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IVCO 2017 SUB-THEME PAPER Enabling Environment

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Foreword

This paper has been produced for IVCO 2017 and is one of a series of papers exploring this year's conference theme *Implementation of the SDGs through transformative partnership in volunteering*.

The paper focuses on the sub-theme *enabling environment* and what this means for international volunteering for development/volunteering for development and its role in implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Separate papers consider the sub-themes *innovation* and *measurement*.

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

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to frame and inform conversations at IVCO 2017 about the concept of an enabling, or conducive, environment for volunteerism. The paper identifies and explores some essential elements of an enabling environment for volunteers as a collective, volunteerism and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) to work effectively, and in some cases considers disabling factors.

The concept of an enabling environment runs through the work of VIOs, from Forum's Strategic Plan to the Volunteer Groups Alliance's national-level advocacy efforts and the UN's Plan of Action, as well as the work of individual organisations. VIOs face some of the same enabling (and therefore disabling) factors as those of other actors, for example civil society space, the operational challenges of international cooperation, security and safety risks, but there are some factors that are distinct to VIOs. These will be the focus of this paper.

The paper focuses on volunteerism – “the use or involvement of volunteer labour, especially in community services” (Oxford English Dictionary 2017) – as a core and collective activity of VIOs, as opposed to the more singular and individualistic concept of volunteering, being “of a person; freely offering to do something” (ibid).

The paper begins with a brief overview of the literature to reflect, at a high level, the literature on enabling environments. This literature informs the elements of enabling environment as:

1. contextual elements – understanding and recognition of volunteerism; political, social, cultural and economic factors; social inclusion
2. actor-based elements – State, civil society, and private sector
3. relational elements – relationships and power dynamics between actors
4. system-wide factors – partnerships, technology and funding; factors shaping volunteerism operations from a whole-of-system perspective.

In practice, the above elements interconnect and influence each other. We have not addressed every element in detail, nor have we given equal weight to every element. This does not reflect the relative importance of different elements, but rather limitations of time and literature. The paper demonstrates that there is, however, no consensus on the essential elements for an enabling environment, or how these elements are connected to the contribution that volunteers make. Nor is there agreement on how such an environment comes about or what power VIOs and volunteers have to create and shape it.

The paper concludes with a brief conclusion and questions for participants at IVCO 2017 to consider and discuss during IVCO 2017 and beyond. The questions are designed to prompt discussion on key areas that warrant further exploration.

Literature review

VIOs have contributed substantially to the literature on enabling environments for volunteerism, with academic publications exploring select aspects in depth. The literature shows a wide and complex web of enabling factors from which we can draw some key themes.

VSO's Valuing Volunteering research focuses on how and why volunteering contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable positive change, and what prevents this (VSO and IDS 2015; see also Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015). The most recent State of the World's Volunteerism Report (UNV 2015) looks at the role of governance in creating enabling environments, and identifies the legal and institutional support for civic engagement needed to enable volunteerism to contribute to improving governance. UNV has published reports calling for action to understand and create enabling environments, including government support (UNV 2000) and volunteer infrastructure (UNV 2014a, 2014b), and the role of volunteerism in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNV 2016). The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS 2010, 2015a) and national Red Cross organisations (for example, ARC 2014, 2016) have published extensively on lessons learned from their volunteers, touched on below, with a focus on humanitarian and crisis relief (IFRCRCS 2011, 2015b) and the impact of local and global changes on enabling environments (IFRCRCS 2015a).

Several reports and conference summaries at the country and regional level provide insight into enabling and challenging environments for local, national and international volunteerism (EAV 2011; UNV 2011; Southern Africa Conference on Volunteer Action for Development 2011; Comhlámh 2013; ARC 2014; Schech and Mundkur 2016; UNV and the National Youth Council of Fiji 2015; NMVO, UNV and VSO 2015; British Council 2016).

Common themes that emerge in the literature include: the need to measure and promote the impacts of volunteering, and to reach a common understanding of what volunteering means in different contexts; the need for sustainable funding, legal and policy support, and locally led and appropriate volunteer assignments; and the need for collaboration and coordination between VIOs and with government, civil society and other local actors. Online volunteering and technological advances, South-South volunteering and corporate volunteers were identified as growing factors in enabling environments.

The elements that constitute an enabling environment

This paper will now focus on four elements that contribute towards an enabling environment – contextual, actor-based, relational and system-wide elements. We will explore different aspects within these elements.

1. Contextual elements

This section explores some contextual elements in which volunteers and VIOs operate, including understanding and recognition of volunteering, the political landscape and inclusion. Other factors that could be considered but are not addressed in detail here are economic and other social and cultural considerations.

Public understanding and recognition of volunteering

The work of volunteers and VIOs can be enabled or impeded by how volunteerism is understood and valued in a particular context (Hvenmark and von Essen 2010; UNV 2014b; IFRCRCS 2015a). Volunteerism is universal, and while people in most societies have some knowledge and understanding of it, there is no broadly shared understanding or positive recognition of its value. Some authors (UNV 2011; British Council 2016) call for a common understanding of volunteerism, recognising that the term is value-laden (Lough and Matthew 2013) and understood differently in different contexts. VSO's Valuing Volunteering research found a range of perceptions of volunteering across and within countries, and concluded that "[n]egative perceptions of volunteering can erode community trust in volunteers, which can severely reduce their effectiveness" (VSO and IDS 2015, p.27). Conversely, as demonstrated in the Myanmar case study below, positive perceptions of individual volunteers can increase trust and therefore demand for volunteerism.

As well as well-documented cultural differences in the understanding of volunteering, and even differences between VIOs and the wider development community (Dekker and Halman 2003, in Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015), we should be especially conscious of how volunteerism is understood by the people and communities that volunteers aim to support, as well as by the volunteers themselves. Lough and Matthew's discussion paper for IVCO 2013, *Measuring and Conveying the Added Value of International Volunteering*, provides an insight into this perspective. A survey of 19 field studies found that the most commonly cited contributions made by international volunteers included capacity building and skills transfer (89 per cent of studies), innovation and ingenuity (74 per cent) and social capital (instrumental) (58 per cent). Areas of concern included a sense that some international volunteer programs or models are "imperialistic, volunteer-centred, neo-colonial, or otherwise ineffective at tackling the real challenges of development".

Volunteerism is, of course, a two-way exchange, and Lopez Franco and Shahrokh (2015) call on the volunteering sector to recognise and promote the fact that volunteers themselves gain knowledge and develop skills through their placements. If volunteers have an open attitude, and a focus on learning rather than helping, there is potential for co-creation and co-generation of knowledge (Chambers 2012, in Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015).

Beyond understanding, enhancing public recognition of volunteerism can affect its impact. As well as formal recognition of volunteers and volunteerism, recognition by influential people in society, in politics and beyond, can raise the status of volunteerism. “Public recognition of volunteerism for development can be a powerful means of motivating citizens to volunteer [and] expression of recognition needs to take place at different levels to encourage volunteerism for development across the board.” (UNV 2014b, p.16). Various actors can be incentivised to engage with volunteers if VIOs succeed in measuring and demonstrating the value of volunteering (see Chowns 2017).

Political landscape

Support for volunteering from political leaders and other decision-makers is one way in which the political landscape impacts on the enabling environment. This can lead to greater public recognition of volunteering, and to partnerships and collaboration between political and other actors.

Since 2000, there has been a trend towards legislation and policies on volunteerism (see Role of the State, below). At the same time, a worldwide trend towards restricting civil society space and rights, including freedom of assembly, is shrinking the formal and informal spaces in which volunteers operate, limiting volunteerism’s effectiveness (Allum 2016; CIVICUS 2016).

Political strife and conflict have a major impact on the risks faced by volunteerism, and can limit the ability of volunteers to operate and achieve their goals. The Red Cross (IFRCRC 2015a) identified that in many countries experiencing conflict and crisis, the Red Cross, Red Crescent and local NGOs and faith groups are among the very few remaining VIOs with formal structures providing aid, medical care and other services. Despite this, and the increasing role of volunteers in these situations, little attention has been given to the needs, experiences and lessons of volunteering in conflict settings, major emergency responses and other complex environments.

Inclusion

Volunteerism can act as an enabler for social inclusion, encouraging marginalised and excluded people, groups and communities to become involved. The act of volunteering can thus promote the enabling environment for volunteerism.

Volunteering can lead to improvements in feelings of self-worth, development of skills, competencies and networks, and feelings of well-being within volunteers, and community cohesion and trust in the communities in which they work. In this way, volunteerism can help address underlying causes of exclusion, including lack of employment, education, health, resilience and changes in policy that may prevent inclusion (UNV 2011).

We should recognise barriers to volunteering. For young people in Jordan, for example, lack of time, material support, financial incentives and appreciation of the importance of volunteering have been identified as key barriers (British Council 2016). In Fiji, lack of information about volunteering as well as lack of organisational support for organisations hosting volunteers are barriers (UNV and the National Youth Council of Fiji 2015). Some of these barriers may be overcome by technology and innovation in volunteer financing and resourcing (see Allum 2016), or through social inclusion policies and implementation of programs by VIOs in ways that address particular barriers to volunteers participating effectively in their programs.

2. Actor-based elements

The environment for volunteering is influenced by actors including the State, civil society and the private sector. As we consider each of these actors, we should ask what is their understanding of the role and value of volunteering in development, and what is the nature of interactions between these actors?

The 2015 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (UNV 2015, p.85) rightly concludes that “[c]ollaboration, alliances and building multi stakeholder partnerships are essential for volunteerism to succeed.” As the IVCO 2017 theme suggests, we should not think of these categories of actor in isolation. They collaborate, compete, and sometimes do both at different times and in different contexts (see Devereux 2017).

Role of the State

The 2015 State of the World's Volunteerism Report finds that governments provide two types of support for volunteering – action to create a conducive environment for the act of volunteering (and for civil society more broadly), and responsiveness to volunteer-led initiatives. It notes that “[s]ome governments recognise the value of systematic legislation, policies, structures and programmes for volunteer engagement and have structures to enable more people to realise the opportunity to volunteer.”

Governments can create environments conducive to volunteering through laws and policies on volunteering, protections for the rights of volunteers, and laws and standards in areas such as civil society and labour regulation which can impact on volunteering (UNV 2015, p.34). The UNSG report on integrating volunteering identifies a trend towards volunteering legislation and policy at national level, with “[m]any Governments... establishing and diversifying national volunteering schemes, approving and revising supportive policies, laws and regulations and including volunteering and community engagement in national strategies and programming” (United Nations General Assembly 2015, p.5).

The State can also create and support volunteering infrastructure and organisational structures and support mechanisms that encourage and reinforce volunteer involvement by sharing good practice, creating opportunities to volunteer and building the capacity of VIOs.

More directly, a significant proportion of international volunteer programs now receive the majority of their funding from government. Support can come in the form of funding individual volunteer involving NGOs, funding streams to support volunteer interventions, or more directly through government volunteering programs operating at national, regional and international level.

Finally, governments support volunteering by being responsive to volunteer-led initiatives and receptive to the voices of volunteers in influencing policy and practice, and in monitoring implementation and holding decision-makers and service providers to account (UNV 2015, p.85). This can take the form of support for local and national volunteers like community health workers, and willingness to host national and international volunteers in positions of influence in state bodies such as ministries, national-level civil service bodies and district health or education offices.

The 2015 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (UNV 2015) considered the role of volunteering in promoting citizen participation to influence the creation and implementation of government policy without supportive governance frameworks and policies. The report includes examples of volunteerism supporting communities to operate in claimed and less formal spaces, with volunteers supporting communities to create demands for change and supporting the development of skills and networks that can be drawn on when opportunities for civic engagement arise. Aked (2015) identified that volunteers can actively support citizens and state actors to come together and practice new ways of participation for democratic governance, including in post-conflict, sensitive and high poverty contexts.

Role of the private sector

Corporate volunteering has emerged as a prominent trend in volunteering for development (UNV 2011), and there is evidence to suggest that, in the right conditions, it can have significant impact on outcomes for beneficiaries, reaching marginalised people and driving development outcomes (Lough and Matthew 2013). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and private sector volunteering are relatively new phenomena, both for humanitarian and crisis response and longer-term development cooperation. Their effectiveness depends on companies' openness to serious engagement on development issues, on their commitment to CSR, and on their understanding of the role of volunteers in development. Two examples are mentioned below.

For over a decade, the WUSC-CECI Consortium has engaged with corporations to support employee participation in their Uniterra international development volunteering program. The skills sought by Uniterra program partners in Asia, Africa and the Americas are identified and then recruited in Canada. In conjunction with its corporate partners, Uniterra recruits corporate volunteers to participate in short-term assignments where they share their skills and expertise with Uniterra's partners; volunteers from the corporate sector participate in three to four week assignments with very specific objectives. Their short assignments allow them to contribute effectively to larger development goals, given they are part of a larger structured program. They often work alongside or precede longer-term volunteers, optimising their shorter assignments. In addition, the pre-departure preparation and the supports provided to volunteers during their assignment by local staff and the local partner contributes to an enabling environment. The Uniterra program has seen mutual but different benefits arise: the corporation increases its employee engagement and retention, the employee develops professional and leadership skills, the overseas partner witnesses an increased capacity, and the Uniterra program experiences a contribution to its development outcomes.

As well as directly supporting volunteer-based projects through financial contributions, and by supporting employees to take part in volunteer programs, private sector corporate volunteers bring reciprocal benefit to their corporate employers, as noted in the VSO India case study below. Their openness to receiving returned volunteers, and to taking on board these volunteers' views, is a determining factor in the ability of VIOs to contribute to secure livelihoods and other areas.

The contribution of the private sector to effective volunteering is also connected to the wider policy environment, which can indeed support private sector engagement in volunteerism, as demonstrated below.

Case study: VSO India and IBM Partnership

VSO India is the implementation partner of the IBM Corporate Service Corps (CSC) program. Since 2015, teams of IBM pro bono consultants have supported the work of local partner organisations. An evaluation of this partnership focusing on corporate employee-based development initiatives in Varanasi and Bangalore was published in October 2016, and offered insights into the enabling environment for corporate or employee volunteering.

Some of the enabling elements identified in the evaluation match those in this paper, such as varying perceptions of volunteering and relational elements such as sensitivity to cultural practices and values.

The evaluation identified a number of elements that were essential to the success of this partnership, and that can be more broadly applied to corporate volunteering:

- Resonance between corporate social responsibility strategies and the program strategy within which volunteering is situated
- Private sector actors that are sensitised to community development, and have the capacity to engage with civil society organisations (CSOs)
- Volunteer assignments and Statements of Work that are co-created by private sector actors and CSOs, and that include engagement with and active inputs from primary actors as part of the program design
- Monitoring and evaluation that considers impact for communities and development outcomes as well as the impact on the volunteers themselves.

VSO has identified the contraction of institutional funding in middle-income countries as a compelling factor in increased private sector support for development cooperation, and for employee volunteering.

The contribution of the private sector to effective engagement with the development sector is also connected to the wider policy environment. A key factor in the enabling environment in this case was India's '2% law'. Passed in April 2014, this law states that any business with annual revenues of more than 10bn rupees (USD155m) must give away two per cent of its net profit to charity. While controversial, the law has led to a marked increase in investment in corporate social responsibility in India, and has raised the status of CSR as a priority for businesses. A provision in the law that prevents businesses from using corporate volunteering to promote their brands has led them to partner with NGOs to achieve impact.

This important piece of the legal context has not been sufficient for an increase in employee volunteering. Businesses must also appreciate the value of volunteering for employee development and retention, and the value of the volunteer experience. IBM in India has recognised the value of returned volunteers as potential leaders, and their potential to bring learning and intelligence from their placements back into the business. VSO India is working at government level, as part of a Consultative Committee on the 2% law, to promote the value of volunteering among businesses.

Role of civil society

Civil society has a significant role to play in the success of volunteering. First, it is a host for volunteers. The 2011 State of the World's Volunteerism Report found that across 36 countries, volunteers comprised 44 per cent of the work force of civil society organisations (CSOs), representing the equivalent of 20.8 million full-time workers (UNV 2011, p.20). Volunteers support CSOs to implement high-impact development activities, including in the face of significant government/core funding cuts (Howard et al. 2014).

A paper by UNV (2015b) explores the relationship between VIOs and CSOs in the context of the 2030 Agenda, noting that the engagement of volunteers in the work of civil society is often not referred to as volunteering, partly reflecting a mixed perception of volunteers by CSOs, including negative stereotypes of volunteers as unprofessional, inexperienced and unqualified.

Changes to such negative perceptions are occurring, for example, in the explicit recognition of volunteerism and volunteer groups as part of CSOs' approaches to sustainable development in the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness. The framework explores the importance of VIOs and CSOs working together for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and calls on CSOs to encourage volunteering. It also calls on VIOs to work more closely with CSOs to learn from each other in the measurement and implementation of the SDG agenda.

We might ask how well wider civil society understands and values the role of volunteering in development, and how open it is to innovation and new ways of working that involve volunteerism, collaboration alliances and multi-sector and -stakeholder partnerships. The role of civil society will be explored further under system-wide partnerships.

3. Relational elements

Recent research has made it clear that relationships of trust are crucial to the success of volunteer placements, and that these relationships rely on volunteers' soft relational skills and on the embeddedness of volunteers within communities over the long term. Turner (2015) emphasises that when creating networks, volunteers need self-reflection skills to identify and understand power imbalances, including their own role, within their networks (see also Lough and Matthew 2013).

VSO's Valuing Volunteering research found that "[t]he need to navigate complex politics, engage people who are highly marginalised, and achieve results makes the work of volunteers highly relational", going as far as to say that "relationships and relationship building between volunteers and their counterparts [are] as important as technical skills

and hard outcomes” (VSO and IDS 2015, p.24). The literature focuses on local networks as an element of the enabling environment for volunteers. Volunteers play a key role in creating and working within complex and diverse networks and alliances (UNV 2000; Lough and Matthew 2013; ARC 2014; Turner 2015; UNV 2015; VSO and IDS 2015). With their ability to access networks both within and outside of communities, volunteers can create locally applicable innovations, reaching marginalised people who might otherwise have been left out of established networks (Howard and Burns 2015; VSO and IDS 2015).

Beyond attributes of volunteers and programs, Valuing Volunteering identifies factors related to the wider environment – “access to and the support of trusted local networks or decision-makers” and “volunteers being able to connect into established local networks and function as part of a collective local effort rather than in isolation” as important foundations for relationship-building (VSO and IDS 2015). This is determined in part by the volunteer and their program, but it is also connected to two questions addressed earlier in this paper – the role of the State and other actors, and perceptions of volunteering.

We should consider, then, the factors that enable the types of relationships that make volunteering successful, including levels of openness to engage in relationships spanning the personal and professional spheres and the access that volunteers, as outsiders, have to these types of relationships (VSO and IDS 2015, p.25).

4. System-wide factors

This section will focus on system-wide factors, including partnerships, technology and funding. These factors, like context, shape the operations of volunteers, volunteerism and VIOs from a whole-of-system perspective.

Partnerships

Volunteering is most effective when volunteers work as part of multidisciplinary teams, and when interventions connect with local networks and organisations (Turner 2015). Transformational and systemic change requires interventions across systems, and this in turn requires a collaborative, co-created approach and partnership with multiple actors while maintaining focus on locally-developed and locally-led solutions (Kelly and Roche 2014; UNV 2015; Devereux 2017).

In a world of increasingly complex systems, it is challenging to understand power and political dynamics in communities (IFRCRCS 2015a). There are calls for VIOs to provide volunteers with local connections (Lough and Matthew 2013), and training in building relationships and supporting participation (Turner 2015). Aged (2015) reports that volunteer support systems are currently focused on individual volunteers, not on how volunteers can

sustain networks. Even if volunteers can build networks, how do we support the people within them to participate, and ensure that they maintain engagement in the long term?

There are also calls for coordination between VIOs (British Council 2016; Turner 2015) in areas including centres for coordination of volunteer effort, partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement and better coordination of interventions within communities, including with local volunteers (IFRCRCS 2015b). VSO's Valuing Volunteering research recommended project design based on a deep understanding of local volunteer resources and how to support them, and then work to see how outside volunteers can connect with this system (VSO and IDS 2015; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015; Turner 2015). Coordination between volunteer programs is particularly important for short-term volunteering, which can limit the ability of volunteers to discover and build networks (Howard and Burns 2015; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015; Turner 2015).

Case study: Enabling environment in Myanmar

This case study provides a brief overview of the key enabling factors, and challenges, that supported the establishment and the current operations of three VIOs in Myanmar – AVI, VSO and Cuso International – based on interviews with host country staff members.

Use of existing partnerships within country to establish a presence:

- To establish a presence within Myanmar, both AVI and Cuso International utilised existing networks operating within the country. For AVI, the Burnet Institute was operating in Myanmar prior to entry in 2011. Staff from the Burnet Institute gave AVI access to local networks and shared a deep cultural and social understanding of the country, enabling establishment of a volunteer program. For Cuso International, the personal relationships the Country Director had within country was key to their establishment.
- AVI also identified the presence of highly skilled people within Myanmar who were fluent in English as enablers to their establishment. This assisted AVI to connect and communicate with host organisations and to staff the AVI Myanmar office.

Identifying and partnering with organisations with the capacity to host volunteers:

- VSO and AVI started programming by placing volunteers within INGOs which had the organisational capacity to support volunteers, including registration with the government so that volunteers could secure visas. VSO also identified that INGOs were resourced to co-finance volunteers.
- AVI and VSO are now reducing the number of volunteers in INGOs and increasing those placed in local NGOs, as these NGOs increase their capacity to host volunteers. VSO identified the need to work with local NGOs and build their understanding of international volunteering for development to ensure development outcomes are supported.

Volunteers creating an enabling environment:

- For AVI, the volunteers themselves were a key enabler. Successive highly skilled and experienced volunteers exemplified the value of the program and helped spread and increase demand for Australian volunteers. In addition, all organisations found the approach of locally-identified and locally-driven volunteer placements built interest and trust with host organisations. All organisations identified their volunteers as highly specialised and skilled, partly due to the high interest from the international community in working in Myanmar as well as volunteer sending agencies' requirements for highly specialised skill sets.

Future opportunities to create a stronger enabling environment:

- Both VSO and Cuso International said there is a need to work more closely with other VIOs to build awareness of the nature and value of international volunteering for development. A report by Cuso International in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteer programme and Searchers Myanmar (2015) demonstrated the high levels of national volunteering within Myanmar, and potential opportunities for closer engagement with this volunteering modality.

Challenges:

- Many volunteer placements with the Government of Myanmar are in Naypyidaw, and all three organisations identified the need for additional support to volunteers living in this city. Relative to other areas in the country, Naypyidaw is isolated and volunteers have limited accommodation and transport options and face higher living expenses. This highlights that different enablers and challenges exist within countries. All of the organisations provide additional logistical support to volunteers and are working to encourage the development of volunteer social support networks.
- All three organisations identified complex and demanding logistics as challenges to operating in Myanmar. This includes visa requirements and memorandums of understanding with government. AVI identified a key enabling factor for its establishment and management was its long-term experience with Southeast Asian bureaucracies, equipping it to manage complex systems.
- VSO pointed to the restrictions on volunteer movement as a particular barrier to volunteers achieving development outcomes. This varies depending on the geographical area and placement, but is particularly evident in the health sector. In one example, a volunteer was placed in a midwifery institution but was unable to gain government permission to enter the hospital for the duration of their assignment.

Technology

Technology is a key enabling factor for volunteering raised in the literature. The opportunities are significant and broad, including digital volunteer engagement and management, such as with online communities of practice, and new roles for online volunteering.

Online volunteering was cited as a way to expand volunteer demographics and skills (UNV 2014b; Comhlámh 2013). It is increasing in many middle-income countries and in most high-income countries (IFRCRCS 2015a). Online volunteering expands the volunteer base and overcomes the considerations of time and cost that can be barriers to conventional volunteering (UNV 2014b; Comhlámh 2013). Access to technology also opens up new networks, for example helping Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers become more connected across countries, building unity and enabling the sharing of ideas (IFRCRCS 2015a).

The first State of the World's Volunteerism Report (UNV 2011) highlighted the potential of online volunteering. UNV has a large online volunteering presence, formalised in 2004, which was found to have played a marked role in expanding global volunteerism and promoting the mainstreaming of online volunteerism around the world (Broers 2015, p.iii). UNV lists opportunities for online volunteers such as tracking food insecurity, monitoring violent conflict, providing early disaster warning and reporting election fraud (UNV 2011, p.26). An evaluation of the online volunteering program (Broers 2015) revealed it enabled a wider range of volunteers to engage, including specific target groups – persons with disabilities, women, youth and volunteers from low-income countries. It also offered opportunities to bridge and expand South-South volunteering. In turn, volunteers registering or completing assignments reported they were encouraged to engage in other forms of volunteerism.

For host organisations, online volunteering offers opportunities to leverage development outcomes offered by volunteers that otherwise might not be possible due to limited resources, with cost effectiveness and technical expertise offered by volunteers being key factors affecting host organisations' demand. The report also found that online volunteering contributed to changing practices and perceptions of volunteerism. Of the host organisations surveyed, 87 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the online volunteering positively affected the organisation's commitment to volunteering, and 84 per cent that it led the organisation to take positive action in favour of volunteerism.

Funding

Trends among donors impact on the types of volunteering that are funded. Funding is currently a factor in driving multi-sector partnerships, with VIOs having to diversify their funding sources (Kelly and Roche 2014), and joint management being seen as a way

to mitigate risk. Donors are historically and generally country government core donors (with the exception of the UN). Donors increasingly emphasise the cost-effectiveness, scalability and value add of programs (Howard and Burns 2015; Turner 2015) and focus on new (Aked 2015) and short-term (ARC 2014) projects, and in many countries there is a downward trend in funding.

This trend may threaten VIOs' emphasis on deep understanding of local contexts to enable systemic, transformative change, and lead to partnerships based on infrastructure rather than shared values (Turner 2015), linear pre-designed outcomes that do not consider complex local systems or collaboration (ARC 2014; Turner 2015) and the programmatic flexibility and innovation needed to navigate these effectively, and failure to build on and learn from past projects within existing networks (Aked 2015).

Remuneration

The question of financial compensation has become a major issue for VIOs. It is now an integral component of the landscape of volunteering (IFRCRCS 2015a), albeit a very divisive one (British Council 2016). Failure to recognise the importance of different forms of remuneration (payment, coverage of expenses, training) can affect the capacity of volunteers to engage, reinforce or challenge existing inequalities, and create new hierarchies within the communities where they operate, working against volunteerism for international development's social justice and human rights goals by reinforcing wealth, access and opportunity disparity. Remuneration can also create competition between VIOs (IFRCRCS 2015a).

Volunteering in humanitarian crises and disaster relief

With reduced government funding and an increase in disasters, volunteering in emergency and humanitarian relief becomes increasingly important and in demand (Comhlámh 2017; IFRCRCS 2015a). The enabling environment for volunteering in such settings is distinct, and we should consider commonalities and differences with long-term development approaches.

Commonalities include the need for measurement and active promotion of the value of volunteers (IFRCRCS 2015a, 2015b). This can keep volunteers engaged longer, after crisis has subsided, and encourage governments to provide sustainable funding and supportive policies for emergency relief volunteerism (IFRCRCS 2015a; UNV 2016). Importantly, this also plays a role in supporting volunteer safety in the field (IFRCRCS 2015a).

Crisis situations demand that international volunteers work well with local volunteers (IFRCRCS 2015a, 2015b) and supplement national capacities, not supplant them (Disaster Response Dialogue 2014; see also volinha.eu). To ensure that volunteer support is locally

driven and locally owned, VIOs must work with governments and humanitarian agencies to plan for potential volunteer support, and ensure that volunteering is reflected in emergency response plans (IFRCRCS 2015b; UNV 2016; Comhlámh 2017). To ensure longer-term outcomes, there are calls for volunteer intervention before, during and after crises to ensure that local organisations better manage crises when they arise and rebuild after most international organisations have left (IFRCRCS 2015b; UNV 2016; Comhlámh 2017).

Volunteer-focused elements in humanitarian crises and disaster relief

Technical and relational skills are important for volunteers in humanitarian settings, as is experience in humanitarian crisis relief (Blanchet and Tataryn 2010). Local volunteers are often the first on the scene, and have particular knowledge and connections within affected communities (IFRCRCS 2015a, 2015b; UNV 2016). Volunteers in humanitarian settings have particular needs due to the risks they face and the work they undertake. These include insurance, and psychological support before, during and after an event (IFRCRCS 2015a). While in the field, adequate communications, coordination and support is crucial.

Questions for consideration

This paper provides a snapshot of some of the key enabling factors for volunteers and VIOs. We acknowledge the limitations of what we have been able to cover, and the complexities and considerations left unexplored. The questions below are intended to build on the themes explored in this paper and to generate discussion with available literature and program evidence. They include some questions raised by the Forum Research, Policy, Practice and Learning Group. We encourage IVCO 2017 participants to consider their organisation's theory of change when reading these questions, as these will include assumptions about the enabling environments in which they operate.

Is an enabling environment a necessary precursor to successful volunteering?

- Is an enabling environment less necessary, or different, in fragile states or during natural disasters compared to volunteering for long-term development cooperation in more and less stable contexts? What are the similarities?

Do we need all of the elements of an enabling environment to be in place before volunteers can be successful?

- Which elements are necessary, which are important and which are nice to have? Can volunteering happen with a limited enabling environment, or with limited support from or entry points to the actors listed above?

- What can we control or influence, and what should we try to understand and ensure that our volunteers understand? What concrete actions can Forum members take to influence positive enabling environments?
- What environments will maximise the contribution that volunteers make to the 2030 Agenda?

How relevant are the attributes of volunteers themselves?

- Can volunteers shape or create a positive or more enabling environment? Do they do this by encouraging active citizenship and contributing to a more vibrant civil society?
- What is the role of volunteers in data/evidence collection, policy and advocacy work both within and outside the system, and in capacity building of various actors?

Relational aspects

- Can we build the willingness of actors to engage with volunteers where needed? What incentives exist for them to engage with volunteers? How can they be better incentivised? How can volunteers contribute to effective engagement?
- Do volunteers and VIOs need to engage all the actors covered in this paper to create an enabling environment?
- What are the implications for recruiting, selecting and preparing volunteers, including for their orientation and training?

Contextual aspects

- How are VIOs working to ensure their own volunteer programs are inclusive?

Actor-based aspects

- How does the increase of private actors change the configuration of the volunteering field?
- How well does wider civil society understand and value the role of volunteering in development, and how open is it to innovation and new ways of working that involve volunteers?
- What might VIOs do to enhance visibility and support of volunteerism in conflict settings?

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