welfare centers, primary health centers, hospitals, schools, vocational training centers, sanitation campaigns, etc.”⁸⁴

The Policy also stated:

The Government will also examine the feasibility of enacting a simple and liberal central law that will serve as an alternative all-India statute for registering VOs, particularly those that wish to operate in different parts of the country and even abroad. Such a law would co-exist with prevailing central and state laws, allowing a VO the option of registering under one or more laws, depending on the nature and sphere of its activities.

- The Government will encourage the evolution of, and subsequently accord recognition to, an independent, national level, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector.

82 Jaitli. H., (2011, July 7). *The National Policy on the Voluntary Sector: Where do we stand today?*. Voluntary Action Network India (VANI).

83 Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). (2007) *National Policy on the voluntary sector – 2007*, 3.

84 Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). (2007). *National Policy on the voluntary sector – 2007*, 12.

- The Government will encourage various agencies, including those in the voluntary sector, to develop alternative accreditation methodologies.
- Concerned Government agencies would be encouraged to ensure proper accountability and monitoring of public funds distributed to VOs.

Five-Year Plans

First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) and subsequent plans have laid stress on community service. The First Plan document highlighted the fact that the public cooperation and public opinion constitute the principal force and sanction behind planning. It was also stated in the plan, "The spread of literacy among the rural people, for example, can be secured by the literates in the community volunteering their services for carrying through a mass campaign for liquidation of illiteracy"⁸⁵.

Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961) stated that in national extension and community project areas, in local development works, in shramdan, in social welfare extension projects and in the work of voluntary organizations, there has always been willingness and enthusiasm on part of the people to contribute in labour, and local resources have been made freely available⁸⁶.

Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966) emphasized the fact that the concept of public cooperation is related to the much larger sphere of voluntary action in which the initiative and organizational responsibility rest completely with the people and their leaders, and does not rely on legal sanctions or the power of the State for achieving its aims.

Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974) gave special emphasis to the needs of the youth and to leadership training. During this plan, support was provided to VOs to participate in youth development Programmes. Community service was developed as an integral part of the educational curriculum. The National Service Scheme was launched in the Fourth Five Year Plan.⁸⁷

Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1979) laid emphasis on the expansion and strengthening of the NSS and NYKS. The National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS) was launched during the Fifth Plan.

Seventh Five Year Plan (1980-1985) It was the Seventh Five Year Plan which highlighted the role of voluntary agencies. It stated, "There is a good deal of voluntary effort in India, especially in the field of social welfare. The tendency so far has been to equate the work of voluntary agencies with only welfare activities and charity work. There has been inadequate recognition of their role in accelerating the process of social and economic development. These agencies have been known to play an important role by providing a basis for innovation with new models and approaches, ensuring feedback and securing the involvement of families living below the poverty line. Therefore, during the Seventh Plan, serious efforts will be made to involve voluntary agencies in various development Programmes, particularly in the planning and implementation of Programmes of rural development. Voluntary agencies have developed expertise and competence in many

⁸⁵ Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). *First Five Year Plan*, 45.

⁸⁶ Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). *Report of the Steering Committee on Voluntary Sector in the Tenth Plan (2002-2007)*, 8.

⁸⁷ Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). *Report of the Steering Committee on Voluntary Sector in the Tenth Plan (2002-2007)*, 8.

non-traditional areas to plan their own schemes instead of expecting Government to do so. More specifically, the role of voluntary agencies in the implementation of development Programme is: to train a cadre of grassroots workers who believe in professionalizing volunteerism”⁸⁸. Volunteerism received a major boost in the Seventh Plan, when a National Youth Policy was framed and a Plan of Action formulated in 1992.

Eighth Five Year Plan (1985–1990) In the Eighth Plan document, due emphasis was given to building up people’s institutions. It was admitted that the developmental activities undertaken with people’s active participation have a greater chance of success and can be more cost-effective as compared to the development activities undertaken by the Government.

Ninth Five Year Plan (1992–1997) The thrust in the Ninth Plan was on harnessing yuva shakti (youth power). The Plan stressed on involving young persons in various community-based nation-building activities and a new scheme called National Reconstruction Corps (NRC) to involve youth volunteers in such activities.

Tenth Five Year Plan (1997–2002) The 10th Five-year Plan in the context of disaster management stated “Capacity building should not be limited to professionals and personnel involved in disaster management but should also focus on building the knowledge, attitude and skills of a community to cope with the effects of disasters. Identification and training of volunteers from the community towards first response measures as well as mitigation measures is an urgent imperative”⁸⁹.

11th Five Year Plan (2007–2012) The 11th Plan provided an opportunity “to restructure policies to achieve a new vision based on faster, more broad-based and inclusive growth.” It stated that provision of access to essential public services to the mass of the people, particularly to those who have been deprived of these services, must be a basic objective of the 11th Plan. It recognizes a pro-active role for Governments at different levels to make this possible.

National Youth Policy 1988

The National Youth Policy 1988 did not make an explicit commitment to volunteerism in its objectives. However, its Plan of Action stated, “Programmes will be undertaken to offer opportunities to the youth for leadership training through personality development and character building, and for motivating them to voluntary social and community service”.

National Youth Policy 2003

The National Youth Policy 1993 was far more explicit in its commitment to volunteerism. Of its seven objectives, three related directly to volunteerism and community service.⁹⁰ These were to develop:

- qualities of citizenship and dedication to community service amongst all sections of the youth;
- to sustain and reinforce the spirit of volunteerism amongst the youth in order to build up individual character and generate a sense of commitment to the goals of developmental Programmes;

88 Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). *Seventh Five Year Plan*, II, 66.

89 Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). *Tenth Five Year Plan*, I, 200.

90 Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS), Government of India. *National Youth Policy 1988*.

- to develop youth leadership in various socio-economic and cultural spheres and to encourage the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations, Co-operatives and Non-formal groups of young people⁹¹;

It is evident that volunteerism in India's policy pronouncements has been inextricably linked to youth development. Youth energies have been harnessed for undertaking developmental efforts.

PROGRAMMES OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ENCOURAGE VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA

National Service Scheme

In India, the idea of involving students in the task of national service dates back to the times of Mahatma Gandhi. The central theme, which he tried to impress upon his student audience repeatedly, was that they should always give priority to their social responsibility. The post-independence era was marked by an urge for introducing social service for students, both as a measure of educational reform and as a means to improve the quality of educated work force. In the draft First Five Year Plan adopted by GOI in 1952, the need for social and labour service for students for one year was further stressed.

In 1960, at the instance of GOI, Prof. K.G. Saiyidain studied national service by students implemented in several countries of the world and submitted his report under the title "National Service for the Youth" to the Government with a number of recommendations as to what could be done in India to develop a feasible scheme for social service by students. The Education Commission headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari (1964-66) recommended that students at all stages of education should be associated with some form of social service. On September 24, 1969, the then Union Education Minister Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao launched the NSS Programme in 37 universities covering all States.

NSS is a concrete attempt in making campus relevant to the needs of the community. In a world rent by ambition, where the wellspring of action is ambition, and the yardstick of achievement is success, the NSS thrives on the motto of "Not Me But You," and objective of "Personality Development through Community Service." With strength of about two million volunteers, NSS happens to be the largest student volunteer force in the world. It is not sheer numbers, but its performance, which is its strength.

The literacy campaign in Kottayam, the first town in India, to become 100% literate in 100 days in 1989, owes its success largely to the NSS volunteers. Ernakulam, the first Indian district to achieve 100 per cent literacy and the role model for literacy campaigns in India, also utilized NSS volunteers for imparting literacy. With proven skills for taking up educational campaigns, the NSS was used in launching the highly successful, 'University Talk Aids Programme' (UTA). The UTA success story, crafted by the NSS is still acknowledged as a pioneering awareness campaign when the subject itself was considered taboo by many. The NSS demonstrated its disaster management skills in the wake of the super cyclone in Orissa in 1999, the earthquake at Bhuj in 2000 and the tsunami in Andamans and Nicobar islands in 2004.

The tradition of providing a theme for NSS every year has ensured that the energies of the NSS are concentrated around a chosen theme in a year. The theme "Youth For

Haryali," in 2002, yielded excellent results in Kerala, where a massive plantation drive was undertaken involving 1,10,000 volunteers wherein 10-15 lakhs saplings were planted on 9th August, 2002 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in the entire State starting from Parasvala to Manjesuvaram. It was an exercise in not just tree plantation but in unity, in convergence and coordination. In 2003, under the theme "Youth for Jal Samvardhan," five major universities, Osmania, Andhra, Nagarjuna, Shri Krishnaderaraja & Venkateswara and Kakatiya converged and intensified their efforts for water harvesting. Those NSS efforts are not sporadic but yield permanent results, as demonstrated in the Ravendeora project in Rajasthan. There, the NSS volunteers took up a settlement with a population of 100 persons and its adjoining villages and built five primary school buildings with 3-4 rooms in each building in the five nearby villages in the area. The villagers were provided electricity connection and the Ravendeora village was recorded as a revenue village in the Government records. The potential of NSS in the task of National building is enormous, valuable as well as noticeable.

Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan

NYKS, the largest non-political youth organization in the world was established in 1972 with the objective of providing the rural youth with avenues to take part in the process of national building as well as providing opportunities for the development of their personality and skills. It channelizes the power of youth on the principles of volunteerism, self-help and community participation

Over the years, NYKS has established a network of youth clubs in villages. The basic objective in the creation of youth clubs is to render community support through developmental initiatives involving activities with particular focus on youth empowerment. The youth clubs and its member volunteers form the base of the NYKS's vast national rural network. The NYKS that has its presence in 500 districts has worked in convergence with other Programmes under the Swarnajayanti *Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY), implemented in collaboration with Ministry of Rural Development, Watershed management Programmes etc. The NYKS has made outstanding contribution in the implementation of the Red Ribbon Express Project in which it collaborated with National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and the Railways. The aim of the Red Ribbon Express was to create awareness about HIV/AIDS throughout the country. The NYKS had earlier run the Villagers Talk AIDS Programme that was an extension of the NSS led UTA Programme into the rural areas. The NYKS had also done outstanding work in the Tsunami devastated states including the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The vast network of registered youth clubs in the country have a veritable army of volunteers who are willing to take up developmental or relief works throughout the length and breadth of the country.

National Youth Corps

The NYC has been formulated by amalgamating two earlier schemes, the National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS 1977-78) and the Rashtriya Sadbhawana Yojana (RSY 2005), wherein young volunteers are enrolled on a full time basis for participating in youth based activities. The Mission Statement of the Scheme states, "It has been the constant endeavor of GOI to channelize the energies and capabilities of its considerable youth population (around 70 per cent of the total population is below 35 years of age) towards nation building activities by organizing them into working groups." The scheme aims to enable young men and women in the age group of 18-25 to serve up to two years in identified developmental activities.

The objectives of the scheme are:

- To set up a group of disciplined and dedicated youth who have the inclination and spirit to engage in the task of nation building;
- To facilitate the realization of inclusive growth (both social and economic) ;
- To act as points for dissemination of information, basic knowledge in the community;
- To act as group modulators and peer group educators;
- To act as role models for the younger cohort specially towards enhancement of public ethics;
- Probity and dignity of labour.

The Scheme is being implemented by the NYKS.

VOLUNTEER BASED NATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Volunteerism is the bedrock on which a number of Programmes have been crafted. Two examples have been the Literacy Volunteers under the National Literacy Campaigns under National Literacy Mission and the Volunteers under the Disaster Management Programme.

Total Literacy Campaigns under National Literacy Mission

The Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) under the NLM was one of the largest Volunteer based Programmes in the world. The TLC was 'area specific, time bound, volunteers based, cost effective and result oriented.' The NLM was set up in May 1988. The TLC first launched in Kottayam town and Ernakulam district in Kerala in 1989 with the active participation of students and voluntary agencies was subsequently extended to other districts. Over 561 districts (fully or partially) took up the literacy Programme. More than 10 million volunteers were mobilized and over 100 million people were made literate. The goal of the NLM was to attain full literacy, i.e. a sustainable threshold level of 75 per cent by 2005. The District Literacy Society (Zilla Saksharta Samiti) the nodal agency for adult education involved voluntary agencies, professionals from the region, members of the community, Mahila Mandals, Small-Scale Industries and *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs) in the literacy campaigns. Under the TLC, one literacy volunteer taught ten non-literates in the village. The volunteer's home was often the venue for the class. Literacy was thus brought to the doorstep of the people. The volunteers in the literacy campaigns included not just the educated unemployed youth, but educated homemakers, ex-servicemen and retired employees. The stories of volunteerism in the literacy campaigns were truly enthralling. School going daughters taught their illiterate mothers, educated daughters-in-law taught their mothers-in-law, unemployed youth taught their grandfathers, the entire country was alit with the spark of literacy. States like Karnataka came up with innovations like "Each one teach two," where every student in the secondary school was expected to teach two illiterate persons in the neighbourhood. In West Bengal, literacy volunteers accompanied illiterate fishermen on boat trips in order to impart literacy. The contribution of the literacy volunteers has changed the literacy landscape of the country. From a comparatively low literacy base of 52.21 per cent in the 1991 Census with male literacy at 64.13 per cent and female literacy at 39.29 per cent over the last two decades the literacy campaigns have contributed to the enhancement of literacy levels to 75.06 per cent in 2011 with male literacy at 82.14 per cent and female literacy at 65.46 per cent.



NSS Volunteers demonstrating their skills on Disaster Risk Management © UNDP

The social gains of the literacy campaigns are equally gratifying. The anti- arrack agitation in Nellore, which led to the imposition of prohibition against country made liquor, was triggered by a lesson in the literacy primer of the volunteer led TLC. The empowerment of neoliterate women in Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu who learnt to ride bicycles during the literacy campaign and won a quarry contract was another success story in which the literacy volunteers played a pivotal role.

Volunteers under the Disaster Risk Management Programme

Volunteerism is the strength of the DRM Programme. This 100 per cent externally funded Programme, the Ministry of Home Affairs is implementing the largest community based DRM Programme in the world. The Phase I of the Programme was implemented in the three States of Gujarat, Orissa, and Bihar during 2002-2006. Phase II of a Community based Disaster Risk Mitigation Programme is under implementation in 169 multi hazard districts in 17 States/Union Territories with the support of UNDP. One of the major objectives of the Programme is to develop a cadre of trained human resources at community level to carry out all disaster management and mitigation initiatives. An innovative method is used in this Programme to train at least two persons as disaster management volunteers who, after being trained are supporting the community in development of the village disaster management plan. The representatives of local self-government block functionaries and CBOs select these volunteers. Most of the volunteers are from local youth clubs, women SHGs or from CBOs and belong to the same community.

Under this Programme, disaster management plans are being prepared from village to district; village volunteers are being trained in first-aid, search and rescue, evacuation

and relief and shelter management; disaster management teams are being constituted at the district and sub-district levels and mock drills are being conducted at all levels.

CONCLUSION

India has ably demonstrated the use of volunteer force in its aim to achieve Millennium Development Goals like the reduction in adult illiteracy and the achievement of health targets. India is blessed with the largest youth population in the world, with about 40 per cent of its population falling in the 13-35 age groups. This segment of the population is considered to be the most vibrant and dynamic segment of the population. If India has to reap the demographic dividend, it is necessary that we utilize the services of India's youth to develop India's human resource. Volunteers in India have contributed directly or indirectly in achieving that goal. Literacy is one area where the sheer number of illiterates and the size of the problem made paid teachers an unaffordable solution. The success of the literacy campaigns made it evident that there was a tremendous volunteer force waiting to be tapped.

Literacy is not the only area where the volunteers have contributed. The Red Ribbon Express Project made extensive use of volunteers to create awareness about the transmission of HIV/AIDS as well as created awareness for the need to fight stigma and discrimination, which again demonstrated the strength of volunteerism in India. The use of volunteers in the Pulse Polio Immunization campaign has been well documented.

All this clearly indicates that there is a huge potential of youth work force, which can be tapped to address urgent issues. Reproductive and Child Health is one area which the NSS & NYKS volunteers can take up, since the volunteers are themselves a part of the clientele, large number of volunteers being future mothers. They can undertake awareness generation campaigns on other health issues, be it demonstrating the use of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) by taking up a door-to door campaign in villages, or by taking up awareness campaigns for eye donations and blood donation. Student volunteers from law colleges can impart legal literacy. Volunteers can take up the task of imparting adult literacy under Saakshar Bharat Programme. Currently, two major issues that have drawn national attention are adverse child sex ratio and malnutrition. Volunteers can lead awareness generation campaigns throughout the country on these critical issues. The educated NSS girl students can put themselves forward as role models, in the campaign against female feticide.

However, it is also an indisputable fact that volunteer based Programmes cannot be run indefinitely as they are bound to lead to volunteer fatigue if they are run for years. Incentivizing volunteers by providing cash incentives, weightage in marks or preference in recruitment as schoolteachers or Anganwadi worker, letters of commendation to volunteers or honouring volunteers during Republic Day or Independence Day would help combat volunteer fatigue.

While volunteerism is visible in rural areas and small towns, in the metropolitan towns the response has not been positive. It is necessary to adopt motivational strategies to harness youth energy and youth power in the metropolitan towns. Short-term courses on volunteerism through the distant learning mode can help build a professional cadre of volunteers who could be deployed in specialized work like disaster management.

On the issue of engagement with VOs in the tasks of Nation Building the National Policy on the Voluntary sector states, "The country faces a number of complex problems

that require adaptive, multi-sectoral solutions where sustained social mobilization is particularly important. These include poverty alleviation, skill promotion, entrepreneurship development, empowerment of women, population stabilization, combating HIV/AIDS, managing water resources, elementary education and forest management, to name a few. Such areas urgently require strategic collaboration between the Government and VOs, through national level Programmes that are long-term in duration, and utilize multiple strategies, methodologies and activities to achieve their objectives. The Government will identify national collaborative Programmes to be implemented in partnership with VOs”⁹². The roadmap for this engagement needs to be drawn up.

India is fortunate that it has a pool of millions of volunteers with the potential, zeal, enthusiasm and commitment. All they need are well-defined goals.

92 Planning Commission, Government of India (GOI). (2007). *National Policy on the voluntary sector – 2007*, 8.

VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Harsh Jaitli

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One of the common threads that runs across all the historical struggles towards the process of nation building around the globe, be it in the past or ones that are currently fought is the undying spirit of volunteers. History testifies to the fact that every major social transformation was triggered and effected by a group of people or communities who were internally driven and committed towards some principles and causes. These people, whom we might call as volunteers, emerged and continue to spring up from manifold sections of the society, cutting across all myriad professional arenas. Hence, one can see professionals, communities, students, scholars, women etc. coming forward to make a mark in their societies.

It is difficult to quantify the contribution of such volunteers, as many of these acts are spontaneous and contextual. However, an answer to the question as to what triggers people to come forward is hard to comprehend, as there are multiple dimensions to it. Individuals tend to volunteer for numerous reasons. Nonetheless, one of the predominant theories is that the traditional values, culture and religious principles have had a compelling influence on people to make that extra step. Others might do so for the sheer reason of altruism, while others might come forward

when something untoward happens to the members of their own communities, while for others it could be the 'feel good factor'. One can possibly enter into a prolonged argument to dig out the reasons for volunteering, but it has to be accepted that the spirit of such volunteers has always played and continue to play a significant role in meeting many of the larger societal needs.

VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIAN CONTEXT

The values and principles of altruism and service have been the trademark of all the eastern philosophical foundations and religions and had a tremendous bearing on the way in which people lived their lives in India. Traditionally, people in India have always upheld societal cohesiveness and community sentiments in high esteem. Many argue that the highest form of the volunteering expression that India demonstrated was through its freedom struggle. People from all walks of life, right from the ordinary people like farmers to intellectuals from higher caste came forward to sacrifice their lives for independence. Besides the organized political parties, individuals also played a key role in the freedom movement. The philosophy of "Nishkama Karma - do good without the expectation of getting a reward" was one of the predominant ideologies that had a profound influence on the lives of people.

EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA

Gaining political independence was not the only dream of the Father of the Nation. Gandhi ji also envisioned a country, which is freed from social and economic misery. During the time of independence, abject poverty, marginalization along with many other social evils were rampant in the country. Hence, his vision of freedom transcended mere political dimension of independence, for him the truest form of independence meant emancipation from those untoward socio-cultural evils. Due to partition when communal violence broke out in the country, many citizens came forward to provide shelter, food and medicines to the affected people. These individuals in the long run gave boost to the voluntary sector in India. Many of them started the social movements and voluntary organizations, which are popularly known as 'Gandhian Organizations'.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS IN THE COUNTRY

One of the major pitfalls within the contemporary discourse on volunteerism is that the concept has become much skewed. Currently, many interpret volunteerism as a one-time gesture of a particular individual who dedicates some time or skill for a social cause. While, we admit that this is also an expression of volunteerism, limiting its canvas in this manner poses a serious challenge to us. The spirit of volunteerism should, and it has to, encompass much more. It needs to be understood beyond part-time engagements. The truest nature of volunteerism is internally driven and it is principle centered and value oriented.

The voluntary sector cannot even think of creating a deeper impact in the society without the contribution and dedicated commitments of these individuals. Considering the perennial shortage of funds, desire of innovations and rising expectations can only be managed with the support of volunteers. There are several subject experts who otherwise are beyond the reach of the voluntary sector dedicate themselves to the mission of voluntary organizations. Unfortunately, many a times contribution of volunteers goes unrecognized by the organizations, and by the government. Sometimes we see them as free or subsidized workforce, who come, contribute and disappear. Even the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector, which defines the relationship between state and voluntary sector, has not given due attention to the volunteers.

PRESERVING AND PROMOTING VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA

Before we enter into a discussion on preserving and promoting volunteerism in India, we need to bear in mind that just like any other practices volunteerism too has undergone some changes. It is being perceived and understood in a different manner today. These changes can be due to many factors:

- The religious and cultural values, which once triggered the people to volunteer for the society, have been declining in the society;
- The onset of many global ideologies like liberalization, globalization etc. have had their impact on volunteerism as they had on any other practices. Currently, lives are viewed and lived differently.

As a result, the approach towards the practice of volunteering has changed. We need to be bold enough to accept the fact that the younger generation is not as eager as the previous ones to enter into the dialogue of development in the form of volunteerism. Hence, it is necessary that we make collective effort to ensure that we make adequate steps to preserve and promote one of the finest practices in our country.

First, there is need to reform the voluntary sector from within to provide due importance and recognition to the volunteers. Millions of volunteers are engaged with the voluntary sector to provide their valuable support, which is otherwise very expensive or rare. For example, many grass roots groups strive to develop innovative methods or techniques in service delivery but many times lack the capacity of documentation. Many outstanding achievements remain unnoticed due to the skill gap to document and report them. Engaging suitable and qualified human resource is always challenging for such groups. Volunteers who commit their time and energy to document these valuable experiences generally fill this gap. These volunteers also play a crucial role in delivery of services. Even the large organizations engaged in knowledge building or research-based advocacy engage the services of such volunteers.

We need to develop institutional policies whereby the voluntary sector can provide insight to the students who join the sector for a short time and can eventually become ambassadors for the sector in the long run. Similarly, we also need this policy to systematically recognize their contribution.

There is a need to redefine the relationship between the voluntary sector and the government. We know that the relationship between the voluntary sector and the government has always been a complex one. Voluntary Sector, in spite of being the third most important pillar for the nation building, is perceived, as the subcontractor as far as service delivery is concerned. This approach not only under-estimates the voluntary sector but also demoralizes the volunteers who are primarily attracted towards the sector. The language of collaboration between the voluntary sector and the government reinforces this point. There is a need to work towards enforcing the National Policy of the Voluntary Sector. Although the National Policy does not substantially talk about the role of volunteers in nation building it does attempt to define the relationship. Unfortunately, the National Policy is only adopted by the union cabinet, and has a long way to go before it is materialized.

There is also the trend of contributing towards the voluntary sector and providing time and skills by individuals from corporate sector. Undoubtedly, it is part of the corporate social projects but mostly it is also willingness of the people to spare time from their regular schedule. The last

Consultation in Jalandhar to systematise and structure the process of capacity building of NGOs and promote volunteerism in the state of Punjab © UNV, 2012



category is that of homemakers and retired persons who spend and dedicate their valuable time through their resident's welfare associations. Many such initiatives are undertaken to impart education and health services to the needy and poor. There has to be a mechanism to provide tangent benefit to the volunteers if they spend their productive time and skill with the voluntary organization. We need to work on a policy document, which provides edge to the individuals who would like to associate with the sector for a short duration.

NATIONAL POLICY ON VOLUNTEERISM

In the absence of a structured approach towards the voluntary sector in general and volunteers in particular, their contribution remains unaccounted. First, there is absence of any comprehensive national policy, which could be endorsed by the state governments, private sector and even the voluntary organizations. As mentioned earlier, the current National Policy on Voluntary Sector, which is undoubtedly a half-baked product, does not speak much about volunteers. Although it talks about creating an enabling environment for the promotion of voluntary sector in India, but most of the steps taken by the government are contrary to this. For e.g. in order to invite international volunteers to the country, one needs the approval and consent of three ministries, like external affairs, home and nodal ministries. There is difficulty in getting visa for the entire duration of an internship or engagement period. Most of the visas given are either city specific or for less duration than the specified period. This creates hardship for the inviting organization as well as the volunteers.

If we have a National Policy for the volunteers, then it has to be prepared and implemented in a holistic manner touching upon myriad dimensions of volunteerism. Some of them could be redesigning the existing framework of volunteerism, stipulating the rights of volunteers, reinforcing the necessity of the VOs to build their capacity to utilize the skills of volunteers in an optimum manner and aligning organizational policies with the volunteering policies.

A separate Ministry or department dedicated to the voluntary sector is also recommended. Even if the Planning Commission makes good policies, they remain in the shelf. In the absence of nodal agency, the objective to execute the professional systematization of the sector remains a dream. Unfortunately, this also leads to various departments and agencies controlling the sector in their own way. Today there is no agency where the volunteer can seek help in case he or she wants to contribute to the sector. As we know that problems faced by the country in the context of socio-economic challenges are quite complex and there is scarcity of human and financial resources to manage them, the contribution of volunteers becomes quite significant in this context. Therefore, there is need to adopt a systematic approach of identification and deployment of resources in the voluntary sector.

CONCLUSION

It is understood that constructive efforts are the need of the hour if we want to preserve and encourage the spirit of volunteerism in our country. In addition, this process has to be a collective one where each stakeholder, primarily the voluntary sector and the government, has a definitive responsibility. For all those who are concerned about the future of the nation and those who want to take stake in the same should consider that preserving volunteerism, one of the richest traditional values imparted to us by our ancestors, is an unavoidable necessity that we need to address. For, constructive process of nation building is unimaginable without the hard-core commitments of the number of volunteers who continue to play a crucial role to make the life a little better for the millions in the country.

INTERVIEW: MAINSTREAMING VOLUNTEERISM

THE GOVERNMENT
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in the government policies/
framework.

Raj K Mishra, a bureaucrat-turned development professional, is the regional director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme for Asia, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London. Mr. Mishra had spearheaded IYV India in his capacity as Joint Secretary in the MoYAS and Member-Secretary of the National Committee for observance of IYV. Raj K. Mishra in his interview to Amita Dahiya puts across how volunteerism in different government policies and schemes could help promote a culture of volunteering amongst citizens and government employees.

1. How can we mainstream volunteerism in different government policies and schemes?

Ministries and Departments of the Government, particularly those in the development sector, have a number of schemes, which cannot be effectively implemented by agencies of the government alone and will perforce, require the involvement of NGOs and even, in some cases, individuals as volunteers. In case of individual volunteers, though, strict guidelines and a transparent selection process will have to be followed. It would be imperative for such Ministries and Departments to devise mechanisms for the involvement of the voluntary sector in the implementation of their schemes.

Happily, we do have some examples of this approach.

The "Bharat Nirman" Plan launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Rural Development, for instance, seeks to engage one welfare Programme volunteer for every 40 rural households across India in the next few years with a view to facilitating the delivery of various services under the umbrella of the Bharat Nirman Plan.

The Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is another case in point. The Ministry's target to raise 2,50,000 women volunteers as social health activists across 18 states with weak rural health infrastructure under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in 2005-2006 to raise awareness about and deliver health and family welfare services is a shining example of seeking out the services of volunteers in the implementation of governmental schemes. In addition, a small living allowance paid to the volunteers, does not take anything away from the spirit behind the effort.

2. How can different government machinery promote a culture of volunteering amongst citizens?

As stated above, there has to be an acknowledgement, in the first place, of the role of the voluntary sector on part of different government agencies in the implementation of various development schemes. Thereafter, a transparent mechanism, processes

and guidelines will have to be evolved. A system of rewards for outstanding work by voluntary agencies/individual volunteers along with penal action against those found either defaulting or fraudulent, will go a long way in promoting a culture of volunteering amongst citizens. What is important is that citizens willing to volunteer should have a feeling of being wanted.

No doubt, there have been some efforts on the part of the government to formulate various strategies like capacity building, streamline the procedures and guidelines and create a synergy between efforts of the government and the voluntary sector since 1988. The first National Policy on the Voluntary Sector was, however, announced by the GOI only in 2007 acknowledging the importance of volunteerism in social, cultural and economic advancement of the people of India. The policy was an initiative to encourage, enable, and empower an independent, creative and effective voluntary sector as a partner of the GOI. This national policy not only defined the relationship between the government and the voluntary sector but was also introduced as a tool to strengthen the sector.

The government to recognize voluntary action in various fields has also instituted various awards. Some of these include the National Awards for Child Welfare, Stree Shakti Puraskar for achievements of individual women in the field of social development, National Youth Awards for individuals and VOs, National Award on Road Safety to VOs/ Individuals and Award of Special Incentive (ASI) to NGOs for improvement of Infrastructure etc.

3. Is there any way in which Government servants too are encouraged to donate some time out of their schedule to volunteering?

My understanding is that in recent years the GOI are allowing their employees to go on deputation to work with reputed NGOs on certain terms and conditions. Individual government servants to work in the voluntary sector could also exercise the option of study leave.

4. Do you think policy gaps hinder promotion of volunteerism?

Yes. However, it must be stated that the Planning Commission came up with a National Policy for the Voluntary Sector in 2007. To what extent it has helped the promotion of the sector is for the main players in the sector to say. I am not aware if any evaluation or impact assessment of the Policy has been carried out. If not, the time is now to do this.

5. Do you think Effective Legal Framework will be helpful in Mainstreaming volunteerism?

No. Mainstreaming of any issue/concern cannot successfully be accomplished through a legal framework. What is required is a broad consensus around a policy, which has evolved through wide ranging consultations with all stakeholders and has been owned by them. That is why I have said that an impact assessment of the 2007 Policy needs to be carried out immediately to determine to what extent it has been implemented by social sector Ministries/Departments of the GOI, and more importantly, whether the voluntary sector feels that the Policy has fulfilled its objective of effectively engaging it in the task of national development.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK, ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA: CASE FOR A SINGLE WINDOW MECHANISM TO AID DEVELOPMENT

Pooran Chandra Pandey

VOLUNTEERISM
HAS BEEN THE
CORNERSTONE OF
CIVILIZED SOCIETY
THE WORLD OVER and
has evolved over time
with the changing
nature of civil society
and its needs. The social
and economic benefits of
volunteerism have been
recognized at the highest
levels and reiterated with the
declaration of International
Year of Volunteers in
2001. Since then, greater
efforts have been made to
formulate laws and policies
on volunteerism to bring the
volunteering agenda under a
legal framework.

Volunteerism has been the cornerstone of civilized society the world over. It has been driven by local conditions spanning across values, systems, social norms and more importantly, the ability of the community to reciprocate to its fellow companions almost instantly. Volunteering in this context occurs in every society and therefore has a universal value embedded in human nature that shapes contours of social and cultural heritage in as far as volunteers contributing to larger social and common good.

In the past, volunteerism was often seen in isolation of the wider social and cultural context in which it took place. Nevertheless, volunteering is much more than simply the giving of time for some particular purpose. In fact, as a cultural and economic phenomenon, volunteering is part of the way societies are organized, social responsibilities allocated, and engagement and participation from citizens expected. It is also true that volunteering in order to deep seat itself and to have widespread acceptance of its merit has needed state intervention in the form of shaping enabling policies and framework that give it the due it deserves and funnels the societal energy in its meaningful manifestations.

The case of India has been no different as the spirit of volunteerism here has been at the heart of cultural and religious practices. Various disciplines of philosophy, its ethos and interpretation, which are directly or indirectly intertwined with the religious practices, also underscore the importance of the need to work for the welfare of the society. The principle of working without the expectation of getting any reward is one of the core values reflected in the Hindu philosophy. In every religion for that matter, contribution to society is mandatory to its followers. The concept of voluntary giving has been the driver behind the spirit of volunteerism in India. A noteworthy feature of all major religions has been the emphasis they placed on philanthropy and sharing of wealth with others, especially the poor and the needy.

However, as the society evolved, the concept or the value of volunteerism too underwent some changes. The notion of complete altruistic giving was eventually replaced by more focused and systematic way of reaching out to others. Further, contrary to the earlier community dimension to the aspect of volunteerism, today individuals choose to volunteer as part of fulfilling a deep felt need within them as opposed to an act, which was bound by religious dogmas and demands. The need to reach out to others is still at the core of Indian culture and this still plays a significant role in addressing the socio-political needs of the country.

During 1960s and 1970s, there were non-profit organizations that were “welfare” or “empowerment-oriented.” Welfare-oriented organizations provided relief after national disasters or wars. Empowerment-oriented organizations sought to inform and train communities to participate in governance as a means of reducing poverty and bringing social change. This trend continued into the 1980s and 1990s, as more groups were dissatisfied with the pace of development and hoped to increase awareness among the population. Subsequently, as the times changed, we had different expressions of volunteerism, which was manifested through technology, online, and addition of new players. The early periods of the year 2000, immediately following the opening of the Indian economy and subsequent interface between foreign and domestic companies, corporate volunteering took roots in a more structured fashion and today it serves as a major philanthropic initiative of a large number of Indian companies. The trend shows that such developments have not only redefined the manner in which people express their intent to do good, but have also given rise to new players that dot the volunteering landscape is encouraging to witness.

The dissatisfaction with the lack of development is still the basis for many NGOs to participate or take action. There was an increasing perception that the government had been ineffective in spurring development, and this was especially acute in rural areas. Developmental NGOs worked to make up for the state’s deficiencies in diverse areas including health, education, livelihoods, water, sanitation, land reform, gender equality, and the environment. Largely, these NGOs worked with the population in order to raise social awareness and inspire civic action.

Over the years, Indian society has always faced innumerable socio-political challenges. Many of these challenges have been systemic and are directly linked with some peculiar social and cultural practices. Governments have not been successful in addressing all of those challenges in its entirety. In this context, the volunteer efforts - individual and collective- have played an important role in addressing such challenges. These efforts continue to have a considerable impact when it comes to addressing the concerns of the needy and those on the fringes.

Considering the importance of spirit and act of volunteerism, the UN declared the year 2001 as IYV (International Year of Volunteers). Since the IYV in 2001, governments, the UN system, civil society partners and other stakeholders have increasingly recognized that volunteerism makes significant contributions to peace and development. The UN General Assembly specifically noted the importance of legislative and fiscal frameworks for the growth and development of volunteerism, and encouraged governments to enact such measures.

The role of the state has always been seen to be supportive, enabling and collaborative to be able to bring together all stakeholders at one platform; and unplug the creativity and innovative mechanisms in which gains and dividends of volunteerism could be maximized with enabling framework of rules, laws, legal mechanisms and policies that only aid processes and build commitments of those who are out to contribute meaningfully to the welfare.

Volunteerism is “a universal human phenomenon” and contributes important social and economic benefits to society. Prior to IYV 2001, few governments had laws or policies that specifically addressed volunteerism in a unified or comprehensive manner. This lack of enabling laws and policies impeded the full realization of the social and economic benefits associated with volunteerism in many countries. For example, several countries’ employment and minimum wage laws failed to distinguish between

**IYV 2001
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VOLUNTEERISM
ISSUES. By
the end of
2001, about
123 national
committees on
volunteerism
had been
formed in
countries
around
the world
– creating
organized
constituencies
that
immediately
began
lobbying for
volunteerism
laws and
policies in their
home countries.**

volunteers and employees, making unpaid volunteer activity technically illegal. In others, an absence of government programmes to promote, support, and recognize the achievements of volunteers represented missed opportunities to unleash volunteerism as an important driver of economic and societal development.

IYV 2001 and the subsequent actions of national and international CSOs precipitated a major change in the way governments think about volunteerism issues. By the end of 2001, about 123 national committees on volunteerism had been formed in countries around the world – creating organized constituencies that immediately began lobbying for volunteerism laws and policies in their home countries. Research projects on the value of volunteer contributions were undertaken in dozens of countries, from Ethiopia to Israel to Canada, leading eventually to government support for laws and policies to further promote volunteerism. Policies or laws governing volunteerism were passed that year in, among many others, the Czech Republic, Colombia, and Madagascar.

Today, the processes set in motion by IYV 2001 have led to an enhanced perception and understanding of volunteerism and the ways in which laws and policies can enable volunteerism. Since IYV 2001, at least 70 new national laws or policies on volunteerism have been passed around the world. Our researchers have endeavored to examine as many of these new laws and policies as possible in order to determine the major trends and lessons learned.

In general, these new laws and policies are the results of successful campaigns launched by domestic CSOs, often but not always with UN or other international support. In some circumstances, governments have been the primary instigators, but most commonly, it has been the civil society leading the way. These laws and policies are focused exclusively on the promotion of volunteerism, and generally define volunteer or volunteerism and address particular issues related to voluntary activities. Legislation to promote volunteerism has been adopted in Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Croatia, Philippines, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, and dozens more countries all around the world; policies on volunteerism have been adopted in many of the same countries, as well as in countries where no volunteerism legislation has been passed, such as Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates.

The case of India is a unique one in ongoing discussions on volunteerism on its needs and requirements for a policy framework around volunteerism to give it both width and breadth both in its practice and ethos. In India, there has been a focus on volunteerism in almost all aspects of life that individuals from all faiths and beliefs follow. There are several instances from everyday life where one knowingly or unknowingly ends up volunteering without being told to do so. What however has evaded India is a policy or framework in a specific mode that gives volunteerism a distinct place in policy-makers agenda and subsequent leveraging of the same from the perspective of benefitting community and people from a quantitative perspective. This has been despite the fact that various initiatives have



The first-ever State of the World Volunteerism Report (SWVR) launched by an impressive panel of dignitaries on 5 December 2011, International Volunteer Day, in New Delhi ©UNV, 2011

already been taken by central and regional governments to whip up the importance and contribution being made by the volunteers in national development goals including the MDGs, and that there are strong examples of such initiatives from all parts and all stakeholders including the corporate sector.

It has been the constant endeavour of GOI to channelize the energies and capabilities of its considerable youth population (more than 65 per cent of the total population is below 35 years of age⁹³) towards nation building activities by organizing them into volunteer groups. It will be important to state here that the Indian government both at the regional and national levels has undertaken a number of innovative initiatives directed at youth and others alike to provide them a platform to be able to leverage their abilities, expertise and skill sets to benefit the community and society that they wish to serve. Hon'ble President, Pratibha Devisingh Patil, in her address to the joint session of the Parliament in June 2009 outlined the broad areas of priority of the GOI as well as certain specific commitments. These, inter-alia, included launching a new scheme of Voluntary National Youth Corps to take up creative social action.

In the recent past more specifically after UNV's declaration of 2001 as International Year of Volunteering and the opening of markets in India through 1990s government's policy on liberalization, privatization and globalization, a number of corporations began to leverage their employees in order to enable them to serve the community with their knowledge, skills and expertise. This trend has ever since grown both in quality and quantity and a large number of corporate houses have joined in and contributed immensely in providing

93 Indiaonlinepages.com. (2012). India's Population 2012. Retrieved 20 March 2012 from <http://www.indiaonlinepages.com/population/india-current-population.html>.

schooling, health services, plantations, blood donations, social enterprise support and are working with communities for local development initiatives. Corporate or employee volunteering is not just as a concept now but as an effective way by which corporate houses through their talent workforce can contribute to local area development. The trends and growing importance of such initiatives have also been recognized by a recently launched report by UNV 'State of World's Volunteerism Report' in 2011.

In yet another example, the Indian government's contribution to volunteerism through policy framework cannot fully be overlooked as the government has over the years captured the ethos of volunteerism and its potential to contribute to community development. In this context, national youth policy of 2003 and national policy on voluntary sector of 2007 gives a fair idea towards government's contribution to capture the spirit and ethos of volunteerism through a shuttled policy framework.

The national policy on voluntary sector is a commitment to encourage, enable and empower an independent, creative and effective voluntary sector with diversity in form and function, so that it can contribute to the social, cultural and economic advancement of the people of India.

The voluntary sector has contributed significantly to finding innovative solutions to poverty, deprivation, discrimination and exclusion, through various means such as awareness raising, social mobilization, service delivery, training, research, and advocacy. The voluntary sector has been serving as an effective non-political link between the people and the Government. This policy recognizes the important role that the voluntary sector has to play in various areas and affirms the growing need for collaboration with the voluntary sector by the Government as well as by the private sector at the local, provincial and national levels.

It is worthy to note that the national policy on voluntary sector initiated by the National Planning Commission acknowledged, "The Government will encourage involvement of volunteers in public services, such as, at family welfare centers, primary health centers, hospitals, schools, vocational training centers, and sanitation campaigns".

The national policy on voluntary sector is a latest edition of the government's intent to take forward the agenda of national growth and development to another level involving volunteers and their expertise and skill sets to contribute to community development and national march towards peace and prosperity. Alongside, the government's support to quantify the contribution of volunteering and civil society through national satellite accounting system under the aegis of the ministry of programme implementation and statistics through a consultative process with key stakeholders is a step in the right direction.

Despite various initiatives by the government at regional, state and national levels to give a focused approach to the advancement of volunteerism, what has evaded us all through has been a concerted policy environment that addresses various issues that are related to volunteerism, which has long been overdue. If India has to rightfully find its place in the comity of nations, it would need to endeavor hard to address the issue of creating an enabling framework around volunteerism that does not only act as an aid to development but also brings together various stakeholders in spirit of co-operation to work towards supporting and helping communities on various fronts. It is rued that despite civil society pressure and government's own intent at various junctures, a specific policy on volunteerism has evaded us.

India has always taken a leadership role in development agendas, as a responsible member of the UN; hence, it is only in the fitness of occasion and as demanded by long-standing needs' of volunteers that the nation duly decides to develop a framework that takes into account various needs, concerns and expectations of a large number of volunteers. This can only

be done by bringing out a national volunteering policy in line with more than 75 nations. This will not only set up a single window mechanism concerning all volunteerism issues but would also put development on fast track by mobilizing a large number of volunteers that are waiting to unplug and contribute to national goals of growth and development.

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APPROACH TOWARDS ACCOUNTABLE ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Praveen Kumar G

Structured
volunteering is
crucial to promote
and recognize
volunteerism.
INDIA NEEDS
TO DEVELOP A
NATIONAL POLICY
ON VOLUNTEERING
TO SET A CODE FOR
VOLUNTEERISM
that would support
and enable value based
voluntary actions to
accelerate national
development.

BACKGROUND

India has witnessed many forms of volunteerism from the ancient period, such as religious volunteering, through the freedom movement and more so in recent times in the development sector. However, there has not been a significant trend towards streamlining structured volunteerism. There lacks sufficient platforms for volunteering, appropriate management systems, policies to support and appreciate volunteers, recognition of volunteer action and active citizenship. There is an urgent need to look at the space for volunteerism in India in the context of the changing development paradigm.

The voluntary sector in India deploys a large number of volunteers. Yet a significant issue facing volunteerism in this scenario is the lack of efficient systems and standards. The voluntary sector policy 2007 states "The Government will encourage involvement of volunteers in public services, such as at family welfare centers, primary health centers, hospitals, schools, vocational training centers, sanitation campaigns, etc.," which is very limited in scope and needs more improvisation and attention. State and non-state actors are working to enhance the development pace of India and there is more stress on capital and human resources. There is much to be done with the increase in digital divide, inequality in resource distribution, high level of poverty, resulting in child malnourishment and hunger, besides poor human development index in terms of infant mortality and maternal mortality rates. This situation calls for civic action and citizenry response. It is undisputed that Active Citizen Involvement can contribute to better development, brings in more effectiveness in development process and reach out to the most poor and excluded communities.

Many civil society organizations mobilize services of volunteers from both urban and rural backgrounds who are engaged in development processes bringing about change in lives of excluded communities. It is clear that this population of volunteers is less when compared to the need and issues prevailing in the society. Citizen's engagement in development process and decision-making is crucial for bridging the gap. This engagement can bring about a huge difference in lives of excluded and marginalized communities and promote inclusive growth.

There are a few platforms for citizenry action in India. Corporate, non-state actors, journalists, increasing middle class population are all looking at opportunities to contribute to development processes. A handful of organisations involve and promote volunteering, however, these structures need management systems – recruitment, induction, retention and monitoring / evaluation and organized mechanisms. There is greater potential to harness this population and promote volunteerism in a much more organized way. A systematic and planned citizen's engagement can bring about a greater impact on health, education and other development indicators.

“Undisputedly, one can argue that the state has its duty towards citizens, whereas citizenry have their responsibility to society and can contribute to change”.

The budget allocation for youth affairs was only 52.6 million US\$ in 2010-2011, whilst the youth population in country is over 40 per cent of the total population. The five-year plans have neglected the aspect and spirit of volunteerism: The International Volunteer Day (5 December) is not being celebrated in congruence with all other international days! Both the emerging middle class and the huge youth population have a role in development of the country. For development to happen, citizens need to be empowered, engaged, and participate in their own development, and decision-making processes. There are not many platforms for individuals to volunteer and become active citizens. The spirit of volunteerism is witnessed only during natural calamities and aftermath of communal riots as these are sporadic and there is no consistency and sustainability. Existing structures like the NSS and Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) needs reforming and need to cater to a larger audience. The voluntary sector deploys a large number of youth and individuals as volunteers but their contribution and engagement is seldom recognized and celebrated. Although there is a national youth policy fostering youth engagement, volunteering should be the agenda for engaging citizens of all class, creed, ability and religion, social and economic background.

There is a need to:

- Recognise the spirit of volunteerism and create space for volunteering in India in congruence with the ministry of youth affairs and other ministries.
- Create opportunities and spaces for the 300 million bases of middle class, 40 per cent youth population, corporates and other individuals to engage in development process and support the marginalised to realise their rights and become empowered.
- Foster the spirit of volunteering, recognise volunteerism, strengthen the cadres of NSS and NYK, and strengthen the spirit of volunteering in civil society and other spheres.
- Establish a national volunteer centre, which will be “solution stop” for capacity development and networking for volunteering and youth organisations, and be seen as the national centre of excellence. It will provide services and resources on questions of volunteer management, codes of involvement; and hold a database of volunteer opportunities. Importantly, the centre will also act as a platform for the promotion and recognition of volunteering. It will play a key role in engaging with the GOI.
- Offer volunteer management training and resource pool to civil society sector, corporate sector and government agencies.
- Create code of ethics around volunteering with volunteering policies in the government, corporate and voluntary sector to be followed uniformly.
- constitute a volunteering award upholding the spirit of youth and citizens who have contributed their time and skills for community development

Therefore, a National Policy on volunteering is recommended to engage citizen in development processes for poverty eradication, enhancing transparency, accountability and in achieving equality in growth process.

Many countries have realized the need for active citizenship and role of volunteers in enhancing development effectiveness. Governments, corporate and civil society have initiated volunteering Programmes, which are often supported by a national policy on volunteering. It is pertinent to acknowledge such initiatives and learn positive impacts for improvising the volunteering scenario in India.

The success of encouraging volunteerism based on active citizenship can be seen in the United Arab Emirates. The government-affiliated Emirates Foundation launched a volunteer symposium, Takatof, to encourage volunteerism as an expression of national solidarity and citizenship. It identifies Emirati citizens as volunteers and beneficiaries. Encouraging active citizenship can require change in the cultural context of volunteerism so individuals associate volunteerism with economic development. This programme was very successful in recruiting large numbers of volunteers, more volunteers than available with the volunteer placements. The Emirati example is demonstrative of a larger trend in the Arab states to undertake ad-hoc volunteer initiatives under a partnership between the government, private sector, and civil society.

The Lebanon Government has set up summer camps for 18-25 year-olds to encourage volunteerism through NGOs in addition to their traditional religious and familial responsibilities. Every year 500 youth attend an eighteen-day camp to promote volunteerism and volunteer in communities emphasizing non-religious and non-sectarian volunteerism. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Affairs for a weekend camp with the same objectives picks 40-50 students. The Ministry of Social Affairs has requested the Ministry of Education to add a "day of volunteerism" to the curriculum to learn about volunteerism and to encourage individual volunteering. By encouraging volunteerism from a young age, the Association for Volunteer Services, an NGO, is hoping to educate children that volunteerism can extend beyond familial obligation.

In Egypt, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood states in its April 2008 Working Paper on the Reality and Prospects of Volunteer Work that, one challenge for formal volunteerism is the understanding of formal volunteerism's value and the idea that it would negatively affect education by distracting from studying. To increase the appreciation of volunteers, the council aimed to focus public awareness on the benefits and social value of formal volunteerism. It worked with the schools, media, and clergy to include messages about volunteerism. It worked with parents and students to illustrate how volunteerism is an individual and national benefit.

Philippines and South Korean Governments are able to encourage formal volunteering and guide the management of volunteers via a national volunteer center. The national volunteer center coordinates policy and planning to effectively manage volunteers on key issues that will contribute to development.

In 2007, the Philippines enacted Act No. 9418 on Strengthening Volunteerism, which sets the guidelines for the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA). The PNVSCA coordinates volunteer efforts, delineates policies for foreign volunteers and systematically registers local volunteers. The Act strengthens the PNVSCA and gives it power to manage the implementation of the Act. The PNVSCA works with the Multi-Sectoral Advisory Body (MSAB), which is composed of representatives from the government, corporate, academic, and non-profit sectors. The MSAB advises on the national volunteer service and acts to strengthen the relationships between voluntary organizations and local communities. Although the Philippines has registered volunteers and volunteer organizations since 2004, under the Act the PNVSCA is to create a national registration system to improve harmonization between volunteers and organizations. The legislation also requires the national Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education to include volunteerism to promote formal volunteerism among students of secondary and higher education.

In 2006, South Korea enacted the Basic Law on Promoting Volunteer Services and created the national Committee on Volunteer Promotion, which comprises the government and

civil society. The Act also created a national Volunteer Service Promotion Committee, which is responsible for volunteer policy, coordination, and management. Ministers from the government and citizens with knowledge and experience in the voluntary sector form the new committee. Under the Volunteer Service Promotion Committee is a Working Group on Volunteer Service Promotion, which is comprised of 25 members from the government and citizens recommended by the Korean Council on Volunteering. The Group is responsible for drafting policy, planning documents, and coordination for the Committee. The Act ensures that volunteers work in a safe environment, and a presidential decree includes specific guidelines for protection. It covers insurance, protection against economic loss, and physical protection. The Korean Council on Volunteering coordinates national volunteer service between organizations, international volunteers, and research.

Volunteering England is a charity that acts as the “lead national volunteering development agency for England.” Among its multiple activities, it works to support the infrastructure of volunteering and promote best practices. It also researches the state of volunteering and cooperates with the government if there are legal barriers to volunteerism. Volunteering England is the secretariat of the England Volunteering Development Council, a high-level advocacy group made up of representatives from the public and private sectors. It works with the government and political parties to lobby for policy and community efforts toward good volunteerism. Furthermore, the documents that outline laws and policies affecting volunteers and the state of volunteerism are produced by these organizations or coalitions.

Volunteers building a waterway to collect the scarce rainwater in the village pond in Deoghar, Jharkhand © PIDT, 2011



Volunteering: Compact Code of Good Practice defines what a volunteer is, as there is no legal definition, and offers a starting point for secondary documents. It includes “understanding the concept of volunteering, the importance and scope of volunteering, overcoming barriers to volunteering, valuing volunteer contributions, the volunteering experience, the volunteering infrastructure and taking the Code forward.”

Additionally, Building on Success: Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure in England 2004 – 2014 is a ten-year strategy developed by Volunteering England, with input from the voluntary sector. The Strategy builds on the Code definition of the volunteer and infrastructure and defines the differences between volunteer “infrastructure and the organizations that provide it.”

Finally, the Manifesto for Change focuses on the voluntary infrastructure and is written for volunteers, non-volunteers, and voluntary organizations. Written as a result of collaboration with voluntary organizations, Volunteering England, the England Volunteering Development Council, charities, and government bodies, its recommendations are to “raise the profile of volunteering,” ensuring that anyone can volunteer, modernize volunteering and reward volunteer efforts, and it includes the government funding that is needed to meet these guidelines. As a result, the government invested £4million for volunteer and management training and £2million for a volunteering fund for the disabled. In addition it decided to produce guidance to help avoid unnecessary criminal records checks being carried out, improve coordination of volunteering by civil servants, support existing events to promote volunteering and undertake further work on the viability of the recommendation to include volunteering in the inspection of public services.

In the larger European Union (EU), there have been laws and policies for the promotion of volunteerism since 1997. EU institutions have conducted multiple studies and made recommendations to member states on how to remove legal and social barriers to volunteerism. In March 2008, the European Parliament recommended in its “Report on the Role of Volunteering in Contributing to Economic and Social Cohesion” for member states to allow Value Added Tax (VAT) exemptions for voluntary organizations when making purchases that are toward their objectives. Because of the EU’s continuous support for volunteerism, there have been various successful volunteer policies in Europe.

For formal recognition of volunteers, the Estonian Government has implemented a policy that includes several methods for rewarding volunteers. The first is to celebrate International Volunteers Day with a National Volunteer Awarding Event with the President of the Republic of Estonia as its patron. It also includes promoting a “Volunteer Pass,” a document that illustrates the volunteer’s skills and experiences from volunteering.

The drafting of Tanzania’s National Volunteer Policy was a collaborative process. In 2001, the government commissioned a study that resulted in a recommendation for a National Volunteer Policy. UNV Tanzania also recommended a National Volunteer Policy after a study in 2005. The government worked with UNV Tanzania, civil society, and the donor community to draft a policy. In addition to the appropriate government ministry, other national government ministries, regional and local governments, CSOs, and donor community have planned to work together in the policy’s implementation.

funding allocations made, management systems created, recognition and value system for volunteering initiated. In order to enhance volunteerism these aspects are very crucial and only a robust national policy on volunteering backed with government willingness and resources will create legitimacy to volunteerism in India. This will further strengthen existing structures including the NSS, NYKS and create more spaces and opportunities for active citizenship through collaborations with various stakeholders in India.

In India, the National Youth Policy 2003 lays emphasis on the youth to learn democratic principles through “Citizenship Programmes” through special camps, NSS camps, NYKS campaigns, and the awareness efforts promoted by NGOs and community-based organizations. References to Active Citizenship are made in terms of ideals and goals based on principles and do not mention practical directions or guidelines for promoting active citizenship. The following is a policy directive from the National Youth Policy:

“Embodying instruction in the values like respect for teachers and parents, adolescent and the aged besides religious tolerance, and compassion towards the poor and the needy. The concept of family as the basic and most important asset of Indian Society will be strengthened.”

The guideline posits that the “concept of family... will be strengthened” but does not mention how or what would constitute a strong concept of volunteering and family. A National Policy on volunteering should be aimed towards developing a framework for measurable, practical policy directives.

The national policy on volunteering will also give a boost to various types of volunteering, recognize and value volunteers and overall bring about a structural framework for volunteerism. As an ultimate result, this platform and framework will act as a pivotal force in enhancing development effectiveness and benefit society. The XII planning process should take cognizance of the need for a national policy on volunteering to give legitimacy to volunteering in country. This will also involve more resource allocations from various ministries and recognition at large.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEERING IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

TK Thomas
Vedabhyas Kundu

NEW COMPLEXITIES IN
OUR SOCIAL STRUCTURE
DUE TO AN EMERGENT
HYPER TECHNOLOGICAL
ENVIRONMENT,
NEO LIBERALISM,
INCREASING
MATERIALISM AND
DISCONNECT BETWEEN
THE SPIRIT OF
ALTRUISM AND GOALS
OF INDIVIDUALS ARE
A CHALLENGE TO
VOLUNTEERISM IN
THE CONTEMPORARY
SOCIETY. These
contradictions,
however, also offer
new opportunities and
space for volunteer
engagement.

"Motivating people to come and volunteer in community work is a big challenge these days. The turnover rate is very high. Majority of them are erratic and some turn up occasionally," says Laxmi Debnath, coordinator of Rabi Thakur Shishu *Panchayat* in Nutan Nagar, Agartala, Tripura. A post-graduate, Laxmi and a few of her friends have got together to teach underprivileged children of her area.

Airing the same concerns, Rihan Ali, coordinator of Surovi Sishu *Panchayat*, Guwahati, Assam points out, "There is constant pressure on the youth today-both from their families and the society to excel in studies, acquire skills for which they can get jobs and even look for avenues like tuition to contribute to the family." Rihan is also involved in various other volunteer efforts but expresses the anguish of not being able to attract steady flow of volunteers like him. "With so much of competition to succeed, where is the time for volunteering?" he exclaims.

Laxmi and Rihan's predicament in getting volunteers who are committed to a cause for a considerable period and who do not constitute a floating population reflects the current challenges to motivate people to volunteer in contemporary societies.

"It is not just young people, but also adults who are finding it increasingly difficult to locate space and time to volunteer," opines Hima Rani Baishya, coordinator of Young Reporters Network of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Assam.

"We have become career conscious and are always in the hunt for that extra buck. Many of us even do not find time to be with our families, so volunteering for the community becomes a luxury," observes Hima, "Many of our social relationships are governed by how much we gain from each other."

Post-modern trends like the new hyper technological environment, an increasing consumerist society, neo liberalism, materialism and affluent culture, and the challenge to acquire status in society through education and financial resources seems to be metamorphosing lives of ordinary Indians. In this context, Joshi (2010) argues, "Today, the impact of globalization and the economic boom can fan increasing individualism in India. This, in turn, could result in increased urbanization, migration, media dominance, hectic work life, the break-up of the joint family system, change in the role of women from being home makers, and disregard of the elderly, among others."

All these emerging scenarios in Indian society can be used to explain the structural causes of the changing notions of volunteering. The spirit of volunteering has been the

bedrock of traditional Indian society; this in turn reflected its collectivist orientation. The concerns articulated by Hima, Laxmi and Rihan takes into account the new complexities of our social structure where the spirit of altruism is challenged.

Hustinx (2001) notes that in the wake of advanced modernization and individualization processes, there appears to be a basic shift from habitual and dedicated involvement towards more episodic, non-committal and self-oriented types of participation. Further, Hustinx et.al. (2003) emphasize that 'individualization is considered the most dangerous threat to volunteering eliminating the remaining solidarity among citizens.'

Though there are contentions and contestations on the consequences of individualization, scholars like Beteille (2003) note individualism is accompanied by the growth not only of competition but also of the idea of natural inequality. It is also contended that individualization results in alienation from society. Etzioni (1993) opines that increase of individual rights conflicts with the needs of the community and could destruct institutions like families and communities.

In this context, the passion of putting self-interest and individual gain are in direct conflict with the philosophy of volunteerism. In fact, Laxmi and Rihan's predicament in locating serious volunteers can be explained by Hustinx's (2003) conviction that individualism and altruism are fundamentally at odds with each other. Eckstein (2001) goes further in arguing that the 'collectivistic' basis underlying volunteer engagement is slowly giving way to a more 'individualistic' basis.

Another important challenge before groups like Rihan and Laxmi's is the 'unattractiveness' of volunteer work in relation to popular culture and other ready forms of entertainment. More than ever before, the rise of consumer culture has ensured that there are competing indulgences available to not only the youth but also different sections of the society. Different forms of entertainment and avenues of engagement are available not only in cities and towns but also in rural areas. Strinati (1995) argues that 'the importance and power of the mass media and popular culture mean that they govern and shape all other forms of social relationships.' He further says that 'our perceptions of the social environment in which we live are largely informed by mediated cultural representations.' Therefore, as popular culture promotes different forms of consumerist habits, people get attracted to these and options to take up volunteer work for the community are eclipsed.

Laxmi echoes a significant dimension to the emerging trends of volunteering when she talks about volunteers turning up occasionally. Dr Brijender Singh Panwar, Director of M S Panwar Institute of Communications and Management, Solan, Himachal Pradesh concurs with Laxmi's contention. Dr Panwar who tries to encourage lot of young people to take up different volunteer initiatives in his area observes it is a challenge to sustain the interest of a volunteer for a long time. "Volunteers no longer want to commit themselves to a cause or a group for long. Many of them want to come and volunteer for an event only without any attachments," he adds.

Contending with Dr Panwar's observations, Hima shares her experience, firstly of volunteering herself and then general attitude of many volunteers. "Most volunteers do not want to get into any complicated process to volunteer. They want it simple and flexible. In addition, they want to be sure that they can move out of the initiative or organization easily if they are not able to sustain their interest. Long term commitment to volunteer for a cause is becoming a rarity," she says.

This trend of volunteering as articulated by Dr Panwar and Hima where volunteers end up

volunteering for an event, one-off Programme or for a short period is termed as 'episodic volunteering.' Cnaan et. al. (2005) defines episodic volunteering as one where individuals engage in one-time or short-term volunteer opportunities. Episodic volunteering adds new dimension to the increasing complexities of volunteer engagement, which people like Dr Panwar, Rihan and Laxmi, who try to involve volunteers in their community endeavours have to negotiate with.

Anheier et. al. (1999) talks of increase in instrumental motives to volunteer in comparison to religious values and selfless motivations. The instrumental motives include gaining new experiences and skills, meeting new people, personal satisfaction and doing something worthwhile in spare time. Articulating on this trend in volunteering, Dr Panwar points out, "The volunteers are purely guided by personal gains like learning new skills and getting a certificate. Besides, they get involved in only those areas where they are interested. Traditional values such as service to others or a sense of duty to the community are not of immediate interests to many volunteers today."

In this context, Katz et al (2005) talk about young people's increasing propensity to volunteer for resume building. Besides, Hustinx points out that present day volunteers demand a considerable amount of autonomy and freedom in their roles and responsibilities. A study of college volunteers in Delhi during 2001 by Team IYV, UN Volunteers also reflected the same fact, most of the volunteers wanted flexibility in their volunteering work. (The study was not published)

Another challenge related to the growing dominance of market forces is resource mobilization. According to Hima, many people want to start their own volunteer initiative. "The immediate problem which one faces is of resource mobilization. In today's society, nothing comes free of cost. For big groups, mobilizing resources is not very difficult. But for volunteers who want to initiate something new, gathering resources is the biggest challenge. It can be very discouraging," she adds.

In the backdrop of the complex challenges to volunteering where views of philosophers like Hobbes and Helvetius who argued that self-love, selfishness or egoistic pleasures are the only motives of human action seem to hold the roost, there are positive cases of individuals and groups trying to bring a change through volunteer action.

OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEERING

The inspiring story of the Medicine Baba⁹⁴ helps locate instances of selfless volunteer action that can inspire people to altruism. Mr Onkar Nath, the Medicine Baba, a retired lab technician has been collecting medicines and then distributing these free of cost in 12 charitable clinics and two government hospitals. His medicine bank, Raahat hi Rahaat, has been working for the past four years.

The 75-year old Onkar Nath is among hundreds of selfless volunteers who are trying to bring about a change in the society against all odds. Such volunteers epitomize the deep-rooted values of altruism in Indian society. It also epitomizes that volunteerism is a trait that exists in the collective consciousness of the people at large.

Inspiring stories like that of Onkar Nath takes us to the terrain of discourse on the opportunities available for volunteering in today's contemporary society. First, it is important to discuss the impact of the modernization process. Beteille (2002) notes, "In



Exposing urban youth volunteers to the realities of rural development through Sports © Anant Vikas Trust, 2011

some areas and in certain phases modernization tends to increase rather than reduce the gap between the socially advantaged and the disadvantaged.”

Further, commenting on the economic reforms process, Kothari (2005) observes that ‘the emerging combination of pressures and policies have led to considerable growth in inequity and unemployment’. He adds, “Integrating Indian economy into the world market necessarily means leaving behind large sections of the society, excluding them from the purview of economic development and perceiving them as dispensable.”

Kothari argues that there is a tremendous obsession with the rich and the super-rich, which is seen by the media to be an indicator of prosperity. “Large sections of the working class and the lower castes and communities are being excluded and retrenched,” he points out, “By following a particular framework of development, we have increased the feeling of alienation and disenchantment among the mass of the people.”

In this backdrop, Dr Pratyusha Kumar Mondal, National Council of Education Research and Technology opines that the increasing inequalities and widening gap between the rich and poor in Indian society offers new opportunities for individuals and groups to volunteer for the downtrodden and related concerns.

“Due to varied contradictions arising out of neo-liberal policies, new spaces are being created for volunteers to work to plug-in these contradictions,” he stresses, “Besides the resultant structural transformation of Indian society creates opportunities for volunteer interventions.”

Dr Mondal cites the cases of dalit movement, the movements for ecological security especially those against trans-national corporations and protest action against different neo-liberal policies. He points how different types of people are coming together as volunteers to raise their voices. “It is not just the people who are suffering who join these causes but many enlightened youth and people who want to see a more equitable society volunteer for these initiatives,” he adds.

Meanwhile Hariss (2007) argues that in the post liberalization era there ‘certainly appears to be a period of associational activism, especially with the development of

networks, fora and coordinating agencies.' This trend seems to be in vogue in urban areas of the country. Groups such as Resident Welfare Associations provide platform for many individuals to volunteer for their colonies.

The increase in associational activism, development of networks and fora as noted by Hariss takes us to the discourse on the role of volunteerism in creation and enhancement of social capital and it being a building block of social cohesion. By building trust and reciprocity between citizens, volunteering contributes both to a more cohesive, stable society and to a more economically prosperous one (UN Volunteers, 1999). The background paper of the UN Volunteers quotes Robert Putnam who said 'one of the key measures of social capital was participation in social capital or horizontal networks of civic engagement.'

New opportunities for volunteering are provided by the proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Though there are contention and contestations on the impact of technological revolution, the exponential growth of ICTs has led to the increase in interactivity, which was not possible before, emergence of new social ties and networks and access to diverse forms of information from different sources, which could not be gauged previously.

Tornero et. al. (2010) says, "During the last few years of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century, digital technologies and new media (ICT) have come to occupy the epicenter of our lives. They are responsible for having constructed the hyper technological manmade environment in which almost all people and objects have been endowed with a kind of digital interface, so we work, live and interact in a digitally enriched environment, in a digital bubble."

Tornero further writes that the 'new hyper technological environment, the deepening of communicative globalization, has not only altered the way we perceive and use time and space, it has also changed the chemistry of our everyday life and our culture'.

The hyper technological environment also opens up completely new avenues and tools for individuals and groups to volunteer. According to the State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) (2011), volunteers can count on a rapidly growing range of technology to help tackle many global challenges of today. It notes that 'the advent of mobile and Internet-based ICT is revolutionizing volunteer actions in terms of who, what, when and where'.

Micro-volunteerism has evolved as a new trend in volunteerism due to deep proliferation of mobile technology. The SWVR notes, "Mass short message service communication (SMS) is one form of micro-volunteerism that contributes to the production and sharing of information. It is frequently used by volunteers to raise awareness on local issues, inform people's choices and monitor public services."

For instance, Ananya Roy, a class XII student in Kolkata and a member of *The Peace Gong* made use of SMS to mobilize people in a silent march to protest the death of over 90 people in the fire in AMRI Hospital. She writes (*The Peace Gong*, April 2012), "On December 12, 2011, I sent out approximately three hundred text messages to students of various schools and colleges telling them that I would be in front of AMRI, sticking a few posters and lighting a candle as a mark of a silent protest. The message was forwarded to numerous people and I received a huge response saying that they wanted to join in too. They wanted to light a candle that would ignite the change in the prevailing darkness. I went ahead to create an event on Facebook named "VOICE YOUR GRIEF AND ANGER-PLAY THE ROLE OF THE YOUTH". It was a public event open to

all those with a heart and will to bring about a change. Within a day we got a response from more than 120 people saying that they would be attending the gathering.”

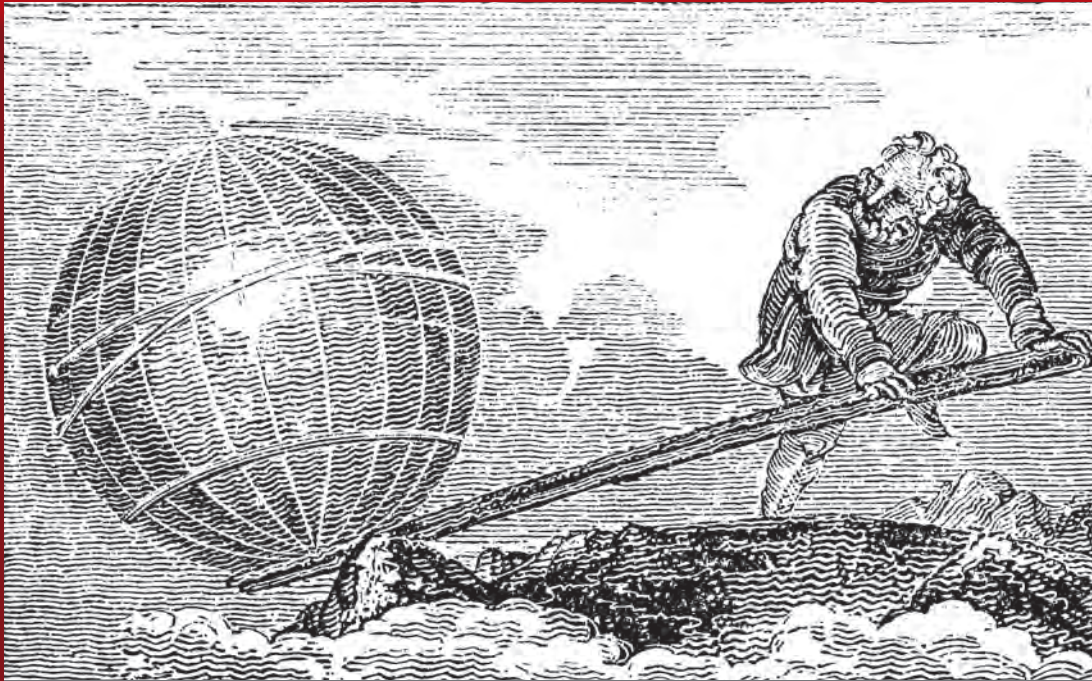
There are large numbers of examples like that of Ananya who are making use of new technology to bring change through volunteering. These include use of social media, which offers amazing possibilities to build trans-global coalitions and partnerships on different concerns and causes.

CONCLUSION

This chapter delved on the complex challenges to volunteering today in the backdrop of structural changes in Indian society. The process of individualization and secularization are a challenge to the collectivist nature of our society and the concept of altruism. Increasingly volunteers volunteer with instrumental motives like enhancing one's own skills or getting some form of recognition. Also forms of episodic volunteering wherein a volunteer wants to volunteer for a one-off event or in the short term seems to be in the rise. Notwithstanding these challenges, the contradictions and conflicts in the society also facilitates new opportunities in volunteering. With the dichotomy between the rich and poor increasing and policies being governed through a neo-liberal framework, new avenues of volunteering are emerging. In addition, the proliferation of ICTs has led to the emergence of new forms of volunteering. Approaches to volunteer promotion need to develop critical understanding of the new trends in volunteering while developing strategies to attract volunteers.

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Give me the space to stand on, and I will move the earth – Archimedes

This an engraving from Mechanics Magazine published in London in 1824.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_\(Small\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Archimedes_lever_(Small).jpg)

A GLIMPSE ON VOLUNTEERING INTERVENTIONS

CASE STUDY/ ARUNACHAL PRADESH: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Hari P. Biswas engages more than 12,000 volunteers in his pursuit to bring about community development.

Hari says, "The inspiration to volunteer comes from my father and Bhaiji (Dr. S.N. Subba Rao). Hari is also motivated by the quote he often shares with his fellow young friends, "He who concentrates with singleness of purpose, will ultimately acquire the capacity to do everything".

Born in 1983 in Munshipara village of West Bengal in a very poor family, Hari completed his primary education in Bengali medium. Soon after, his family moved to Arunachal Pradesh, where his parents worked as PWD casual workers to support the family of seven. Hari often helped his father to earn extra income. His father passed away while Hari was still in college and Hari had to find a job while pursuing his education to support the family. Despite all odds, he completed his post-graduation with merit and many awards to his credit for extracurricular activities.

In college, a chance meeting with renowned Gandhian Dr. S.N. Subba Rao during a National Integration Camp changed his life. Inspired by Mr. Rao's work for community development/ ranging from promoting interfaith understanding to running youth camps for community service, Hari started the National Youth Project (NYP) in Arunachal Pradesh in 2006. NYP now works in 205 villages of all the 16 districts with 47 centers. The project has successfully mobilized more than 6,500 women in 500 Self-help Groups (SHGs), engaged more than 7000 farmers in cultivation, and set up many training-cum-production centers for unemployed youth in the region.

Hari P. Biswas (in black suit) during a SHG training in Arunachal Pradesh © NYP



Thanks to Hari's efforts, SHG members (most of which are women) of all the 205 villages are on their way to becoming self-reliant by taking up activities like handloom, handicraft, mushroom cultivation, piggery, poultry and vegetable gardening. To give some examples, 125 women are working as artisans at Rural Industry Service Centre of NYP where they make traditional dresses like gale, mekhela, shawl, etc. at Chongkham in Lohit district; and more than 200 SHG members from Lower Dibang Valley and other areas are engaged in mushroom cultivation. Farmers Club members of Maryiang in upper Siang district are making cane and bamboo handicrafts.

One of the best initiatives taken by NYP is vegetable cultivation in difficult terrain for more than 7,000 farmers in Arunachal Pradesh. NYP introduced new technology for cultivation in the state resulting in regular earnings for the farmers now. The products of the SHGs and farmers club members are either sold directly to NYP outlets in different locations or at national and state level exhibitions organized by NYP or other organizations.

Each year, more than 5,000 unemployed youth are trained for self-employment under various vocational training, entrepreneurship and skilled development Programme etc. in the NYP centers. For all these activities, various agencies such as National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), and National Council of Rural Institute (NCRI) etc. support Hari in his work.

Hari also wants to give back to his own people. His native village is still very backward with no electricity and poor health facilities. In 2011, he started the construction of a school to create educational facilities in his village and will continue to do more in the near future.

CASE STUDY /HARYANA:

URBAN YOUTH REACHING OUT TO EMPOWER THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN RURAL INDIA

With the efforts of Shivani Rathee and Shelly Singh, the children of Nainagla, Mewat are becoming active and responsible citizens, and transforming their surroundings for creating a healthier environment.

Shivani Rathee and Shelly Singh, students of Ramjas College, Delhi, have been active members of NSS and have helped organize cloth and blood donation camps, cleanliness drives, and teaching the poor campaign in their college. Their strong will and dedication to bring about a change in the lives of children has led them to work actively in the Mewat region of Haryana.

Shelly and Shivani assess the existing problems in the village from time to time, and discuss them with the children to promote community building through child participation. The duo says, "Our aim was never to make a difference but to inculcate the will in them to make a difference. We conduct workshops for the children so that they can contribute to peace and environment protection."

The success of their efforts is evident from the fact that 51 students have now joined the Shishu Panchayat, whereas they rarely attended school earlier. These students have also taken up the ownership of the activities, in the absence of Shelly and Shivani.

For Shivani and Shelly, the journey in Mewat has been full of rich experience. Mewat, a Muslim-dominated district is one of the poorest and underdeveloped regions in Haryana, though it is just 50 kilometers from Delhi airport.



Shivani Rathee with Shishu Panchayat members in Mewat © Shivani

With the aim to encourage urban youth to volunteer in rural areas and support them for the development of their communities, three villages — Nainagla, Agon and Doha — in Mewat were visited by UNV and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Foundation (GRTF) in 2011. Based on the inputs and consultations, Nainagla was chosen. Shivani Rathee was then trained in July 2011 to set up a Sishu Panchyat in the village.

She was later joined by Shelly Singh. Both of them now travel to Nainagla every week to strengthen the network and to empower the children there, especially the girls. When they started, they were surprised when the woman Sarpanch (village head) initially refrained her own daughters from joining them.

Despite many initial challenges, Shelly and Shivani's efforts have helped to bring about positive changes. The SP members now meet regularly to discuss the problems and try to come up with logical solutions. They raise voice for their rights and discuss about the actions they can get involved in. The members recently organized a health rally demonstrating the importance of healthy habits as a daily regime and clean surroundings to deal with sanitation – a major problem in Mewat. A tree plantation drive was also organized by them to sensitize the children towards environment.

Thanks to Shivani and Shelly, a change is slowly taking place. They hope they would continue to work with these children. Their work has received a lot of appreciation and recognition and was featured in Hindustan Times, a leading newspaper in India.

CASE STUDY / WEST BENGAL:

FORMER IAS OFFICER CONTINUES TO VOLUNTEER FOR IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Amalendu Ghosh believes that the plight of the poor can improve only if they learn to take up their own causes. Thus, for the last four years, he has been training the marginalized through confidence building, guidance and handholding to improve their lives.

Born in a remote village of Murshidabad district in West Bengal (WB) in 1946, Amalendu Ghosh has seen abject poverty of rural people, their sufferings, injustices and deprivations. These left an indelible mark in his mind and prompted him to join civil service in 1972 to serve the people of his state. He had an illustrious career and held many responsible positions at the district and secretariat level. These include Commissioner for Panchayat and Rural Development; and Chairman, Municipal Service Commission.

In 2007, Amalendu started volunteering at Loka Kalyan Parishad (LKP) - a voluntary organization to take up direct action initiatives to alleviate chronic poverty of rural India. For years LKP worked on improving food security and other vital issues of the poor in parts of WB and Bihar. Amalendu quotes Sri Sri Ramakrishna 'do not always look upward, see downward as well'. "Besides, my grandfather taught me to look, through the windows, beyond the four walls of the room, where many live who are not as privileged

Amalendu Ghosh IAS(Retd) encouraging women from poor families to form Self Help Groups © LKP



ধানগোলা-
দল সংখ্যা- ১৯টি, গোলাব সংখ্যা- ১৯
শুরুতে সদস্য সংখ্যা- ১৮৩ জন
শুরুতে মজুত - ৮০.৩০ কুইন্টাল
বর্তমান দল সংখ্যা- ১৯ টি
” সদস্য সংখ্যা - ১৮৩ জন
বর্তমান মজুত সংখ্যা- ৯৮ কুইন্টাল

as I am and taught me to be sensitive to their causes, even if I am unable to do anything personally. These lessons have inspired me to do something for the poor using the LKP's platform. I am committed to go on as long as my health will permit and I aspire to see smiles on the faces of those with and for whom I am working," says Amalendu.

After retiring from civil services in 2008, Amalendu continued with his social commitments and now works full time on a voluntary basis for rural development and rural local governance. He supports the implementation of MNREGA in Purulia, WB by providing his expert advice and guidance in utilization of unattended land and developing leadership skills of rural women using innovative methods. He along with his colleagues has developed many capacity building modules, IEC materials and booklets as well.

The retired civil servant has successfully mobilized women of the poorest families (who suffer from acute food and nutritional insecurity) to form SHGs in the five most backward blocks of WB. These women have now started saving money and are building confidence to take up initiatives like farming on public land obtained from *Panchayats*/ taken on seasonal lease from absentee landowners etc. Amalendu with LKP has been able to advocate and convince the *Panchayats* to handover unused lands to SHGs to labour and produce fruits and many vegetables for home consumption and surplus sale.

Currently, Amalendu is leading the activities involving nearly 40,000 families of the most backward areas of WB. These families are engaged in farm activities, fisheries, small animal rearing, social forestry etc. Women of these families have helped to reduce their food insecurity by about 50 per cent.

The committed volunteer has also encouraged women to work with rural local governments – *Panchayati Raj* Institutions for their institutional and capacity development. As a result, the women now attend *panchayat* meetings, visit government offices confidently, and assert their rights. Public health and education issues are also being included in their activities. Women also take up the causes like alcoholism, early marriage, dowry system, domestic violence etc. Thanks to Amalendu's efforts, empowerment of women has generated huge social capital and strengthened grassroots level democracy in the poorest and backward areas of WB.

CASE STUDY/WEST BENGAL:

ARUN NEVTIA MAKING EFFORTS TO ENSURE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE FOR THE MARGINALIZED IN THE RURAL AREAS

Afflicted with cancer at the age of 10, Arun Nevatia has not allowed this serious ailment to curb his zeal to help others.

"Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others," remarks Arun.

Arun gave up his real estate business to dedicate his full time to social service in 2007 and donated an initial fund for establishing health centers in rural areas. The first center was established at Mayapur, 130 km north of Kolkata and currently the center serves more than 5000 rural poor every month.

Arun has seen his lows of life — extreme physical suffering because of cancer and mental agony associated with it. While other children were enjoying their childhood, Arun had to go through chemo and radiotherapy. The disease relapsed five times



Arun Nevatia at a primary health care center established by him for the poor in rural areas of West Bengal © Arun

with an array of associated ailments in the form of diabetes, blood pressure, thyroid, cataract and other deadly diseases. But Arun, blessed with superior intelligence, topped his school, and graduated from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. Thereafter, he joined the housing construction business and worked for 20 years despite his sufferings. During this course, it dawned on him, that he could overcome his disease as he had the best of the doctors and expensive medicines available, but what about millions who cannot afford good healthcare?

With this noble thought in mind, Arun opened a primary health center at Mayapur in 2007 to provide healthcare to poor people at the initial level and help prevent them from the vicious cycle of poverty, exploitation and apathy because of their illness. As expected, the center received an overwhelming response and saw more than 8,000 patients in the very first month. Encouraged, many of Arun's acquaintances joined hands with him and a public trust, The Rural Health Care Foundation, was formed.

At present, the trust has five centers in many downtrodden areas of West Bengal and has served more than 400,000 patients. The trust plans to open enough centers in the entire state so that no underprivileged suffer due to lack of primary health care. The trust has tie-ups with many eye hospitals and provides cataract operations and cleft lip/palate free of cost. Arun feels that "this tree of efforts is sure to yield fruits when people start to live a healthier life in rural areas." Even though his health may not support him, he thinks

that he does not need health or wealth to work for the poor, but the true spirit that he has in abundance.

For his efforts, Arun has received the Salaam Bengal Award 2011 initiated by Anandabazar Patrika (ABP) Group, and the Indian Volunteer Award 2011 by Apeejay Group. He is also one of the winners of the Challenge 3rd iDiya 2011 competition conducted by the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. Impressed by his work and commitment, UNICEF India has expressed willingness to work with his foundation. His foundation is also listed on the website of Centre For Health Market Innovation.

CASE STUDY/HIMACHAL PRADESH:

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

In a region like Himachal Pradesh (HP), which is highly vulnerable to various types of natural hazards, it is crucial to build communities for disaster preparedness and response.

Navneet Yadav, a National UN Volunteer works as the Capacity Building and Training Associate under the UNDP-GOI DRR Programme (DRR 2009-2012) in HP. As a UN Volunteer, Navneet has developed a new perspective on volunteering and has realized his ethical responsibility to strengthen the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) framework in this region.

He draws a great sense of satisfaction from his work and is determined to bring in more innovative ideas to make people aware of disaster preparedness and response to minimize casualties in terms of loss of life and material. "I endeavour to sensitize and prepare the communities for an unimagined, catastrophic event, or to overcome it. I exploit my creativity and skills to develop innovative means of capacity building

Navneet raising awareness about DRR among school and college students in Himachal Pradesh through an audio-visual quiz © Navneet, UNV



for disaster preparedness, planning and response. Taking the globally-renowned good practices to the grassroots-level through effective means of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) is indeed a satisfying and rewarding experience," says Navneet.

Navneet designs and develops various types of IEC on disaster preparedness and response, capitalizing on his past creative skills and his experience of working in earthquake-hit Kashmir region. His initial creations included bilingual posters and brochures on earthquakes and landslides preparedness, fire safety and earthquake-resistant construction. In his quest to develop innovative means of awareness generation and capacity building of the community, he has developed an audio-visual quiz which has now become a popular tool to raise awareness on DRR among the students of schools and colleges in HP. Navneet's supervisor, the State Project Officer- HP, Mr. D.C. Rana provides him with the much-needed guidance and feedback in his work.

Navneet has also significantly contributed to the conceptualization, planning and execution of the first ever State-level Mass Awareness Campaign 'Samarth-2011' which witnessed huge participation of community in all the districts of the state. During this campaign thematic events were organized on the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) 2011 with the participation of public, schools & colleges, media, hospitals, NYKS, department of Fire Safety and Civil Defence, and other Government Offices and NGOs. A small IEC booklet on DRR designed and developed by Navneet for 'Samarth-2011' is widely appreciated by the common people as well as experts.

To promote volunteerism for effective DRR, Navneet developed a toolkit on 'Role of Volunteerism for Disaster Preparedness and Response' in consultation and support from the UNDP DRM Unit. This toolkit contains vital information about the key concepts of DRR, significance of volunteering, general qualities of volunteers and their roles & responsibilities in DRR. Another significant initiative taken by him was the creation of a state-level database of volunteers for Disaster Management in HP.

For this, Navneet developed the HPSDMA (Himachal Pradesh Disaster Management Authority) Volunteer Application Form, which was approved by the concerned authorities of HP Govt. To celebrate International Volunteer Day Navneet organized a daylong event 'Swayam-2011' at the Government Degree College, Sanjauli, Shimla on 5 December 2011 with guidance and support from UNV India. He encouraged the students from Shimla and adjacent districts to register with HPSDMA. Because of his efforts, 136 youngsters enrolled in the Programme as volunteers.

Navneet's initiative and contribution is being seen as invaluable to bring about a great degree of transformation in preparing the communities for disaster management and response.

QUO VADIS (WITHER NEXT?)

Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta

“The Titanic was built by professionals, while Noah’s Arc was built by volunteers” was the cryptic, profound voice of a young NSS volunteer at the workshop “Volunteer Voices” in celebration of the Global Youth Service Day and IYV+10 in 2011.

At the risk of sounding altruistic, the creation of a new world, a different world, a sustainable and better world, can be built only by Volunteers taking the lead. The New Age Volunteering in India needs to break free from the ghettos of dogmatic thought and action and involve with ever-widening circles of communication between diverse groups to create a new knowledge as a base for action.

Volunteering makes for a humane social environment. Volunteering, both, as a form of self-expression, community identity and vehicle for change is an entity that the various authors have brought forth succinctly in this book, through history up to contemporary times. Volunteering in India however is so much a way of life that it remains elusive when definitions or volunteer enumeration is attempted.

India is today in a golden age of media advertising, where values are indiscriminately commodified. The market mantra of giving less while promising more is percolating into behavior patterns of people. Flaunting materialism and stimulation of the adrenalin is the order of the day. The excitement of the latest gadget being yet around the corner; amidst rising inflation, makes India’s middle-class inimical to concepts of social responsibility and immune to harsh realities like farmers suicides or child abuse knocking at their doorstep. This hyper-distracted reality creates a surreal world where the majority feel like minority, alienated from their own resources of the self and the environment.

Volunteering in India needs facilitation so that it involves, collaborates and co-exists across class and caste based communities. Youth volunteers need to be enabled to look beyond their petty boundaries of religion, caste, class, gender, age, abilities and power gambles that are limiting thought, innovation, and action. How many of us, for example, know that a cart in the Sundarbans, West Bengal is made from 5 different types of wood, each with an appropriate quality for the part it plays. Unfortunately, the contemporary development paradigm would only view the cart as a symbol of poverty and try to eliminate it along with the knowledge and technology that exists therein.

The Twelfth Five Year Plan, 2012 by the Planning Commission of India with its focus towards inclusive development has been very welcome. It is a world of dream peddling. Inclusivity will hopefully not mainstream the marginalized on to a failed paradigm. Will the State engage in true inclusivity by removing road blocks to non-violent volunteer action and towards one which embraces voluntary organizations facilitating inter-generational, cross-sector, cross-cultural and multi-stakeholder dialogues? If India on the move has to be developed in the right direction while retaining its spirit of giving and ethos of plurality, Volunteering will have to be fashionable and practicable on one hand, while on the other, the state has to assume responsibility to see that volunteering for the practice of Antodaya, or the “Awakening” of the “Last” is possible so that gains of progress can be shared. Such facilitation of active citizenry would need thoughtful and humane engagement.

United Nations Development Programme in India initiated dialogues that promoted “communities of practice” with lead facilitation agencies like UNICEF, UNESCO and FAO. This allowed for the integration of a wealth of information of volunteers in praxis and provides us with Best Practices that light the way forward. The true wealth of India could be harnessed if broad-based mechanisms were created to include volunteers without Internet access or formal education. Such inclusion would create “Communities of Learning’ in which volunteers could exchange ideas and experiences from each other and, we may harness the true wealth of India, which lies in each individual volunteer.

As we globalize, we may want to learn from the beautiful African tradition of Ubuntu. Bishop Desmond Tutu gave this explanation in 2008, “One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu – the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you cannot exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You cannot be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole World. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.”

Recognizing, rewarding and awarding the commissioning of studies, documentation and research in Volunteering is urgently needed so that volunteering is understood and not seen with a skeptical eye. Creating the necessary enabling environment for Volunteers to walk the talk in pride, would yield rich dividends. It could even now reverse the impending forces of fractionalization, fragmentation, intolerance and criminalization that plague the country, and mainstream Volunteering, reciprocity and active citizenry as the cultural ethos of a New Age India.

IYV+10, has brought a new recognition of Volunteering and we hope that mechanisms would be found to communicate and highlight Volunteer action in the hope that it would become commonplace reality. We live in hope that we never unplug the age that Albert Einstein, in reverence said about Mahatma Gandhi, “Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 in India holds within it a huge dream where we could be directly in communication with our future generations. Could we inculcate small acts of Volunteering from infancy and childhood? Could we reiterate giving as a value of the Indian identity? Could we change perspectives where Volunteerism is not seen as a Resource to be exploited but as a Value to be nurtured? Could we as parents, teachers, leaders, friends and compatriots fuel the sustenance of this transformation? Could we, as a Nation, muster the passion to ignite the fire of freedom and ever-widening thought and action?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

SECTION 1 VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Natwar Thakkar has dedicated his life to the cause of national integration and has silently worked for four and a half decades in the complex and inhospitable socio political climate of Nagaland. The Gandhian, known for uniting people in far-flung and remote areas of Nagaland since 1955, has been offering selfless service and has undertaken many activities to promote socio-economic development.

Mathew Cherian, Chief Executive Officer of HelpAge India since 2004, has worked in the area of rural development with cooperatives, voluntary agencies and the National Wastelands Development Board. He is the Founder of Association of Third Sector Researchers in India, Resource Mobilization Network in India, Campaign for Human Rights (Dalits and Tribals), and CAF India.

Biraj Kanti Shome is the Regional Coordinator for community mobilization, Regional Resource Centre for North East States under Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. Earlier he was District Programme Officer (community mobilization) for the Sarba Siksha Avijan, Assam.

Biplab Loha Choudhury is the Associate Professor in the Centre for Journalism & Mass Communication, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. He has extensive experience on development issues communication methods. His books on voluntarism & development include Indian Paradigms of Development Man Standard and Communication (Sampark, 2011) and Communication Strategy of NGO for Rural development (AURCP-AUS, 2000)

Tushar Gandhi, author, motivational speaker, an occasional actor, CSR advocate, and a lifelong volunteer is the great grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. He is also a socio-political activist on peace issues and heads the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation.

SECTION 2 SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF VOLUNTEERISM

Tarun Kanti Bose is an independent writer and editor, media trainer, analyst, researcher and teaches Development Journalism. He has authored and edited several books, and has contributed to journals on socio-economic issues, gender, local self-governance, environment etc.

Jyotsna Chatterji, Director of Joint Women's Programme, New Delhi and Vice President of YWCA, India, is also the chairperson of Madhyam, Bangalore and Women in Development, Chennai. She serves as a member of many human rights groups in India and Asia, including Core Group on Prevention of Child Prostitution (National Commission for Women) and Core Group National Commission on Human Rights among others.

Rohit Trivedi, assistant professor and visually impaired himself, has been advocating for the rights and entitlements of persons with disabilities at national and international levels resulting in increased disable-friendly public places in Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere. Dr. Trivedi volunteers with Arushi, a pioneering organization working on disability issues in Bhopal.

SECTION 3 CULTURE, MEDIA AND VOLUNTEERING

Geeta Chandran, Founder-President, Natya Vriksha, is a celebrated Bharatanatyam artist, vocalist and activist. She serves on the board of several prominent institutions and is deeply involved in many social causes. Author of SO MANY JOURNEYS, Geeta was awarded the prestigious national award – the Padma Shri — in 2007 by the President of India for her vast and varied contribution to Bharatanatyam.

Anubhuti Yadav, an active promoter of Media Literacy in India, is currently working as the Assistant Professor at Central Institute of Educational Technology, National Council for Educational Research and Training. She has won prizes for her scripts in All India Children's Educational Audio Video Festival and has played a key role in introducing media studies at school level.

SECTION 4 CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES ON VOLUNTEERING

Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta is the Executive Director of PIDT and serves on the Board of Directors of IAVE, South-South Solidarity and Indian Habitat Action Forum. Well-travelled within the country and abroad, Cherukuri was instrumental in organizing a number of Volunteering and Youth Conferences in association with the UNV and grassroots action on women's empowerment, artisans' development and education.

Javed Naqi is the assistant professor in Higher Education Department, Govt. of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). A native of Ladakh, Javed is also the founder of THINK INK, a youth and children led volunteers network that develops writing/reporting skills in rural young people in J&K to write on issues they are passionate about.

Vedabhyas Kundu is the Programme Officer at Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, New Delhi. Vedabhyas is widely recognized as a resource person on volunteerism, media literacy, child participation, communications, and peace and conflict resolution. He was the Volunteer Promotion Officer during IYV in 2001.

Rakesh Mohan, IA & AS 1987 is the Joint Secretary (Youth Affairs), Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and the co-chair National IYV+10 Committee. He has gained expertise in Finance and Auditing and has conducted audit for reputed organizations such as WHO, Geneva and FAO, Rome. Mr. Mohan is deeply committed to social development and has presented many papers at the international levels on issues such as Sustainable Human Settlement and People based Reforestation Programme.

Kamal Kumar Kar is the Youth Officer & Regional Head of NSS Regional Center, Ahmedabad, MoYAS, GOI. He has worked in diversified fields such as HIV/ AIDS awareness, rural development, community participation, adolescent health issues in various states of India. Since June 2004, he is actively involved in the training, planning and implementation of Disaster Management activities in NSS in collaboration with Ministry of Home Affairs and UNDP.

Paresh Tewary is the Vice President for JSW Group CSR; Sustainability and Head JSW Foundation. He has wide experience in voluntary and private sector and has led people's initiatives related to HIV/ AIDS, National Policy on Voluntary Sector etc. Paresh also serves on many taskforces including those of the Planning Commission, GOI, and Responsible Business Expert Group Indian Institute of Corporate affairs (IICA).

Amita Dahiya is the UNV National Coordinator for IYV+10. She has experience in Programme management, research and education. Amita has worked as a volunteer with Focal Point for Women UN HQ, New York and with national and international NGOs in various capacities since 1992.

Ananya S Guha is Officer on Special Duty, IGNOU Institute for Vocational Education and Training, Shillong, Meghalaya. He is also a freelance writer and poet. He writes on matters related to education, literature and topics of general interest.

SECTION 5 LAWS AND POLICIES ON VOLUNTEERISM

Vandana Kumari Jena, co-chair National IYV+10 Committee, is the 1979 batch IAS officer of Orissa cadre, and currently the senior advisor on Women and Child Development, Voluntary Action Cell, and Handloom and Handicraft of the Planning Commission, GOI. She is also a prolific writer. Her first novel "The Dance of Death," was published in July 2008. She has also edited many books including "Innovations in literacy".

Harsh Jaitli is the Chief Executive Officer of VANI. He has been active in capacity building and research based advocacy efforts for about two decades on the issues like environment, health, local governance and organizational development.

Pooran Chandra Pandey, Chevening Scholar at London School of Economics and Political Science, is the Executive Director, Global Compact Network India. He has led Teach India Campaign and Social Impact Awards. He also has chaired and co-chaired various task forces and committees of GOI leading to national policy on voluntary sector among others.

A Chevening Gurukul scholar from the London School of Economics and Political Science 2008, **Praveen Kumar** is a development professional with experience at national and international level of promoting active citizenship, volunteering, governance and inclusion. Currently he works as the Programme Manager VSO.

T K Thomas is the Chairman of GRTE, a national think tank of academicians, social workers and practitioners. He is a media educationist and a senior broadcaster and has taught in institutions like Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC) of Jamia Millia Islamia University, and Indian Institute of Mass Communication etc. He is widely recognized as a resource person on media, education, peace, training and capacity building etc.

**Volunteering in India:
Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses**

presents the viewpoints and experiences of eminent people
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