



CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM

DEVELOPING A BUSINESS CULTURE OF CARING IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



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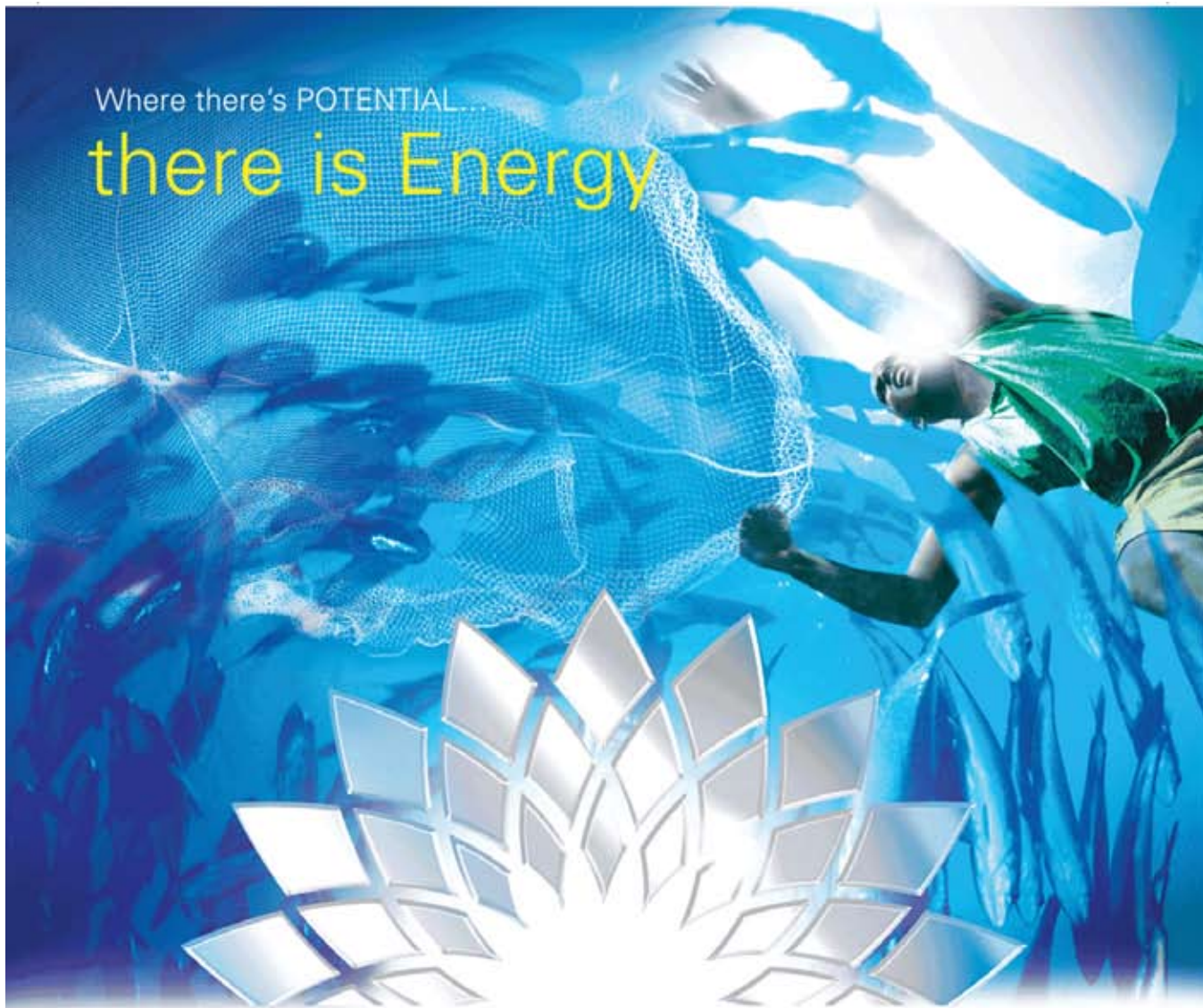
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The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform 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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SETTING THE SCENE

OBJECTIVE

The principle objective of the UNV Survey on Corporate Volunteerism was to understand the current situation with regards to corporate engagement in social and environmental development activities and based on such understanding, to address the gaps, shortcomings and challenges that would have emerged from such examination. It was therefore important to highlight the Private Sector's interest and participation in voluntary activities as well as to examine the motivational factors that prompt individual employees to volunteer in their own company. It is hoped that the survey findings will enable corporate volunteer managers, policy-makers and employees to understand individual attitudes towards volunteering and as a result, to target and manage programs in support of volunteerism more effectively and in so doing, practitioners would be enabled to remove existing barriers to voluntary engagement in the Private Sector.

DEFINITIONS

No specific definitions of corporate volunteering were provided to the respondents, who individually interpreted the concept. Although volunteerism can be defined in different ways, it regularly includes a number of core principles such as free will, a motivational predisposition that is not based on the expectation of remuneration as well as a commitment to the benefit of society, the public common good or a third party. The United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) bases its own definition of volunteerism on the above-mentioned criteria and describes it as a form of social solidarity that benefits both society at large and the volunteer "by strengthening trust and reciprocity among citizens, and by creating opportunities for participation." The results of this survey refer to 'formal volunteering' as the aim is to explore volunteer experiences in companies and within corporate frameworks. They do not take into account what is known as 'informal volunteering' i.e. providing unpaid help and assistance to others on an individual basis.

METHODOLOGY

This survey in its findings focuses on the Private Sector and was carried out by the UNV Country Office Team in Trinidad and Tobago from November 2009 to May 2010. It comprises responses from 82 companies of various sizes (SMEs as well as larger national and multinational corporations) and provides information about past and ongoing volunteer initiatives. It highlights patterns of individual motivation and examines issues of time and benefits management among others. Research was conducted by utilizing an online questionnaire that provided interviewees with the opportunity to choose between single and multiple answers and which sought to capture both qualitative and quantitative data.

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

The starting point for developing the survey questionnaire was provided by a British study entitled *Helping Out: A National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving* published in 2007 by the National Centre for Social Research and the Institute for Volunteering Research on behalf of the UK Cabinet Office's Office of the Third Sector. While the study did not provide samples of questionnaires used, the responses given were used to develop a set of questions for this survey. In addition, the study on *'Volunteering in Bosnia and Herzegovina'* carried out by the United Nations Volunteers program in 2002 provided another useful template. Both of the aforementioned surveys analyzed volunteerism in a general sense rather than examining the state of corporate volunteerism. It was for this reason that some amendments and modifications were necessary both in terms of the language used as well as to specifically address the issue of voluntary initiatives in the Private Sector. Furthermore, the survey was informed by an analysis of the 2010 Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey which through providing an understanding of the value that U.S. corporations are placing on skills-based corporate volunteerism was seen as a useful comparative tool in the evaluation of Trinidad and Tobago's Private Sector.

RESPONSE RATES

Those companies that participated in the survey did so on a voluntary basis and were given the option of refusing to answer some questions. These unanswered questions were classified as "skipped" and were not taken into consideration in the study.

A total of 82 companies and members of the business community participated in the survey answering nine questions regarding basic aspects of their organization's volunteer programme and providing information about the individual motivation of employee volunteers. The self-completion survey which was mailed out to a total of 602 companies ranging from multinational corporations to small and medium-size enterprises and received 82 responses represented a 13% response rate.

SURVEY STRUCTURE

The survey brings together information in 4 different sections: The first section comprises of three questions focuses on the operational reality of existing volunteer programs while the second section includes three questions that take into consideration volunteers' participation rates in projects. The third section looks at the benefits of volunteering identified by companies and volunteers and at the individual motivation to serve. The final section explores how companies recruit volunteers for their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The survey captured some information regarding personal details of participants including sex, age, ethnicity and profession. All the individuals questioned in this study provided information about their age. The findings showed that 24.3% of all interviewees fell within the age group of 30-40, 26.8% within the age group of 40-50 and only 6.8% belonged to the 60 or over age category. The remaining respondents fell within the age group of 20-30. The study also looked at the sex of the respondents. Contrary to the widely-held belief that more females than males volunteer, men (53.6%) outnumbered women (46.34%) in their voluntary commitments. With regards to the category of ethnicity, the total response rate was 96.2%. The responses showed that 28% were Indo-Trinidadians, followed by 23.7% of respondents of mixed race, 18.2% Afro-Trinidadians and 12.1% White/Caucasians. With regards to professional status and their position within the company, 75.7% indicated that they were employees while the remaining 24.3% described their status as that of senior managers.

WHO DOES IT?

Overall, the survey findings revealed that corporate volunteerism remains a minority phenomenon practiced by a mere 24.7% of all companies and indicating an obvious deficit in corporate Trinidad and Tobago's social investment policies. (see Figure 1). Thus far, the remaining 76.3% of companies have not bought into the argument of

staff volunteerism as being a combination of "business sense and moral obligation as one businesswoman put it. Based on the UNV's experience derived from its advocacy initiatives, the most likely reason for such low participation rate is the only limited public information about the concept of corporate volunteerism as well as a lack of understanding about its commercial benefits. The conclusion is therefore justified that corporate volunteering still remains in its infancy in Trinidad and Tobago. In contrast, the 2010 Deloitte survey showed that Corporate America has increasingly adopted workplace volunteerism as a means to make a long-term difference in communities and to support companies' commercial goals.

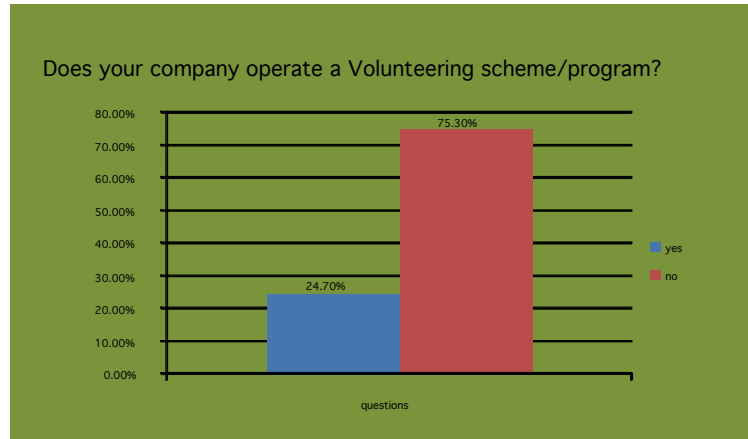


Figure 1

WHO IS INTERESTED IN DOING IT?

Despite the only weak participation rate of local companies in volunteer activities, the 'good news' for volunteer managers and Third Sector practitioners is that an overwhelming 77.4% of those still on the sidelines have expressed an interest to develop a corporate volunteer programme in future. Among some of the reasons for the only limited popularity of employee volunteerism are arguably the lack of understanding of CSR and volunteerism as being commercially beneficial business tools that enhance

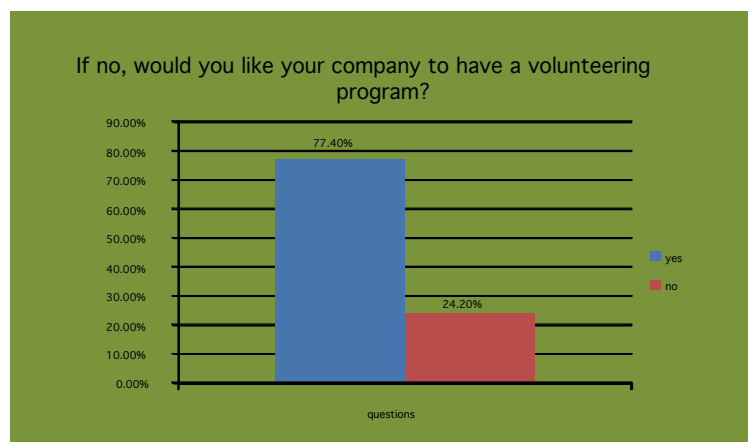


Figure 2

a company's competitiveness as well as the anticipated costs either in terms of staff time, training and/or logistical support and charitable giving. Furthermore, successful CSR and volunteer programmes crucially require the backing of the 'board room' and senior managers as particularly family-owned businesses often remain skeptical as to the benefits and rationale of new managerial approaches. Both questions regarding the existence of volunteer programmes as well as regarding the desirability of developing such a programme did not refer specifically to a particular thematic area but to any form and format of voluntary initiatives within a corporate framework.

TIME MANAGEMENT

The 'hands-off' approach adopted by many businesses and the only limited official support that corporate volunteers receive from senior management can be seen in the fact that 65.3% of all responding companies expect staff to use their own private time to volunteer. Only 20.4% of all companies offer a flexi-time modality to cover the hours spent and a mere 14.3%

grant paid time off from work up to a maximum amount of hours. The most generous form of company support was the arrangement of allow for paid time off without limitation, something that as little as 4.1% of all respondents had introduced into their enterprises. In a single case, a multinational company through its global CSR mandate would encourage staff to invest their own time in order for the employer to match the total volunteer hours accumulated with financial donations. In comparison, the Deloitte survey showed that most US companies offered employees paid time off for voluntary activities during business hours (69%) with a smaller percentage pursuing volunteer activities outside of business hours (44%). A smaller group (35%) allowed for unpaid time off for volunteer activities during normal business hours.

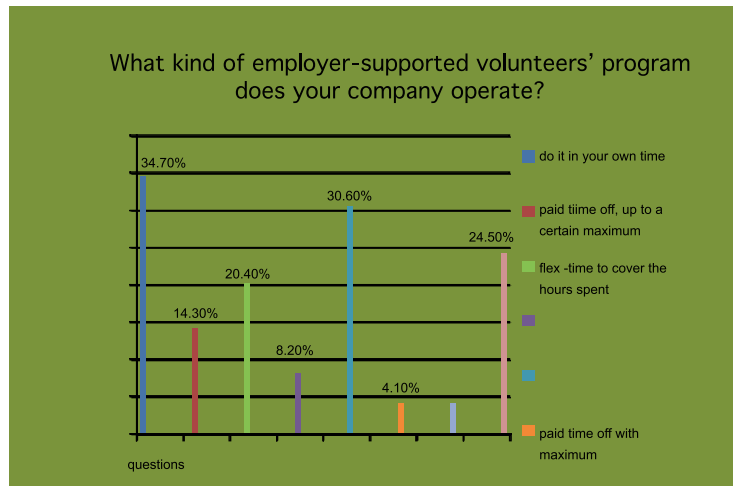


Figure 3

PARTICIPATION

On an individual level, the survey also inquired about the personal involvement of respondents in corporate volunteerism. While 35.6% of all interviewees had themselves volunteer experience and 64.4% of all persons interviewed had never volunteered within their companies, only 31.6% were volunteering at the time of completing the questionnaire. The reasons for the only cautious reception of voluntary activities among employees are manifold. In the words of one entrepreneur, “not everybody has experienced people’s generosity first hand” and would have had therefore an inspirational impetus and experience that would motivate the employee to pass on that generosity to others. Some may feel deterred by the prospect of sacrificing their own spare time and yet others may lack the appreciation for volunteerism as a tool in their own career development that would enhance their marketability in pursuit of future employment opportunities.

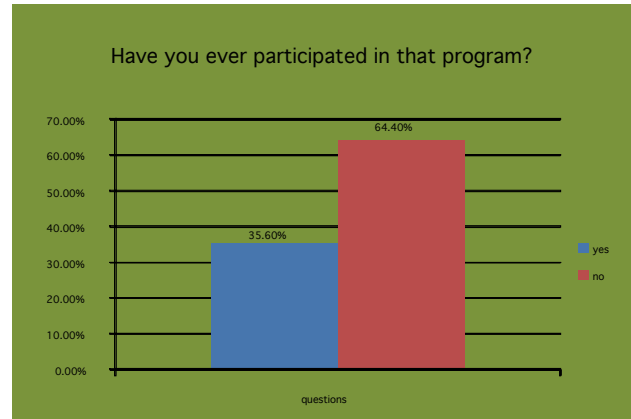


Figure 4

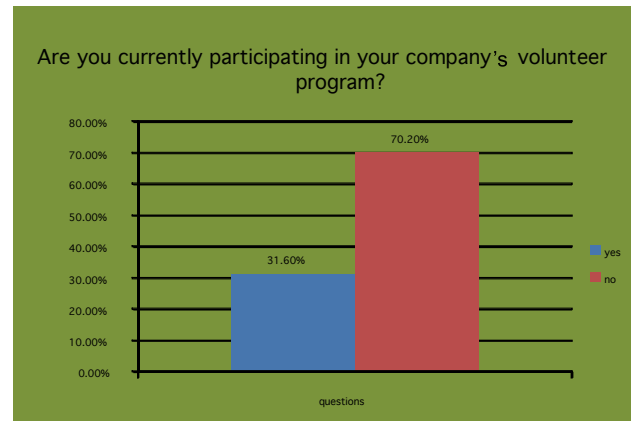


Figure 5

FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATION

The data on the frequency of volunteer participation helps to further highlight the persisting challenges for CSR managers to ensure the long-term sustainability of volunteer programmes and projects. The majority of respondents (52.2%) had only volunteered once in their company while 21.7% had served in two and four and more projects respectively. The ‘one-off’ nature of many voluntary contributions may be partly attributed to a widespread attitude of prioritising materialistic gain driven by the conviction that ‘time is money’

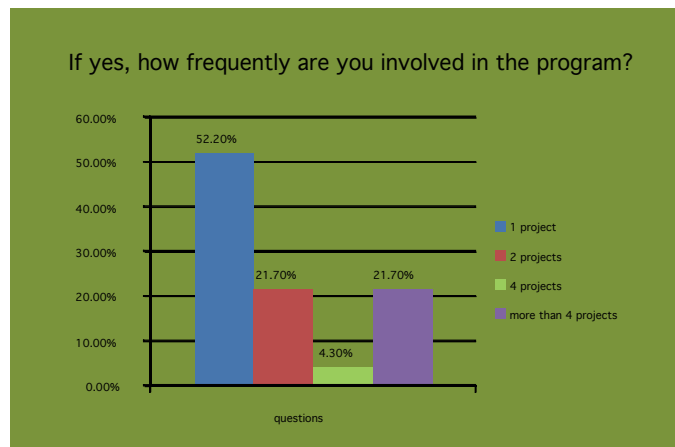


Figure 6

and the belief that personal commitment to third party causes should be remunerated. However, weak management structures with regards to volunteerism and a lack of internal and external recognition for employee's voluntary services are additional explanations for the relatively passive attitude displayed by many employees towards corporate volunteerism.

BENEFITS

The majority of corporate respondents named the opportunity to meet and network with new and different people as being the most important benefit resulting from their voluntary engagement (67.6%). This was followed by the development of new skills that would prove to be useful in other areas of professional life (32.4%). 29.4% of respondents pointed at other benefits such as having enhanced a company's brand value and commercial success as well as having helped people in distress. 5.9% of all interviewees reported to have benefited from volunteering in terms of enhancing their CVs and another group of respondents (5.9%) acknowledged having secured an additional income (although this raises obvious questions about the nature of the assignment as being a voluntary one).

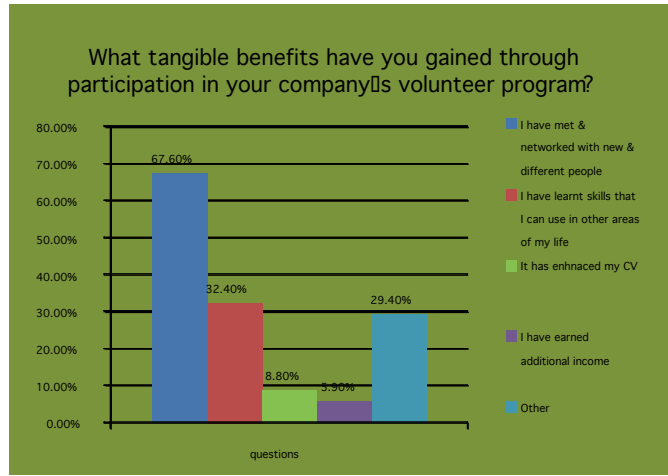


Figure 7

MOTIVATION

What brings people in corporations to volunteer their time, energy and talent for causes that are not their own and to the benefit of people that they often know little or nothing about? The desire to share one's own intellectual, creative and personal experiences and skills and the intention to 'give back' featured most prominently on the list of motivational factors that respondents provided (52.3%). This was followed by the charitable motivation of being able to assist poor and needy

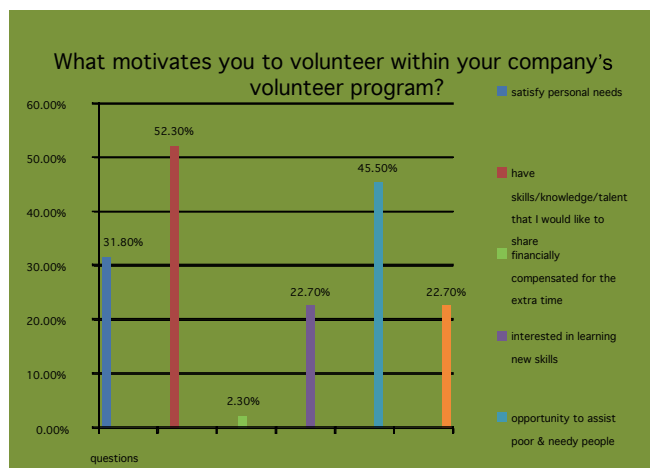


Figure 8

people in society (45.5%) as well as by the consideration of satisfying personal needs (31.8%). Almost a quarter of all respondents (22.7%) declared that they were motivated by the possibility of developing new skills and an equal number of interviewees stressed the fact of being able to meet new people as an incentive volunteer. 13% of respondents pointed at religion as being the main driving force behind their societal commitment. Citing 'other' reasons for their voluntary engagement, 22.7% of respondents highlighted the need to give back to society, stressed their spiritual belief and mentioned personal fulfillment as their primary motivation.

A small minority group of 4.5% admitted to career development as being an important consideration in their decision-making process. From these results it becomes clear that what volunteers expect from their commitment is not a material benefit nor a privilege or formal status but the opportunity to apply their knowledge, to gain skills and to contribute to positive change in the community. In terms of the motivational context, a glance over the results of the already mentioned Deloitte survey produced findings not very different from T&T survey: corporate managers and volunteers declared that the main motivation was the alleviation of societal needs, to help non-profit organizations to serve a greater number of beneficiaries and to give the company a public reputation as a good corporate citizen.



Figure 9

RECRUITMENT AND COMMUNICATION

The final question touched on the issue of volunteer recruitment. The majority of respondents (61.1%) deviated from the suggested answer matrix (notice boards, staff e-mails, staff meetings and newsletters). Instead, many senior managers and company owners stressed their own sole responsibility for devising programmes and activities but rarely made reference to types of communication tools. Other common ways for staff to find out about volunteering were reported to be through e-mail (22.2%) and staff meetings (16.7%) while a small number (11.1%) mentioned that they had come to know about volunteering programs through notice boards. The choice of the right channels to recruit volunteers and to assist them

is an important part of the company's voluntary strategy: in fact the way volunteers are approached dramatically affects the effectiveness and sustainability of the initiatives.

CONCLUSIONS

The responses provided clearly demonstrate that employee volunteerism remains a minority phenomenon across the full spectrum of Trinidad and Tobago's Private Sector. Most employees are not familiar with existing opportunities, do not find their personal interests represented in company volunteer schemes and remain passive 'bystanders' even when official programs have been introduced. Volunteerism is generally seen as a purely charitable activity unaligned and unrelated to business plans and commercial goals and with only limited value for the development of the human resource potential within the company.

The survey suggests a definite need for improved efforts at communicating volunteer opportunities within corporations and to ensure a stronger involvement of employees in program design.

Global best practice shows that an important element of internal 'ownership' of company volunteer programs is the frequency with which volunteer managers collect information from their employees thus seeking their input and opinion. The information that employees can provide to managers ranges from their personal satisfaction derived from volunteering, the value to skills development that they attribute to their volunteer activities and the extent to which they believe they accomplished goals that met short-term needs for the community and made a long-term impact on society. Asking for feedback from corporate volunteers is indeed relevant to maintain sufficient levels of motivation and to ultimately ensure the sustainability of in-house programs and initiatives.

In addition, corporate executives need to be drafted stronger into the fold by lending their personal support to volunteer initiatives and by providing 'boardroom backing' with a high degree of external and internal visibility to the concept employee volunteerism.



Figure 10

ALL THE CHALLENGES NEEDED TO REDEFINE ENERGY



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THE VOLUNTARY SPIRIT OF CORPORATE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme Trinidad & Tobago

Doing good and doing good free of charge driven only by free will becomes increasingly 'fashionable' in the corridors of corporate Trinidad and Tobago. Over the past couple of years, issues of corporate ethics and companies' social and environmental commitment have risen to greater prominence in Trinidad and Tobago. While the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) held the Caribbean's first ever Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Conference in October 2009, the Energy Chambers' annual CSR Awards, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TTCIC) CSR X-Change event series and the current collaboration of UNDP and the Ministry of Trade and Industry on the issue of developing of a national CSR policy have all contributed towards keeping the issue of social investment by corporate actors in the national spotlight. Closely related to the thematic area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) - the 'smaller twin' as it were— is the issue of corporate volunteerism. Unlike CSR, corporate volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago's private sector remains still in its infancy and while the deficits of utilizing the concept more effectively have become apparent to an increasing number of business leaders, the UNV Forum on Corporate Volunteerism held in September 2010 concluded that "Trinidad and Tobago's Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations (CBOs) as well as individual employees are lacking the awareness of the nature, modalities, implications and benefits of corporate volunteerism." This publication is intended to make a contribution towards filling this gap by disseminating information about local cases of successful company volunteering, highlighting some basic facts and trends through presenting the findings of a survey on corporate volunteerism and introducing the findings of the abovementioned Forum on Corporate Volunteerism.



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MINORITY ACTIVITY

According to a recently concluded Survey on Corporate Volunteerism conducted by the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) in Trinidad and Tobago, only 24% of all privately-owned companies in Trinidad and Tobago operate a formal in-house program for staff volunteers. While the preparedness to voluntarily serve communities, to contribute towards protecting the environment and to reach out to the needy, disadvantaged, sick and less privileged does exist in some quarters of the national community, many local private sector companies in Trinidad and Tobago are yet to discover the human as well as corporate value of workplace volunteerism in support and as a manifestation of their Corporate Social Responsibility.

CORPORATE CULTURE

From a normative perspective, honoring employees' volunteer initiatives and fostering a service mentality in the interest and support of the public common good should be integral part of any company's corporate culture. From a commercial perspective, an increasing number of managers in markets around the world have already realized that what is good for society as a whole can also be good for sound business practices and be in the strategic interests of their enterprises. U.S.-based social entrepreneur and volunteerism expert Susan Ellis insists that "efforts at developing a workplace volunteer program only make sense as a logical extension of a company's culture" and that volunteerism projects need to be therefore aligned to a company's core business mission with its volunteer activities directly affecting fence-line communities and tangibly involving a companies' senior management. Research has clearly demonstrated that corporate volunteer initiatives crucially depend on the backing, participation and recognition of 'the boardroom'. It is therefore essential that CEOs and Managing Directors come to play an active role in their company's voluntary initiatives, lend their time to projects and activities and assure their employees of appreciation from the 'top'.

As volunteerism should be regarded as a normal business process, lines of functional competency will have to be clearly established. This includes the development of governance structures, the determination of responsibilities and the assignment of organizational portfolios. The creation of a corporate volunteer committee as the programme's organizational 'engine room' would be a possible step to facilitate the participation of all parts of the company and preventing the volunteerism activities as part of

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the company's overall CSR engagement to be falling exclusively into the domain of the communications department.

BENEFITS

The benefits of an active volunteerism scheme are numerous. On the one hand, making an effort and showing dedication to the concerns, needs and aspirations of individuals and communities beyond the fence line helps to build corporate reputation and solidifies an organizational image of care, social responsibility and good corporate citizenship. Furthermore, contributing to the material and emotional wellbeing of others generates personal satisfaction, a sense of purpose and an ethos of corporate loyalty that helps to substantially boost staff morale. Rather than spending significant amounts of money on costly team-building exercises, organizing projects that are voluntarily supported by company employees helps to develop a corporate environment in which workplace 'togetherness' can be greatly and lastingly strengthened. As such, corporate volunteerism initiatives have become useful tools for human resource development helping to sharpen and develop strategic focus and governance structures as part of the corporate 'habitat'. The debate about the ultimately economic benefits of corporate volunteerism for the company as seen from an HR perspective has led some practitioners to propose a 'mandatory' integration of 'voluntary' commitments into job descriptions either as something the candidate needs to have on his/her CV when applying or something the new employee needs to accept as part of the terms of reference.

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SOFT AND HARD SKILLS

Staff volunteerism helps employees to develop new skills that can effectively supplement official corporate training programs. And newly acquired skills do not have to necessarily fall into the 'soft' category of professional qualifications. While team-building and social competency can be seen as obvious results of corporate volunteerism, the acquisition or improvement of technical capabilities such as project management, budgeting, planning, staff and time management as well as Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are additional 'hard' by-products of voluntary engagement. Those employees that become involved in volunteerism projects will soon 'wear two hats' namely that of 'corporate ambassador' introducing the company as a partner for communities as well as that of 'social development advocate' carrying the message of social change and the importance of voluntary action back

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into their corporate environments. In both of these roles, the criterion of emotional fulfillment is hugely important and the thoughts of one recently interviewed Trinidadian corporate volunteer reflect the thinking on the minds of many. “Are we leaving a legacy for the generations coming after us? Can’t we enjoy life, consumption and sound business practices while also support communities in need?” In her opinion, volunteerism provides “direction for one’s own purpose in life”.

GROWING AWARENESS

Companies in Trinidad and Tobago have already started to realize the business benefits of employee volunteering even though they may not always have an official volunteerism programme in place. In the already mentioned UNV Survey on Corporate Volunteerism, 77% of all private sector respondents who currently do not operate a volunteerism expressed their interest to introduce and establish such a workplace volunteer program. Such overwhelming interest should be interpreted both as an expression of corporate confidence in the potential of employee volunteers to bring about a ‘return on investment’ and to support the company’s bottom line through reputation building and skills development. Such widespread interest also signals that companies could well be the provider of operational frameworks for societal engagement of individuals notwithstanding the fact that their primary *raison d’être* is that of profit maximization.

“

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VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIPS

Not always do companies create their own volunteerism projects from scratch and the search for project partners, themes, locations and agendas is often a challenging part of the internal planning process. In many instances, companies will seek to team up with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to forge issue-specific partnerships in which the corporate part will provide the human resources necessary for NGOs to achieve their mission. Operating in the area of social service delivery, companies and their staff volunteers depend on the environmental versatility and operational ‘street smartness’ of NGOs. The latter’s access to communities and their niche expertise in poverty eradication, youth activities and environmental protection to name just a few presents a pool of resources that companies find increasingly important to tap into. However, not all not-for-profit organizations make for good partners and the question of organizational capacity and NGO’s governance structures is

an important criterion for the successful forming of partnerships between Private Sector and Civil Society.

WHERE FROM HERE?

Over the coming years, Corporate Volunteerism has the potential to become a major contributor to the building of social capital in Trinidad and Tobago based on the twin pillars of communal trust and local networking. The voluntary engagement of employees in community projects fosters social connectivity, increases the density of interpersonal relations in support of improvements to the 'public square' and reminds stakeholders that in a people-focused modern market economy wealth creation goes hand in hand with an increased corporate responsibility for the public common good. As it has over the past couple of years, the UNV Country Office Team in close cooperation with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will continue to sharpen the profile of corporate volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago throughout 2011 with stakeholders having an opportunity to participate in a range of new advocacy and outreach activities. This should help to enable staff volunteers and their companies to honor their corporate responsibility even more effectively and to give meaning to the idea of 'good corporate citizenship'.

“

...UNV Country Office Team in close cooperation with UNDP will continue to sharpen the profile of corporate volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago throughout 2011.

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WOMEN AND VOLUNTEERING

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DEFINITION

Volunteering has many definitions, including those provided by the United Nations, but the one that which seems to speak best to why women volunteer, is: *'People volunteer for many different reasons. They may choose to volunteer to develop skills or gain experience, to socialize or give something back to society. They may also volunteer because they feel a moral duty or compelling reasons to take part in voluntary action or support a particular cause. The key element is that it is freely undertaken.'*¹

THE DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the Centre for Non-profit Management at Trinity College in Dublin², 40% of women, as opposed to 28% of men, are likely to volunteer, with significant differences according to age and geographic location. Women over 40 tend to volunteer more than younger women, and females who live in towns and cities are more likely to volunteer than rural or country based women. Additionally, educated women make up a significant portion of those who volunteer, with the tendency to engage in voluntary activity increasing with educational attainment. In the United States, studies have shown that women with children and women who work have the highest volunteer rates of all.³

What this points to is a positive association between volunteering and socio-economic status, so one could conclude that individuals from higher socio-economic groups, whether male or female, are more likely to volunteer. In Trinidad and Tobago this can be confirmed by the success of women's voluntary associations and groups such as:

- The Network of NGO's for the Advancement of Women
- AFETT: The Association of Female Executives of Trinidad & Tobago



Lara Quentrall-Thomas

The author was the first President of the Association of Female Executives of Trinidad and Tobago (AFETT) and is the Chief Executive Officer of Regency Recruitment Limited. She is actively engaged in many voluntary activities, most notably as District Governor Elect for Rotary International District 7030 (Southern Caribbean).

¹ <http://www.thecompact.org.uk/information/100023/publications/>

² *Women and Volunteering – A Feminised Space?* by Freda Donoghue, Centre for Nonprofit Management, Trinity College, Dublin – October 2003.

³ *Volunteering in America – 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civil Life* by the Corporation for National and Community Service : www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/VA/VIA_fullreport.pdf

- KIND : Kids in Need of Direction
- The UK Women's Club
- The Syrian Lebanese Women's Association
- The American Women's Club
- The Hispanic Women's Society
- The Dyslexia Association of Trinidad and Tobago Bursary Fund
- Soroptomist International

These groups are typically composed of influential, executive or expatriate women or women married to influential executive men, who are able to leverage relationships and networks to the benefit of others. For example, the Association of Female Executives of Trinidad and Tobago (AFETT) has successfully completed a number of voluntary projects including the issue of a national Career Guidance Handbook for students, a symposium on Child Care, and it's annual Suit Me Up sale of nearly new work clothes for women entering the workplace. In addition, it is focusing now on developing a mentoring program for selected girls from a secondary school in Belmont, Port of Spain, allowing them to access expertise and guidance from professional women in a wide range of disciplines. These projects were only possible because of the significant corporate, state or international agency support secured through members of the Association using business connections to leverage funding, expertise, guidance, media space and air-time.

However, unlike the trend in developed countries, in the Caribbean region there are also a significant number of CBO's that were started by, and are operated by, women from lower socio-economic groups. In Trinidad and Tobago these include Moms for Literacy, The Autistic Society and The Jesus Cares Family Home.

So in the Caribbean, one could argue that unlike the 'first' world, female volunteering appears to transcend socio-economic, professional and educational barriers. It could be contested that this is because women find it hard NOT to volunteer when they already know the individuals involved, have been asked to help a friend or neighbor, or feel passionate about a 'cause'. In many local instances, NGOs are started as a result of personal or family situations, such as instances where a child requires expensive medical procedures but there is a lack of state facilities or funding, or relatives suffering from an illness or addiction in the absence of parental support groups.

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HOW AND WHY WOMEN VOLUNTEER

Research shows that women are far more likely than men to be engaged in, and concerned about, the trials and tribulations of their own communities, most often as a result of their involvement in religious organizations.

Through volunteering, women connect to and support one another – sharing life stories, ideas and strategies – making a difference in the lives of their own families and those of the people around them. Women enjoy the sense of belonging and social networking that volunteering brings, and unlike men, are motivated by a sense of doing good, rather than a sense of achievement at the results. So the *process*, rather than the outcome, is typically what appeals to women. As Maria Shriver described it at the 2009 California Women’s Conference ⁴, women are ‘architects of change’ in their own lives and the lives of others. “We volunteer because we get back more than we give, and we feel better about everything because we are part of something bigger than ourselves” she stated.

The type of volunteering done also varies according to gender. Men are more likely to be found in sporting events, providing transport, campaigning and advocacy activities, whereas women tend to give their time to caring and sharing activities such as reading to the elderly or visiting the sick ⁵. In Trinidad and Tobago this is also true as the traditional areas of volunteering for local women include:

- volunteering at local domestic violence shelters
- serving as mentors to underprivileged women and girls
- participating in breast cancer and heart health awareness activities
- joining organizations that specifically work to improve the lives of women and girls
- supporting disaster relief funds, in particular, assisting female victims of natural disasters ⁶

“
Through volunteering, women connect to and support one another – sharing life stories, ideas and strategies – making a difference in the lives of their own families and those of the people around them.
”

THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING ON CAREERS

Just because work is not paid, does not mean it is not valuable. It has been said that volunteers are not paid . . . not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.

⁴ www.womensconference.org

⁵ *Women and Volunteering – A Feminised Space?* by Freda Donoghue, Centre for Nonprofit Management, Trinity College, Dublin – October 2003.

⁶ <http://www.articlesbase.com/womens-issues-articles/women-helping-women-through-volunteer-organizations-for-women-755734.html#ixzz0sLyXIDWu>

According to a study done for Women's Way⁷, female volunteers build up a number of critical skills through their involvement with NGOs and community groups. Volunteerism is a rich education and career development tool for professional women, as their research showed that:

- 83% of participants had acquired, improved or developed their leadership skills
- 78% reported improvement in their communications skills
- 62% of survey respondents said that they enhanced problem-solving skills
- 57% demonstrated improved organization/multitasking abilities
- 53% enhanced their marketing skills

In fact, because of the development of these skills, employers are recommended to encourage workers to participate in volunteering. "Volunteering not only teaches individuals leadership skills but also helps them with relationship development and community activism" says Ana Valdez, executive director for the USA based Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility. "Volunteering tells recruiters and hiring managers that you are willing to stretch yourself beyond your current role."

And although most women do not actively seek volunteering opportunities for this reason, the indirect yet impactful development of these 'power skills' becomes an important factor in career and professional mobility. It is not uncommon for women to rise to the top of voluntary organizations much more quickly than they do with their employers, so volunteering is an important pathway to the positions of influence and leadership that women are often denied access to in their 'day jobs'.

CONCLUSION

Women have come a long way in this journey and they haven't come alone. Volunteer organizations for women welcome all ages, cultures and ethnic groups. Members come from all professions and are doctors, attorneys, homemakers, teachers, CEOs, business owners, and government officials.

Every day, women volunteers are making the world a better place.

“

Volunteer organizations for women welcome all ages, cultures and ethnic groups. Members come from all professions and are doctors, attorneys, homemakers, teachers, CEOs, business owners, and government officials.

”

⁷ www.womensway.org

PARTNERSHIPS PROPEL PROGRESS

Corporate Volunteerism and Non-Profit Partnerships

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WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Etched in our memory is the awesome sight of seeing literally hundreds of volunteers with bright smiles on their faces as they poured into the corridor of the ward. These persons represented different corporate entities, NGOs, churches, and the general public. Regardless of where they came from, their purpose was the same – to help the Just Because Foundation (JBF) with the refurbishment of an unused ward at the Wendy Fitzwilliam Paediatric Hospital, Mount Hope. The Mission: To transform that space into the country's and the Caribbean's first multi-disciplinary Family-Centered Paediatric unit now known as the JBF Paediatric Specialty Unit (JBF-SU). This ward can accommodate twenty-one (21) patients.

The establishment of a specialty unit at the children's hospital had been a long-standing desire of doctors and other healthcare providers, and was certainly a necessity for paediatric patients who were afflicted with many forms of childhood cancer as well as children who suffer from other chronic, non-communicable diseases including those with heart, liver and kidney problems. Some of these patients are at hospital for weeks, months or even spend an entire year undergoing treatment.

The genesis of this project is very personal as it was borne out of a crisis that confronted us when our then 3 _ year-old son, Jabez 'JB' Joseph, was diagnosed in 2005 with Alveolar Rhabdomyosarcoma - a rare cancer of the soft muscle tissue. The ensuing journey took us into the heart of the private and public healthcare system in Trinidad and Tobago and then took us far away to Newcastle, in Northern England where our sole purpose (or so we thought) was to ensure that JB received the best treatment available.

As it turns out, the journey was about presenting our family with a new perspective on paediatric healthcare and ultimately, to prepare us for the task ahead.

When Jabez and his big sister RaVen stepped onto the ward at the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) in Newcastle they were wowed by its ambience describing it as 'hospital heaven.' It was at that point that we had a life-changing idea. On our return to Trinidad; we would set the wheels in



**Noel Joseph,
Vice-President &
Co-Founder**

The Just Because Foundation (JBF), an award-winning NGO whose focus is on the provision of practical, emotional and holistic support for families of children with cancer. Together with his wife, Chevaughn, Noel manages a number of support projects including a "Home away from Home", the JBF Siblings Club and the JBF Paediatric Specialty Unit at the Wendy Fitzwilliam Paediatric Hospital, Mount Hope. Noel's 20-year career in advertising, marketing and audio/visual production, now serves him well as the Branding and Communications Manager of the JBF. He oversees the creative development and execution of the Foundation's Public Service Television and Radio announcements as well as printed material.

motion to realize this dream of a cheerful place that provided enhanced healthcare for our nation's children.

THE PROCESS

In May of 2008, the JBF sought the permission needed to carry out the project. At a press conference held on June 9th 2008, Mr. David O'Brien, former Chairman of the North Central Regional Health Authority (NCRHA) made the official announcement- the NCRHA had given the JBF the green light to spearhead the project in collaboration with other NGOs, corporate and private donors, various contractors and suppliers. The media reported: "A Ward for Cancer Kids is on its way."

It was at that point that reality hit home. The starter's gun sounded. We were a little slow out of the blocks - stunned by the fact that within one year of the launch of our 'Home Away from Home' and JBF Siblings Club, we found ourselves at the helm of another significant undertaking. This project required major funding as well as extensive manpower, lots of raw materials and then a host of finishing touches. We had none of the resources readily available. When we looked at the big picture of everything we had been through on our journey with 'JB', and all that we've experienced since the day he got his wings, we were even more determined to do this for him, and for all those families who needed this to happen.

On July 19th 2008 there was a massive workday at the hospital where volunteers from various organizations and companies such as Habitat for Humanity, Kids in Need of Direction (K.I.N.D.) and Pepper Advertising came together to begin the transformation work. Led by a number of its top executives, The Unit Trust Corporation (UTC) fielded a cast of hundreds. Using their organizational skills, the UTC contingent was assigned to work in different areas as teams, making the day's activity flow efficiently. UTC also provided funding for the setting up of a Computer Zone at JBF-SU. Their support extends to funding for and staff involvement at JBF Siblings Club sessions.

This initial phase of the project included a massive paint job, and for a project of this scale, one would imagine that the cost of paint alone would have been prohibitive. In response to our requests, Berger Paints Trinidad Limited stepped up big time with the donation of **all** the paint required!

The project moved along at a steady pace with various paid contractors doing re-tiling work and electrical upgrades throughout the ward, but with only a couple of months left to the projected launch date, we were faced with a major shortfall in funding and there was also need for another big workday.

“

We were a little slow out of the blocks - stunned by the fact that within one year of the launch of our 'Home Away from Home' and JBF Siblings Club, we found ourselves at the helm of another significant undertaking.

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The opportunity was presented to us to meet with Mr. Niall Dorrian, C.E.O. of Digicel T&T, and members of the Marketing Department. Within hours of our meeting, we received an e-mail confirming Digicel's commitment to the project. And what a commitment it has been. On the financial side, the contribution was in excess of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00 TT) making Digicel our Platinum sponsor for the project. Then came the workday. There was a virtual sea of red as wave after wave of Digicel staff members from throughout the company's network of offices converged on the hospital. Mr. Dorrian himself led hundreds of employees in the assault as there was much to be done. Painting, cleaning, lifting, dumping, climbing. The frenetic activity was reminiscent of a very active beehive.

The relationship between Digicel and JBF continues and has escalated to the point where it has taken on many dimensions including new and exciting fundraising initiatives, the coordination of celebrity visits to the children at hospital by members of the West Indies cricket team, Soca Warriors and Soca Artistes, as well as gift distribution at Christmas time.

The launch took place on November 14th 2008, mere months after the press conference. The crew that worked until sunrise on the day of the launch comprised employees of Magic Mist as well as parents of children with cancer who had seen the vision, felt the energy and worked with us shoulder to shoulder until the last bed was made up and decorated with a JBF Be Better Bear on the pillow.



“

It was a proud day for volunteerism in Trinidad & Tobago when the project was presented on the world stage by Ms. Gabrielle Walcott – Miss T&T at the Miss World Pageant 2008 held in South Africa, where out of 109 countries, Gabby won the 'Beauty with a Purpose' title for her work with the JBF and other volunteers on the project.

”

THE RESULT

O ur own version of 'hospital heaven.' A place where birthdays are celebrated, along with national holidays and festivals. It is a place of **H.O.P.E.** which is a JBF credo that stands for **H**ave **O**nly **P**ositive **E**xpectations. The JBF-SU was brought to life by paintings, murals, custom-made furniture, a colorful library and music corner, privacy blinds, patio furniture, DVD players, televisions sets and much more all creating an atmosphere of cheer and well-being. We were also privileged to have gotten the assistance of Brian Mac Farlane, The Trinidad & Tobago Art society, and artists from various groups and ad agencies.

It was a proud day for volunteerism in Trinidad & Tobago when the project was presented on the world stage by Ms. Gabrielle Walcott – Miss

“ It is the set of *the sails*,
not *the direction*
of *the wind* that
determines which
way we *will go.*”

Jim Rohn



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T&T at the Miss World Pageant 2008 held in South Africa, where out of 109 countries, Gabby won the 'Beauty with a Purpose' title for her work with the JBF and other volunteers on the project. The pride we felt was multiplied by the number of volunteers, contributors, well wishers and supporters who all played their part in getting the ward ready. We are forever grateful to God and to all those who responded to the call.

The residual effect of the prayer, hard work, funding and positive energies put into the project was quite evident during CHOGM 2009 as the JBF-SU received several visits from a number of international delegates. The children and family members enjoyed these visits as they were able to showcase various talents.

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The lessons learnt throughout this entire process can be summed up by the phrase Partnerships Propel Progress

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PARTNERSHIPS PROPEL PROGRESS

The examples presented and the lessons learnt throughout this entire process can be summed up by the phrase **Partnerships Propel Progress**. By their very existence and by the sheer numbers (reportedly there are more than 3000 NGOs in T&T) civil society organizations have clearly shown that they are full of compassion and desire, they have the will to get things done and not at all lacking in initiative. Yet, too many of these organizations find themselves plodding along as though their shoes were made of lead, in need of some 'wind beneath their wings.' That is the premise on which corporate volunteerism is built. The projects pioneered by the JBF required extensive support otherwise a number of our dreams would have remained dreams...locked away in our hearts or drafted into a document stored in a filing cabinet. The rate at which we have been able to progress was fueled and propelled by corporate volunteerism.

WIN.WIN.WIN.WIN.

Commonly known as a Win-Win situation in which there is mutual benefit to the parties involved in a transaction, Corporate/NGO partnerships actually take it to the fourth power in which the outcome is a positive one for the company, the NGO, the beneficiaries of the charitable efforts or projects undertaken, and for the nation.



Noel and his wife, Chevaughn Joseph from Just Because Foundation

It is therefore crucial that volunteerism forms part of a well-balanced corporate diet regardless of the size of the company. Staff members must be encouraged to have their **RDA (Regular Dose of Altruism*)** in helping others as a part of their healthy social lifestyle. Even outside of a structured corporate call to action, individuals who have been touched by the experience of working together with an NGO 'toward the greater good' of others, will stay in touch and in tune with the work at hand. This will take volunteerism to even greater heights.

As an organization, we are forever grateful to God for His unending Grace and Favor upon our efforts, and we will continue to sing the praises of those who have supported, and will support us in one way or another as we forge ahead to make a positive difference in the lives of others Just Because...he cared.

“

...we are forever grateful to God for His unending Grace and Favor upon our efforts, and we will continue to sing the praises of those who have supported, and will support us in one way or another...

”

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM & HUMAN RESOURCES

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Corporate Volunteerism (CV) and Human Resources (HR) – How are they linked? Certainly, the more appropriate question (at least the shorter to answer) is “How aren’t they linked?”

Let’s break it down – corporate is the company and what drives it, while HR manages the employees – what drives them. We all know that employees are the ones who ultimately **are** the company, so throw Volunteerism into the equation and therein is the deal-breaker...it is after all the human resources of the company who are doing the volunteering. Corporate Volunteerism is a partnership where essentially two key components contribute something – the employee gives something (usually their time, efforts and physical support) and the employer gives something (usually financial support) which ideally benefits the receiver, but also the two contributors in many ways.

At Scotiabank, our human resources have always been the centre of our lives, without even being overtly conscious of it sometimes. Years ago however, that was put into words just as much as our business targets were defined, and we contrived the mission - **To be an Employer of Choice**. While it sounds fluffy, even “ultimate” and sure enough, we know that this is an objective for every high performing organization out there nowadays – we all want to be Best Employers...what makes Scotiabank different? Perhaps nothing specifically – after all, every company has the data, they know the organizational best practice theories, jargon and ‘what’ to do – but it’s in the collective effort and ‘how’ to get it done (through people) that makes us different!! So it’s everything collectively!! It is that very simple and profound mission that drives everything we do at the Bank – we do what we do because it makes sense – to our customers, to our business, and to our employees.

Why would HR care about CV? With Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as the new buzz, Corporate Volunteerism as a certain relative of CSR, and the fact that employees are demanding this very responsibility from their employers, there is no wonder why Corporate Volunteerism is so intra-connected to HR and why HR sees its value. HR.com (on-line community) reminds us that: **“When a company gets its employees involved in**



Misty Anne Dorman-Hosein, Human Resources professional, is currently the Team Leader, Employee Relations at Scotiabank. Misty is based in Trinidad as part of the Human Resources (HR) Shared Services Group within Canada, and leads a team of Employee Relations Specialists based across the Caribbean region, who collectively service twelve (12) countries from as high up north as Bahamas to as far south as Guyana.

Misty holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management from the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (formerly the University of the West Indies – Institute of Business) and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry graduating with Upper Second Class Honours.

charity work it sends the message that the organization is a part of its community, that business is about more than just making a profit, and that they support the outside interests of their employees” And the internal benefits are endless.

A survey by the Washington, DC-based Points of Light Foundation, even though it was done over a decade ago (1999), shows a compelling trend to incorporate volunteer programs into overall business plans and corporate statements:

- 81% of those surveyed connected volunteering to their overall business strategies (up from 31% in 1992)
- 100% said volunteering helps create healthier communities;
- 94% said it increases employee morale;
- 100% said it enhances corporate image;
- 97% said it improves teamwork.

HR's overall purpose is always making sure you select, develop, engage and retain the right people at the right time to do the right things in the right way. This is enabled through all of the HR functions throughout the employment life cycle and at every stage of that cycle employees now care about the company's interest in and commitment to CSR and how this integrates with their own pursuits – they ask it at the interview stage because the environment is so important to them, and they ask it while employed because they want their charities represented. But whether or not they drive it, it is a must do for any high-performing company.

All the indicators prove the benefits of engaging your employees in volunteer work:

- **Establishing strong bonds between employer and employees** – believe it, every human being has the innate desire to give (almost as much as receive) and while some are passionate about it on their own, many often need a push – an employer who is already on board and has the ideas that they just need to give of their time – well better yet. This encourages employees' ties to their employer, who appears to be doing this when it is not overtly evident that there are benefits to the employer, in fact they have to put out their resources and dip into their profits. So it improves that altruistic, noble image and makes employees feel like their employer cares about the wider community. These bonds provide the basis for all the employer of choice indicators as specified below:
 - **Improved team environment** – just as the statistics from the survey above show, the link to an improved work environment is real and obvious. Charities are mainly successful because of the persons who

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It is that very simple and profound mission that drives everything we do at the Bank – we do what we do because it makes sense – to our customers, to our business, and to our employees.

”

get together under a common focus with a common bond, far less when there is more than one commonality – not just the charity but now also the company they work for.

- **Reduced turn-over** – employees tend to feel connected to their employer because of the similar shared interest(s) thereby theoretically making it more difficult to leave. One thing in abundant supply at Scotiabank is the service tenure racked up by employees – no matter where you go in the globe, you find Scotiabankers in abundance of 10, 20, 30 and even 40 plus years in the Bank. We know that CSR is not the only influence here, but the wider people philosophies of the Bank of which CSR is a piece, that do drive these amazing results.
- **People development** – apart from the development of those being helped, getting involved in these projects with sometimes many more diverse opportunities than the often streamlined work environment, has the added benefit of exposing your employees to responsibilities and opportunities they may not likely have had in the workplace. This increases their potential, scope and future development in ways that neither internal nor external training programs could have accomplished. This can serve to prepare employees for greater roles in their personal lives and at work, and is a very significant benefit of corporate volunteerism which also ties handsomely in with the Bank's leadership development objectives.
- **Increase in motivation and morale among the workforce and organizational pride** – getting people together under a common banner with a greater good in mind, can usually have the effect of improving relations among them – and doing this in a non-work environment often makes for better work rapport. The employees themselves feel proud to be aligned to such a company.
- **Improved customer service, both internal and external** – whenever you increase motivation, commitment and engagement, you tend to see a direct impact on customer service – service to fellow employees and to external customers. This is also in keeping with the Bank's environment, where you are selected because of your ability to deliver service and this is reinforced by training programs and performance behaviours throughout your career. Volunteerism is after all an extension of the "serving" philosophy and selfless service at that!
- **Enhanced company image/reputation** – the improved service levels and the heightened profile of the employer out there in the community who is not only giving of their financial resources but encouraging their staff to give of themselves builds a powerful, caring image for the

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*...getting people together
under a common banner
with a greater good in mind,
can usually have the effect of
improving relations among
them...*
”

company; such goodwill is not easily bought and unquantifiable.

- **Increase in productivity** – all of the foregoing translates directly into increased productivity and we all know what that means – better business results.

At Scotiabank there are thousands of efforts pursued on varying scales, from one person drives to thousand-person causes, from purely non-financial support to million dollar programs, from globally driven initiatives to every branch getting involved in their own efforts. In the corporate context, our employees have offered extraordinary support for local causes through two formal employee community programs offered globally:

1. **Team Scotia Community Program** (TSCP) matches funds raised by employee teams. Through TSCP, the Bank matches up to \$5,000 raised by teams of five or more Scotiabank employees through their local charitable fundraising activities. In 2009 alone, more than 2,000 fundraising activities received over \$5.6 million from the TSCP.
2. **Scotiabank Employee Volunteer Program** (SEVP) provides donations to community organizations where individual employees have been active volunteers. Individual employees and retirees who have actively volunteered for at least 50 hours per year with a qualifying community-based organization can apply for a donation of up to \$1,000 from the Bank. This program is very successful and it's important to note that your life beyond the workplace is considered so that our retirees who can often be a handsome resource for charity and volunteer work, get to champion initiatives and receive support from their former employer! An employee who participated in the SEVP had this to say, confirming the links mentioned above about pride, commitment and increased employee engagement:

"My most sincere Thank You, on behalf of the Orangeville Community Band, for the very generous support under the Scotiabank Employee Volunteer Program. When I presented the cheque to the Band, there was thunderous applause as well as a drum roll/cymbal crash, in appreciation. I was extremely proud to be a Scotiabanker that evening (as I have been for nearly 25 years)." Erin Jenkins, Support Analyst, HR Information Services.

This year, in attempting to add yet another dimension to the CSR and Volunteerism efforts, the Bank introduced the CUSO-VSO/Scotiabank Employee Fellowship Program. The Bank partnered with the non-profit development agency and member of the VSO Federation - CUSO-VSO

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Individual employees and retirees who have actively volunteered for at least 50 hours per year with a qualifying community-based organization can apply for a donation of up to \$1,000 from the Bank.

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who work in developing world organizations to identify areas of greatest need and then collaboratively develop strategic volunteer positions. This program provides employees the opportunity to take a six-month to one-year leave of absence from work to engage in international developmental work. CUSO-VSO matches volunteers to placements where they are most professionally suited and all placements are international so that employees are placed in locations outside of their region where the Bank has a business presence.

Right here in Trinidad and Tobago, each of our branches has a CSR component of their annual objectives with a budget to support them. There are a few conditions as expected - they must also do their own fund-raising and their charity must be youth oriented because this is the corporate umbrella focus. There are many success stories but in the interest of space and time, we only chose two:

Our Marabella Branch launched their Operation Smile J – where the branch became aligned to a home for over 100 abandoned children, situated in a remote location. This program focused on making the children smile and in the process created many smiles for Scotiabankers – on their faces and in their hearts. Staff not only participated in raising the funds, they went out to the home and offered their own time and support – because it was all done after work hours during the work week and on weekends. Scotiabankers spent time reading and playing with the children, setting up their library and even making personal gifts that they took for the children. Apart from initially championing the cause which the employees actually put into operation, the Bank also donated six (6) computers to the home. As the Manager, Service and Support at the Branch said “staff felt happy and a certain joy about helping less fortunate children, and it had the effect of making them more engaged at work”

Our southernmost branch **Rio Claro** – partnered with the 4H Nariva Mayaro Group which is aligned with 14 schools in the geographic territory. This gave the branch wide scope in assisting in many different kinds of ways including supporting fund raising events – such as staff lending their time at a Curry Q, to organizing ‘green scene’ initiatives in schools, to attending school graduations. The branch raised approximately \$20,000 through fund raising activities, endearing the support of the international Bank in Canada and even garnering donations from others in the community to the causes. The branch also created a new dimension offering management and organization skills to the company (4H) helping them improve their time management and financial administration. Herein, the branch benefited in several ways including improved morale and team-building among staff,

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Right here in Trinidad and Tobago, each of our branches has a CSR component of their annual objectives with a budget to support them.

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the gratification of helping others, potential business opportunities, the enhanced reputation in the community among both customers and the wider public and the closer alignment with schools – which prove to be an excellent resource for potential new hires in meeting the branch's future recruitment needs.

So are there any metrics to prove the investment in CSR/CV? Well Scotiabank assesses its employees' opinions on various themes annually including the Bank's approach to CSR, and in the 2010 survey done in May, the results proved very positive. To the question: ***"Scotiabank Group is socially and environmentally responsible"*** the Scotiabank globe of 57,332 employees ranked this question at 91% satisfaction. The result was exactly the same for the Caribbean and Central American region of close to 4,000 employees and again, exactly the same for the over 1,100 employees in Trinidad and Tobago. Talk about a global consistent employee perspective of the Bank to an initiative!! It's no surprise that the 2 branches mentioned above had a score in this question of 100%.

For those who argue that there is no real "win-win" situation and that there must be some down sides. Certainly there are, employees have to give tremendously of their time and energy while the company does the organizing efforts and pledges the financial resources. But when you assess the benefits of getting involved in this kind of focus, which can sometimes not be achieved by efforts within the company, particularly with the socially conscious workers and societies of today, it is clear that these intangible benefits do translate into very tangible business benefits to the employer.

You have to give to get as the old adage says, supporting the case for the argument that corporate volunteerism makes good business sense.

“
...employees have to give tremendously of their time and energy while the company does the organizing efforts and pledges the financial resources.
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The Marabella Branch Manager (Centre) along with other employees with the children of the home clad in their Operation Smile T-shirts.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERISM IN THE GUARDIAN GROUP

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AT THE CORE

Guardian espouses four Core Values – Integrity, Quality, Growth and Serving People.

These values are at the core of how Guardian employees operate every day, on the job. Adherence to these values make Guardian different – and better! But what happens when you suggest to employees that they take it a step further?

THE BEGINNING

It all began in 2008 in recognition of the diverse interests of the people of Guardian. Group Corporate Communications came up with a theme of 'Doing It Differently' and focussed on several areas – Wellness, Social, Outdoor, Eco and Community. Each focus area was led by employee committees under the guidance and with the support of Group Corporate Communications.

The community initiative was – and is - part of a broader corporate social responsibility programme. It was designed to pursue opportunities for employee community involvement through volunteering.

Leading the charge was Ranuca Hamlet, Manager - Corporate Planning at member company Guardian General Insurance Company. As it turned out Ranuca's knowledge and expertise in strategic planning, execution and communication were a large factor in the GIFT concept taking root.

Her sub-committee set to work with a purpose and a goal of Volunteer Week 2008 for an official launch of Team Community within the Guardian Group in Trinidad & Tobago. By mid 2008 the group of employee volunteers would have a name, a charter and a logo.



Maria MacMillan

Maria MacMillan is the Group Vice President – Corporate Communications of Guardian Holdings Limited, an integrated financial services group involved in life, health, property and casualty insurance, pensions and asset management. A graduate of the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine campus), she was awarded a BA in English and Social Sciences and a post-graduate Diploma in International Relations. Mrs. Rivas-McMillan is a member of the GHL Executive Board and a Council Member for the Trinidad and Tobago Insurance Institute where she also serves on its Education Committee. On a professional basis, she is a founding member and former Vice President of the International Association of Business Communicators Trinidad & Tobago Chapter and is a past president of the Public Relations Association of Trinidad & Tobago and former board member of the Association of Female Executives of Trinidad & Tobago (AFETT).

BEHIND THE SCENES

Team Community, later to be known as GIFT - Guardian Initiatives for Transformation - represents the varying initiatives and projects undertaken by TEAM Guardian, employees shaping a better life for those less fortunate.

The sub-committee's vision for GIFT was as the banner under which volunteerism and charitable work would be champion. The work of GIFT would serve to inspire Guardian employees to make a difference in the lives of others so as to improve our communities and our world.

The mission was condensed to three words: **Engage, Inspire, Recognise.**

The GIFT Charter was hammered out by the Committee via face-to-face and email discussion since the members came from different parts of the Group with varying levels of flexibility in attending meetings. In it, TEAM Guardian gives a commitment to reach out to others in their communities: 'to give of self, extend a hand, and expect nothing in return except that the recipients pay it forward'. The pay-it-forward concept works on the assumption that people cannot always 'pay back' the individuals who've helped them along the way. In which case, they should 'pay it forward' by helping others.

The Charter, the Vision, the Mission as well as the projects and achievements were all uploaded to the company intranet and shared via electronic newsletters. It can also be found on the company's website (www.guardianholdings.com).

ENGAGE

The GIFT Committee began the process by connecting with employees and asking them to share their stories of community service they were already doing of their own accord. This was done in small group sessions and via the intranet and electronic newsletters.

Employees received regular electronic messages under a bright banner for recognisability. These messages highlighted the community work being done by their colleagues and spoke to the personal benefits and value derived from volunteering.

The messages drove home the point that Guardian recognises its obligation for genuine pro-activeness to give substance to 'corporate social responsibility' and that the aim of 'Doing It Differently – Community' was to engage, inspire and recognise persons, within the Group, who volunteered to serve.

“

The work of GIFT would serve to inspire Guardian employees to make a difference in the lives of others so as to improve our communities and our world.

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GIFT branded t-shirts and polos were sold to employees. These served a two-fold purpose: a fund-raiser for GIFT's activities and a mechanism to drive the GIFT message home to staff. Employees were urged to wear the polos on Business Casual Fridays.

Existing employees continue to be engaged by providing opportunities for participation in projects as individuals and groups. The Human Resources Department engages new employees by giving information on GIFT during their Orientation Programme.

INSPIRE

The then Group CEO, Peter Ganteaume, was fully supportive of the initiative and sent his own personal message to the volunteers who came on board.

The first project was small – A Day of Caring. Employees were invited to spend time by co-hosting a day at the Zoo with children from a selected home for displaced children. Funds were raised by direct soliciting of colleagues and fund-raising activities and the activity was carried out with the support of United Way of Trinidad & Tobago. It proved an amazing success and gave the Committee the enthusiasm to go on to more and bigger things.

Using this small group as a base and reaching out to others of like mind, the Committee created the GIFT Champion.

“
...a champion is one who engages in any contest; in medieval times this might mean single combat in defence of honour or rights; today, it refers to someone who acts or speaks on behalf of a person or a cause; a defender; an advocate; a hero.


”

GIFT CHAMPIONS

According to the Webster dictionary, a champion is one who engages in any contest; in medieval times this might mean single combat in defence of honour or rights; today, it refers to someone who acts or speaks on behalf of a person or a cause; a defender; an advocate; a hero.

At the first call, 47 employees responded and these were invited to a workshop at the Marriott, a corporate hotel in Port-of-Spain, ending with lunch. The workshop was held during International Volunteer Week, April 2008. In preparation for this, the GIFT Committee produced a video using in-house talent and expertise which served as the introduction to the morning's programme.

The GIFT Committee had given considerable thought to the Agenda and covered such areas as: framing the stage for volunteering by highlighting how small changes can make a big difference – through the Power of 10%; sharing GIFT's vision, mission and goals and connecting these goals to four



Hope blossoms...

Guardian General's "Pay It Forward" Corporate Social Responsibility Project

No matter how barren the terrain it only takes a single seed for hope to bloom. That seed is Guardian General's Pay It Forward Programme and since its launch in 2007, it has brought hope to children and families in communities in which we operate.

Deep rooted in our belief that corporate citizenship is a partnership between companies and communities to create a healthy society, this employee volunteerism programme geared towards helping the less fortunate has grown beyond our expectations.

It is an ongoing concept that allows for involvement of the entire organisation, staff members work tirelessly together to assist those in need, who in turn "pay it forward". Today, the Pay It Forward programme has expanded into schools, inspiring and motivating young children to improve their life skills.

We invite you to join this movement of Paying It Forward in your own way. To learn more about Pay It Forward visit us at <http://www.ggil.biz/citizenship/community>



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projects that made it real for the champions. Representatives of four Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) made presentations on their group's activities.

After this, the employee volunteers got into one of the four groups guided by the NGO representative to bring to life four key areas of GIFT's programme – children, families, the elderly and youth. A leader from among the employee volunteers was selected by each group and made a presentation of their plan of action.

Through this workshop, the volunteers got their first real opportunity to work on a specific community project as a team. Just as important, they were also developing their team-building as well as public speaking skills and, later when the work began, their project management capabilities.

At the end of the workshop, certificates and volunteer pins were given to all attendees.

Later the volunteer group was formalised into the GIFT Champion group.

Guardian's GIFT Champions are advocates for community involvement and leaders of specific community projects. They are responsible for engaging employees in volunteer work through everyday conversations and promoting the activities and causes of GIFT, by getting involved and being true spokespersons for GIFT.

A GIFT Champion's Guide was developed and is accessible via the Group Intranet.

“

Recognition has been both formal and informal: face to face; direct communication; electronic newsletters; the company's GHL Star, an annual magazine which is also sent to shareholders; and branded items with personal notes to each Champion by GIFT's Executive Sponsor.

”

RECOGNISE

Guardian has consistently sought to recognise and celebrate the achievements of the GIFT volunteers.

Recognition has been both formal and informal: face to face; direct communication; electronic newsletters; the company's GHL Star, an annual magazine which is also sent to shareholders; and branded items with personal notes to each Champion by GIFT's Executive Sponsor.

There is also a special section on GHL's website, the Group Intranet and the Group 180 Micro Site. The 180 Micro Site was specifically created to allow all employees in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean to interact on a shared space.

GIFT Champions also have their own group on the company global address list – anyone can click on the grouping and see the entire list of employee Champions. The GIFT Committee Chair has been given the capability of adding to or removing names from the list.

During 2009, each project was highlighted and the work of the Champions and their teams acknowledged. For Volunteer Week 2010, the theme of which was 'Celebrating People in Action', four flyers were created and sent electronically and in print form throughout the Group. GIFT's Committee chair also sent personal emails to all Champions thanking them for their support as they marked not just Volunteer Week but also the second anniversary of GIFT.

A quick survey of the leadership of the Group in Trinidad & Tobago in May 2010 threw up the fact that not enough is being done by immediate supervisors to recognise their volunteer employees and this area will need to be addressed. Plans are also afoot for a Recognition/Reward Programme which is likely to be implemented for 2011.

GOALS 2010

The GIFT Committee held its usual strategic planning session in the last quarter of 2009, reviewing its achievements and amending its goals for the next three years.

In April GIFT launched its signature 2010 project. Teams were invited to register a 'Pay-it-Forward' project on which they will work, with seed funding from GIFT. Pay-It-Forward projects were required to focus on: Children including youths in the community; Families in the community; or the Elderly in the community. Teams have to show how they engage employees in volunteerism. The Pay-it-Forward project runs to September 30, 2010, after which projects will be evaluated by a panel comprising two executives and three independent personnel. The aim is to announce the winning project on World Volunteer Day – December 5th.

“

GIFT Champions also have their own group on the company global address list – anyone can click on the grouping and see the entire list of employee Champions.

”

MANAGEMENT FEEDBACK

One of the questions asked during the leadership survey related to perceived drawbacks for the individual and the team. Some 200 Team Leaders, Managers and Executives were sent simple surveys electronically and given a 5-day window to respond. A reminder email was sent the day before the deadline. In the end just about 13% responded and indications are a face-to-face survey would have elicited a greater response. A similar challenge was identified: time and the difficulty in balancing the company's demands during working hours with time required for volunteer work (planning, engaging, etc). Or – from another perspective, there was difficulty in releasing employees for co-ordination meetings even when the

employee is willing to work back the time.

The survey also asked the leadership to list the benefits of employee volunteering. Among those identified for the individual were: Personal fulfillment and self gratification that s/he is part of a ripple effect of people helping people; increased self-confidence; better self-esteem; new skills sets (planning, budgeting); more responsible approach; more understanding and service oriented; employee engagement; positive impact on relationships.

As for the team value added, these were: building team spirit/support; an environment of caring and sharing; better customer service focussed; camaraderie; fostering a spirit of co-operation and enhanced communication.

One of the conclusions of the survey was that corporate volunteerism can be a win/win for the individual, the team, and the Business Unit/Group.

WHERE NEXT?

GIFT is new territory for us at Guardian. It began as one thing and morphed naturally into another. We're learning as we go and growing as we learn.

While the GIFT Champions are out on the field, a small team of dedicated volunteers carry out the logistical, brainstorming and administrative functions. They look at the big picture. Though they are supported by Group Corporate Communications, they are the ones who give up their Saturdays to go through a strategic planning session to come up with a 3 year Operational Plan. The Plan is reassessed annually and amended as necessary based on consensus.

It's all about people – about developing a culture of volunteerism among our employees, about working with the people in the communities in which we operate. It is about commitment and dedication in the face of personal and work challenges.

GIFT's vision is regional. Already, employees in member companies have asked about how they can get on board in their territories.

The work has only just started.

“

Personal fulfillment and self gratification that s/he is part of a ripple effect of people helping people; increased self-confidence; better self-esteem; new skills sets (planning, budgeting); more responsible approach; more understanding and service oriented; employee engagement; positive impact on relationships.

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 - Widower's Pension
 - Remarriage Grant
 - Child's Allowance
 - Dependent Parent Pension

Survivors'

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- Widower's Pension
- Remarriage Grant
- Child's Allowance
- Orphan's Allowance
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EXPERIENCES & AVENUES FOR SUCCESS WITH CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM & MENTORING ACTIVITIES

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THE IMPORTANCE OF QUANTIFYING THE "BOTTOM LINE" IMPACT OF CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM

The Heroes Foundation (HF) is a Non-Profit, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) whose Mission is to nurture the next generation of heroes, from the ranks of our nation's youth. This is done in part through the creation and promotion of mentorship activities, including enrolling the students into various altruistic activities, such as volunteerism.

Justifying costs is one of the practical challenges that HF has faced when partnering with corporate T&T for volunteer initiatives. This is caveated with the clarification that the corporate partner is almost always willing and able to cover the direct expenses associated with such excursions (such as T-Shirts, Transportation, Food). The challenge lies in asking the company to contribute costs to cover the time required to organise the event and mobilise volunteers.

This originates from the fact that as a not for profit NGO, it is not straightforward for the Foundation to make a case for the recovery of manpower costs associated with enabling these corporate volunteer opportunities. This is compounded by the fact that the existing concept of volunteerism in T&T makes it intuitively difficult to request, or indeed justify, any financial "benefit" from the experience, even if for legitimate reasons. As a result, the Foundation normally writes-off related personnel costs as a "loss-leader", with the intent of establishing a long term corporate contributor relationship.

One of the possible solutions to the above challenge would be for the corporate world to be able to **quantify the value of corporate volunteerism to the bottom line of organisations**. Once this is effectively done, then the concept of financially contributing to the partnering NGO for volunteerism activities would be more palatable, since it would be seen as an investment into the profitability of the corporate entity.

Until this step is taken, one has to rely on the inherent altruistic attitude of the leadership of the organisation, to promote such an activity on a qualitative basis i.e. with the leader or manager knowing from an intuitive



HEROES
FOUNDATION



**Philip Julien, Chairman,
The Heroes Foundation.**

Philip Julien was born in Trinidad in 1970. He graduated from McGill University in Canada, with a Major in Chemical Engineering and a Minor in Environmental Engineering. He then worked with a Canadian engineering firm for approximately ten years, focusing on environmental protection and project management. In 2001, he moved back to Trinidad, and is presently acting as the Chief Executive Officer for Alutrint Ltd. In 2002 he founded the not-for-profit organization known as the Heroes Foundation, whose Mission is to "Nurture the Next Generation of Heroes" by encouraging the youth's involvement in altruistic and mentorship activities.

perspective that volunteerism is something worthwhile to promote within the organisation. Creation of this perspective within society is itself a necessary yet challenging undertaking.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM & THE ENVIRONMENT – CSR AT ITS BEST

In my opinion, one of the better volunteer activities that corporations and NGO's can collaborate on, is one which pertains to improving the environment of their fenceline community, of the country in general. This speaks to the heart of good Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities i.e. those which affect the triple bottom line of People, Planet, and Profit.

The People and Planet component is self-evident: people being involved in a positive activity that brings value to their existence beyond the workplace, while preserving and enhancing the environment for the next generation. The issue of demonstrating a positive impact of volunteerism on the final "P" – Profitability - of an organisation remains of paramount importance in the short-term.

The international component of our locally hosted mentorship programme – Big Brothers Big Sisters – has achieved some success in this regard. They have undertaken studies that demonstrate a correlation between an employee's productivity as part of the workforce, and their involvement as a "Big" (Adult Volunteer). Since productivity can be directly linked to profitability, the corporate bottom line impact can be quantified.

“

Another challenge being faced in the Volunteer arena of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), is the absence of the generally accepted principle that exist in some other countries...

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MENTORING CHALLENGES

Another challenge being faced in the volunteer arena of Trinidad and Tobago, is the absence of a generally accepted principle that exists in some other countries (like the US or Canada); namely, that of giving one's time as a **mentor** – which may be viewed as the ultimate form of volunteerism. This principle does not as yet exist here in T&T. We typically find it easier to persuade someone to donate their monies to the Foundation, as opposed to donate their time to the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Programme. Unfortunately however, as the saying goes, "money can't buy you love."

The Heroes Foundation is the local host organisation for the BBBS programme, which revolves around the matching of an adult volunteer ("Big") with an at-risk/in need youth ("Littles"). The premise is that by the Big spending a few hours every week with the Little, the Little would benefit

from a stable and helpful adult influence in their lives. This model has been met with enormous success worldwide, with studies and numerous testimonials confirming the tremendous benefit that such a matching has brought to the Little...**and** the Big.



I believe that all of us can agree that such an intervention

is desperately required, to help offset the dramatic negative effect of the absence of effective parent figures-in particular father figures-within the ranks of the vulnerable youth in our society. However, the combination of the cultural lack of familiarity with investing one's time as a mentor, together with some practical logistical challenges of enabling such an encounter in Trinidad, makes it very challenging to find an adult volunteer who is willing and able to make the commitment of being an effective Big. Success has only been attained with those matches that include a Big who is already pre-disposed to the mentality of being a mentor (more on the importance of this later).

“
...the combination of the cultural unfamiliarity of investing ones time as a mentor, coupled with some practical logistical challenges of enabling such an encounter in Trinidad, makes it very challenging to find an adult volunteer who is willing and able to make the commitment of being an effective Big.
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MENTORSHIP SOLUTIONS

The Foundation has worked over the years to improve upon this situation. This includes:

- Approaching corporate T&T to secure buy-in for the concept of permitting their employees flex-time to be a Big during the work week, which would for example, allow them the option of paying a visit to their Little on the way home from work one day per week.
- Locating prospective “Littles” in community homes that are in close proximity to the corporate entities work abode. This is win-win, in that it is convenient for the employee to visit the home on the way to or from work, and it is easier for the employer to justify from a CSR perspective, as the beneficiaries of this interaction live in their fenceline community.

This configuration has represented an improvement compared to the previous model of “walk in” match prospects. However, the implementation of these matches still has its own set of challenges. More specifically, we have encountered some challenges in motivating employees to get

involved in this type of venture. The general sentiment is that most of them believe that they simply do not have the time to commit over a one-year period relationship to an at-risk/in-need youth for a few hours each week.

In my opinion, the employee cannot be faulted for such thinking, because many of us have fallen victim to the “rat race” mentality. That cycle can only be changed in the short-term through direct leadership intervention, where one can witness the importance the organisation places on volunteerism and mentorship.

This could be achieved by using volunteer activities as an indicator in the measuring of employee’s performance evaluation. Another method could be for the organisation’s leadership to lead by example through becoming volunteers themselves or as in this case becoming a “Big” themselves. This approach would therefore signal to the employees the level of importance that their leadership places on such an activity.

The reality though, is that a culture shift is required country-wide, in order for the concept of volunteerism and mentorship to become more acceptable. A shift of this magnitude can only be effected through its proper cultivation from within the ranks of this country’s next generation – the Youth.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH AS VOLUNTEERS

In fact, having the youth achieve this altruistic sentiment is one of the main mandates of the Foundation’s existence. The intention would be that as the present youth assume the mantle of leadership in the future (both corporate and public sector), the issue becomes moot in regards to quantifying the bottom-line benefit of supporting corporate volunteerism, or of justifying the mentoring activities: those leaders would be promoting these concepts simply because their life experiences have shown them that “its just the right thing to do.”

The Foundation has already gradually begun to see the merit of this approach. Our cadre of young persons eager to volunteer grows every year. This is a direct benefit of their enrolment in the Foundation’s Youth Development Programme (YDP), which is designed to nurture that very altruistic spirit from within the



hearts of secondary school students in the Forms 2 & 3 levels. A clear trend that we have also seen from our young volunteers is that the more they volunteer, the more they want to volunteer – truly a positive cycle.

As a result of this, the Foundation’s YDP has been most fortunate over the years to have participated in some corporate volunteer activities. One of the more notable ones is the Annual International Coastal Clean Up Day, which has grown in popularity over the years, and for which our 200 plus annual new YPD enrolees come out in full force. (To-date, the YDP enrolees are more than one thousand strong.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEES AS VOLUNTEERS

Switching from my NGO to my corporate “hat”, I am fortunate to have been with Alutrint during its formative years, where since its inception, there has been a focus on integrating the concept of CSR – both internally and externally-into the fabric of the organisation.

Our latest staff volunteer activity occurred on World Environment Day, and involved the Alutrint Team linking up with secondary students from Vessigny School –a secondary school in our fenceline community of La Brea – to clean up Station Beach, also in La Brea.

As a participant, I can honestly say that there have been fewer work experiences in recent memory more rewarding than that event, on many fronts:

- It allowed us to make a direct and positive impact on the environment of our fenceline community.
- It engendered a camaraderie between the Alutrint Team that was more effective than any previous formal team-building session;
- It allowed us to interact directly with the future generation of La Brea through the high school students.
- It allowed the students to informally learn more about the Alutrint organisation, and what it might be like for them to work with us in the future.

“
Our latest staff volunteer activity occurred on World Environment Day, and involved the Alutrint Team linking up with secondary students from Vessigny School –a secondary school in our fenceline community of La Brea – to clean up Station Beach, also in La Brea.
 ”



Some of the Young Men from the YDP participating in the International Coastal Clean Up Campaign



...and let's not forget the young ladies of the YDP!

The optimist in me likes to think that the experience also inspired some of the students to actively contemplate the importance of corporate volunteerism...which comes back to a point made earlier.

A WIN-WIN-WIN-WIN SCENARIO!

For me, this latest experience really turned the theory into reality: that the act of implementing corporate volunteerism in tandem with the youth can truly be viewed as “win-win-win”, in the following manner:

- a win for the Employer – who benefits from a more motivated, and therefore more productive team;
- a win for the Employee-who benefits from the satisfaction of being involved in a positive activity with youth; and
- a win for the young Volunteer – who benefits both from the activity, as well as from an informal “career fair” through their exposure to interacting with different professionals.

One could go so far and add a fourth “Win”, namely, a Win for the Country. The cross-fertilisation of altruism between younger and older generations inculcates in all the desire to do more for others and by extension, for the country at large. It is therefore the fervent hope of the author that more occasions will be created for these youth/corporate team-ups, since it is through actions such as these, that the greater good of the country will be served, and a stronger nation will be realised.



Alutrint Employees team up with Vessigny School Students while cleaning up Station Beach, La Brea



Alutrint Staff interacting with Vessigny High School Volunteers after Station Beach Clean up in La Brea

FIND YOUR OWN CALCUTTA

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FIND YOUR OWN CALCUTTA

"Find your own Calcutta" ... is reported to be the response the late Mother Teresa gave to some one who wanted to leave their homeland and volunteer with her in India. Seems a harsh response on its own, but on second thought, it aptly described what volunteerism and leadership development can be all about. Each of us has our own "Calcutta" in our back yards, situations screaming for our attention. Developing countries like Trinidad and Tobago continue to witness unequal economic growth, galloping murder and crime rates and increasing numbers of functionally illiterate citizens. These situations all require significant intervention and we have seen that the infusion of money will not necessarily bring success. Personal intervention is required to make a difference. That means getting your hands dirty, rolling up your sleeves and working cheek by jowl with whoever needs you.

Blake Mycoskie, founder of Toms Shoes, donates a new pair of shoes to a child in a developing country for each pair of shoes that he sells. His company was founded 4 years ago and so far has given away 600,000 pairs of shoes. He got this idea while on vacation in Argentina where he visited several villages in which children didn't wear shoes. In creating his business he included in his business plan the idea of helping those Argentinian kids, and others like them in developing countries. While he spends a lot of his time traveling the world delivering shoes, once a year he includes members of his staff in the "shoe drop". Just that action transforms an ordinary worker into an inspired advocate who is anxious to go the extra mile in ensuring that the project continues.

Mycoskie, like several social entrepreneurs is changing the notion of corporate social responsibility. His company found a need, is filling it and is giving back to society as his company grows. He is being an effective marketer and social entrepreneur. He is demonstrating real corporate responsibility. With what was a little known brand and a big vision, Mycoskie is making a difference to the lives of children all over the world. He has an advantage because he was able to build in his social responsibility effort from the ground up, when the company began. Most organizations have to work backward and fight to achieve the buy-in to their corporate responsibility programme. But it begins with a clear understanding that corporate responsibility goes beyond providing a big cheque for a photo



Dennise Demming
Public Relations Consultant
and Trainer

Dennise Demming has more than 30 years experience in Business Communications having held various management positions in the Media, Energy and Manufacturing Sectors. She is currently the Lead Consultant at Demming Communications, a firm which she founded 11 years ago. Her business communication experience is supported by a strong academic background. She holds an MBA from the Institute of Business, University of the West Indies, a B.Sc. in Political Science & Public Administration as well as a certificate in Mass Communications also from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. This academic prowess is enhanced by her participation in numerous local and international training activities aimed at skill development in the field of communications.

opportunity. The people problems which plague modern society require individual connection in order to bring relief.

An effective starting point would be to conduct an employee communications survey which could canvass the interest of employees and develop a list of potential projects. Often when this bottom-up approach is taken, it results in greater interest in, and commitment to the initiative. Companies should avoid charities that are religiously or politically based, to avoid alienating any part of their client base. In essence, the corporate responsibility programme should be viewed like any other project the company rolls out. There must be a strategy and plan to achieve the identified objectives. A project approach is likely to result in; a more productive, motivated and committed workforce, an increased ability to attract and retain employees, reduced absenteeism, enhanced brand image and reputation, increased sales and increased customer loyalty.

Once the project approach is adopted, care must be taken to prepare both the internal and external audiences. This would be a good opportunity to improve the skills bank of the internal audience and ensure that each person can engage in a meaningful conversation with the beneficiaries of the selected projects. Author and Management Guru Peter Drucker, said “if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it”. The identified projects should have measurable criteria on a range of different parameters including the social impact assessment and personal contribution.

The next step is to ensure that there is alignment with the values and principles of the organization. That means writing it into the strategic plan and ensuring that someone is accountable for delivering. Often times this accountable measure is seen as an opportunity to project the dollar value that is being contributed to any number of programmes in the hope that the numbers will be so impressive that it satisfies their corporate responsibility requirement. In reality, that’s just part of the deal. The process of changing the social indicators requires that we “eyeball” people. Think of the impact on a young person of actually having a conversation with a successful entrepreneur from a major company. It has the potential to be a life changing moment simply because people respond to real life experiences which say that somebody cares.

The ‘acid test’ of corporate responsibility requires that we answer the difficult question: How can our organization make a meaningful contribution? The answer becomes increasingly difficult in societies like Trinidad and Tobago where the barefooted children are not so obvious.

In delivering on the Corporate Responsibility initiative, there must be a mechanism for continuous review of the corporate strategy to ensure

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Companies should avoid charities that are religiously or politically based, to avoid alienating any part of their client base. In essence, the corporate responsibility programme should be viewed like any other project the company rolls out.

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that employees at all levels find their own Calcutta in their back yards. Reinforcement of the strategy can take various forms. In the case of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, there is the “We Care” programme. Employees are encouraged to identify, support and contribute to various family and community projects. The company responds by matching the contributions of employees. The initiative could be significantly enhanced by building-in opportunities for the leadership to personally connect with the beneficiaries.

Corporate Responsibility is a process and the underlying philosophy must be to improve the lives of persons around us while minimizing negative impact on the environment. The following model could be easily applied.

The ideal approach to corporate responsibility is to build it into the strategy and action plan of the organization as suggested throughout this article. However an inability to institutionalize the idea should not result in the abandonment of programmes aimed at engaging employees in community building. Sometimes employees identify and conduct their own activities. Other times the programme is company driven. There is a recognition that people are at different stages along the journey of corporate responsibility. Two major lessons have been learned from these experiences. Firstly, effective corporate responsibility will only be institutionalized if the idea and activities are embedded into the company plan and secondly, to have social impact communication must occur on the one-on-one level. If we are to impact people, it will not be achieved from an arm’s length, it must happen cheek by jowl. The people of Calcutta need to see the “whites of your eyes”.

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There is a recognition that people are at different stages along the journey of corporate responsibility. Two major lessons have been learned from these experiences...

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Maintaining the Growth and Sustainability of our Future

e Teck is 'Righting the Future' through Community Engagement, Corporate Philanthropy and Employee Volunteerism

Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited's CSR philosophy can be found in our tagline, 'Righting the Future' and is reflected by our development, support and sponsorship of community programmes and projects that improve the sustainability of our fence-line communities.

Captions

1. e Teck's staff volunteers at the Community Health Fair and Family Counseling Day held at Demerara Heights on 21st August 2010
2. e Teck sponsored the attendance of Mr. Madoo of the Wallerfield Farmers and Allied Welfare Association at the Youth Business T&T Annual Business Symposium
3. e Teck sponsored participants of the Birdsong Camp, whom after several weeks of training gave a performance at Queen's Hall.
4. Participants of e Teck's Community Health Fair and Family Counseling Day held at Demerara Heights received information on breast cancer and family planning issues
5. e Teck sponsored TTS\$20,000 in prizes for UTT's Business Plan Competition
6. e Teck sponsored the attendance of students of Coryal Secondary School at a Career Enhancement Seminar "Unlocking Your True Professional Potential: The Power of Commitment"

To learn more about our Corporate Social Responsibility programme please visit www.eteck.co.tt



UNV FORUM ON CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM

Developing a Business Culture of Caring

FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

To increase awareness of volunteering in and as a representative of the modern workplace raises a number of questions on several levels of inquiry. What value does the voluntary engagement of employees in social and environmental projects add to the public common good? Where does corporate volunteerism fit within the conceptual confines of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)? What is the justification for private sector companies to concern themselves with more than their core business processes? What are the generic elements of any corporate volunteer programme and how can those be integrated into the planning process? And of course, which Civil Society organizations would be partners in volunteering and how can meaningful cooperation be achieved?



PARTICIPANTS AND VENUE

As the first corporate volunteerism event of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago in recent years, more than 40 stakeholders from the Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia, regional and international organizations as well as volunteerism-promoting organizations attended the one-day workshop entitled 'Developing a Business Culture of Caring' organized by the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) Country Office Team in Port of Spain in collaboration with an inter-sector Steering Committee. The Forum which was held at the Kapok Hotel in Maraval was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and opened by the UNV Programme Officer Dr. Jens-Ulrich Poppen followed by the welcoming remarks of the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Dr. Marcia de Castro and feature addresses by Mr. Nicolas Galt, President of the TSL Group of Companies and Mr. Robert Riley, CEO of British Petroleum Trinidad and Tobago (bpTT).

WHY A FORUM?

Despite a number of successful advocacy efforts promoting the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Trinidad and Tobago, the CSR component of Corporate Volunteerism remains still in its infancy. In a recent country-wide survey conducted by the UNV on the issue of workplace volunteerism, only 24% of all companies interviewed indicated the existence of an internal volunteer program for staff and it appears that outside the country's energy sector with its strong presence of multinational corporations the use of employee volunteers in support of internal and external CSR initiatives is not seen as relevant for bottom line, business strategy and human resource management.

It also seems that two major factors are responsible for the lack of corporate buy-in for workplace volunteerism on the part of many companies in Trinidad and Tobago – limited capacity to devise formal volunteer programs and management systems and an only rudimentary understanding of the business benefits of volunteer-supported social engagement. Among the benefits of corporate volunteerism is the building of corporate reputation and the solidification of an organizational image of care, social responsibility and good corporate citizenship. Furthermore, voluntary staff involvement in projects that contribute to the material and emotional wellbeing of others generates personal satisfaction, a sense of purpose and an ethos of corporate loyalty.

In addition to the lack of capacity and lack of knowledge, many companies find it difficult to identify partner organizations in civil society whose projects their employees could support through voluntary initiative. Businesses may be prepared to have their workforce volunteer in social and environmental projects but remain unsure as to which NGOs are active in fence-line communities and which initiatives need volunteer support. In other words, the necessary coordination of demand for and supply of corporate volunteers remains fragmented with volunteer skills under utilized.

Unfortunately, the topic of corporate volunteerism has not reached the national policy agenda yet and the national stakeholder community does not currently enjoy the benefits of tax benefits or other regulatory incentives that would be commonly part of volunteer or Third Sector legislation. However, efforts by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) and spearheaded by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) to work towards the development of a national CSR policy would cover some of the ground of voluntary action by corporations.



*Dr Marcla De Castro,
UN Resident Coordinator
and UNDP Resident
Representative*



*Lara Quentrall-Thomas, CEO
Regency Recruitment Ltd
and Past President of AFETT*

HOW?

The workshop placed considerable emphasis on the element of interactivity and peer discussions. It consisted of a series of working group sessions that focused on topics previously introduced by presenters and covering the thematic aspects of business case and benefits, strategic and skills based volunteering, volunteer programme development and design and partnerships. Participants brainstormed collectively, gathered information, exchanged personal experience and identified responses to challenges identified. In organizing the event, the UNV Country Office Team together with the Steering Committee felt it important to include as many local testimonials of corporate volunteerism and ‘homegrown’ examples of employee involvement in company’s CSR activities as possible.

FINDINGS

Participants were asked to appoint a team leader who would capture the findings of the group discussions and report back to plenary at the end of each interactive section. The results of the working group exchanges including the presentations were as follows:

THE BENEFITS OF CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM

Engaging in voluntary activities and giving expression to one’s corporate social responsibility reaps tangible business benefits for every member of the workforce including managers, junior professionals and workers. Volunteering as an employee helps individuals to grow as a person and mature as professionals. It facilitates the building of technical skills, boosts confidence and contributes towards personality growth and increased productivity. While volunteering brings out ‘team player’ qualities in each individual, it also generates corporate identity and instills a unique sense of loyalty to one’s professional ‘family’. As the modern workplace often undermines the principle of work-life balance through long working hours with little change in the professional experience, voluntary work in communities can help restore that balance between the spending one’s time for non-material purposes and the demands of the job.

Corporate volunteerism also serves to improve corporate branding and organizational image in the eyes of customers, suppliers and communities. By extension, it can help to improve ethical behavior within the supply chain and to attract investors through its effect of forging greater social

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“On the inside in terms of recruitment, staff, retention, motivation, team-building and leadership development there is a lot to be said about the kind of voluntary preparedness that staff brings to the table ultimately benefitting the company from a commercial point of view.”
 –Dr. Jens-Ulrich Poppen,
 UNV Programme Officer,
 UNDP Trinidad and Tobago

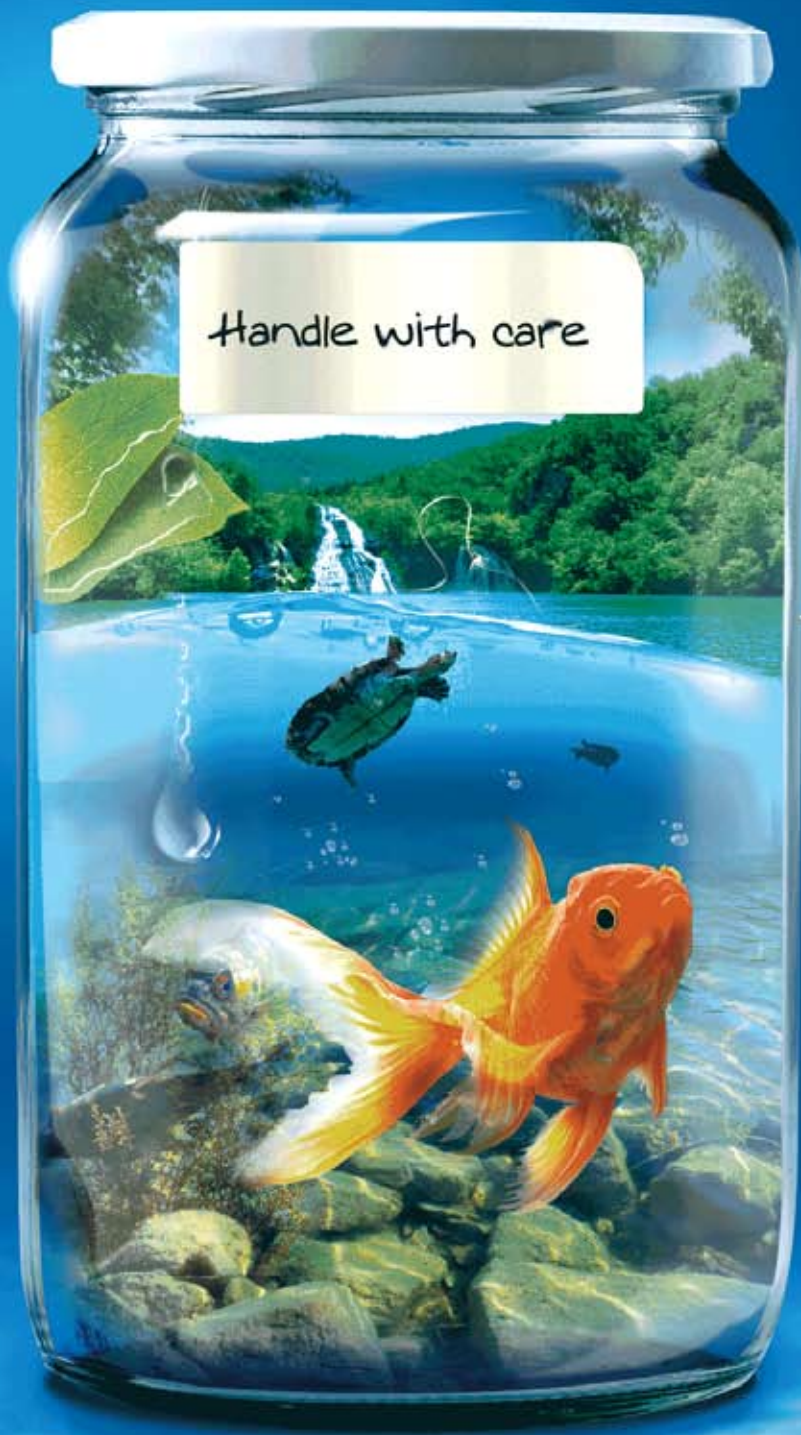
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*Nicholas Galt,
 Managing Director,
 Trinidad Systems Ltd.*



*Robert Riley,
 CEO, bpTT*

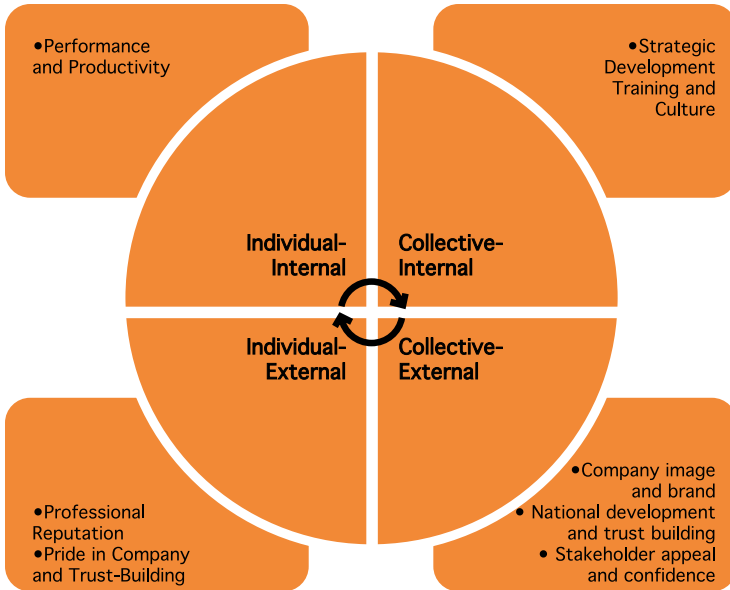


RBC Blue Water Project

It takes more than a financial company to protect the world's most precious natural resource.

Since 2007, RBC has pledged more than CAD\$27 million in charitable grants to more than 350 projects around the globe that promote water stewardship and the protection of fresh water.

RBC is proud to be part of this project across the region. Our goal is to promote responsible water usage among employees and clients, with a focus on reducing our Caribbean water footprint.



cohesiveness among the workforce. The enhanced motivation and heightened morale of employees leads to increased levels of staff retention with positive effects on institutional memory and learning. In this regard, particularly young talent ‘looking for more’ is likely to be attracted and kept within the company. The inter-personal relations between co-workers will be strengthened not only because of increased team work but also as a result of the shared ‘special’ experience of helping others. By extension, lines of corporate communications are likely to experience a steady improvement with greater levels of trust being generated among colleagues. From an NGO perspective, the partnering with private sector companies and the involvement of corporate volunteers can lead to an increase in financial resources and to the solidification of budgets.

In her presentation on the benefits of corporate volunteerism and the activities of Guardian Holdings’ employees as part of the company’s Guardian Initiatives for Transformation (GIFT) Programme, Maria MacMillan made a distinction between Personal Added Value and Team Added Value that can be derived from the voluntary engagement of employees. According to her, the value-adding qualities with respect to the individual lie primarily in the realm of emotional fulfillment and self-gratification. In addition, success in one’s voluntary activities gives often rise to increasing levels of self-confidence and improved self-esteem. These personal characteristics are indispensable for any satisfactory output, high quality performance and

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The inter-personal relations between co-workers will be strengthened not only because of increased team work but also as a result of the shared ‘special’ experience of helping others.

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overall competitiveness in the marketplace and form a direct 'cash in' of the company's CSR programme. In Macmillan's experience, volunteering leads to the development of new skills that are directly applicable to business processes such as planning and budgeting. Employees who as volunteers deal with the sensitivities of project partners and stakeholders in their outreach activities will bring enhanced understanding for complex and multifaceted situations and a greater level of service orientation back to their professional engagements, something that will ultimately impact positively on relationships with both external and internal partners.

On the level of the collective, corporate volunteers experience the strength, success and advantages of team work far beyond the confines of the workplace. This experience will ultimately benefit the team-work approach within the company and is likely to encourage staff to further build on the trust developed through their 'extracurricular' activities. According to Mrs Macmillan, the individual impetus of care for the public common good shared by company volunteers will extend into the corporate realm with employees display a more caring attitude towards their immediate environment and supported by increased levels of camaraderie and inter-personal co-operation.

DEVELOPING A CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM INFRASTRUCTURE

In his presentation 'A Map for Organizing a Viable Programme', Dr. Axel Kravatzky focused on the development of corporate volunteerism infrastructure in private companies thus seeking to identify generic elements of volunteer programmes and essential components of the planning process. He introduced participants to a five-step process for programme planning and implementation consisting of a) Initiate; b) Plan & Prepare; c) Execute & Account; d) Report & Audit and e) Innovate & Scale Up.

Initiate

The first phase of any effort to develop a corporate volunteer programme should concentrate on the issues of corporate vision, company policies and entrepreneurial commitment. Such visionary ground work would entail the definition and review of an organization's corporate values, the establishment of an internal CSR governance system and the assigning of accountability and responsibility for the managerial portfolio of volunteerism.



*Gail Weekes, Campaign
Marketing Officer,
United Way*

Plan & Prepare

Having initiated the preparatory brainstorm, determined a governance structure, identified lines of accountability and linked the overall corporate vision with volunteerism programme's vision, the second phase of programme development will specify and prioritize the CSR parameters that relate to and provide an accurate reflection of the company's organizational values. Planning and preparing would also require a more concrete determination of the actual commitments to corporate volunteerism as part of the company's CSR activities as well as the establishment of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). While the designing of the actual volunteers programme forms the centre piece of the entire process, preparations in the areas of awareness-raising within the company as well as staff training need to commence too.

Execute & Account

In the execution phase, corporate volunteer managers need to ensure that ongoing operations are clearly aligned with the previously formulated commitments. In order to establish an accountability framework, the company should define goals, develop systems, establish project records and enter into cooperation agreements at this stage of the volunteer cycle.

Report & Audit

One of the findings of the UNDP/STCIC CSR Mapping Study published in 2007 was that the process of reporting on companies' community outreach activities was the only rudimentarily developed and that the Private Sector's lacked the experience in professional CSR reporting. In addressing this deficit, Dr. Kravatzky's volunteerism programme model outlines the need for reporting on three levels, namely the a) corporate management level; b) on the level of staff, board and shareholders and c) externally to the stakeholder community.

Innovate & Scale Up

The final phase seeks to give meaning to the demands for greater strategic alignment of corporate and CSR activities with business goals and business planning. It calls for an integration of volunteer project results into core business processes and to invest into innovation through the identification of concrete benefits to customers and other stakeholders and to evaluate the implications for company profits. If possible, corporate volunteerism projects should be scaled up if proven effective.

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Put simply, I would say the biggest benefit is firstly to the individual and then that would transcend into the company and further to that the community will benefit and in the whole picture the country will benefit from volunteerism.

–Keisha Dokiesingh, Deloitte

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Treating the management of corporate volunteerism as a business process and working towards the development of a corporate volunteerism infrastructure based on Dr. Kravatzky's planning model, participants focused on three elements of the model's navigation map in particular. The following findings were presented by the working groups:

Planning and Preparation

- Without employee-involvement during the inception stage, any corporate volunteerism programme will fall considerably behind expectations. The contributions of staff during the initiation phase are vitally important conveying a feeling and message of ownership and generating a greater degree of personal responsibility, loyalty and energy that will make the programmatic initiative sustainable.
- The link between volunteer performance and individual reward needs to be integrated into any new programme design effectively organizing corporate volunteerism like any other business process with a delivery component. The fact that employees have agreed to make their skills and time available without the expectation of financial compensation should not obscure the need for the introduction of performance measurements and corresponding rewards mechanisms.
- As part of the programme design process and preparation phase, the issues of compensatory time, regular programme meetings for review and planning and volunteer training modules need to adequately address and be embedded in the overall programme framework.
- The corporate volunteers programme and its goals need to be included in and aligned with the company's Strategic Plan. Its deliveries and accomplishments should be reported in the Annual Report.
- In order to determine social and environmental target areas for volunteer intervention, the company needs to carry out a needs assessment which could include but is not confined to social surveys and focus group research. In other words, volunteer managers need to look beyond what company wants and identify what target groups need based on empirical evidence.



Dr. Axel Kravatzky works with CEOs, executive teams, boards, and other senior executives in the design and implementation of large scale, transformational change with impact across the organization. Axel is a graduate of the London School of Economics (B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D). He led the start-up of Tet Ansamn [Heads Together] Ltd, the first experiential learning organisation in the Caribbean that merged seven years after its creation with Aegis Management Solutions Ltd. For the past four years he has been Principal Consultant and Executive Coach at Aegis Management Solutions Ltd.

- Among the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for staff volunteer activities were the criteria of project purpose, target audience, duration, recognition and reward, measurement, external/internal expectations, improvements in performance both organizational and personal, stakeholder and volunteer feedback including surveys, questionnaires, customer response as well as internal and external publics.
- Participants identified a number of generic elements for the design of a viable volunteer programme, namely the motivational component of intrinsic caring, the identification of a value system, the individual desire to serve, corporate buy-in, accountability, surveys, measurement tools, lessons learned and, as was also mentioned in the area of innovation, the growing of a culture and mentality of 'pay it forward' to make any programmatic effort sustainable.
- The Preparation Phase for the corporate volunteer programme must include awareness-raising measures and the securing of buy-in of the proposed initiative(s) and proposal(s) by senior management. From an NGO perspective, the need for regular partnering with private sector companies makes the organization in its quest for community development more marketable



Nicholas Galt receiving a token from UNV Programme Officer, Dr. Jens-Ulrich Poppen at the Forum, Kapok Hotel

Report & Audit

- Reporting requires a multi-level approach with a broad range of communication tools being utilized including websites, newsletters, intranet, magazines and internal meetings. It should address the following issues:
 - Success in relation to targets
 - Internal and external challenges as well as impacts
 - Value to the organization
 - Lessons Learned/recommendations/Best Practices
 - Financials
 - Recipient/ beneficiaries feedback
- As with any other auditing modality, the auditing of the completed corporate volunteerism programmes and projects needs to be externally carried out and driven.

Innovate and Scale Up

- Employee recognition is an indispensable part of any volunteer programme as it provides the motivational 'fodder' for repeated volunteer experiences. Being recognized for one's personal contributions ensures that through word of mouth of 'happy employees', new staff is being encouraged to participate in volunteer projects thus ensuring that the number of volunteers available goes beyond the 'usual suspects'.

- Programmes should build into their matrices the goal of developing a 'pay it forward' mentality on the part of beneficiaries in order for the programme to have a life of its own, to proverbially 'live on in all the people it touched' and thus become sustainable.

STRATEGY

Many businesses struggle with the challenge to integrate their CSR activities including their volunteerism dimension into the company's overall business planning cycle and to integrate social engagement and environmental activism into corporate strategy. Trudy de Verteuil's presentation on the issue of 'Aligning Core Business with Corporate Volunteer-Supported CSR' and the case of the Telecommunication Service of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) sought to address this challenge. Conceptually guided by traditional thinking about the Triple Bottom Line and mindful of its market position as a technology company with a large skilled workforce that includes technicians, junior staff, senior staff and specialists in areas such as marketing, TSTT has embarked upon a corporate volunteerism programme that aims to utilize the skills and professional expertise of company volunteers in a strategic context. While by de Verteuil's own admission, at times the company still confuses marketing and sales with social investment, its outreach and civic engagement activities have been developed on several levels with a relatively high degree of sophistication. TSTT's social investment portfolio consists of four elements – sponsorships, donations and concessions, partnering and community communication centers. The sponsorship pillar includes support for the GIE Network Magazine as well as the Annual National Secondary Schools Swim Meet event. Donations by the company consist of grants and cash reduced service rates while partnering rests on consultancy services and capacity-building activities. The company's CSR engagement results from the recognition that in as much as TSTT earns income through the communities in which

it operates, the creation of wealth brings with it the responsibility to 'give back' to the operating environment in some form or fashion.

The company's strategic objectives are to encourage volunteerism among its staff, to partner with employees in that effort to positively impact communities, to contribute towards the work of NGOs through the provision of a cadre of highly skilled persons, to encourage staff to find creative ways of helping and contributing to their communities and to encourage employee initiatives that help vulnerable groups in society.

Structurally, the TSTT corporate volunteerism programme has been developed under the auspices of a Project Advisory Committee that is ultimately responsible for communication across company departments and among the workforce. Employees are assessed before entering into the company skills database to ensure optimal use of existing technical expertise. They are encouraged to agree to a minimum of 30 contact hours depending on skills as well as personal motivation and can choose between one-off activities, serial activities and longer-term commitment. Examples for the three categories would be TSTT's support for Habitat for Humanity, the Cancer Society and Families in action respectively.

Putting the professional skills of TSTT employee volunteers strategically to good use in the company's CSR projects has led to an impressive record of accomplishments in a range of social outreach and community activities. Among the successes of the programme were the provision of 140 Christmas hampers for the entirety of the village population of Kernahan, an increase in the number of Moms trained literacy tutors by 15, an annual average of \$20,000 for the T&T Cancer Society and an increased number of Families in Action Confident Parenting Facilitators by 12. Furthermore, in the area of charitable giving the company has donated 20 used computers per year and provided text books for 140 children.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Business has become an important driver of development globally. In addition to the Private Sector's trailblazing activities in areas as exciting as social impact investment or microcredit, companies worldwide have given expression to their social responsibility and public commitments through a variety of CSR projects, initiatives and approaches that directly contribute towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Within this context of re-directing core business operations towards national development and stronger alignment of traditional community work with



Trudy de Verteuil currently holds the position of Manager - Corporate and Community Affairs at the Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT). A former journalist, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Language Literature and Social Sciences from the University of the West Indies and a Masters degree in Social Development Planning and Management from the University of Wales Swansea as Manager -Corporate and Community Affairs she is responsible for directing TSTT's multi-million dollar social investment programme. She has been the driving force behind much of the company's corporate social responsibility thrust which includes motivating and mobilizing the company's several hundred volunteers.

a company's core line of business, corporate volunteerism has become an increasingly popular expression of the widespread corporate desire to make a difference in social upliftment and environmental sustainability. The following cases are three examples of MDG-relevant areas of voluntary engagement that have been undertaken with the support of the business community.



MDG8 - GEN Y PROJECT

Corporations and the Private Sector in particular have become extraordinarily important partners in UN's global efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Management consultant Ian Ivey's presentation on his involvement in the 'Gen Y' project highlighted youth development as a target area for corporate volunteer managers directly linked to the development context of MDG 7 – Developing a global partnership for development. The project seeks to empower young people to contribute towards a positive future in Trinidad and Tobago. The presentation provided participants with a framework for corporate support within which entry points for voluntary assistance could be identified.

The 'Gen Y' initiative departed from the assumption that the gap between the rich, well educated and connected, high-tech savvy, female, urban youth embedded in functional family structures and the poor, poorly educated and disconnected males hailing from rural regions and being hampered by dysfunctional family situations is continuously getting wider. Many young people will be therefore ill-equipped to realize their dreams and potential in a world of tomorrow, that in Trinidad and Tobago is likely to see the reduction of the oil and gas sector to 15% of GDP while fashion, renewable energy, health and wellness, niche tourism and education will become the next big contributors to national productivity.

Departing from this situation analysis, Ivey outlines the four follow-up theme areas of a) networking skills and capabilities, b) information technology and computing capabilities, c) developing a personal 10 year vision and d) enhancing entrepreneurship and innovation. As part of the 'Gen Y Project', youth participants in workshops were asked to identify their greatest ambitions, dreams and plans for personal development. They would be guided in their brainstorming by the overarching question 'Where will I be and what will I be doing 10 years from now'

The audience was introduced to the subsequent efforts by the 'Gen

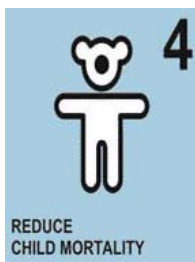


Ian Ivey
MDG8 - Gen Y Project

Ian Ivey was born in New Zealand and gained his Masters degree at Massey University. His career began in the horticultural industry and then progressed to roles in corporate investment and project management in Australia and New Zealand, senior management roles in the international energy and environmental sectors in Australasia, Europe, the Arabian Gulf and Asia, and the development of international trading relationships. Since 1997 he has been increasingly involved in the area of future proofing businesses and organizations through the use of foresight and innovation in association with a group of key international network partners. In recent times he has been particularly involved with major foresight projects focusing on entrepreneurship, innovation and youth in the Caribbean and Australia and has been based fulltime in Trinidad and Tobago since mid 2007.

'Y' participants of narrowing down the number of 'best bet' go forward opportunity areas effectively reducing them from 32 to 3 that would be implemented. In the working group exercise that followed Ivey's presentation, Forum participants were asked to identify 3 action points that they as commercial organizations as well as private individuals could address through (corporate) volunteerism in order to assist 'Gen Y' youth in the implementation of their personal development goals.

The results offered support on different levels. Mentorship programme, role playing, Outreach Programmes, youth television and radio programmes, celebrity endorsement, Big Brother Big Sister programme, internship and job training, support innovation, get more involved in NGOs (time, money), adopt a school, organize essay competitions and debates to engage children while focusing on skills developments, support sports-based initiatives, 'take your child to work' initiatives, donate ICT hardware and organize and provide training, provide practical career guidance, support efforts at branding ('you are the brand')



MDG 4 - THE JUST BECAUSE FOUNDATION

Confronting the menace of paediatric cancer, the Just Because Foundation (JBF) exemplifies the importance of local efforts and private initiative in reducing child mortality around the globe and thus contributing to the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Founded by Noel and

Chevaughn Joseph in 2007, the JBF is at the forefront of holistic cancer care for paediatric patients and their families in Trinidad and Tobago and Noel Joseph's presentation walked participants through the short but remarkable history of his NGO, an organization that has received the support of corporate volunteers on several occasions. The founders experienced personal loss when their five and a half year old son Jabez ('JB') died of a rare form of cancer – an Alveolar Rhabdomyosarcoma – and set up the organization in his memory. In June 2008, the North Central Regional Health Authority (NCRHA) gave permission for the newly established NGO to work towards the creation of an additional paediatric ward at the Wendy Fitzwilliam Paediatric Hospital at Mount Hope. Starting with the refurbishment of this previously unused part of the hospital in July 2008, a large pool of employee volunteers from the Unit Trust Corporation (UTC) and Pepper Advertising jointly with volunteer staff from NGOs such as Habitat for Humanity and Kids in Need of direction (K.I.N.D.) assisted in a massive renovation project

assigning volunteers to various areas and activities on the ward depending on individual skills and experience. The painting of the ward facility kept hundreds of corporate volunteers busy over the course of two consecutive weekends. The UTC example of sponsoring the equipment for the JBF Computer Zone as well as lending a helping hand to NGO activities such as the Siblings Club through its workforce demonstrates that corporate volunteerism and charitable giving can and in fact should go hand in hand in order to achieve maximum benefit for communities and those in need of support. In another corporate partnership that married charity and corporate volunteerism, the Foundation teamed up with mobile network provider Digicel receiving TT\$200,000 in donations and securing the support of more than three hundred Digicel staff for “painting, cleaning, lifting, dumping and climbing” to put it into the Foundation’s own words. The company partnership with Digicel has come to be seen as a prime example for multi-level collaboration ranging from financial support to ‘in-kind’ contributions such as mobilizing Digicel-sponsored celebrities for hospital visits, volunteer involvement and Christmas gift campaigns. Other volunteer support included employees from janitorial service provider Magic Mist, Brian Mac Farlane, the T&T Art Society and Miss World contestant Gabrielle Walcott to name only a few. “The rate at which we have been able to progress” says JBF Co-Founder Noel Joseph, “was fueled and propelled by corporate volunteerism”.



Noel Joseph
MDG 4 - The Just Because Foundation

Noel Joseph is the Vice-President and Co-Founder of The Just Because Foundation (JBF), an award-winning NGO whose focus is on the provision of practical, emotional and holistic support for families of children with cancer. Together with his wife, Chevaughn, Noel manages a number of support projects including a “Home away from Home”, the JBF Siblings Club and the JBF Pediatric Specialty Unit at the Wendy Fitzwilliam Pediatric Hospital, Mount Hope. Noel’s 20-year career in advertising, marketing and audio/visual production, now serves him well as the Branding and Communications Manager of the JBF. He oversees the creative development and execution of the Foundation’s Public Service Television and Radio announcements as well as printed material.



MDG 7 – APETT AND THE ST. JAMES EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION

In his presentation entitled ‘Skills-Based Volunteering and the Environment – Ensure Environmental Sustainability’, engineering professional and CEO of Vicar Enterprises Richard Saunders described the history of volunteer mobilization at the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago (APETT) over the past 50 years and, with regards to skills-specific voluntary activities of its organizations, introduced the organization’s latest project with the St. James Empowerment Foundation. APETT’s corporate volunteers initially focused on providing career guidance lectures and only recently sought to ensure a more varied utilization of technical skills among its members, particularly by involving retired engineers in projects that are often focused on environmental sustainability and therefore possess great relevance for the achievement of MDG 7. The project with the St. James Empowerment Foundation in focusing on the use of bio-engineering

techniques for the improvement of waterways and waste management seeks to reduce the incidence of pollution in rivers and other waterways leading into the Gulf of Paria. Innovatively, the project includes is based on a community managed plan to address waste in a multifaceted way. In partnering with a local NGO, APETT established an official framework for volunteer assignments resulting from the realization that many non-for-profit organizations suffer from a considerable lack of capacity to address their strategic and operational issues and encounter challenges to align their needs for technical support with the skills available through volunteerism

APETT's corporate volunteers provide a broad range of engineering backgrounds to its project partners including civil, mechanical, chemical, industrial and electrical engineering. In Richard Saunders words, the partnership between NGO, APETT and its corporate volunteers is a mutually beneficial one with the community benefiting as well as the professional volunteers benefiting from meaningful experience when seeking innovative strategies of community engagement. For corporate volunteers, the collaboration with social partners with evaluation skills has become a key component in successful project implementation.

GAPS

Emerging from the working group sessions, participants identified a series of structural, organizational, operational and attitudinal gaps that were perceived as the main spoilers for a broader acceptance and an increased buy-in of corporate volunteerism by private sector companies. It was felt that those systemic deficits would have to be addressed in order to modernise existing volunteer programmes, enlarge the number of active participants in corporate volunteer initiatives and maximise on the potential for constructive partnerships between Private Sector and Civil Society.

The following major challenges to the development of sustainable corporate volunteer programs were identified:

Senior management buy-in: Executives often remain passive, indifferent or out-rightly opposed to the idea of employees devoting their energy and skills to anything other than what is seen as core business processes.

Increase contributions: Individual participation as well as material allocations need to be increased to enable volunteers and the companies that mobilize them to advance community projects meaningfully.



**Richard Saunders,
CEO, Vicar Enterprises**

Engineer Richard Saunders is the President of the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago (APETT) and Managing Director of Vicar Enterprises Limited, a company providing Property Development, Project Management, Design Build of Sports and Recreational Facilities and Real Estate services. He received his secondary education at St. Mary's College, Port of Spain and pursued a first degree at the University of the West Indies, where he graduated in 1976 with BSc. Honours, Electrical Engineering. He obtained his MSc. in Electronic Instrumentation at the University of Wales, Swansea and a Diploma in Public Enterprise Management at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, India. He is currently a Council member of Trinidad and Tobago Group of Professional Associations, Director of the Holy Cross College School Board of Management and a Past President of the Association of Real Estate Agents and The Port of Spain West Rotary Club.

Lack of information: Trinidad and Tobago's Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations (CBOs) as well as individual employees are often lacking the awareness of the nature, modalities, implications and benefits of corporate volunteerism.

Needs Assessment: Mobilization, partnering, communication, recognition and strategic planning are essential elements of any corporate volunteer programme. However, direction, focus and configuration of volunteer projects are often ill-determined as needs assessments are rarely being carried out.

Mentality that focuses only on cash donations. For many years now, the trend in CSR has seen a shift away from charitable giving towards a more pro-active and strategic role for companies in the area of project identification, planning and execution. However, many employees and companies do not perceive the giving of time as a valuable contribution towards community development.

Inefficient NGO network that suffers from overlap, lack of mutual support within stakeholder community and little knowledge sharing: Many NGOs command little resources and are lacking the capacity to partner on larger-scale project work. At the same time, accumulated expertise and information remains closely guarded not only within the NGO community but also between companies.

Legislation: At present, no volunteerism legislation exists in Trinidad and Tobago that would help to provide definitions, set standards and offer incentives to Volunteer-Involving Organizations (VIOs) both inside and outside the Private Sector.

Coordination: In order to avoid the duplication of efforts, ensure maximum synergy effects and ensure alignment of objectives, coordination needs to be seen as a quintessential component of any national volunteers system. Currently, there does not exist such a coordinating institution.

Training: Volunteer training for employees is an integral part of any strategically developed corporate volunteers programme. Unfortunately, most staff volunteers are not properly prepared for their assignments and therefore underutilized within a system of skills-based volunteering.

“

I think it is important certainly in Trinidad and Tobago that we look for NGO partners because what happens often here is that two or three NGOs are doing almost identical projects to the ones that corporate entities would like to do. There is no synergy.
–Lara Quentrall-Thomas,
Regency Recruitment

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As a result of the gaps identified, workshop participants outlined the next steps to be taken by the stakeholder community to address shortcomings, deficiencies and weaknesses of corporate volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago.

NEXT STEPS

Participants agreed that the workshop should be used as a starting point for further activities and initiatives within the stakeholder community. As a result of the gaps identified during the group sessions, workshop participants outlined the next steps to address shortcomings, deficiencies and weaknesses of corporate volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago. The following proposals were made in outlining a possible next-step scenario:

Establish a Volunteerism Programme Association (VPA) and launch the organization at a high-profile event/Corporate bodies working together to form a national corporate volunteer network (CVN): Such an Association/Network would serve as a clearing house for corporate volunteerism activities coordinating and matching the demand for and supply with volunteer candidates. Likely to be hosted by one of the participating companies or NGOs, the VPA/CVN could function as a 'one-stop shop' complete with database, Best Practice information and advocacy initiatives.

Intensify networking among stakeholders in Private Sector and Civil Society: The brainstorming process and dialogue on developing corporate volunteerism in Trinidad and Tobago should be made permanent with regular exchanges between stakeholders and the creation of networking platforms for the facilitation of company-NGO partnerships.

Share information relating to corporate volunteer management practices and experiences in programme development and implementation: The need for advancing the concept of corporate volunteerism as a management practice remains on the front burner of advocacy efforts in Trinidad and Tobago and the feedback of participants reflected their strong interest to learn more about selected aspects of relevant management processes. This could include seminars, workshops, symposia, testimonials, publications and other forms of knowledge sharing.

“

We would like to do more. We would like to get our executives more involved. And this Forum has given me some ideas of how we may be able to take the next steps to get there.

*–Nicole Galt, Vice President
HR, TSL Group*

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Works toward a comprehensive cataloguing of all NGOs/CBOs: The existing directories of NGOs are outdated and not reflective of the current organizational realities on the ground. The Private Sector would benefit from an updated version of the directory initially compiled and published by the Ministry of Social Development including contact personnel and a brief introductory description of existing capacities.

Working with well-governed NGOs: The question of NGOs' organizational capacity and their governance structures is crucially important for the successful forming of partnerships between Private Sector and Civil Society. However, only a limited number of vetting and assessment processes exist with organizations such as The United Way remaining the few 'filters' in the volunteerism arena.

Increase efforts to mobilize new staff for volunteer projects: The need to pay special attention to the issue of internal mobilization becomes most apparent in the frequently observed phenomenon of the 'usual suspects' – the small number of employee volunteers that would come out in support of company initiatives time and again while the majority of staff members remains on the sidelines.

Make visits to companies in an effort to raise the awareness about corporate volunteerism: This could take place once stakeholders have established a more permanent framework for their advocacy efforts such as a possible Volunteerism Programme Association (VPA) or a Corporate Volunteerism Network (CVN).

Develop learning modules and training programmes on the issue of reporting and accountability: Any future activities to promote and advocate the concept of corporate volunteerism will have to place special emphasis on the element of training. This needs to include the area of CSR and volunteer reporting which remains an only weakly developed component of the volunteer management cycle.

Engage executive management to secure buy-in for the concept of corporate volunteerism: The UNDP/STCIC CSR Mapping Study highlighted the importance of executive buy-in for the successful planning and implementation of CSR projects. This remains true in the case of corporate volunteerism which crucially depends on support by senior management and 'boardroom backing'.

“

In essence, the Forum reflected some of the premises of volunteerism as being something that takes place in the wholehearted spirit of giving.

–Catherine Dookie-Da Silva, Desktop Designs & Letters Ltd.

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Promote CSR on a national level. Drill down to individual commitments which will naturally make their way into organizations:

The absence of an official CSR policy framework and the conceptual vacuum as a result of such void hampers promotional and advocacy efforts on national level. Promoting CSR should bring about attitudinal change on an individual level and create a 'voluntary spirit' that would be subsequently available to volunteer managers in corporations in both private and public sector.

Include young persons in volunteerism: The promotion of corporate volunteerism needs to start with the youth in order to effect generational change in the individual preparedness of citizens to contribute voluntarily towards the public common good. The students of today are the employees of tomorrow and nurturing a culture of volunteerism among young people is likely to reap tangible benefits in the medium term.

Most important insights and perspectives derived from the Forum:

- Need to network with NGOs and other organizations
- Management commitment needed
- Need to create culture of volunteerism
- Roadmap to developing an in-house volunteer programme
- Common challenges to effective volunteer management
- Conduct needs assessment
- Need for proper governance
- It makes economic sense to volunteer - Volunteerism 'pays'
- Empowered employees are more productive
- Skills and individual talents are as important for community work as financial resources
- Introduction to workable formats, approaches and projects
- Importance of solid resource base for the sustainability of corporate volunteerism
- Need to establish a national volunteer association
- Importance of creating volunteer partnerships with NGOs
- Information about programme design
- Volunteerism still in its infancy despite significant numbers of NGOs and other groups requiring assistance



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CORPORATE VOLUNTEERISM

In its desire to help those less fortunate in society, the TSL Group has created an internal culture which espouses assistance to others either directly through cash donations or through giving of their time. All Staff members are encouraged to participate in this corporate initiative.

The TSL Group for the past five years has partnered with United Way Trinidad & Tobago to assist in achieving this goal. Its employees voluntarily donate financially each month through salary deductions and TSL matches the employees' total contribution which is remitted to UWTT. More recently, the TSL Group hosted its' first public charity event, "A Cup for Charity", the proceeds of which were donated to the UWTT for the purpose of assisting certified NGO's throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

TSL also lends support to the St. Michael's School for Boys in Diego Martin. The school caters for male juveniles between the ages of 10-18 years and in 2007 the school was given a technology jumpstart with the launch of an RBTT initiated programme geared towards transforming the learning environment. The TSL Group embraced the opportunity to partner with RBTT and now provides on-going technical support for their computer labs.

Just over fifteen years ago the TSL Group adopted and continues to support the Sunny Hill Home for Boys in Malick, Barataria and since that time the company staff run a Christmas collection drive, in order to satisfy a particular need specific to the wellbeing of the boys as well as a large food hamper of Christmas supplies in keeping with the season. Each boy is also given a Christmas gift.

In the areas of Health and Safety, the TSL Group has been and continues to work with the Newtown Boys RC School as well as with Holy Name Convent Secondary School towards developing their HSE handbook. TSL encourages the schools to form HSE committees and meets with them to assist in the formulation of policies and guidelines.

Another pet project of the organization is lending support to the Friends of the Blood Bank Association in Trinidad and Tobago. A mobile unit visits the Group's Head Offices bi-annually, which is promoted internally, with the result that many staff members freely volunteer their blood donations to the Blood Bank.

Besides all of the above, used copiers which are in very good condition which are returned upon completion of a lease agreement are loaned and/or donated to NGO's on a regular basis, providing document copying and printing support to foundations such as ALTA (Adult Literacy Association of Trinidad and Tobago) and many others.

TSL's President, J. Nicholas Galt, sets the standard for the Group as he is personally involved with several volunteer initiatives, namely, the GBS Foundation, Youth Business Trinidad & Tobago, United Way Trinidad & Tobago, Next Generation, the American Chamber of Commerce and is a Paul Harris fellow and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists in London, England.

There are employees who follow his example and so personally get involved with groups which provide much needed assistance to the underprivileged. In particular, Staff Member Janicia Britto has visited Haiti on two occasions since the devastating earthquake and her experience has not only changed her life but the lives of many in Haiti whilst at the same time bringing encouragement to her co-workers. This action continues to highlight the need for dedicated volunteers to other TSL Staffers. The TSL Group is committed to being a builder of bridges, connecting hearts, minds and souls, as such the Group is of the firm opinion that together all can make a difference.

TSL Group building bridges...Connecting hearts, souls and minds



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