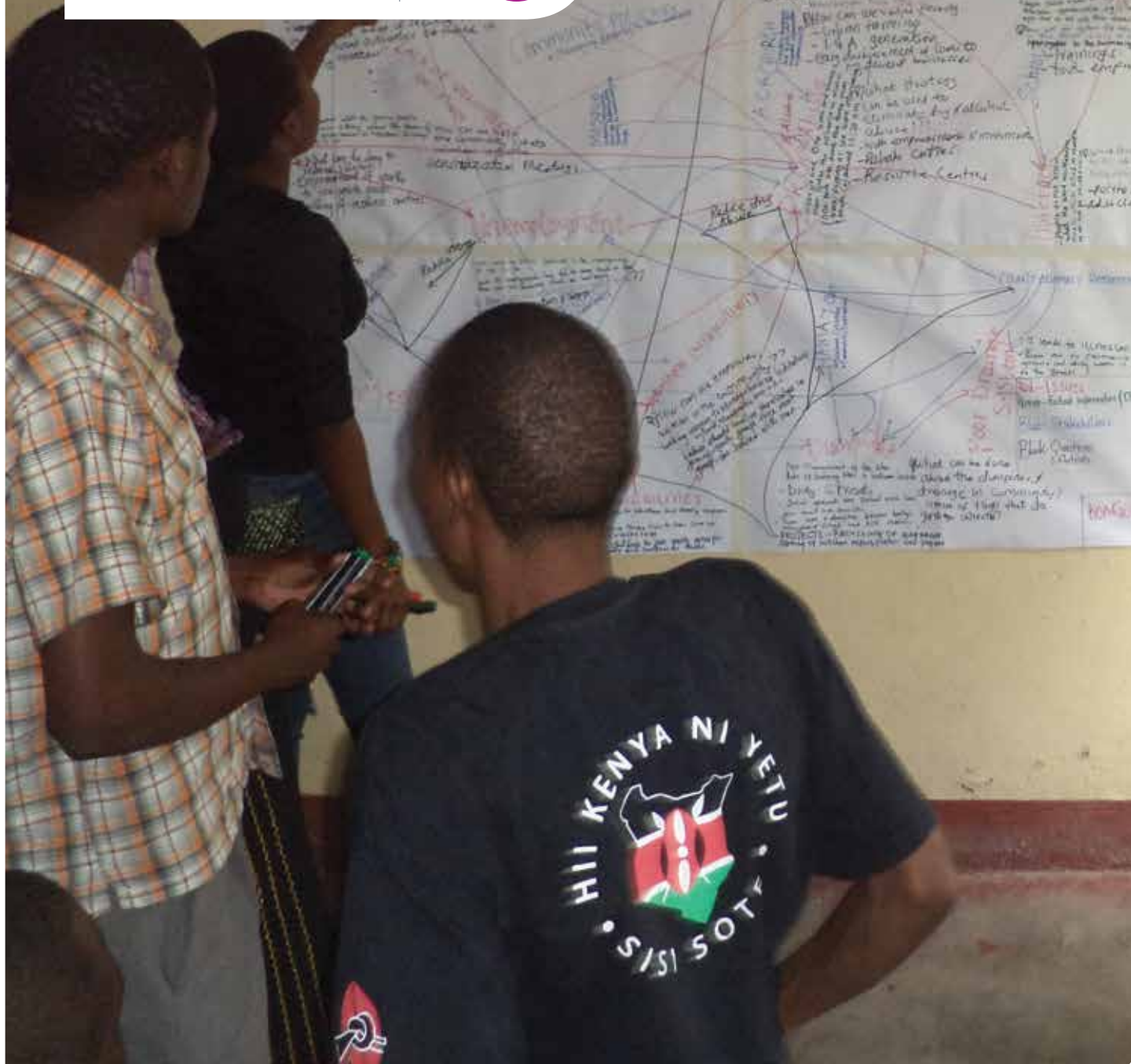


VALUING VOLUNTEERING - KENYA

THE COMMUNITY DYNAMICS OF VOLUNTEERING IN MOMBASA

January 2015



VSO at a glance

VSO is the world's leading independent international development organisation that works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries.

VSO brings people together to share skills, build capabilities and promote international understanding and action. We work with partner organisations at every level of society, from government organisations at a national level to health and education facilities at a local level.

IDS

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a leading global organisation for international development research, teaching and communications. The *Valuing Volunteering* project is being conducted in partnership with the IDS Participation, Power and Social Change Team.

The *Valuing Volunteering* research has also been made possible by the generous contributions of **Cuso International** and **Pears Foundation**.



Credits

Text: Dr Simon Lewis

Research: Dr Simon Lewis

Editing: Katie Turner and Ken Moxham

Layout: marcomadruga.com

Cover photo: Dr Simon Lewis

Photography: Dr Simon Lewis

Copyright

© Simon Lewis, VSO Jitolee and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) 2014.

Unless indicated otherwise, any part of this publication may be reproduced without permission for non-profit and educational purposes on the condition that Simon Lewis, VSO Jitolee and IDS are acknowledged. Please send Simon Lewis, VSO Jitolee and IDS a copy of any materials in which Simon Lewis, VSO Jitolee and IDS material has been used. For any reproduction with commercial ends, permission must first be obtained from Simon Lewis, VSO Jitolee and IDS.

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Dr Simon Lewis.

The research is heavily indebted to the hard work of the local volunteer researchers who approached the project with such passion and dedication. Particular thanks go to Deeja Atis and Abdulhalim Ahmed for their help in coordinating the local research team. I would also like to thank the following organisations for being involved and allowing their volunteers the opportunity to take part: Kwacha Afrika, Red Cross Kenya (Mombasa branch), Mombasa County Youth League (MCOYLE), Likoni Community Development Programme (LICODEP), and Mikoroshoni Ambassadors of Change Youth Group.

Special thanks go to Mombasa's Volunteers in Action (VIA) Network and its members, particularly Safe Pwani for the kind use of its meeting space. With such enthusiasm within the network, it was a real pleasure to work with its members.

The research is grateful for the efforts of Zeytun Saney, Ann Keempua and David Kalume and their fantastic help in facilitating. Extra special thanks go to John Cornwell for his ongoing support, from setting up the research project to his continual words of wisdom.

Internationally, the research benefited greatly from the support of the four *Valuing Volunteering* lead researchers in other countries: Sandy Picken in Mozambique, Val Clamonte in Ghana, Lizzie Hacker in Nepal and Jody Aked in the Philippines. Within the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Danny Burns, Joanna Wheeler and Erica Lopez provided valuable and reassuring advice on methodological approaches and tools. In the VSO UK office, the research is grateful to Katie Turner for her support and answers to many queries. Thanks also go to Benjamin Lough for valuable feedback on an early draft of this report. Over the course of the whole *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research, special thanks go to Hannah Treacy for her constant support and encouragement.

Lastly, but far from least, I thank the local people in the communities of Shanzu, Kongowea and the city centre who so freely and willingly gave of their time to talk to the local researchers and provide the research with such rich insights.

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AMREF | African Medical and Research Foundation |
| CBO | Community-based organisation |
| CHW | Community health worker |
| FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Organisation |
| HR | Human resources |
| HRM | Human resources management |
| ICS | International Citizen Service |
| IDS | Institute of Development Studies |
| IVD | International Volunteer Day |
| LADSAP | Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan |
| LICODEP | Likoni Community Development Programme |
| MCOYLE | Mombasa County Youth League |
| MMS | Mombasa Municipal Council |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| PESTLE | Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental |
| PSAR | Participatory Systemic Action Research |
| PSI | Participatory Systemic Inquiries |
| UNV | United Nations Volunteers |
| VIA | Volunteers in Action |
| VIO | Volunteer Involving Organisations |
| VSO | Voluntary Service Overseas |
| VUE | Visual Understanding Environment |
| YMCA | Young Men's Christian Association |

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Executive summary | 6 |
| 1 Introduction | 10 |
| 2 Mombasa context | 12 |
| 3 Methodology | 14 |
| The Mombasa research process | 14 |
| The Mombasa research team | 14 |
| Research methods | 16 |
| 4 Findings | 17 |
| Overview | 17 |
| 4.1 The uneven nature of change: how volunteers negotiate organisational politics and vested interests | 17 |
| 4.2 The ecosystem and multiple contexts of volunteering in Mombasa | 23 |
| 4.3 Community perceptions and receptiveness to volunteers | 31 |
| 4.4 Relationships and levels of trust | 33 |
| 4.5 Gender barriers | 35 |
| 4.6 Dependency and sustainability | 35 |
| 4.7 Collaborative working: partners, organisational systems and the impact on poverty, marginalisation and inequality | 37 |
| 5 Reflections on the research process | 41 |
| The value of the process | 41 |
| Challenges during the research process | 42 |
| The lead researcher's positionality with regard to the research site | 42 |
| 6 Conclusions | 43 |
| 7 Recommendations | 45 |
| 8 References | 47 |
| 9 Appendices | 48 |
| Appendix A: Research methods | 48 |
| Appendix B: <i>Valuing Volunteering Mombasa</i> interview guide | 54 |
| Appendix C: Additional examples of volunteer 'rivers of experience' | 55 |

Executive Summary

Valuing Volunteering research in Mombasa involved over 12 months' work with a group of local volunteer researchers who conducted inquiries in three communities: Shanzu, Kongowea and the city centre. Using a Participatory Systemic Action Research (PSAR) methodology and a range of participatory tools, successive rounds of reflection, sense-making and action allowed the local research team to piece together the complex dynamics surrounding volunteering in Mombasa.

The research also acted to model a participatory approach for better understanding the issues and needs of people living in poverty. Rather than approaching the Mombasa communities with a predefined rigid set of questions, issues were allowed to emerge from their specific contexts and then tested for resonance across multiple stakeholders. Over the course of the research, more than 20 local volunteer researchers received training in participatory techniques. In turn, they spoke to over 400 people from local communities, involved in excess of 20 volunteer-involving organisations and contributed over 1,000 hours of community fieldwork.

1. The uneven nature of change

The process of bringing about positive change is often messy, indirect, unexpected and slow. The research found that when working with volunteers – particularly in this case international volunteers – volunteering-for-development organisations need to incorporate an understanding of the following into their programme/project design and implementation:

- i. **The service duration of international volunteers has a direct impact on their ability to bring about change.** Volunteers serving for longer durations, typically in excess of 12 months, are more likely to have the time to navigate internal politics and guide organisations through often lengthy change processes. Having more time also provides additional opportunities for building long-term relationships that may help facilitate change.
- ii. **The time-limited nature of international volunteer placements can mean volunteers are more likely to challenge unfair practices** as they are not bound by the same unequal power relations that may restrict the voices of local/national volunteers and/or staff.
- iii. **International volunteers often undertake a range of activities outside of their official placement descriptions.** This can be vital in achieving impact as change does not always occur in the most direct way or as envisaged in project documentation.
- iv. **International volunteers can add significant value in terms of building 'bridging social capital' through networking.** This can help in raising resources and giving a voice to marginalised people, yet the role of networking is often under-acknowledged by volunteering-for-development organisations.

- v. **Volunteers can suffer from the negative impacts of organisational politics, to the point where their wellbeing is reduced.** As a result, they need to be better supported and trained in navigating sensitive workplace dynamics.
- vi. **Self-awareness and 'critical consciousness' are valuable qualities for international volunteers.** Professional skills and qualifications are not enough, on their own, to ensure that change occurs in a participatory and inclusive way. Volunteers need to be self-aware, value the promotion of participation and inclusion and be self-reflective as to their own role in bringing about change. This approach can be sought during volunteer recruitment but also developed through relevant training.
- vii. **International volunteers find it easier to build relationships and earn the respect of colleagues and local people when they are embedded in the local community.** Being 'close' to the community encourages the co-production of context-specific solutions as volunteers gain local insight and develop relationships with local partners. However, this can be easier to achieve in smaller communities and/or when the volunteers live near their place of work.

In an ideal world, volunteering-for-development organisations would only partner with organisations that share common development goals or a common outlook toward achieving development. However, reality often dictates that bringing about change involves dealing with partners, often power-holders, which may not share the same viewpoint. Some government agencies, for example, may have their own specific priorities but may need to be engaged with in order to bring about system-wide change. However, knowing the difference between types of partners is vital for both the proper design and implementation of partner selection processes and the placement and preparation of the right volunteers for the specific context.

Volunteering-for-development organisations need to make a clear distinction between partners that are chosen because they share common development goals or a common outlook toward development and those that are selected because they are necessary to engage with in order to bring about (system-wide) change.

2. The ecosystem and multiple contexts of volunteering in Mombasa

It is useful to view volunteerism as an ecosystem, with multiple forms of volunteering occurring simultaneously against a backdrop of multiple contexts. Understanding these contexts and the journeys of the volunteers operating within and across them has significant potential for improving volunteerism's impact in reducing poverty.

- **Inter-community dynamics are vital in understanding local ecosystems of volunteering.** Too often the context or situational analysis conducted by development organisations simplifies context to a fairly simple set of socio-economic characteristics. This research finds that context is more complex, consisting of multiple factors at multiple scales, both within and between geographic areas. Furthermore, it is the **relationships between communities that can reveal hidden complexities regarding the nature of volunteering.** For example, when affluent areas act to attract volunteers, this may indirectly reduce the degree of volunteering occurring in poorer communities. In such cases, **volunteerism's impact on reducing poverty is reduced as it may act to increase rather than decrease inequality.** Volunteering-for-development organisations need to take such dynamics into account, particularly in terms of where, geographically, their interventions are targeted and where their volunteers are recruited from.
- **Volunteering-for-development organisations in Kenya need to understand volunteering through the lens of national perceptions.** The reality in Kenya is that formal volunteering opportunities that come with attached stipends/allowances are often seen as a form of low-paid work. This has blurred the line between volunteering and paid employment. As a result, **volunteering also needs to be analysed in the context of wider employment patterns and associated factors such as rural to urban migration.**
- **Opportunities exist to explore new models of volunteering in Kenya that build upon the strong links that many rural-to-urban migrants maintain with their home communities.** The desire of those who have moved to urban centres to help more remote and often poorer 'home' communities has potentially powerful implications for volunteering, particularly as it may act as a form of redistribution of wealth and skills from wealthier cities to more impoverished areas. **For volunteering-for-development organisations, such context-specific models have significant potential for increasing volunteerism's development impact.**

In terms of better encouraging and supporting local/national volunteers, a number of emerging points should be seen as critical:

- Most local/national volunteers start volunteering at a young age, either through schools or religious institutions.** Volunteer programmes targeted at this age group can have lasting impacts in establishing and embedding a spirit of volunteerism and enlarging the pool of future volunteers.
- Local/national volunteers face particular challenges at key transition points in life, such as leaving school. Volunteering-for-development organisations should consider targeting recruitment and support at such times in order to attract new volunteers and sustain existing ones.**
- Support structures play an important role in sustaining voluntary activity.** The support of friends and the social networks developed through volunteering can be crucial, along with the support of family members. As a result, **fostering and highlighting the social aspects of their volunteer networks should be seen as a valuable practice for volunteering-for-development organisations.**
- Volunteers are more motivated when they witness first-hand the positive impact of their efforts. Volunteering organisations can therefore create a 'virtuous circle' if they manage to use volunteers to implement well-designed interventions that make a visible difference to people's lives.**
- Not acknowledging efforts is demotivating for volunteers.** Conversely, even small acts of appreciation, such as awarding a certificate of participation, can have significant positive impacts on the motivation of volunteers, leading them to try harder and continue their voluntary activities for longer. **For volunteering-for-development organisations, providing some form of (even basic) recognition should be seen as both a crucial and cost-effective means of motivating their volunteers.**

3. Community perceptions and receptiveness to volunteers

How volunteers are perceived in communities has a direct bearing on how receptive local people are to working with them and, consequently, how effective they are in bringing about change. Critically, perceptions of volunteers are closely associated with perceptions of the wider development sector. As a result, in poor communities where dependent relationships have grown up between local people and external donors/organisations – such as the ‘handout’ culture – this can lead to undue expectations being placed on volunteers, and too little recognition of their efforts. Volunteering can also become negatively associated with the activities of people eager to acquire volunteer allowances/stipends for their own benefit rather than that of the community.

- **Negative perceptions of volunteering erode community trust in volunteers, which can severely reduce their effectiveness.** In such situations, **volunteering-for-development organisations should investigate appropriate community engagement strategies as a way of more effectively managing community expectations and changing perceptions.** It may also be that the ‘volunteer’ label has too many negative connotations and ceases to be a useful term. In such cases, alternative terms, perhaps based on local understandings, may offer greater potential for recruiting the right volunteers and emphasising the positive contribution of volunteering.
- **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to be particularly aware of the distinction between volunteers motivated by personal monetary gain and those who volunteer for the benefit of others** (although monetary compensation may still be a contributory motivation). Volunteer recruitment and management processes should be developed that support volunteering as an activity based on altruistic principles. An example could include providing non-monetary incentives such as certificates of participation rather than daily stipends.

4. Relationships and levels of trust

Levels of community trust in different types of volunteers have a direct impact on the ability of volunteers to bring about positive change. International volunteers are often associated with being less corrupt, more likely to fulfil promises and not being restrained by local politics and power relations. Kenyan volunteers from other parts of the country may face initial suspicion of their motives but, importantly, may succeed in gaining the trust of the local community. For local volunteers, much depends on how they are perceived in the community (which varies on a case-by-case basis) and the sensitivity of the issues and information they are entrusted with. How they deal with personal information relating to health (sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS especially) is a critical area that affects levels of trust. In these instances, more officially recognised local volunteers such as community health workers (CHWs) appear to be more trusted than volunteers not engaged with formal voluntary organisations.

- **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to fully understand the dynamics of how different types of volunteer (international, national, local, etc) are perceived and build this understanding into the design and implementation of volunteer interventions. Crucially, this understanding needs to be based on community-specific contexts and dynamics.**
- **Building positive trusting relationships is a critical element in enabling volunteers to make a difference. Confidence, patience and relationship-building skills should be prioritised as criteria for volunteer selection, alongside any professional skill requirements. Induction processes and training should also include a focus on these ‘softer skills’.** However, volunteering also presents a potentially important opportunity for the personal development of volunteers – something which can become a more significant development goal when those volunteers also come from poorer communities. As such, when recruiting, **volunteer-involving organisations should look for the potential in candidates particularly when they come from deprived communities.**

5. Gender barriers

The research found that women are far more likely to face barriers to volunteering than men. The most commonly cited reasons were that women are often the subject of family pressures and expectations as well as social norms and cultural values that all combine to block their path to volunteering. Many women respondents stated that they would like to volunteer but were unable to due to the number and severity of challenges in their way.

- **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to be better aware of and seek to better understand the additional challenges that women face when it comes to volunteering.** Where possible, flexible volunteering opportunities which better enable women to combine volunteering with their other responsibilities should be explored. For example, group childcare could be provided for women whilst they volunteer.

6. Dependency and sustainability

Community dependency on external support creates added challenges for volunteering-for-development organisations

looking to work in such communities. Local volunteers may be more interested in receiving stipends/allowances, thus requiring more robust recruitment practices, and local people may be less willing to engage with volunteers. The dependence on external help may also make using certain types of volunteers, such as international volunteers, more problematic as they are associated with, and perceived to represent, the 'donor' development sector.

- **Volunteerism risks perpetuating, rather than reducing, marginalisation and inequality when it occurs more in affluent areas than it does in poor ones.** This is potentially accentuated when volunteers in poor communities choose to travel to more affluent areas to volunteer (though there may be some financial gain as volunteer allowances find their way back to the local economy). **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to better understand these local contexts and the local flows of volunteers so as to ensure that volunteerism acts as a tool for reducing inequality and marginalisation.**
- **There are issues around which local communities will mobilise to take collective action.** Self-organised efforts tackling security concerns are one such example but can lead to activities that are illegal and/or not condonable. However, the fact that there is local desire to address such issues **presents possibilities for volunteering-for-development organisations to work with communities to devise much-needed volunteer solutions** that can also be more acceptably endorsed by development organisations.

7. Collaborative working

Collaborative working can potentially have a greater impact on reducing poverty than organisations working individually. However, the effectiveness of joint working depends on a number of factors. Firstly, partners need **flexibility within their systems** (such as budgets and capacity) to allow for joint projects to be pursued, or collaborative activities need to be designed into their programmes. Secondly, **partners need to value the mutual benefits of collaborative working** over the potential for individual organisational gain. Developing effective monitoring, evaluation and learning processes around joint projects can be useful in demonstrating their worth to partners. Thirdly, collaborative working generally requires a **shared agenda or common goals** around which partners can mobilise. This can be essential for demonstrating the mutual benefits of joint working. When these factors are present there is real potential for solutions to be co-produced that have significant impacts on reducing poverty.

- **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to look seriously at the potential for collaboration and co-production with partners as a means to improve their effectiveness in reducing poverty.** Designing collaboration in projects, maintaining some flexibility within budgets for joint working, and prioritising greater mutual benefit for those living in poverty over individual organisational gain should be seen as vital.
- **Organisational networking has the potential to develop small community-based organisations (CBOs) that operate in poor and marginalised communities.** Through networks, larger CBOs and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can provide opportunities for smaller CBOs to increase their capacity and improve their skills. Crucially such emerging organisations may provide valuable entry points into poor communities for larger NGOs that lack a presence in such areas. Options for supporting the growth of indigenous CBOs through networks include: having more established partners play a mentoring role to smaller organisations; giving them exemption from paying membership fees until they are more established; providing learning and training opportunities through the network; and establishing routes for small organisations to develop into partners of larger CBOs and NGOs.

1. Introduction

Valuing Volunteering is a two-year global action research project aiming to build better understanding of where, when and how volunteering affects poverty. Importantly the research does not assume that all volunteering has a positive impact. As such, the project attempts to make sense of the complex circumstances and combination of factors that lead to positive change and those that have unintended as well as potentially negative impacts. The work has been led in partnership by VSO and the Institute of Development Studies, and facilitated in four countries around the world by VSO long-term volunteers.

In Kenya, research in Mombasa formed one of a series of in-depth participatory inquiries into the dynamics surrounding volunteerism and its impact in reducing poverty. Accompanying case study inquiries on the Korogocho community in Nairobi (Lewis, S. (2015) Community Volunteering in Korogocho) and the UK's International Citizen Service (ICS) in Kilifi (Lewis, S. (2015) International Citizen Service in Kilifi) are being published in parallel with this report.

In addition to the research findings presented in this report, a key component of the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research in Mombasa, and other sites such as Korogocho, has been the modelling of a way of working that prioritises participation, empowerment and the emergence of issues from specific contexts. Using a PSAR methodology, local volunteer researchers have been empowered through successive cycles of sense-making, action and reflection to better understand the complex interaction of factors that cause poverty and how they can consequently take action to change things for the better. Concurrently, local volunteers have also better understood volunteerism's contribution and potential against the backdrop of wider development issues and challenges.

Whilst many evaluations focus on a particular intervention and then seek to establish its impact, this inquiry took the community as a starting point and allowed the issues surrounding volunteering to emerge from it. This change of emphasis or 'starting point' is important because rather than beginning with a volunteering initiative and looking down to evaluate the impact, the research started by exploring community needs and looked up to see what volunteering was occurring and how effective it was in addressing those needs. The central aim of exploring volunteerism's impact on reducing poverty remained the same but the approach ensured that effectiveness was measured against a thorough understanding of local contexts, issues and needs. The importance of such an approach for volunteering-for-development organisations lies in understanding local contexts and the needs of people living in poverty through a participatory process, rather than prioritising predefined targets, funding criteria or finding partner organisations for volunteers.

Where the Mombasa case study differed from other research sites was in its city-wide scope. Whilst this enabled an analysis of the complexities of inter-community dynamics, there was also a need to have a number of focus areas so as to gain rich insights from within communities. The recruitment and training of a local volunteer research team, consisting of 14 local volunteers from over half a dozen Mombasa-based volunteer organisations, provided the mechanism for ensuring that the research was rooted in local communities. Following discussions, the local research team decided to select communities based on three mutually agreed criteria:

- i. the areas where local volunteers had experience and local contacts
- ii. communities that offered a variety of different characteristics and dynamics, thereby providing for 'maximum variation' (Flyvbjerg, 1998)
- iii. areas that would be logistically possible to cover in terms of access and number of researchers.

The three selected communities of Kongowea, Shanzu and the city centre offered a geographical spread across Mombasa and a range of varying characteristics including levels and indicators of poverty, informal/formal nature of settlement and ethnic mix. An additional community, Likoni to the south of Mombasa, was considered but logistical challenges meant that it was not included, though it was identified as a potential future research site. Figure 1 in the subsequent section shows the physical location of the research communities.

The Mombasa research was initially structured around a number of general research questions which aimed to establish the challenges and dynamics faced in the three communities as well as what type of volunteering activity was occurring, how it was perceived, what impact it was having and factors that might be limiting its effectiveness. These were all designed to interrogate the research's overriding purpose of better understanding how, when and where volunteering affects poverty. Preliminary inquiries were deliberately broad so as to let issues emerge from the communities and then test to what degree those findings resonated across stakeholders (Burns, 2014). In other words, in order to be more open and inclusive the inquiry wanted to avoid the risk of steering the research with preconceived ideas of what was important.

From initial community issue mapping exercises, a number of key research questions emerged which were used to structure the subsequent stages of the investigation. These were:

1. What are the relationships between Mombasa's communities in terms of volunteering and why do such dynamics exist?
2. What can be learned from the life journeys and experiences of volunteers?
3. Why do some communities see volunteering as something that is not worthwhile and will not make a difference?
4. Why do communities trust different types of volunteers more than others?
5. How do gender dynamics affect volunteering?
6. How can better partnership working between volunteer and volunteer-involving organisations have an impact on tackling poverty, marginalisation and inequality?

Findings revealed hidden complexities and relationships between issues that had not been expected before the research began. For example, some members of specific communities were found to hold deep-seated beliefs, sometimes based upon tribal practices, that meant volunteering had the potential to be labelled as a form of 'black magic'.

Regarding the structure of this report, subsequent sections provide contextual background on Mombasa and an overview of the research approach and methods.

The findings are then split into seven key areas: (4.1) the uneven nature of change; (4.2) the ecosystem of volunteering in Mombasa; (4.3) community perceptions and receptiveness to volunteers; (4.4) relationships and levels of trust; (4.5) gender barriers; (4.6) dependency and sustainability; and (4.7) collaborative working. Implications of these findings are highlighted throughout the report, with recommendations included following the conclusion. A number of reflection points on the research process are also covered following the findings.

2. Mombasa context

The city of Mombasa is Kenya's second largest urban centre after Nairobi, with the 2009 census putting the population at 925,137 (Government of Kenya, 2013). Following considerable population growth since 2009, some projections put the current total in 2014 at 1.2 million.

Mombasa is a maritime city with two creeks creating a natural harbour – an attribute that has helped it become a major historical trading centre. The port of Mombasa is the largest and most important in East Africa, providing services domestically as well as to Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Moser et al, 2010).

Kenya's new national constitution introduced the concept of devolved county government, which became a reality following the 2013 general elections. As a result, Mombasa County is the new administrative unit for the city, replacing the Mombasa Municipal Council (MMC), Mombasa District and the larger Coast provincial administration which formed one of the eight regions of Kenya (Hildebrand and Holst, 2010). The County is subdivided into the six constituencies of Changamwe, Jomvu, Kisauni, Nyalí, Likoni and Mvita which between them have 30 wards.

In terms of poverty levels, Kenya's National Bureau of Statistics estimated that the incidence of poverty across the whole Coast province increased from 57.8% in 1999 to 59% in 2005/6 (based on the Integrated Household Budget Survey 2005/6). This is poverty as measured according to a national poverty line that uses a basic income per capita criterion which is tailored to urban and rural areas. According to the same data, the 21 constituencies that made up the Coast Province, prior to 2013, contributed 11.7% to total national poverty, with an estimated 1.9 million living below the income per capita threshold. Significantly, over half of the Coast's poor people are concentrated in 6 of the 21 constituencies, one of which is Mombasa's Kisauni constituency.

Mombasa itself faces many similar challenges associated with Kenya's urban centres, including poverty across multiple indicators, high unemployment and numerous informal settlements that lack basic services and infrastructure. As Hildebrand and Holst state, "notwithstanding a healthy tourism industry, Mombasa's economy has stagnated to the extent that decaying infrastructure and widespread poverty characterize the city today. Over one third of the city's population lives below the poverty line and virtually all of the urban poor live in unplanned settlements across the city" (2010:70).

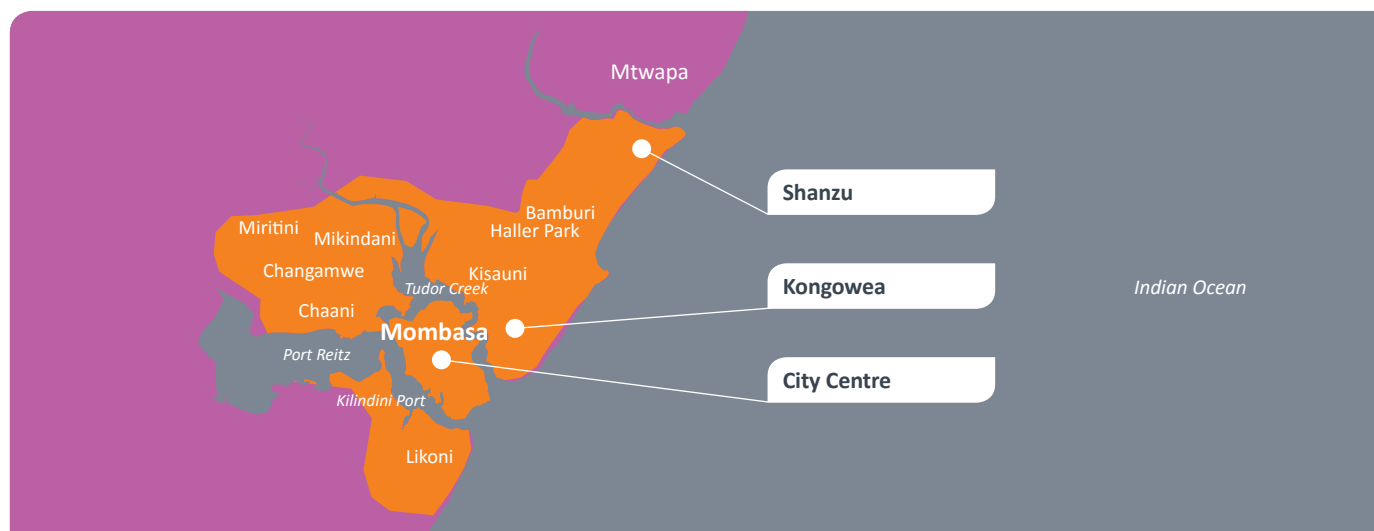
The National Bureau of Statistics, based on 2006 data, estimates that 37.6% of Mombasa's households fall below the national poverty line, with female-headed households more likely to live in economic poverty – 48.8% of them to so. In terms of employment and livelihoods in Mombasa's informal settlements, studies show that many young people (in Kenya the definition of youth applies to those up to 35 years of age) work in the tourism sector, on construction sites, as porters in markets and in urban agriculture – they also engage in recycling or scavenging for food and items that can be resold, and drug peddling (Hildebrand and Holst, 2010).

As well as being more likely to live in poverty, women are more likely to be marginalised from decision making and pushed to work in the informal sector, with 56% of women working informally compared to 41% of men (Hildebrand and Holst, 2010). However, even within the informal sector, women are more marginalised, with men dominating "the more lucrative activities in the informal sector, such as handicraft sales, manufacturing, renting out of rooms, and water vending. Women are engaged mainly in selling foodstuffs, brewing and selling illicit liquor" (Hildebrand and Holst, 2010:74). Unsurprisingly, gender inequalities are also pervasive in decision-making processes, with one report concluding that "there is inadequate representation of women at all levels of decision making" (Kenya National Coordination Agency for Population and Development, 2005:16).

Mombasa's communities face a variety of development challenges. The following figures taken from Hildebrand and Holst (2010) illustrate the scale of the issues. City-wide, only 15% of the population is served by the sewer system, 58% of people use pit latrines and only 30% of the 600–700 tonnes of solid waste generated every day is collected, which means that 54% of people dump rubbish in open areas and drains. Access to clean water is a major challenge, with only 33% of daily demand for water being met. As a consequence, 73% of poor people buy their water from water kiosks, often using significant amounts of their limited incomes to do so. In terms of health facilities, municipal-owned and government-owned facilities are not sufficient to meet demand, so are outnumbered by small, privately owned clinics. The Mombasa District Strategic Plan 2005–10 identified 15 government-owned and 22 municipal-owned health facilities compared to around 160 privately owned clinics (Kenya National Coordination Agency for Population and Development, 2005).

Public participation in urban areas has historically been low. To tackle this, the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) was conceived as a way of increasing participation and local ownership. However, "investigations in both Mombasa and other towns... show that LASDAP has been politicized, and the projects generated do not necessarily represent community priorities" (Hildebrand and Holst, 2010:80).

Figure 1: Map of the three research locations in Mombasa



Landownership in Mombasa is another critical and complex issue. Residents of informal settlements, in particular, often face insecurity in tenure, which provides them with little incentive to invest in more permanent dwellings, and leads many to consider themselves as only temporary residents even after spending years in the community (Hildebrand and Holst, 2010). Moser et al provide a useful explanation of the issue:

“In the current legal and police framework, three categories of land ownership exist in Mombasa. These are the Government land or Public land, Trust land, and Private land. Government/Public land is reserved for the government’s use, and Trust land is administered by Local Authorities under freehold title in the name of the Local Authorities. Private land includes all land held on freehold or leasehold tenure by members of the public. In Mombasa, 40% of the land available is Government/Public land. Private and Trust land is 35% and 25% respectively”. (2010:20)

However, the issue is often further complicated by the illegal claiming of land and the actions of agents, many of whom operate in informal settlements, who falsely purport to sell title deeds to plots.

The presence and activities of development actors varies across Mombasa’s communities. Moser et al broadly divide NGOs and CBOs in Mombasa into two categories: “first the larger more prominent groups supported by external (usually international funding), and second, local self-help groups” (2010:38). The latter typically consist of youth and women’s groups, funeral and family/clan organisations, as well as micro-finance and mutual support groups, often specific to people living in particular circumstances such as young mothers or those living with HIV/AIDS. In some cases, local self-help groups take less legal forms such as vigilante gangs and groups.

Historically, VSO Jitolee has placed a small number of volunteers in Mombasa and the surrounding area. During the course of the research the number of VSO volunteers in Mombasa ranged between one and two, with one of those volunteers acting as an entry point for the research. In recent years, Kenyan and UK VSO International Citizen Service (ICS) youth volunteers have undertaken their Kenya in-country induction in Mombasa before leaving for their placement communities in Kilifi and Malindi along the coast to the north and Nanyuki in central Kenya. However, security concerns mean that, as of May 2014, no VSO volunteers are permitted to travel or reside in

the Mombasa region. The same security concerns also contributed to Mombasa not being selected as a host community for ICS volunteers during their three-month placements.

Within Mombasa the three communities of Shanzu, Kongowea and the city centre were selected by the research team to be the research sites. The locations of the neighbourhoods are shown in Figure 1.

City centre/Mombasa Island

The city centre is relatively well developed and houses the main municipal buildings for the county such as the State House, Law Courts, and County Headquarters. It has a number of middle-class and affluent residential areas, highly regarded schools and academies, and regional/national offices of international NGOs.

Kongowea

Kongowea lies to the north of Mombasa Island and is a densely populated area with 15 constituent villages and an estimated population of 106,180 residents. The community has experienced a significant influx of national economic migrants, many drawn by the prospect of work in the tourism industry, with the nearby suburb of Nyali home to a number of high-end hotels and resorts. For many, Kongowea is most well known for its market which is visible as a dense collection of shacks and stalls from the main coastal road. Unfortunately a substantial section of the market was damaged by fire in April 2014. Kongowea experiences high levels of extreme poverty (something which is often masked in local statistics by its being part of the same constituency as affluent neighbouring areas) with poor sanitation, high crime rates and a lack of basic services such as schools and healthcare facilities.

Shanzu

Shanzu is located at the northern tip of Mombasa next to the border with Kilifi County. It is situated in the Kisauni constituency, which in 2005/6 contributed 7.4% of the people who made up the Coastal provinces’ total number of registered poor. It experiences a number of developmental challenges such as a lack of basic services and high crime levels. It is also regarded as one of the centres of the coast’s sex tourism industry.

3. Methodology

The *Valuing Volunteering* project used two research approaches to collect and analyse insights about volunteering: Participatory Systemic Inquiries (PSI) and Participatory Systemic Action Research (PSAR). Both approaches enable us to get under the surface of how communities operate and how change happens.

Participatory Systemic Inquiries (PSI) allow a system of actors, actions and contexts to be mapped as a baseline against which change can be assessed (Burns, 2012). When identifying the starting points (our baseline) for a project we might typically record those factors that have an obvious direct relation to our intervention. For example, if our aim is to increase girls' access to education, a 'traditional' baseline might record factors such as school enrolment, attendance and participation. PSI allows us to go deeper and reflect on how people, processes and the environment within which they are situated influence one another and the path to change. Doing this involves asking both broad and detailed questions which take us beyond the school walls and into the complexities of social systems, such as "Are girls supported by their family and the wider community to attend school?" "What are the power dynamics within the community and how might these influence girls' attendance in school?"

This data is then used to determine how different factors affect one another, with the aim of learning about why change is or is not happening. While causal links between each part of a system can be identified, they are frequently not linear relationships. By allowing us to observe volunteer practices as part of a wider system rather than in isolation, PSI challenges our assumption that if we do x it will automatically lead to y, and forces us to consider each intervention within the context in which it is taking place. For example, strengthening our understanding of the factors that impact on people's perceptions of volunteering was important in some inquiries to make sense of volunteers' effectiveness. A PSI mapping and analysis might take place over a 2–12-week period and can involve working with many different individuals and groups. In the *Valuing Volunteering* project we ran many different PSIs at the community, organisational and national levels. Where actors were motivated to respond to emergent findings, PSI formed the beginning of an action research process.

Participatory Systemic Action Research (PSAR) is an action research methodology which embeds reflection, planning, action and evaluation into a single process. The core principle behind action research is that we learn at least as much from action as from analysis. It incorporates iterative cycles of action and analysis, allowing us to reflect at intervals on a particular action or approach and adapt it according to what we've learnt. The action research used by *Valuing Volunteering* was participatory because it was led by individuals directly affected by or involved in volunteering-for-development initiatives, and they defined the action research process and questions. It was systemic because we assessed the impact of these actions by considering the knock-on effects for the actors, actions and contexts comprising the wider social system. PSAR typically takes place over a period of 18 months to three years.

The Mombasa research process

The Mombasa research inquiry involved over 12 months of research utilising a PSAR methodology. The approach allowed for a range of methods to be used in the focus communities of Shanzu, Kongowea and city centre and in workshops with volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations. The research would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the local research team which consisted of volunteers from various Mombasa-based organisations. Short descriptions of the organisations involved are provided in Box 1. Throughout the process, the local team was instrumental in conducting fieldwork, analysing findings and steering the research. Members even carried out additional research independently without the facilitation of the lead researcher.

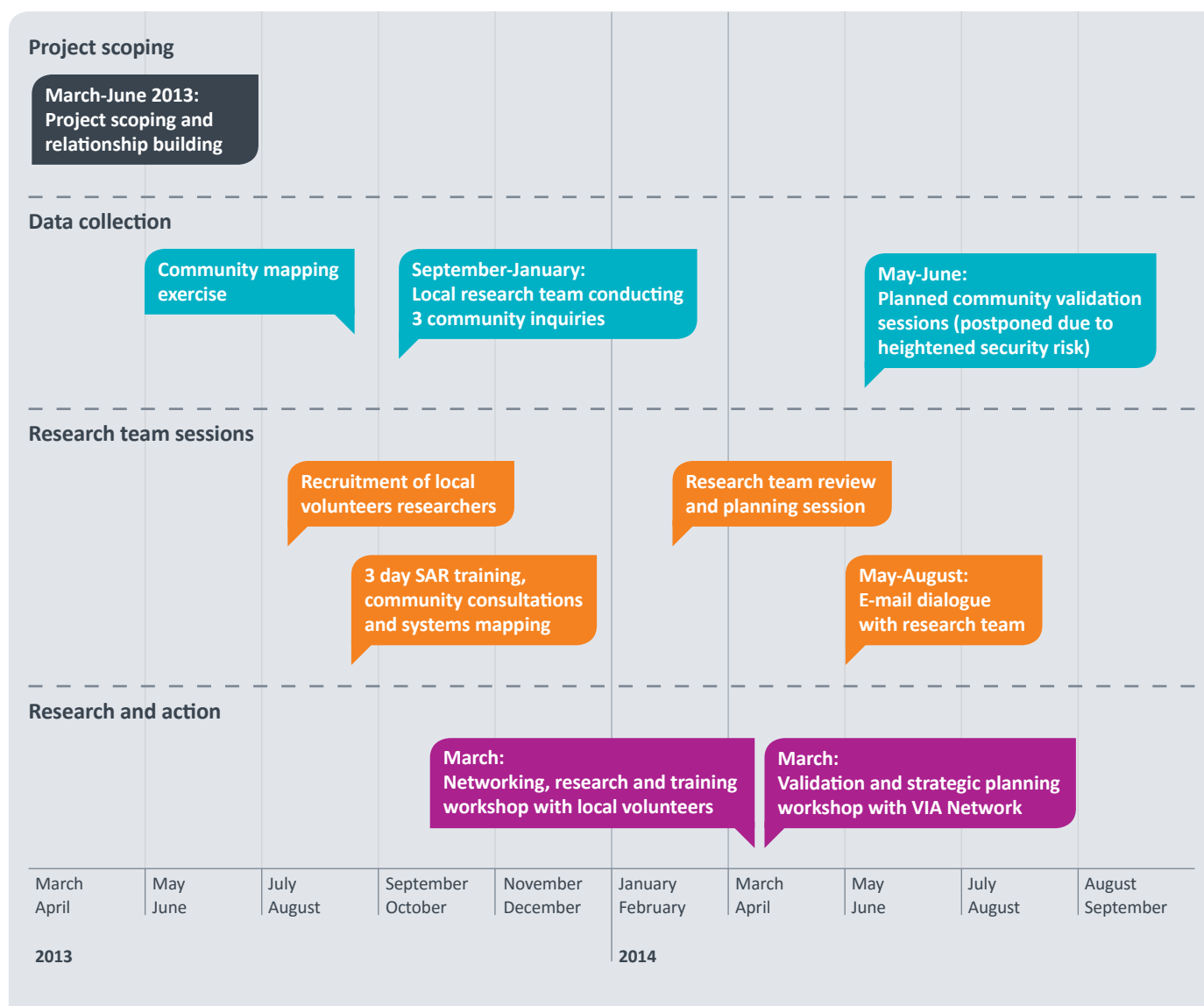
The research began with initial scoping in March 2013 following the Kenyan national elections and officially concluded in September 2014. Unfortunately, in reaction to perceived security threats in the Mombasa region, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and subsequently VSO placed restrictions on travelling to the area for UK nationals and international volunteers respectively. As a result, the lead researcher, a UK international volunteer, was prevented from conducting further research field visits from May 2014. Figure 2 shows the steps taken in the research process.

The Mombasa research team

The creation of the Mombasa team of local volunteers owes much to the help of an international VSO volunteer who was placed at local partner organisation, Kwacha Africa. This international volunteer essentially acted as an entry point or linking agent to a wider pool of local volunteers who were interested in being involved.

Following initial discussions with the international volunteers as to the viability of the research, potential volunteer members of the research team were invited to fill in an application form. The application form served two purposes. Firstly, it provided a mechanism for assessing applicants in the event that the number of candidates exceeded a manageable group size. Secondly, the act of having to fill in an application form was taken as an indication of willingness to be involved and so it served as a way of filtering out members who may have been opportunistically seeking personal benefits rather than being genuinely committed. The possibility of having two research groups, were there to be more applicants, was also considered.

Figure 2: The steps taken as part of the research process



From the applications, a team of 14 local volunteers from various Mombasa volunteer organisations was assembled to form the initial research group. A brief description of those organisations represented in the research team is provided in Box 1. In July 2013 the team took part in three days of training on PSAR. The training included participatory sessions on team building, understanding complexity, defining volunteering, a newspaper front page exercise to share information, and interview technique, as well as practical sessions conducting community fieldwork, constructing systems maps and action planning.

Following the training session, the team independently undertook its own research activities with support and assistance provided remotely by the lead researcher who was based in Nairobi. Subsequent visits were made by the lead researcher in February and March 2014. Despite the international volunteer initially acting as the entry point to the research team, it was mutually agreed that it would be best for promoting local ownership if a local member of the research group acted as the chief point of liaison with the lead researcher. As a result, a coordinator for the Mombasa group was chosen by members of the team. Although a volunteer position, the coordinator for a short time did receive a small allowance to cover communication and travel expenses and provide a little reimbursement for the extra time commitment. The research team also received an allowance to cover their travel and food costs when taking part in research activities.

Over the course of the research, a number of core members remained part of the team. However, the turnover of volunteer researchers was an issue as some either found paid employment and/or migrated to other parts of Kenya. Of the initial 14 members, half did not stay actively involved throughout the project. However, this needs to be balanced against the 5 new members that joined after the official start of the project. This kept the membership at between 10 and 14 throughout the process, and even with the high turnover, the team retained enough original members to provide continuity.

Research methods

Throughout the research a number of specific research methods were utilised within the overall framework of systemic action research. Appendix A provides a synthesis of the methods and the ways in which they were used. A wide range of methods was employed including semi-structured interviews and informal discussions, systems mapping, focus group discussions, force-field analysis, network mapping, rivers of experience, organisational timelines and newspaper front pages.

BOX 1: The organisations represented by members of the local volunteer research team as described in their own words as part of a participatory ‘newspaper front page’ exercise

Kwacha Afrika

Kwacha Afrika was formed in 2000 by a group of frustrated youths who wanted to see change in their community. They would meet under a tree to discuss how they would achieve their aim of bringing change in the community and creating awareness amongst different groups within society. They took their name from an indigenous coastal phrase which means ‘Arise Africa’, and the organisation works to educate the community on the issues of governance, health, gender and the environment. It sustains itself through partnerships, although the issue of funding is a challenge. Kwacha Africa is particularly successful in its use of creative mediums, for example theatre, to deliver messages to the communities most in need.

Mikoroshoni Ambassadors of Change Youth Group

The group was formed in 2009 to tackle security concerns in the Shanzu area and to deal with growing idleness amongst the youth. The organisation sensitises the community on the importance of a clean environment and garbage collection. It also provides clean water to the community at an affordable price and makes bead necklaces and jewellery from recycled magazines. Since 2009, Mikoroshoni has faced challenges in establishing the tools and means for garbage collection in the area, but in establishing these systems it has helped to secure the sustainability of the youth group.

Red Cross Kenya

The international Red Cross organisation was originally formed by Henry Dunant in Switzerland [in 1863]. It has grown across the world, and currently has 68 branches in Kenya and includes many departments specialising in water and sanitation, blood donations, youth and first aid. In the Mombasa region, the Red Cross branch focuses on first-aid training, disaster preparedness and management, and donations to the community. The main challenges for the Red Cross in Mombasa, and across Kenya, are mobilising resources and retaining volunteers.

Mombasa County Youth League (MCOYLE)

Working across Mombasa County, MCOYLE is a youth organisation which was started in 2011 by five youths with a vision to empower the young people in their communities. This has included youth sensitisation programmes on civic education and health. For MCOYLE, its greatest challenge is securing funding and support to sustain its initiatives.

Likoni Community Development Programme (LICODEP)

Likoni Community Development Programme is a community NGO which was founded in 1998 through an Action Aid initiative programme involving eight groups from Likoni, with the main aim of fighting poverty. LICODEP’s mission is to not only empower the community financially, but to also empower them socially by sensitising the community to relevant issues and advocating for change. With a focus on youth, LICODEP promotes community development in areas of education, health issues, peace and security and advocacy.

Descriptions are based on a ‘newspaper front page’ exercise in which participants were asked to describe their organisations and present it as if it were the front page of a newspaper.

4. Findings

Overview

Findings from Mombasa revealed numerous complex and interrelated insights. In terms of when, where and how volunteering affects poverty, three key areas of learning emerged that can be structured around the following interactions of issues:

- i. Change often occurs in an uneven way, particularly as volunteers negotiate internal politics and the challenges of vested interests. **Findings suggest that international volunteers have a particular role in facilitating change in such environments.**
- ii. The interplay between community dynamics (who volunteers and where, or what can be termed the 'ecosystem of volunteering'), community perceptions and receptiveness to volunteers/volunteering, and the knock-on effects on volunteer ability to build trusting relationships. **This 'trialectic' relationship is also influenced by other factors such as gender and levels of community dependency on 'external' support such as that offered by some NGOs (Lefebvre, 1991).**
- iii. **How partners work together and the degree to which organisational systems and structures affect better collaboration.** The findings also reveal that improved joint working has the potential to increase volunteerism's impact in addressing marginalisation and inequality.

Delving deeper into these three key areas of learning, individual sections will analyse (4.1) the uneven nature of change and how volunteers negotiate organisational politics and vested interests; (4.2) the ecosystem and multiple contexts of volunteering in Mombasa; (4.3) community perceptions and receptiveness to volunteers; (4.4) relationships and levels of trust between communities and volunteers; (4.5) gender; (4.6) dependency and sustainability. Finally, a seventh section will analyse the issue of (4.7) partnership working and how it can be improved to increase the impact of volunteering.

4.1 The uneven nature of change: how volunteers negotiate organisational politics and vested interests

During the course of the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research, in-depth interviews were held with over 30 international volunteers undertaking long-term placements (in excess of 12 months). In each case, the volunteer was recruited and supported by a major international volunteering-for-development organisation, but placed into a national or local partner organisation where they performed a variety of duties such as organisational development, research, advocacy and resource mobilisation.

The learning from one international volunteer's experience, who undertook two consecutive placements in Mombasa with different partner organisations over the course of nearly four years, is particularly insightful in revealing the uneven process in which change often happens and the ways in which international volunteers, especially, overcome challenges. It should be noted that learning and subsequent reflection was gathered during a series of discussions that took place over nearly 18 months. In addition, although only one international volunteer was involved in Mombasa, learning and evidence presented in this section are based on observations and points that resonate across the range of in-depth interviews conducted with other long-term international volunteers across the country.

A recurring theme was the uneven process of change: either gradually over a long period of time; rapidly with developments occurring in quick succession; or sometimes sporadically when particular combinations of factors would align to act as catalysts for change but then shift again to slow the pace. The complexity of the settings in which volunteers operate often means that the process of change rarely proceeds as planned, as myriad issues and stakeholders all have the potential to influence developments. As a result, bringing about positive change requires flexibility, adaptation and persistence on behalf of the volunteer and the various partners involved. Learning from Mombasa reveals six key dynamics to bringing about change in complex environments.

i. Negotiating organisational politics

At both placements undertaken by the international volunteer in Mombasa, organisational politics had a substantial impact on the way in which change occurred. At the volunteer's first placement, a vocational college, many staff felt demotivated and underpaid and, as a result, they went on a 'go-slow' which in turn frustrated the students to the point where they went on strike. This delayed the volunteer's placement activities by weeks but, more importantly, also presented a minefield of internal politics to navigate.

As part of building relationships in the placement, the volunteer was friendly with a number of staff and students. In an attempt to mediate the conflict, the volunteer went to the college's board and suggested they seek to heal the rift between board, teachers and students openly as a group. However, the board wanted to deal with the issue privately and the volunteer was labelled as a troublemaker for challenging board members. The matter was not helped when a member of staff went to the board and blamed the volunteer for conspiring with previously sacked members of staff to incite the students to protest.

The volunteer was left in an unenviable position but did have the support of some members of the board who championed him. They persevered and, in dialogue with staff, hit upon the idea of developing the college's human resources (HR) procedures, as these were seen as a root cause of the low staff morale that was negatively impacting upon the college's performance. As the volunteer stated, "HR is a way of changing things in a gentle and subtle way" and, in this case, it acted as a method for addressing bigger issues. Resulting work led to the establishment of an HR sub-committee, staff representatives who would meet with the board, and a new HR policy. In this example, positive change did not occur as quickly as had been planned – the board delayed the new HR policy by nearly a year until sustained pressure meant it had to be accepted. However, as the volunteer reflected, "things are changing and issues are slowly, slowly being addressed".

The example described above, and the experiences of other international volunteers in Kenya, have important implications for the design of volunteer placements. The first relates to the duration of these placements. The volunteer would not have been able to guide the partner organisation through the change process if they had been on a 6–12-month placement. In this case, it took nearly all of the volunteer's two-year tenure but the time-limited nature of placement was also an advantage as it allowed them to challenge power structures without fear of it denting their future career opportunities. This aspect of challenging the organisation to change was seen by the volunteer as a crucial part of their added value. As they summarised, "the college are still warm to me but it's hard to remain friends with people and still challenge them; sometimes you may compromise challenging them to save friendships but, at the end of the day, you're there to challenge and support them; of course, if you build the conditions to make a safe challenge, that is best".

Second, the example illustrates how the journey to change does not necessarily follow the most direct route. Although the volunteer in this case was recruited to undertake a range of organisational development activities, it was the particular events surrounding the tensions between board, staff and students that led to HR reform being embraced as a more subtle and less confrontational way to bring about change. It may have taken more time but it was eventually successful. What was important was that the volunteer had the time, flexibility and attributes (both in terms of hard and soft skills) to pursue the course of action.

Third, change can happen in areas that were not planned for. In this case, the obstacles thrown up by organisational politics led to the volunteer focusing some of their time on activities and projects where there was visible local interest and the potential to make a difference. As a result, they were instrumental in establishing an environmental society in the college, helping to set up a regional volunteer network and an association of facilitators committed to community development – all initiatives that have continued since the volunteer left. These achievements were never set out as objectives in the volunteer placement description but are no less important.

Fourth, bringing about change is not necessarily a smooth process. The volunteer in this example had to put up with being marginalised by certain groups in their placement (the board stopped inviting the volunteer to meetings once they had been labelled as a troublemaker) and working in a tense and sometimes hostile environment. As they stated, "I struggled on toward the end of my placement, I had to stick with it". This undoubtedly had a negative impact on the wellbeing of the volunteer and there is learning for volunteering-for-development organisations in terms of how they support volunteers in such circumstances.

For volunteering-for-development organisations that place volunteers into partner organisations, the importance of organisational politics should not be underestimated. Specifically, any assumptions that volunteers will simply undertake activities in partner organisations as if it were a neutral environment need to be challenged. It should also not be assumed that international volunteers can easily cut through organisational politics, because in reality, they are just one active agent amongst many. So whilst learning from *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* does suggest that international volunteers are particularly skilled at navigating organisational politics and are sometimes allowed by organisations to operate partially outside of them, this does not necessarily lead to change happening in a smooth, clear and direct way. On the contrary, it is often messy, indirect, unexpected and sometimes slow.

ii. The challenge of vested interests: partner dynamics

Closely connected to, and essentially an elaboration on, organisational politics is the challenge of vested interests in bringing about change. The *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research came across multiple examples of organisations that either opposed change because key members did not perceive it as beneficial to them or sought out volunteers, not for the change they could facilitate, but for the resources and status they could provide. In both cases, volunteers were prevented from having an impact.

Vested interests within organisations can be extremely problematic when they prioritise personal gain. In Mombasa, the international volunteer's attempts to bring in substantial funding for a project at the vocational college met with considerable resistance from some board members. As the volunteer described, "they didn't want development there, they just wanted things to tick over; we had a [significant] offer and some board members didn't want it; they were selfish, there were no meetings where they were going to get an allowance from". In the volunteer's second Mombasa placement in a well-respected national NGO, the volunteer described the organisation's approach as always based on the question, "what can we gain from this, what financial gain is there for us?" When the volunteer approached the organisation with a proposal for a school feeding project, initial interest waned when the leadership realised the funding would go direct to the schools rather than through the organisation.

In other instances, volunteers can be valued more for the resources and status they bring than their role in bringing about change. Research in Mombasa and nationwide revealed that some partner organisations will go to great lengths to obtain volunteers but are resistant to letting them become too involved in case they challenge vested interests or expose poor working practices. In the international volunteer's second Mombasa placement, they found that

"my partner organisation had been getting lots of short-term lower skilled volunteers from various organisations – quite a few were international and they paid money [to the host organisation]; in many cases they would start to find stuff out and by then it would be the time to leave. It was the same with local volunteers; after a while they would start asking questions and then they would get bullied out".

In this case, local volunteers would either leave or be ‘bullied out’, whilst the leader of the organisation built a supporting management structure of people who would not challenge them. Interestingly, volunteer service duration was also a factor, with international volunteers deliberately selected on short-term placements so as to deny them the opportunity to get ‘under the skin’ of the organisation. The example suggests that international volunteers on long-term placements may be better placed to challenge unequal power relations, reveal corrupt practices and guide organisations through complex and sometimes messy change processes. As the international volunteer observed, “for the average local volunteer, it is a big risk to speak out against powerful people”, but as international volunteers are often not bound by existing power structures and are time-limited in their placements, they are enabled to ask the questions and propose the solutions that many others will not.

Evidence from other international volunteers across Kenya supports this finding. Partner organisations being more interested in receiving the funding associated with an international volunteer or having the prestige associated with them were recurrent themes. As one international volunteer based in western Kenya stated regarding their host partner organisation which had received a succession of long-term international volunteers,

“the gaps are there [in the organisation] because someone wants them to be; each time they receive a volunteer, nothing really changes and that’s because they don’t really want it to. It’s not in their interest for volunteers to improve things because then they may stop receiving volunteers”.

For some partners, manufacturing a continual ‘state of need’ guarantees more international volunteers and the resources and prestige associated with hosting them. But the vested interests within organisations that drive this are not committed to change and so the act of volunteering has little impact. Positive examples were encountered and these usually involved partner organisations that shared the same outlook and commitment to change as the volunteer-sending organisation. As one volunteer observed, “when both sides click, you can have that sustainable change you are after”.

A key implication for volunteering-for-development organisations is the critical importance of selecting the right partner organisations to support and place volunteers in. The Mombasa example and others from across the country, suggest that some partners are well versed in ‘saying the right things’ and masking more selfish intentions. In many instances, the solution for volunteering-for-development organisations will be to ensure robust partner-screening processes are in place and engage in long-term partnerships where trusting relationships can be built over time. In so doing, the common agenda and goals shared by both the volunteer-sending and volunteer-hosting organisation should create a more enabling environment for change to happen.

However, there may also be cases where volunteering-for-development organisations place volunteers with partners with the explicit aim of bringing about organisational change in an environment where resistance is expected. For example, volunteers placed in bureaucratic government or state agencies may be expected to experience challenges from various vested interests or organisational politics. In these cases, the partner may not be selected because of shared goals but because of the opportunity they offer to bring about change.

For volunteering-for development organisations, there is an important distinction to be made between partners that share development goals and those that may not, but need to be engaged with in order to bring about change (particularly in system-wide interventions that operate at multiple scales). This is because partner selection may be the better route to overcoming vested interests and organisational politics in the former, whereas recruiting and training volunteers on the basis that they will need to be adept at navigating internal politics may be a necessary requirement in the latter.

iii. The importance of volunteer ‘critical consciousness’ and self-awareness

It may seem like an obvious statement to say that international volunteers need a high degree of self-awareness of their role in contributing to development. However, it is not uncommon for international volunteers recruited for their professional skills to simply work in their new partner organisation the way they would in a more developed-world setting. In so doing, they may fail to work in particularly participatory ways, ignore cooperatively developing solutions that combine their knowledge with that of local people, and miss opportunities to challenge power dynamics that marginalise people. The *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research also came across numerous examples where international volunteers had accepted impressive organisational titles (the term ‘expert’ being particularly common) and/or taken on senior positions in organisations that did little to challenge perceptions of knowledge from the developed world being superior to that of the developing world.

Closely connected to self-awareness is the concept of ‘critical consciousness’ (Freire, 1970; Action Aid, 2012). Volunteers with high levels of ‘critical consciousness’ typically have a heightened sensitivity to their own role in bringing about change, incorporate reflexivity and reflectivity into their everyday practices and embrace participatory techniques as a means to empower those around them. The concept is linked to the term ‘conscientisation’ developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire which refers to the ongoing process of reflection and action that can “enable people to perceive the social, political and economic contradictions in their lives and to take action against them” (Action Aid, 2012:55). ‘Critical consciousness’ embodies the transformative potential of continual reflection and action, along with self-awareness, within the individual. For international volunteers this can be vital in assessing their own role in bringing about change, building relationships and encouraging reflection and action in others.

The importance of self-awareness and promoting participation can be paramount because using professionally skilled international volunteers with little understanding of participatory and inclusive development risks turning the ‘simple’ into something ‘sophisticated’ (Chambers, 2012). As Chambers states, too often “elaborate procedures and complex techniques, when transferred from North to South have high costs... they generate an appetite for expensive equipment, for foreign experts, for counterparts, for training in the North, for data collection and for the processing and analysis of data” (Chambers, 2012:10). However, volunteers that see the value in co-producing solutions with the people they work with and who are reflective in looking at their role in the process have the potential to bring about sustainable change.

The international volunteer in Mombasa is an excellent example of how the qualities of 'critical consciousness' and self-awareness can make a difference. With over ten years' experience in community development in international contexts, the volunteer displayed particular personal awareness and sensitivity to navigating internal politics, promoting participation and inclusion, and importantly, a reflective understanding of their role in bringing about change.

A specific example is provided in the case of the volunteer's second placement in a national NGO in Mombasa. Whilst undertaking organisational development activities, it became clear to the volunteer that the organisation desperately needed human resources management (HRM) procedures in place. However, the organisation was not in the right place to take that work forward and the volunteer knew that progressing the work on their own would be unsustainable and result in procedures that would never be implemented. Instead, they informally suggested the need for HRM work with various members of staff and when an issue arose that could have been averted with HRM procedures in place, the volunteer would offer a subtle reminder – something which the volunteer referred to as 'planting the seed'. The end result was that some months later, members of the organisation asked the volunteer for their help in facilitating the work on HRM. Crucially, the volunteer was mature enough to not claim credit for the idea, preferring to let the organisation own the approach and helping them to establish HRM procedures that are continuing to have a positive impact on the organisation.

Having the self-reflection to realise that they may not be the lead agent of change is important for international volunteers. Introducing new ideas, building organisational capacity and facilitating participatory approaches are all vital contributions of international volunteers but they need the 'buy-in' and momentum of local partner organisations or communities in order to make them sustainable. For volunteering-for-development organisations, this mentality is a key attribute to look for and nurture in their volunteers. The hard and soft skills that enable volunteers to work in participatory ways are also something which can be developed through training and peer-to-peer learning.

iv. Building relationships and being persistent

The example of the Mombasa international volunteer demonstrates the importance of building relationships and being persistent in order to bring about change. One of the volunteer's biggest achievements in their first placement in the vocational college was gaining significant funding to make the college more environmentally friendly and produce its own green energy by installing solar panels. However, this only came about from the relationship the volunteer built with the electronics teacher, who had the idea following a power cut at the college. Working together, the volunteer was able to help the idea become a reality. Also, in the same placement, when internal politics labelled the volunteer a troublemaker, it was the positive relationships that they had built with some board members, staff and students that enabled them to continue and bring about change, albeit slowly.

Being persistent and willing to try new approaches are qualities that international volunteers bring to development initiatives. Also, whereas some initiatives can fall apart when they experience failure or challenges, international volunteers can encourage enthusiasm through their persistence and facilitate learning from failures to develop improved solutions. As the Mombasa volunteer stated, "bringing about change can be experimental, you find a strategy, find a few people and you try it; sometimes it doesn't work".

Being less risk-averse can be valuable particularly when combined with an understanding of the complexity surrounding the development system – as such, each failure is not treated as a reason to give up but as an opportunity to better understand the system and improve. For volunteering-for-development organisations, encouraging such critical and evolving thinking over the course of volunteer placements and within partner organisations may help to facilitate change.

v. Being embedded in communities and clear on volunteer roles

The concept of being 'embedded' in the community was something that resonated with the international volunteer in Mombasa and others across the country, as something that helped to build relationships; in essence, international volunteers earned a degree of local respect from local people by giving up the luxuries typically experienced by paid staff to live in the community. Importantly, being 'embedded' extends beyond just living in the community to include how the volunteer is perceived (whether they are known as a volunteer and the activities they are undertaking) and the degree to which volunteers are active in those settings.

In the case of Mombasa, the international volunteer both lived and worked at the vocational college where they were placed, which meant they became well known in the local community and people clearly knew what they were there to do. As the volunteer stated, "it's really important that people know what you're doing" as it helps to set expectations and dispel any assumptions that the international volunteer is only there as a source of funding. In addition, the volunteer learnt Swahili and took an active interest in the community, which helped them to become more 'embedded' and integrated. It also illustrates the importance of language skills in building local relationships.

Importantly, being embedded in local settings can promote the co-production of context-specific solutions as the international volunteer gains a local perspective and develops relationships with local partners. As the Mombasa volunteer stated, "you need to know the dynamics of the communities you're working in and show respect to local people; that's your starting point". For volunteering-for-development organisations, basing volunteers in communities and encouraging their active involvement in them should be seen as valuable components in promoting relationship-building and the development of local solutions.

The issue of volunteer allowances was one that had the potential to blur the boundary between volunteers and paid staff. In the Mombasa example, the international volunteer in their first placement at the vocational college was perceived as receiving a paid NGO salary because their allowance – despite being a fraction of what paid development workers typically receive – was still twice as much as the headteacher's salary. In contrast, this perception decreased during the second placement at the national NGO, where staff salaries were higher. The disparities between local salaries and international (or national) volunteer allowances do have an impact on how volunteers are perceived, particularly where allowances greatly exceed local salaries.

In general, volunteers perceived it to be easier to become embedded in settings where they lived very near to their place of work and/or in smaller communities where they had a very visible presence. In contrast, international volunteers who lived in larger cities such as Nairobi and/or had to commute significant distances to their placements faced added challenges in becoming embedded and being recognised as volunteers as opposed to paid staff.

vi. Networking and flexibility within volunteer placements

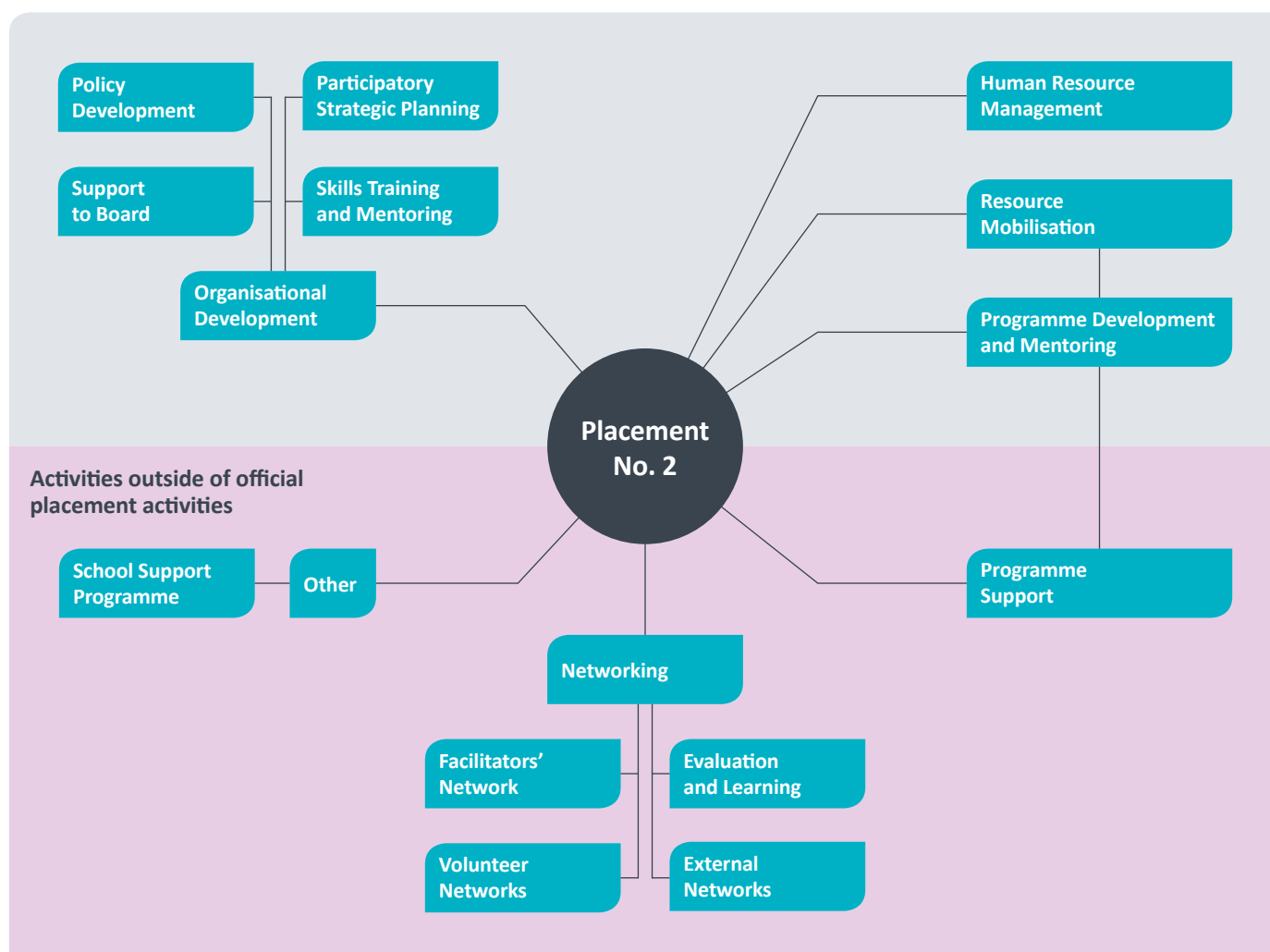
Valuing Volunteering Kenya has found that international volunteers regularly work far beyond their official placement descriptions. This is sometimes because placement objectives do not provide enough for volunteers to do, but more often it results from the commitment and passion of volunteers to make a difference. Often this attitude is sought after during volunteer recruitment, but interview responses also suggest that the time-limited nature of placements contributes to volunteers wanting to make a difference in that time.

One area that rarely falls within official placement activities is networking. Yet international volunteers can add significant value in terms of the linkages they make between people and organisations. This is sometimes referred to as ‘bridging social capital’ and it “has the potential to tie together diverse social groups that might not otherwise have equal access to power and resources” (Lough and Matthew, 2014:33). The success of the international volunteer in Mombasa provides a superb example. During their first placement at the vocational college, a project was launched to plant thousands of tree seedlings across the city. However, sourcing the seedlings was difficult and required funding that the college did not possess. Seeking a solution to this, the volunteer approached a local cement factory and made contact with an employee who happened to be a returned volunteer from the same organisation. Thereafter, the cement factory provided more than the entire required amount of seedlings and the college was able to set up a number of seedling nurseries.

The networking of international volunteers and the ‘bridging social capital’ it builds can be vital in bringing about change, both in terms of mobilising resources and giving voice to poor and marginalised people. However, its role is often not acknowledged and, as a result, the placements devised by volunteering organisations risk only emphasising other activities and not leaving space for the networking that can be the catalyst for change. As a solution, volunteering-for-development organisations may wish to either give greater recognition to, and even facilitate, networking by volunteers or increase and highlight the flexibility within placements as an enabling factor for volunteers to use their initiative in devising solutions. As the Mombasa volunteer remarked, “the stuff outside the job description was helpful for meeting objectives within it”. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the activities undertaken by the Mombasa international volunteer, with those that fell outside the official job description shown within the dotted red line.

The diagram clearly shows the degree of work that was undertaken by the volunteer beyond the official job description. Critically, most of the activities included within the red line and the outcomes they led to were not measured by the volunteer-sending organisation, so much of the volunteer’s contribution to reducing poverty was missed. Additionally, the focus on final placement objectives rather than the process of getting to them, fails to fully appreciate the contribution of activities such as networking. For volunteering-for-development organisations, understanding the process of change has potential for better designing more effective volunteer interventions.

Figure 3: The placement activities of the international volunteer at their second placement at a national NGO in Mombasa.



Implications

1. **The process of bringing about change is often messy, indirect, unexpected and sometimes slow.** Specifically, the challenge of negotiating organisational politics can hamper the attempts of volunteers to bring about change within partner organisations. In overcoming these challenges, volunteering-for-development organisations need to consider the following points:
 - i. **The service duration of international volunteers has a direct impact on their ability to bring about change.** Guiding an organisation through a change process requires time and makes volunteers undertaking longer-term placements more suitable to such roles. Longer term volunteers are also more able to get 'under the skin' of organisations in order to reveal and challenge unequal power relations.
 - ii. **The time-limited nature of international volunteer placements can mean they are more inclined to challenge unfair practices and ask the questions that local staff or volunteers would not.** Additionally, they are more likely to not be constrained by existing power structures.
 - iii. **Change does not always occur in the most direct way.** As a result, seeking solutions where the problem is most obvious is not always the most rewarding. Change can also occur where it is not expected as volunteers undertake a range of activities, some of which do not fall within official job descriptions.
 - iv. **Volunteers can suffer from the negative impacts of organisational politics**, to the point where their wellbeing is reduced. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to look at how they support volunteers experiencing difficulties.
2. **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to make a clear distinction between partners that are chosen because they share common development goals or a common outlook toward development and those that are selected because they are necessary to engage with in order to bring about (system-wide) change.** Government agencies would be one such example of the latter. When partners are selected because of shared goals, volunteering-for-development organisations need to ensure robust selection processes are in place that are able to see through partners that have become adept at masking selfish intentions by 'saying the right things'. For partners selected because they are a necessary component in bringing about change but where challenges may be expected, efforts need to be made to ensure the right volunteers are recruited and they are given the appropriate training for operating in political environments.
3. **Self-awareness and 'critical consciousness' are valuable qualities for international volunteers.** Professional skills and qualifications are not enough on their own to ensure that development occurs in a participatory and inclusive fashion. Personal awareness and sensitivity to navigating internal politics, promoting participation and inclusion and being self-reflective as to their own role in bringing about change are all important qualities. **To a certain extent, these are attributes and a mindset that can be prioritised during recruitment. However, such 'soft skills' and techniques can also be developed through volunteer training.**
4. **Failure can play an important role in learning and improving development interventions.** International volunteers demonstrate a commitment to trying new approaches and persisting when things do not go to plan. The emphasis on critical thinking, along with being less risk-averse, are valuable contributions of international volunteers that can help to facilitate change.
5. **International volunteers find it easier to build relationships and earn the respect of colleagues and local people when they are embedded in the local community** – typically this entails living in the vicinity of where they work and being known within the local community. Importantly, this also encourages the co-production of context-specific solutions as the international volunteer gains a local perspective and develops relationships with local partners. Evidence suggests that this is easier to achieve in smaller communities and/or when the volunteer lives near to their place of work than in larger communities and/or where the volunteer has to commute a significant distance to their placement. **Where volunteer placements occur at the community level, volunteering-for-development organisations need to ensure volunteers are more fully integrated into their local settings. Where volunteers operate at a distance from local communities (such as in institutional settings like national headquarters) extra efforts need to be made to ensure volunteers know the needs of poor and marginalised people and that colleagues recognise the volunteer's status as a volunteer.**
6. **The networking by international volunteers can be a vital catalyst in bringing about change, but its role is rarely fully appreciated.** By networking, volunteers build 'bridging social capital' that can mobilise resources and give voice to poor and marginalised people. **Volunteering-for-development organisations should put greater emphasis on the importance of networking in volunteer placement objectives and look to build a greater understanding of the role of such activities in the process of change. Incorporating greater flexibility within volunteer placements may also enable them to use their initiative in devising solutions.**

4.2 The ecosystem and multiple contexts of volunteering in Mombasa

A recurring theme from the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research is the importance of context in better understanding where, when, why and how volunteering is effective. Here context is deliberately used in broad terms, for there is not one specific context but many; findings have shown that national, local and even a volunteer's personal context is likely to have an impact. There are also other contexts that can be vital such as those within an organisational or social group.

The research in Mombasa has revealed two important dynamics that relate to context and greatly affect the ecosystem, or alternatively the landscape, of volunteering in the city.

A) Community and inter-community dynamics

It is vital to not view context as something which can be easily understood through a quick analysis of socio-economic characteristics (or through using other tools such as a PESTLE – Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental). Whilst such an approach may be helpful for setting the scene, it can fail to grasp the dynamics and relationships that exist between actors, organisations and communities. The inquiries in Mombasa, for example, initially found that a lower than expected level of volunteering occurred in some communities. However, deeper analysis revealed that people living in those communities did volunteer, just not within the boundaries of their own community. Instead they preferred to travel to other communities to volunteer where there were perceived to be better opportunities or more recognition of their work. Without being aware of these inter-community dynamics it would be easy to conclude that volunteering in some communities is having little effect, when in reality the effects are felt elsewhere. It is therefore essential to understand the context of the whole system.

B) Personal contexts: volunteer journeys

Understanding the personal contexts of volunteers is both insightful and useful for designing interventions that align with and complement the life journeys and experiences of volunteers. The personal contexts of volunteers reveal numerous factors affecting how and why people volunteer and the challenges that prevent them from doing so. Building understanding of these issues has the potential to enable organisations to work with volunteers in ways that better support them, rather than imposing conditions and working arrangements which either hinder or demotivate them.

These two issues of inter-community dynamics and personal contexts will be analysed in turn in relation to how they affect volunteerism's effectiveness in tackling poverty, marginalisation and inequality.

A) Community and inter-community dynamics

The Mombasa coastal context

Initial workshops with local researchers revealed a strong sense of Mombasa and more generally 'the Coast' being different from the rest of Kenya. Participants were quick to stress the 'no rush' or 'slow but sure' approach to life, strong religious culture, the welcoming and friendly nature of its residents, and the fact that they perceived it to be peaceful. Despite some recent unrest, often connected to religious extremism, participants emphasised how the coastal region was relatively peaceful in the 2007–8 post-election conflict when violence claimed an estimated 1,500 lives, predominantly in other parts of the country.

The coastal culture was seen to impact on volunteering in a range of negative and positive ways. In negative ways, local researchers found that the 'no rush' culture meant it took a long time for things to happen, which often infuriated international NGOs working to set deadlines and also fuelled idleness and unemployment in communities. Traditional belief systems, many connected with specific tribes, sometimes created fear in communities and made them less likely to volunteer. One example was mentioned of local people fearing looking after their neighbours' children because if the children subsequently fell ill (whether it be a day, week or year afterwards) the parents would accuse them of putting a curse on them and they would be ostracised by the community. In this unexpected finding, cultural/tribal beliefs, that could lead to acts of volunteerism being associated with 'black magic' or 'curses', acted to undermine people's willingness to volunteer.

Positively, participants said how peace on the coast had facilitated volunteering and their welcoming nature had helped to increase trust in volunteers. The deep religious commitment of many people had also helped to nurture a culture of volunteering, particularly as many people had received help from religious institutions.

Mombasa's diverse community contexts

Research showed a strong sense of pride amongst people in Mombasa which was connected to their perceived coastal culture. Despite this, the coast, and Mombasa in particular, is far from a homogeneous place. Mombasa is a mixing pot of different ethnicities, resulting from the city's position as a major centre of trade which has attracted residents from all over Kenya and historically from further afield. Mombasa's communities reflect this diversity as "well over a third of Mombasa's total population live in more than 55 slums across the city", each with its own identity and dynamics (Hildebrand and Holst, 2010:74). Other studies have also shown how the complexity of tribal identity and flows of in-migration mean that even long-term residents who have lived in Mombasa for decades still identify themselves as 'visitors' (Moser et al, 2010).

To assess how volunteering varied across Mombasa's communities, field inquiries were conducted in the city centre, Kongowea and Shanzu. Defining a community in itself can be problematic given the range of characteristics by which they can be categorised such as shared values and/or ethnicity, the impact of administrative boundaries and the possibility of geographically defined and dispersed communities. In the case of Mombasa, the selection of communities was informed by the everyday experiences of the local research team who knew first-hand what were perceived to be local communities, neighbourhoods and villages – these terms were used interchangeably and it is important to note that despite 'village' usually being used in rural environments, it is common to see it used in Kenya in urban contexts as it relates to an administrative unit. As such, the research adopted an understanding of community as a locally 'imagined community' defined by its symbolic existence in the local consciousness, as evidenced through the local naming of neighbourhoods for example (Anderson, 1991).

Individually each of the inquiries revealed interesting dynamics in relation to volunteering in those communities. For example, people in Kongowea and Shanzu spoke of the challenges of development and how the communities felt they lacked the ability to take collective action to improve their situation. Some volunteering was taking place, and local CBOs and self-help groups existed, but its impact was perceived to be minimal. As one resident of Kongowea commented, "I have never seen a community volunteerism initiative in the community". In contrast, people in the city centre, which is generally more affluent, spoke in much more positive terms and could point to both organisations and projects that had had an impact.

Mombasa's inter-community dynamics

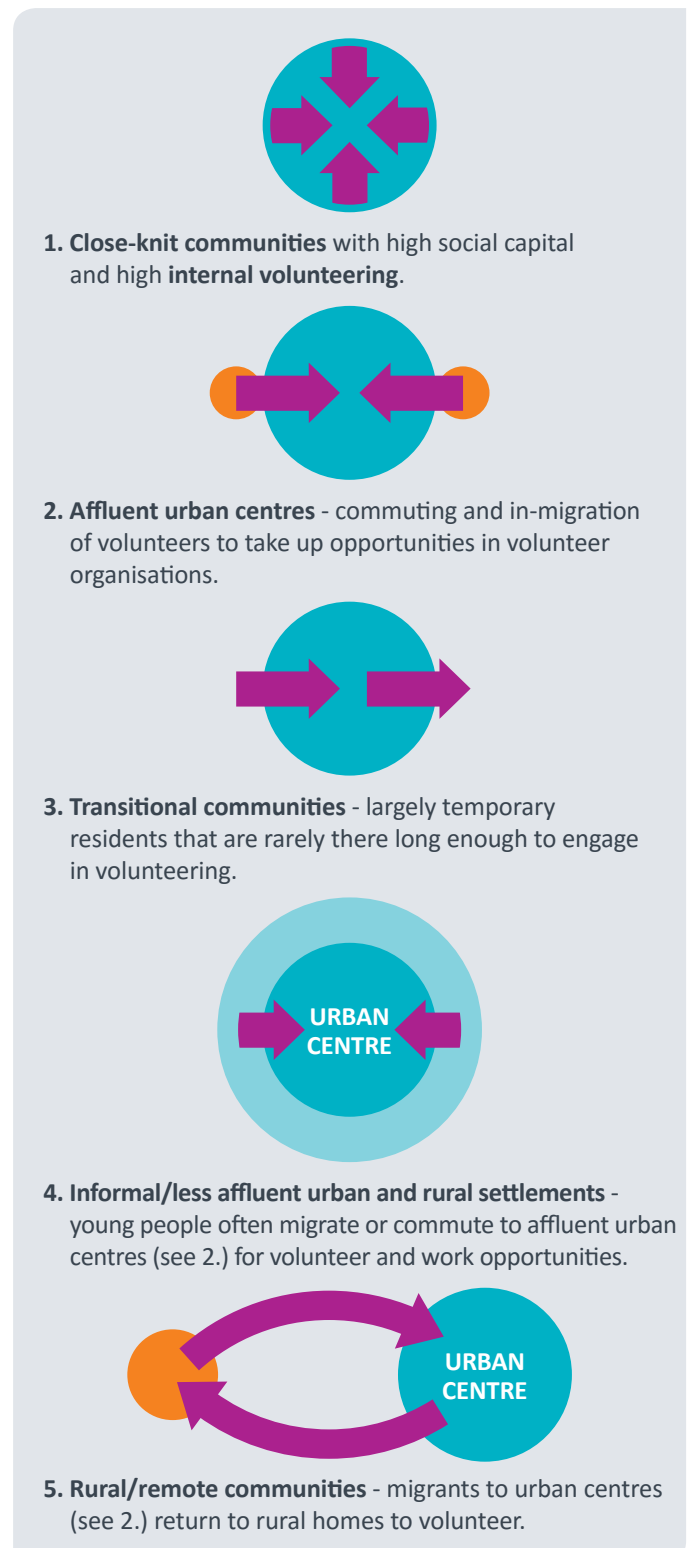
These community dynamics are important, but less expected insights came when these findings were tested and validated at a city-wide scale. Research participants generally agreed with findings from within communities but pointed to how Mombasa's communities were inherently tied into wider relationships with each other – in other words a web of complex inter-community dynamics existed. This is the kind of context that is missed when research and interventions focus purely on one defined community.

Of particular note for communities such as Kongowea and Shanzu was the finding – uncovered by the local research group and during subsequent sessions with voluntary organisations – that, although little volunteering was acknowledged there, it did not mean that their residents were not volunteering. Instead they were travelling to other areas with more respected and larger volunteer-involving NGOs and CBOs that offered better opportunities and more recognition for their efforts. Furthermore, acts of informal volunteering were often hinted at by community members but not overtly acknowledged as being a form of volunteering, with many assuming that volunteering meant doing so formally through an organisation.

For organisations working in such communities, the challenge is thus not necessarily to convince local people of the value of volunteering but instead to provide the right local opportunities within the community. There is also potential to build community self-esteem by highlighting how people are helping each other through unrecognised acts of informal volunteering.

In a workshop with the Volunteers in Action (VIA) Network – a volunteer network with representatives from a number of volunteer-involving organisations working in Mombasa – participants attempted to deconstruct the complexity of relations within and between communities in Mombasa with regard to where and why volunteering was occurring. The result was the identification of five broad community types, each with their own dynamics and relationships with others. Figure 4 illustrates the five types of community in Mombasa and their volunteering dynamics.

Figure 4: Five types of community and their specific volunteer dynamics in Mombasa



Workshop participants identified the following characteristics of each category of community dynamics:

1. Close-knit communities with high social capital

Social capital is taken here to refer to the social relations between individuals, families, groups and communities that can help to build trust, a sense of community togetherness and mutual support structures (Puttnam, 1995). Volunteering in communities with high social capital is often motivated by a sense of personal investment in the area and desire to do things for the good of the community. The close-knit nature of the community also increases the expectation that others will be acting in the best interests of the community, which mutually reinforces voluntary activities. The example of Frere Town in Mombasa was identified as exemplifying this dynamic.

2. Affluent urban centres

Generally more affluent and home to higher numbers of volunteer-involving organisations (particularly larger more formalised institutions) and businesses, the city exerts an influence on surrounding communities, pulling in migrants and commuters in search of work and volunteer opportunities. Mombasa city centre was referenced as a typical example. However, the higher levels of affluence in such areas also mean that they are less in need of volunteering-for-development interventions.

3. Transitional communities

Typically a high number of residents, though not necessarily the majority, are temporary or semi-permanent members of the community. The short time spent in an area, combined with the anticipation of it not being a long-term home, results in a lack of commitment to the community and acts to disincentivise volunteering. The high turnover of residents also creates challenges associated with consistency and continuity for local volunteering and self-help support groups, which erodes social capital. Mtwapa to the north of Mombasa was referenced as an example of such a community.

4. Informal/less affluent urban and rural settlements

The dynamics of volunteering are intertwined with the city centre as residents are drawn to the perceived work and volunteer opportunities existing in central Mombasa. As such, it may be that there is little volunteering within the community but not the case that there are, by association, few volunteers. Instead, those volunteers commute to more affluent areas, such as Mombasa city centre, to take up more desirable and numerous volunteer opportunities. One side effect is a drain on volunteers in the home community, particularly young recent graduates. The two research locations of Shanzu and Kongowea were identified as falling within this category.

5. Rural/remote communities

Cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa are the destination for many internal Kenyan migrants seeking employment, with many relocating from their rural homes. It is a common practice for Kenyans to support their families in the rural homestead through remittances, and in some instances they will return to the community to provide support, often in the form of volunteering (typically on a seasonal basis during holidays or later in life) (Moser et al, 2010). Whilst some activities are successful and well received, some returning volunteers have noted hostility to their acts of goodwill, particularly on cultural grounds as home communities perceive returning volunteers as having changed or compromised their beliefs whilst away.

The example communities referenced in each category were identified by workshop participants. However, the categorisations are by no means intended to be exhaustive and, conversely, no specific community will be an exact fit for just one category, though they will likely exhibit characteristics that relate to one or many. As such the conceptualisation represents a simplified model and heuristic device by which to make sense of the complexity of volunteering inter-community dynamics. Unfortunately resource and time constraints meant that further inquiries into communities typifying the full range of different dynamics were not possible.

The effects on volunteering impact

Analysing the dynamics of communities is useful in explaining ‘why’ and ‘why not’ volunteering happens in some areas more than others. Crucially it is not always the case that some communities have more volunteers than others but rather that those volunteers will commute or migrate to volunteer where there are more formalised volunteer opportunities (often with associated allowances or stipends) and increased recognition of their efforts. Section 4.3 will analyse how the varying levels of appreciation of volunteers across communities affect the amount of volunteering that takes place.

This dynamic is crucial for understanding how volunteerism’s impact can be increased. With people choosing to leave their poorer communities to undertake volunteer activities in more affluent areas, volunteering is essentially failing to have an impact where there is most need. It also potentially increases the inequality between richer and poorer neighbourhoods. The issue is, however, complicated when formal volunteering opportunities are accompanied by significant allowances, which blurs the distinction between volunteering and paid employment. In such cases, volunteers may bring the allowances back into their local economy, thereby injecting funds into poorer communities. This issue would be a worthwhile focus of further investigation.

Closely connected with the section above is the need to appreciate, in the Kenyan context, how the flows of volunteers are closely associated with the flows of people who move for employment opportunities. The reason for this is simply that they are often the same people. Wider research as part of *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* has revealed that many, particularly young graduates, see volunteering as a ‘stepping stone’ to paid employment – an accompanying case study on the Korogocho community in Nairobi (Lewis, S. (2015) *Community Volunteering in Korogocho*) provides a more detailed account of the national picture of volunteering in Kenya.

In Mombasa, it is common for volunteers to commute into the city centre from communities such as Shanzu and Kongowea. This is primarily because there is a greater pull factor emanating from the larger number and higher profile of volunteer organisations in the city centre. Volunteering with these organisations, with their larger budgets and paid staff, is more likely to include an allowance and/or lead to paid employment. As such, volunteering in Kenya needs to be understood not only in terms of inter-community dynamics but also in relation to wider employment patterns. Of particular significance are the factors driving rural to urban migration and the associated increasing urbanisation of Kenyan society.

B) Personal contexts: volunteer journeys

Any ecosystem or local landscape of volunteering involves the combined personal circumstances of a number of volunteers. Whilst a context or situation analysis will commonly focus on analysing socio-economic, political and cultural factors amongst others, this research inquiry wanted to build better understanding of the personal contexts of local volunteers, particularly following initial conversations with local researchers who referenced poor management and exploitation by volunteer-involving organisations as key factors that put them off volunteering. The aim of understanding personal contexts was to enable volunteer-involving organisations to be more effective in their recruitment, management and rewarding of volunteers. Improving such organisational processes was also seen as an important component part in increasing the impact of development organisations in reducing poverty and marginalisation.

The findings provide valuable insights in terms of analysing where, when and how local people volunteer and why. Over 30 personal 'rivers of experience' portraits, illustrating the volunteer journeys of local Mombasa volunteers, were collected. These were supported by an additional 70 cases from other Kenyan coastal towns which were used to contrast and compare results. The two case study boxes accompanying this section offer rich insights into the personal journeys of a number of volunteers¹ and a number of additional examples can be seen in Appendix C. When analysed together, seven key themes emerge which are vital to understanding the struggles volunteers face and how organisations can work better with them.

1. People do not volunteer continuously

The rivers of experience exercise revealed that most people do not volunteer continuously throughout their lives. A volunteer's journey is rarely straightforward but takes many twists and turns, and so there are times when they can volunteer and times when their personal circumstances prevent them from doing so. As one workshop participant stated, "everybody have challenges in their road of doing things". A number of local volunteers mentioned how a lack of income or being in 'hardship' meant that they had to stop volunteering in order to make a living. In other cases, people became demotivated and disillusioned with volunteering, usually as a result of feeling exploited or unappreciated, or the organisation they had been volunteering with collapsed. The relevance of this finding lies in understanding the life experiences and everyday challenges that volunteers face.

2. Family and friend support networks

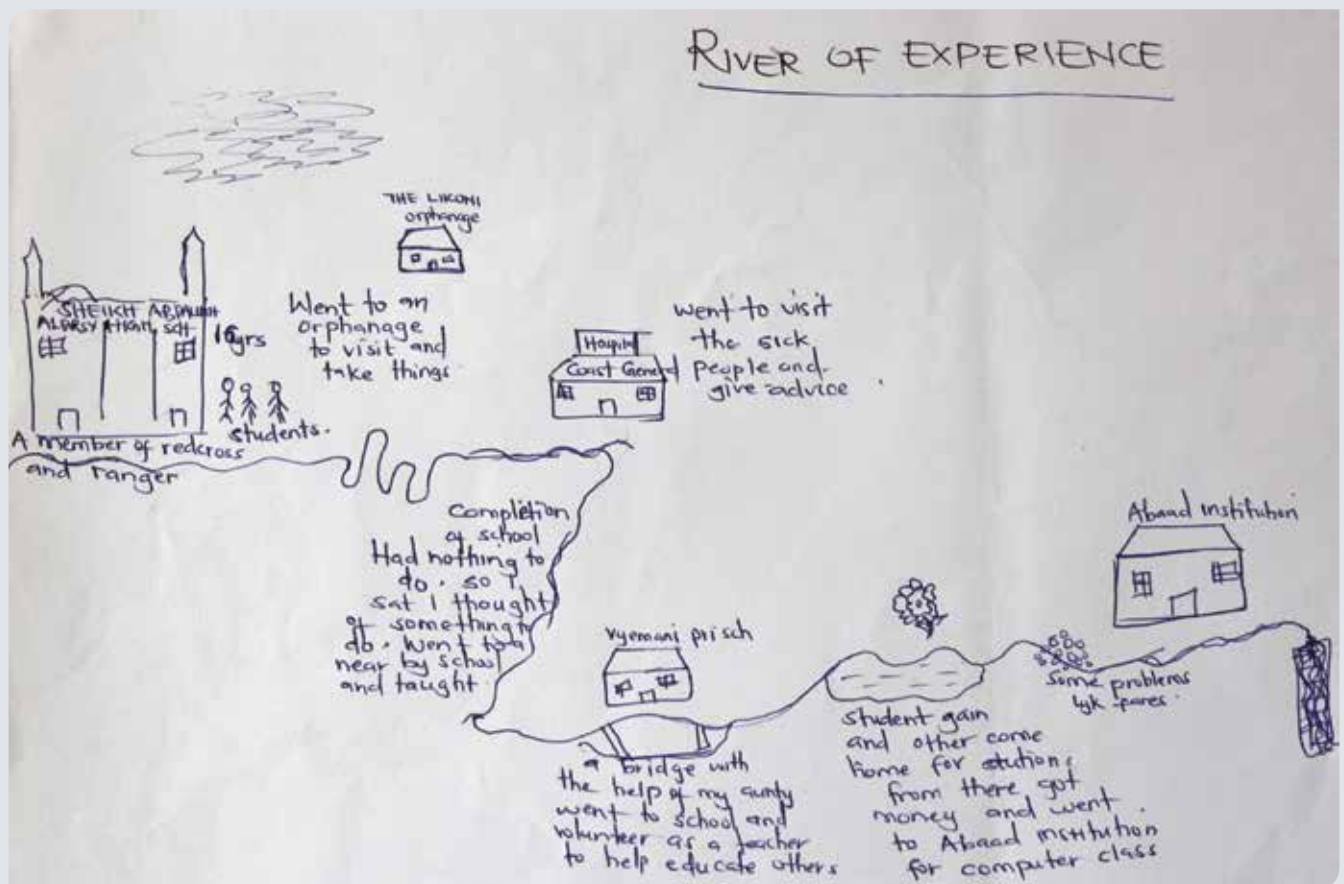
The influence of family and friends on volunteers was repeatedly referenced. For many, family and friends had played key supporting roles in enabling and encouraging them to volunteer. Younger volunteers referred to the support they received from parents upon leaving school when volunteering provided an opportunity to gain experience. Box 2 shows how one volunteer was supported by her aunt to volunteer as a teacher in a school, which eventually led to her providing home tuition to students and making enough to fund her attendance at computer class. Participants mentioned making friends through volunteering, and often these friendship networks and the associated social element were important in sustaining their volunteering. Whilst family and friends could be supportive, in other cases they could also be a barrier to volunteering. Some volunteers referred to a lack of understanding from their families in relation to the worth of volunteering, which presented a real challenge. For volunteer-involving organisations, the findings reveal the critical importance of volunteer support, particularly at key transition points in life such as leaving school. They also suggest that targeted recruitment and support at such times may be especially effective in attracting and sustaining national/local volunteers.

3. Most volunteering starts at a young age

The local researchers through their community inquiries found that most volunteers first experienced volunteering at school. The rivers of experience exercise supported this finding, with nearly all local volunteers identifying their volunteer journey as either starting at school or in a religious organisation when they were of school-going age. The roles of school clubs, such as the Red Cross club, appear to be particularly important in establishing both the ethic of helping others (a number of cases mentioned school visits to help orphanages and hospitals) and a sense of being in a supportive group environment. Within schools, some volunteers referred to the support provided by teachers who acted as patrons of the student volunteer groups. However, others also mentioned that teachers could be a challenge and barrier to volunteering when they perceived such activities to be interfering with a pupil's studies. The local research team identified the importance of encouraging voluntary activity whilst at school as a key precursor to volunteering in later life. For volunteer-involving organisations, supporting volunteerism for people during the early stages of their lives is likely to be a particularly effective way of building a cadre of emerging volunteers.

1. In all cases substitute names are used to protect the confidentiality of the volunteers.

BOX 2: Deeja's river of experience



Deeja began volunteering at high school as a member of Red Cross students. Initial volunteering activities included visiting the local orphanage and taking things to the orphans as well as visiting the hospital to give support and advice to the sick. The curves in her river indicate some challenges but the journey was relatively smooth. A major challenge occurred after she completed school and had nothing to do, represented here by the course of her river changing direction. With support from her aunt, shown by

a bridge, she was able to volunteer as a teacher at a school. This volunteering eventually led to her making some money from providing extra out-of-school tuition to students and she used the money to attend computer classes at the local technical college (shown by a lake and a flower in the illustration). However, rocks and stones in her river show how Deeja still struggles to have enough money to pay her travel fares.

4. Volunteering with multiple organisations

Whilst a volunteer is unlikely to volunteer continuously throughout their life, they are also unlikely to volunteer with only one organisation. Wider *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* learning suggested that volunteers will sometimes be members of multiple volunteer groups simultaneously, shifting the time they commit to each one depending on which has funding. However, volunteer research participants in Mombasa showed a much greater progression from one voluntary organisation, project or activity to another. In some cases a shift to a new organisation was necessitated by the collapse of an organisation; in others, volunteers appeared to be looking for new opportunities, especially upon completing school, and would often aim to secure opportunities with more well-established and respected volunteer organisations. This perceived hierarchy of voluntary organisations – at least partly based on the level of allowance each offers – essentially presented a ladder for volunteers to climb. Once a lucrative volunteering opportunity was secured with a respected/well-funded organisation, volunteers tended to shift less between organisations.

5. Motivation and recognition

Volunteer journeys showed that one source of motivation was witnessing the outcomes of volunteer efforts. A number of participants referred to seeing how they had made a difference such as providing help to the sick, assisting in orphanages (see Box 2), saving lives through emergency response (see Box 3) and cleaning up the environment. Some mentioned how they were motivated by being officially recognised and appreciated. One volunteer, for example, referred to the time when they were awarded a certificate of active participation, which left them full of enthusiasm for volunteering. The finding illustrates how seemingly small acts of appreciation and acknowledgement can have a significant impact on the motivation and wellbeing of volunteers. Such learning should be seen as crucial by volunteer-involving organisations looking for simple and cost-effective ways to motivate their volunteers.

6. Personal and organisational challenges

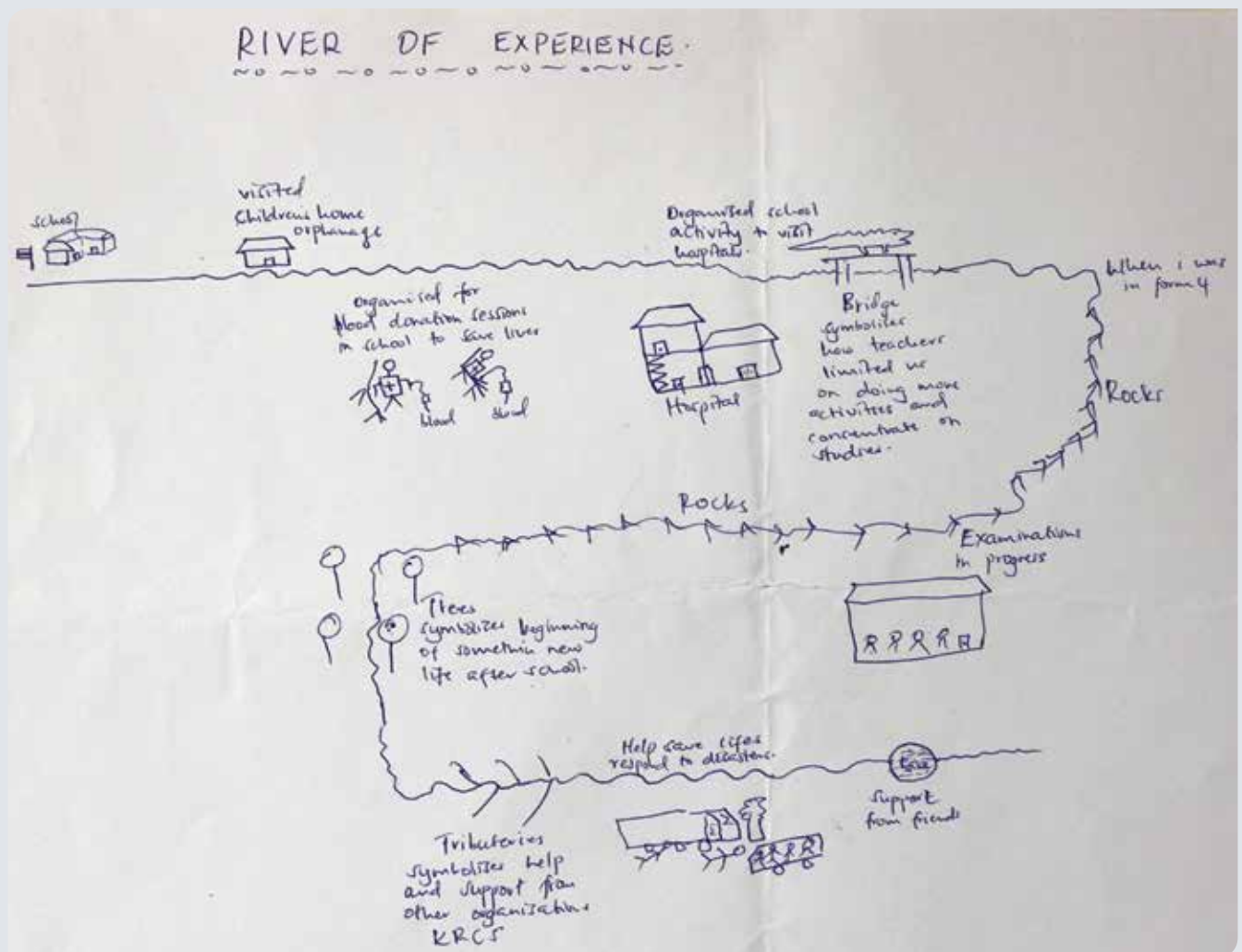
The challenges faced by volunteers are often personal and organisational. Personal challenges typically include lack of income and 'hardship', unsupportive family and friends and searching for direction in life, particularly at transitional times in life such as after finishing school. However, volunteers also face organisational challenges. A number of cases specifically refer to instances where organisations have become dysfunctional, in one case due to members dropping out. However, committed volunteers will often show considerable resilience and search for new opportunities. As one workshop participant stated, "I learnt that during volunteering, there are challenges but these should not stop you from volunteering".

7. An unsupportive society

One participant observed how "volunteerism benefits you and the community". However, one challenge experienced by many volunteers was a lack of understanding and support from communities and society in general. This emanated from a general lack of understanding as to what volunteerism was and a perception that many volunteers were more interested in personal gain than helping others. The volunteer journey shown in one 'river of experience' showed a fork in the river with the annotation: a "lack of enough support from society". This is an issue which will be returned to in the next section as it is a significant issue affecting when, where and how volunteering has an impact.

Volunteer journeys are important for understanding the ways in which people volunteer and the factors that both enable and challenge them. If volunteer interventions can incorporate elements that make the most of enabling factors and address challenges, then they are more likely to be successful and also result in happy volunteers who will continue to volunteer.

BOX 3: Mohamed's river of experience



Mohamed's volunteer journey begins at school where he visited children's homes and hospitals, and organised blood donations to help save lives. His depiction of a crocodile on a bridge symbolises how a teacher prevented him from doing more volunteering as he was told to concentrate on his studies. Rocks show that he experienced some challenges, with his river taking a winding

course. However, completing school presented new opportunities as shown by the trees/flowers. The Red Cross supported him to volunteer with them – represented by the streams flowing into his river – and now he does voluntary work helping to save lives and respond to disasters. Continued support from Mohamed's friends helps to keep him motivated to volunteer.

Implications

- 1. Inter-community dynamics are vital in understanding local ecosystems of volunteering.** Too often the context or situational analysis conducted by development organisations simplifies context to a series of socio-economic characteristics. This research finds that context is more complex, consisting of multiple factors at multiple scales, both within and between geographic areas. Furthermore, it is the **relationships between communities that can reveal hidden complexities regarding the nature of volunteering.** For example, when affluent areas act to attract volunteers, this may indirectly reduce the degree of volunteering occurring in poorer communities. In such cases, **volunteerism's impact on reducing poverty is reduced as it can act to increase rather than decrease inequality. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to take such dynamics into account, particularly in terms of where, geographically, their interventions are targeted and where their volunteers are recruited from.**
- 2. Volunteering-for-development organisations in Kenya need to understand volunteering through the lens of national perceptions.** The reality in Kenya is that formal volunteering opportunities that come with attached stipends/allowances are often seen as a form of low-paid work. This has blurred the line between volunteering and paid employment. As a result, **volunteering also needs to be analysed in the context of wider employment patterns and associated factors such as rural to urban migration.** For volunteering-for-development organisations, there may be benefits from overtly stressing how their volunteering positions differ from paid work – clearly explaining what stipends/allowances are intended to cover, for example – or being more pragmatic and highlighting how volunteering may lead to paid positions either within the organisation or in another. However, in the latter case, organisations would also have to be prepared to work with ‘volunteers’ whose motives may be primarily non-altruistic.
- 3. Rural to urban migrants often maintain strong links to their rural homes and communities.** Support is often provided to rural homesteads either in the form of remittances or through acts of volunteering, either during holidays or when people return from urban centres later in life. The desire of those who have moved to urban centres to help more remote and often poorer ‘home’ communities has potentially powerful implications for volunteering, particularly as it may act as a form of redistribution of wealth and skills from wealthier cities to more impoverished areas. **For volunteering-for-development organisations, exploring models for how such types of volunteering could be facilitated and/or harnessed has significant potential for increasing volunteerism's development impact.**
- 4. Evidence shows that most volunteers start volunteering at a young age, either through schools or religious institutions.** Establishing the ethos of helping others is particularly powerful and can have a lasting impact on the life direction of young people. **Volunteering-for-development organisations would be wise to look at how they can increase the pool of potential volunteers by supporting the emergence of future generations of volunteers.** This may also lead to unexpected results such as a greater number of local volunteer-run organisations.
- 5. Analysis of the life journeys of volunteers reveals that people face particular challenges at key transition points in life such as leaving school.** With the right support from family, friends and volunteering organisations, volunteering can fill a void at these times and provide vital life experience. **Volunteering-for-development organisations should consider targeting recruitment and support at such times in order to attract new volunteers and sustain existing ones.** Understanding how volunteering can fit into someone's life course at such points may also help in the marketing of volunteer opportunities.
- 6. Support structures play an important role in sustaining voluntary activity.** Evidence shows that the support of friends and the social networks developed through volunteering can be crucial, along with the support of family members. As a result, there may be benefits for volunteering-for-development organisations, especially in terms of volunteer retention, **from fostering and highlighting the social aspects of their volunteer networks.**
- 7. Volunteers report being more motivated when they can witness first-hand the positive impact of their efforts.** **Volunteering organisations can therefore create a ‘virtuous circle’ if they manage to use volunteers to implement well-designed interventions that make a visible difference to people's lives.** This also suggests that, rather than just involving volunteers during a particular part of a project cycle such as implementation, there may be benefits from involving them more fully or holistically over the course of a project, specifically during evaluation exercises when they may be given the opportunity to assess the impacts of their efforts. This could have a positive impact on volunteer motivation.
- 8. Not having your efforts acknowledged is demotivating for volunteers.** Indeed volunteers reported feeling exploited when they were expected to undertake activities with no recognition. However, they also noted that even small acts of appreciation, such as awarding a certificate of participation, can have significant positive impacts on the motivation of volunteers, leading them to try harder and continue their voluntary activities for longer. **For volunteering-for-development organisations, providing some form of (even basic) recognition should be seen as both a crucial and cost-effective means of motivating their volunteers.**

4.3 Community perceptions and receptiveness to volunteers

Community perceptions of volunteering and the level of receptiveness to working with volunteers have a direct impact on how, when and why volunteering is effective. The inquiries in the Shanzu and Kongowea communities revealed dynamics that present considerable challenges to volunteer initiatives and individual volunteers. These dynamics predominantly revolve around negative community perceptions of volunteers and expectations – derived from dependent one-way relationships – that volunteers provide services to communities in a one-way exchange without any appreciation of their efforts.

Across the community inquiry sites, a recurring finding was how volunteering was perceived as a low-status activity. Associated with this, volunteers were often seen as unemployed people engaging in opportunistic attempts to gain small handouts from the community or the stipend/allowance offered for attending NGO-organised meetings and projects. As one respondent noted, “most communities consider volunteers as time wasters”. Many community members and volunteers are acutely aware of the economic value of their time and see little point in engaging in voluntary activity if there is no monetary reward. The following quotes illustrate this view:

“some people only want to volunteer so that they can get at least 200 Ksh to buy at least a packet of rice”

Kongowea resident

[there are] “no volunteer initiatives as people expect to be paid due to poverty”

Kongowea resident

“everything has a monetary value”

City centre research respondent

These views are not restricted to poorer informal settlements either. Local researchers in the more affluent city centre encountered similar feelings, with one respondent stating how “volunteers are being ignored and considered low people”.

The negative community perception of volunteering not only disincentivises people from ‘genuinely’ volunteering but also discourages local residents from working with and building relationships with volunteers. This affects levels of trust between volunteers and the community – something which will be analysed further in the next section. The consequence is that communities are trapped in a negative feedback loop as genuine volunteers are demotivated by the challenge of community suspicion and negativity, whilst increasing numbers volunteer for personal gain rather than community benefit. The perception of volunteers as untrustworthy and low-skilled is thus enforced. In a reflection session on the community research, one local volunteer summed up what they had learnt: “the negativity that the community puts on volunteerism”.

Combined analysis of workshops with local volunteers and fieldwork in communities such as Shanzu and Kongowea revealed differing motivations of volunteers, which had the potential to impact upon how they were perceived. For example, some respondents spoke more positively of volunteering, stating how it “helps build a community” and allows volunteers to gain experience.

Differing motivations create a perceived split in volunteers – those who volunteer predominantly to make a difference but also to gain experience and meet new friends; and those who use the guise of volunteering for personal benefit. The latter are predominantly low-skilled and unemployed people who view the small stipends or handouts associated with volunteering as a survival mechanism in the absence of other forms of income. Box 4 provides additional details on the motivations and wellbeing of volunteers. There is no right or wrong to such motivations but it is clear that the issue has created confusion and distorted what volunteering means in such contexts. The challenge for increasing the impact of volunteering lies in navigating a path that tackles this confusion and helps to build community trust in volunteers.

Linked to section 4.6 below, volunteers also face the challenge of a community perception that it is their right to be helped by volunteers. There is often little reciprocity in such expectations, which leaves volunteers feeling unappreciated and in some cases exploited. In one reported case from the Shanzu community, a local volunteer stopped volunteering because her efforts were not being valued as something they were choosing to do for no financial reward. As the local volunteer stated, “I stopped volunteering since the woman I was helping thought it was her right to be helped”, whilst another respondent from the city centre observed how “volunteers are not appreciated”.

Evidence suggests that such community perceptions may be based on the local assumption that volunteers are doing so through the formal volunteering initiatives of well-funded national and international NGOs. As a result, community members view volunteers as representatives of those organisations, or their public face, and have become accustomed to receiving their help; the expectations on the volunteer are thus intertwined with how development organisations have been seen to operate in communities which, more often than not, has been based on dependent donor–beneficiary relationships with little real participation or empowerment. The unexpected impact of such approaches has been the unfair expectations placed on volunteers, which is potentially very damaging to their motivation and wellbeing. It also means that all volunteers risk being categorised in the same way as representatives of large NGOs. Therefore, even indigenous volunteering initiatives, unconnected with external funding, may suffer from the same exploitative expectations.

BOX 4: Volunteer motivations

Volunteers cited a range of factors that motivate them to volunteer. Although the need for costs to be covered through stipends/allowances was regularly mentioned, a clear distinction emerged between volunteers who had genuine motivations to help others and those who did it as an opportunistic act purely to benefit personally. Often skill and educational levels, the degree of deprivation, employment status and other factors, such as drug addiction, were influential factors, although their influence is incredibly complex. For example, community respondents in Kongowea and Shanzu perceived volunteers as ‘time wasters’ and idle people, who were typically young, low-skilled, unemployed and occasionally also early school dropouts and/or substance abusers. For these people, the motivation to volunteer was the associated allowance or stipend, as this represented a form of livelihood or ‘survival mechanism’. As one community member reflected, “people can’t volunteer since they won’t do work with no pay”. However, there were also low-skilled unemployed community residents who genuinely volunteered in their communities to make a difference, irrespective of whether they received an allowance or recognition. The confusion around differing motivations suggests that the ‘volunteer’ label might not even be particularly useful, especially when it comes with negative connotations. It may be that local terms could be more effective at identifying and communicating the positive aspects of volunteering and characteristics of volunteers.

In the case of the volunteer rivers of experience exercise, virtually all the attendees were committed volunteers but their range of motivating factors also included many references to gaining experience, meeting new friends and contacts, and seeing volunteering as a means to access new opportunities. As one respondent stated, “it’s easy to get employment if you volunteer and get exposure”. Volunteer motivations thus simply do not fit discernible categories, as they vary according to each volunteer’s personal circumstances. This further illustrates the importance of understanding the volunteer life journey as illustrated through the river of experience exercise discussed in the previous section.

These findings support wider results from the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research and particularly the case of the Korogocho community in Nairobi, which forms an accompanying case study (Lewis, S. (2015) Community volunteering in Korogocho). For many Kenyans, volunteering represents either a ‘stepping stone’ to paid employment, particularly for recent graduates, or a survival mechanism for low-skilled, often extremely poor and unemployed people. Understanding these dynamics and motivations is vital for organisations looking to recruit and work with volunteers.

Implications

- 1. Volunteers often act as the public face of development organisations and are particularly visible in the communities where they operate.** However, this also means that expectations of them are inherently linked to how the activities of the wider development sector are perceived. In poor communities where dependent relationships have grown between local people and external donors/organisations – such as the ‘handout’ culture – this can lead to undue expectations being placed on volunteers and little recognition being given to their efforts. Volunteering-for-development organisations should carefully consider what type of volunteer is best suited to such environments and what measures can be taken to reduce the extra burden placed on volunteers. For example, it may be that organisations need to place extra emphasis on acknowledging their volunteers to make up for the lack of community support.
- 2. Negative perceptions of volunteering erode community trust in volunteers. This can severely reduce their effectiveness.** Volunteering-for-development organisations may wish to investigate appropriate community engagement strategies as a way of more effectively managing community expectations and changing perceptions. It may also be that **in certain circumstances, the ‘volunteer’ label will have too many negative connotations and cease to be a useful term.** In such cases, alternative terms, perhaps based on local understandings, may offer greater potential for recruiting the right volunteers and emphasising the positive contribution of volunteering.
- 3. Volunteer motivations vary but evidence shows a clear split between those who are primarily motivated by personal monetary gain and those who volunteer for the benefit of others** (although monetary compensation may still be a contributory motivation). Volunteering-for-development organisations need to be particularly aware of this distinction and build in appropriate volunteer management processes that support volunteering as an activity based on altruistic principles. Examples could include thorough and robust recruitment processes or providing non-monetary incentives such as certificates of participation rather than daily stipends.

4.4 Relationships and levels of trust

A recurring theme in terms of increasing volunteer effectiveness was the importance of positive trusting relationships. This predominantly applied to the relationship between volunteers and the people, groups and communities they interact with but it also included the relationships formed with other volunteers. In volunteer workshops many mentioned the relationships and friendships they made with other volunteers as a strong motivating factor which helped to sustain their volunteer efforts. Particularly for younger volunteers in well-established NGOs, building friendship networks and socialising were significant motivating aspects associated with their volunteering.

Trust was repeatedly referred to as a key element affecting whether volunteers had positive relationships with those they interacted with. The level of trust also appeared to depend on how well the volunteer was known by a group or in a community and the kind of volunteering being undertaken (ie health, clean-ups, etc). As one volunteer stated, “finding trust in people as a volunteer is challenging when the people you are helping don’t know you”. To gauge the degree to which communities trust different types of volunteers, a workshop exercise was run with a group of volunteers from various organisations across Mombasa. Figure 5 summarises the views of the group in relation to community trust regarding selected volunteer types.

Interestingly, local volunteers could be both entirely trusted or distrusted by communities depending on the area they were working in and how well they were known by community members. Specific community fears existed around how personal confidential information was treated by local volunteers, especially in relation to issues of sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Hence local volunteers working in these areas faced greater challenges in gaining the community’s trust. On the other hand, local volunteers well known in the community and not dealing with sensitive information were likely to be highly trusted. Volunteer CHWs, who are usually recruited from their own communities, were likely to be reasonably well trusted. The fact that the role of a CHW is officially recognised and the work they do is often well respected helped to increase

the level of trust communities had in them. The only exception was nurses dealing with sensitive information, which links to community distrust of volunteers working in such areas.

International volunteers were very quickly added to the 100% trusted category as they were seen as not engaging in corrupt practices, would deliver on what they promised, and were not affected by local politics and power relations. Interestingly, this echoes findings from the Korogocho research site in Nairobi where community participants noted having higher levels of trust in international volunteers and development professionals.

Kenyan volunteers from other parts of the country split opinion on whether they were trusted by the community. Not being known to the community meant that local people struggled, at least initially, to know the motivations of such national volunteers. The misunderstandings surrounding volunteerism in Kenya were seen to fuel this distrust of volunteers who are not known to communities, as it could be difficult to know if they had ulterior motives. Nevertheless it would appear that communities decide on a case-by-case basis regarding national volunteers, depending on what their motivations for volunteering are perceived to be.

These were the results according to Mombasa volunteers and it was interesting to note that they generally perceived volunteers to be people genuinely volunteering to make a difference. Hence, in such cases, a committed local volunteer was likely to be trusted by their community. An issue or type of volunteer that was not considered was those who ‘volunteer’ locally purely to receive an allowance or stipend. The reason for this is that the group simply did not regard such people as volunteers. It is likely that if they had, such volunteers would not have scored highly on levels of community trust. It is worth noting that the findings presented in this section reflect the views of Mombasa volunteers, as further testing and validation with communities and other partners had to be curtailed due to security risks in Kenya’s coastal region. As such, further triangulation of initial findings would be valuable.

Figure 5: Mombasa group’s perceptions of the level of community trust in different types of volunteer

| Distrust 100% | Distrust 50% | Neither trust nor distrust | Trust 50% | Trust 100% |
|--|--------------|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local volunteer dealing with issues of sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National volunteers - do not know their agenda Would trust a local volunteer more with money Depends on the individual and type of project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Health Workers (but not nurses dealing with sensitive information) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local volunteer known by the community International volunteers |

The level of community trust in volunteers is an important enabler in terms of whether volunteers can be effective. Communities that trust volunteers (or a particular type of volunteer) are much more likely to be receptive to working with them. When there is little trust, community members are less likely to engage and volunteers will face more challenges in building positive relationships. This can also negatively impact on the confidence of some volunteers who pick up on the fact they are operating in a potentially hostile environment where they are viewed with suspicion. As one female resident in the Kongowea community noted, the “problem is the ones doing sensitisation have no confidence to approaching others, the community members”. In designing volunteer initiatives in communities that have little trust in volunteers, prioritising initial relationship-building as a means to bring about change is likely to be critical, along with providing sufficient induction training of volunteers to prepare them for the environment they will be operating in.

Volunteer research respondents were quick to stress that a core quality volunteers needed was patience. Revealingly this applied to both building relationships with people and to gaining access to opportunities, further illustrating the point that volunteering is often seen as a stepping stone to other things. As one workshop participant stated, “patience is key in volunteerism as with time, more opportunities may come your way”. Another respondent provided a similar reflection: “volunteering requires patience and [you] should not have any expectations about being catered for your needs first”. In terms of relationship-building, volunteers that demonstrated patience when interacting with ‘beneficiaries’ were more likely to establish rapport and trust that increased the impact of their efforts.

Implications

1. **Levels of community trust in different types of volunteers have a direct impact on the ability of volunteers to bring about positive change.** International volunteers are often associated with being less corrupt, more likely to fulfil promises and not being restrained by local politics and power relations. Kenyan volunteers from other parts of the country can face initial suspicions relating to their motivations but, importantly, can succeed in gaining the trust of the local community. For local volunteers, much depends on how they are perceived in the community (which varies on a case-by-case basis) and the sensitivity of the issues and information they are entrusted with. How they deal with personal information relating to health (sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS especially) is a critical area that affects levels of trust. In these instances, more officially recognised local volunteers such as CHWs appear to be more trusted than volunteers not engaged with formal voluntary organisations. For volunteer-involving organisations, **these dynamics relating to the perceptions of different types of volunteering need to be built into how interventions are designed and implemented in particular communities.**
2. **Building positive trusting relationships is a critical element in enabling volunteers to make a difference. Confidence, patience and relationship-building skills should be prioritised as criteria for volunteer selection, alongside any professional skill requirements. Induction processes and training should also include a focus on these ‘softer skills’.** However, volunteering also represents a potentially important opportunity for the personal development of volunteers – something which can become a more significant development goal when those volunteers also come from poorer communities. As such, when recruiting, **volunteer-involving organisations should look for the potential in candidates, particularly when they come from deprived communities.**

4.5 Gender barriers

Findings from community inquiries revealed that women are far more likely to face barriers to volunteering than men. The most commonly cited reasons were that women were often the subject of family pressures and expectations as well as social norms and cultural values that all combined to block their path to volunteering. Many women respondents stated how they would like to volunteer but were unable to because of the number and severity of challenges in their way. The following quotes from the community inquiries and volunteer workshops illustrate these observations:

“I want to volunteer but I have three kids to take care of so I cannot”

Woman Kongowea resident

“People especially women would love to volunteer but responsibilities hinder them”

Woman Kongowea resident

“A man married a lady who used to volunteer in a youth group, then forbid [her] to continue volunteering for the reason that their religion does not allow someone’s wife to engage herself in activities not related to her husband’s”

Volunteer workshop participant

“A family forces girls from volunteering and forces her into marriage”

Male Kongowea resident

When conducting the community inquiries in Kongowea and Shanzu, local volunteer researchers also witnessed the separation of gender roles first-hand. Whilst conducting fieldwork, researchers noted how they found it harder talking to and interviewing women in the morning as they were often busy with household duties or setting up their stalls and businesses, particularly in Kongowea. In contrast, men were generally more easily available as they ‘milled around’. One researcher also observed how “most of the members in the groups at Kongowea are men. This means that ladies are not that involved and do not involve themselves in such group activities”.

A contrast was noted between local groups in communities such as Kongowea, where most members were observed to be men, and workshops for volunteers connected with established and well-known NGOs, where attendance was much more balanced. So although women are more likely to face challenges to volunteering, they are still finding ways to volunteer and are succeeding in finding opportunities in well-established NGOs. The local research team identified this as an important emerging finding and something which would benefit from further investigation.

Implications

1. **Organisations should be aware of and seek to better understand the additional challenges that women face when it comes to volunteering.** Where possible, flexible volunteering opportunities which better enable women to combine volunteering with their other responsibilities should be explored. For example, group childcare could be provided for women whilst they volunteer. Volunteer-involving organisations may also wish to emphasise the positive benefits of volunteering to local volunteers and connect this to using volunteering as a means to instigate more equitable gender relations.

4.6 Dependency and sustainability

Community dependency versus having the agency to lead on local development was a major theme to emerge from the community enquiries in Mombasa city centre, Kongowea and Shanzu. Noticeably, whereas respondents in the city centre expressed optimism as to the potential for their area to develop and their role in making it happen, views in Kongowea and particularly Shanzu were far less hopeful. The result was that people in the latter communities were less likely to volunteer in their communities. This section will first analyse why some communities feel a sense of hopelessness with regard to development, before exploring some examples where communities are adapting to deal with being marginalised. It will finish with a brief look at the role of power and politics within this.

Community inquiries revealed that some communities feel a sense of marginalisation, disempowerment and disenfranchisement that translates into apathy towards the prospect of development happening in their area. As one community member remarked, “why don’t we have NGOs in Shanzu?” In fact Shanzu does have NGOs and CBOs, such as members of the local research team who came from the Mikoroshoni Ambassadors for Change Youth Group, which is active in Shanzu. The systems-mapping exercise also identified the Great Vision Youth Group and Community Light Programme as operating in Shanzu. However, overall, local people perceived there to be a weak NGO/CBO presence in Shanzu which contributed to a community ‘superstition’ – a term used in the mapping exercise – that the area would never improve. As one local nurse stated, there is “a strong belief that the area cannot develop”.

The community’s self-perceived lack of capacity to take action acts as a disincentive to volunteering as many people do not see it as having any potential to make a difference, either to themselves or the community. As one respondent noted, “people have become reluctant to make development”. In communities such as Shanzu, evidence suggests that a collective sense of pessimism has eroded social capital and discouraged volunteering. Revealingly, this is in stark contrast to Mombasa city centre which has a vibrant volunteer community with numerous volunteer-involving organisations. As a result, volunteers in the city centre are more likely to feel that their efforts will make a positive difference and this ‘virtuous circle’ even acts to attract volunteers to the city centre from more impoverished areas. However, the ‘pull factor’ of the city centre on volunteers also means that volunteerism falls into the trap of perpetuating inequalities in local development rather than helping the poorest and most marginalised people.

Residents in Shanzu and Kongowea, with little sense of the ability to take collective action, generally perceived development as something that was done to them rather than something they would lead on. This creates dependency on outside help as illustrated by observations of some local volunteers being more motivated by the prospect of receiving small allowances than genuinely participating for the good of the community. In Shanzu this sentiment also expressed itself as a feeling of community victimisation by the outside world. Examples from the community inquiry included the perception of outsiders coming into their community to commit crimes and one case where a foreigner abused a local girl but escaped punishment because they were seen as being of a higher status than people in the community. Only one reference to an international volunteer was recorded, but their role was in fundraising, which did little to challenge the perception of international organisations bringing in money from outside the community.

The role of the authorities, particularly the county government (previously the council before 2013) and the police, plays a key role in feelings of marginalisation from decision making in informal communities such as Kongowea and Shanzu. Whereas Mombasa city centre and the volunteer organisations within them are close to seats of political and administrative power, communities such as Kongowea and Shanzu exist in the grey areas, often informally, with little or mixed legal recognition and minimal involvement in decision-making processes. The community inquiries highlighted how a perceived lack of proper political representation and an unresponsive police force accentuated community feelings of marginalisation.

With regard to county representatives, one Shanzu community member remarked, “after being elected they disappear never to be seen in the community until another election”. Often the hopes of local communities are exploited as part of political manoeuvring in advance of an election, with political promises later left unfulfilled. As one Shanzu resident commented on the issue of much needed security lighting, “what happened to the street lights? They were effective before the elections but just when we expect more developments, the lights no longer work”. Broken political promises also erode trust in the political process, which further accentuates a community’s sense of marginalisation.

The police are often perceived in a similar negative light. In Shanzu, respondents noted the severe lack of police presence which left them feeling isolated and unprotected. As a result, many businesses closed early through fear of being burgled. Police were based in neighbouring areas but were observed to only get involved if they were offered bribes. As a result, respondents in Shanzu highlighted cases of mob justice and one resident in Kongowea stated how “the community are more dependent on themselves in terms of security than depending on local authorities”. It is debatable to what degree incidences of mob justice and vigilante groups can be taken as examples of communities demonstrating capacity for collective action. However, it does reveal that there are issues of concern that do act to mobilise local community action and that there may be possibilities for volunteer-involving organisations to work with this local interest to devise much-needed, valued and (importantly) legal volunteer interventions.

One area in which community residents did come together to help each other was in the practice of local *Harambees*. *Harambee* is a Swahili word which loosely translates as ‘all pull together’. The term gained popularity in the early years of post-independence Kenya when political leaders encouraged the spirit of *Harambee* to motivate communities to come together to undertake development projects. The broader *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research has found that the idea of *Harambee* has lost some of its relevance, particularly amongst younger generations, but is still recognised as a valuable concept. However, its modern practice appears to be more as a local fundraising tool than the collective community efforts and activities of previous times. Community inquiries in Mombasa revealed that residents would commonly call a *Harambee* in order to cover the costs of school fees, medical bills or funerals. In cases of *Harambees*, requests for donations would typically be made to friends and family, which illustrates their importance in mutual support networks.

Implications

1. **Community dependency on external support creates added challenges for volunteering-for-development organisations** looking to work in such communities. Local volunteers may be more interested in receiving stipends/allowances, thus requiring more robust recruitment practices, and local people may be less willing to engage with volunteers. The dependence on external help may also make using certain types of volunteers, such as international volunteers, more problematic as they are associated with, and perceived to represent, the ‘donor’ development sector. **Using certain types of volunteer (for example, trusted locals or qualified national volunteers) along with placing an emphasis on relationship-building in order to overcome ‘donor–beneficiary’ dependent relationships are likely to be key factors in operating in such communities.**
2. **Volunteerism risks perpetuating, rather than reducing, marginalisation and inequality when it occurs more in affluent areas than it does in poor ones.** This is potentially accentuated when volunteers in poor communities choose to travel to more affluent areas to volunteer (though there may be some financial gain as volunteer allowances find their way back to the local economy). **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to better understand these local contexts and the local flows of volunteers so as to ensure that volunteerism acts as a tool for reducing inequality and marginalisation.**
3. **There are issues around which local communities will mobilise to take collective action.** Self-organised efforts tackling security concerns are one such example but can lead to activities that are illegal and/or not condonable. However, the fact that there is local desire to address such issues **presents possibilities for volunteering-for-development organisations to work with communities to devise much-needed volunteer solutions** that can also be more acceptably endorsed by development organisations.

4.7 Collaborative working: partners, organisational systems and the impact on poverty, marginalisation and inequality

Mombasa is an interesting case in terms of joint working between volunteer-involving organisations with some demonstrable successes in addressing marginalisation and inequality. Generally, where organisational systems have been flexible and mandates not overly restrictive in limiting the scope of work, there has been noticeable success in cross-organisational working on shared goals and projects. Lessons from such practices are particularly relevant for understanding where, when, how and why volunteering can be more effective in reducing poverty.

In one volunteer workshop, participants were asked to construct a network map providing details of the organisations they volunteered with and the links they had with other groups. This was used as a basis for discussion on what organisations were achieving by working together, where there were challenges and where there were opportunities for greater collaboration. A copy of the network map can be found as Figure 15 in Appendix A.

The network-mapping exercise brought together participants from nine organisations and a number of individual volunteers to provide a snapshot of the volunteer sector in Mombasa. Even with the relatively small number of voluntary organisations, the network map revealed some interesting findings. Of the seven dedicated voluntary groups, every one indicated an active link to at least one other organisation. Of those seven, three had two connections to other organisations and one had four. Undoubtedly, conducting the same exercise with a different group of volunteers would produce a different map, but it is useful to observe that there is generally some level of interconnectedness between volunteer organisations in Mombasa, ranging from individual links to more networked associations. Interestingly, a number of volunteers not connected to a specific organisation also attended the workshop in the hope of finding groups to join. The workshop thus acted as a networking opportunity for both individual volunteers and volunteer organisations and revealed a demand for more information on volunteering opportunities and initiatives.

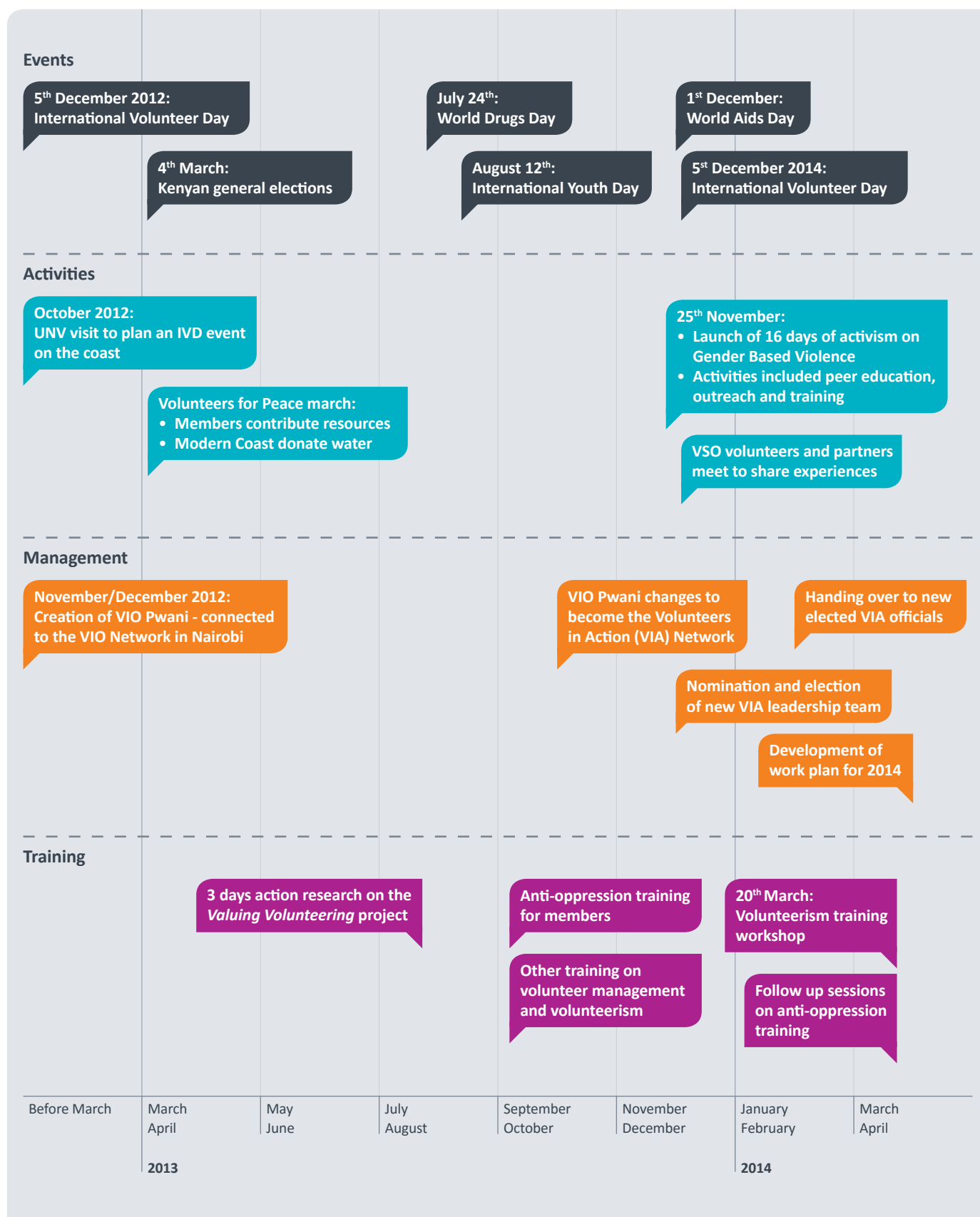
The potential for cross-organisational cooperation in Mombasa is best illustrated by the Volunteers in Action (VIA) Network. The VIA Network first emerged as a loose collective of volunteer organisations in November 2013, initially in order to arrange the Mombasa celebrations of International Volunteer Day (IVD) on 5 December 2012. The motivation and drive for establishing the network largely came from a few dedicated individuals, one of whom was an international VSO volunteer based at local partner Kwacha Africa. Interestingly, helping to establish the VIA Network fell entirely outside of their VSO placement objectives, but their experience in networking (discussed in section 4.1 of the findings) and skill in seeing potential opportunities meant they were well placed to contribute. Importantly, because the volunteer worked with others who were enthusiastic about setting up a volunteer network, they were able to offer support and then step down from active involvement. For volunteering-for-development organisations, the case illustrates how volunteers can use their initiative and work beyond their official placement descriptions to bring about change that was not initially expected.

In terms of the development of the VIA Network, it was initially called the Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIO) Network Pwani (*Pwani* meaning coast) and connected to the main VIO Network² based in Nairobi. The VIO Network positions itself as a national network and includes representatives from many of the main offices of volunteer and development organisations such as United Nations Volunteers (UNV), Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), the Kenya Red Cross Society, St Johns, the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Hope Worldwide, the President's Award and Junior Achievement. In contrast, the VIA Network includes regional representatives of some of these organisations and other Mombasa-based organisations. However, a lack of cross-network collaboration led to the VIO Network Pwani becoming more independent in September 2013, when it renamed itself the VIA Network.

The change in name also better described the aims of the network. Whereas the VIO Network has always focused on cross-organisational networking and information sharing, the VIA Network was more volunteer-focused and specialised in running joint projects and training sessions for volunteers. Figure 6 illustrates the evolution of the VIA Network, showing the major development according to internal management, training sessions, joint activities and the international days the network celebrates.

2. The VIA Network was initially called the VIO Network Pwani when it was connected to the main VIO Network.

Figure 6: A timeline of Mombasa's Volunteers in Action (VIA) Network



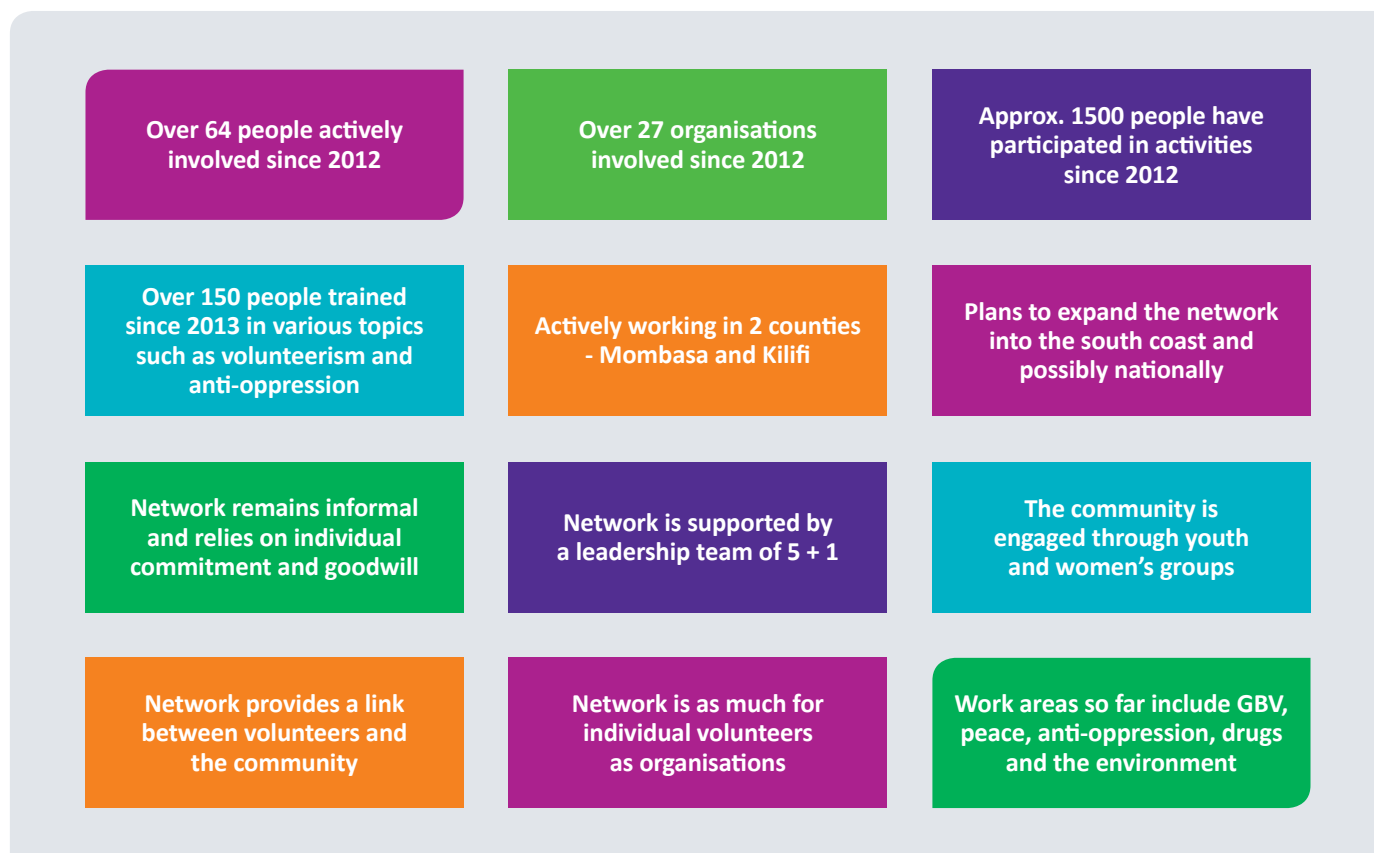
The case of the VIA Network is relevant in terms of volunteer effectiveness because it demonstrates how multiple partners can come together and how, with a degree of flexibility in their systems and the foresight to realise the benefits of collaboration, they can co-produce solutions that have an impact on reducing poverty. Of course, every member of the VIA still has their own organisational activities and targets, but the commitment to the network is based on the understanding that there are areas and issues in which joint working can be mutually beneficial. Figure 7, based on an exercise conducted with members of the VIA Network, shows some of the major achievements of the network in its short history.

The network has had particular success in conducting joint activities on pertinent issues where isolated interventions are less likely to yield results. One example was the network's 16 days of activism on gender-based violence which involved outreach, peer education and training in multiple locations across Mombasa. Joint peace rallies also succeeded in gaining much greater attention than individual organisations would have achieved on their own. In terms of volunteering's impact on marginalisation and inequality, the VIA Network provides valuable lessons for how better joint working can make a difference.

The VIA Network's focus on volunteers is also helping to improve their wellbeing. By promoting networking between volunteers in different organisations, Mombasa's volunteers are increasingly becoming one large community, able to share their experiences and learning across members. In cases where organisations may be exploiting the goodwill of volunteers, members are more aware of what is acceptable and know their rights. As one volunteer stated after attending a joint training session, "the organisation should have [a] policy to support and encourage volunteers". Conversely, volunteer-involving organisations are able to share good practice in volunteer recruitment, management, retention and recognition. Increased collaboration on volunteer training also offers possibilities for budgetary savings and may provide more opportunities for volunteers to gain new skills and network. The VIA Network's training sessions on anti-oppression and volunteerism, which have so far reached out to over 150 volunteers, are excellent examples of this.

Despite the benefits of joint working in terms of volunteer effectiveness and impact, there are also challenges. In the case of the VIA Network, one area where tensions potentially exist is between the organisational systems of partner organisations and the functioning of the network. So far, the network has existed and grown predominantly as a result of the commitment and drive of a small group of volunteers. Organisational support has been minimal and mainly limited to small funds for activities and providing free meeting spaces. The network has operated informally, though plans are underway to have it officially registered.

Figure 7: Key achievements and characteristics of the Volunteers in Action (VIA) Network



Whilst the network's informal status has given it flexibility, there are risks that as it grows, more will be required than individual commitment and goodwill, and it may come into conflict with the systems of member organisations. Already, there are signs of this happening. One organisation that used to offer meeting space to the network for free subsequently decided that it was required to charge for the meeting room. The example illustrates the risk that some organisations either feel they have to follow official rules – in this case charging for any use of a meeting room by an external group – or view joint working as a potential money-making exercise, even when the activity is benefiting the host organisation as well. Joint working can easily be jeopardised by overly restrictive organisational systems and/or managerial mindsets that prioritise organisational gain over mutual benefit. If collaboration is to have the impact it can, organisations need to show flexibility in their organisational systems and place higher value on the importance of joint working – something which may be increased by the better embedding of monitoring, evaluation and learning into joint activities for example.

Another challenge for networks such as the VIA Network lies in expanding its membership beyond the 'same old faces'. So far the network has involved over 27 organisations since 2012, which is admirable, but the membership generally relies on reasonably well-established volunteer-involving NGOs and CBOs. Whilst there are undoubtedly benefits for these organisations, it is often the smaller struggling CBOs and self-help groups that are most in need of support and guidance. They are also likely to exist and operate closer to communities where poverty and marginalisation is greatest. As such, in terms of reducing poverty, CBOs in poor communities have the potential to bring about significant change either on their own or in partnership with larger CBOs, NGOs and development institutions.

The research workshop with VIA Network members highlighted the problem of a lack of trusted organisations in which to place volunteers and the challenge of reaching out to the right people to bring about change. Certainly it would be damaging to the network if members were brought on board that had little interest in seeing it grow to mutually benefit all members. However, increasing the network's impact in helping the most deprived is also likely to involve building greater links with those volunteers and groups operating in the most impoverished communities. It is these groups that are also most likely to have historically been marginalised from such networks and opportunities. In communities such as Shanzu and Kongowea, where development is seen as something that will not happen there, there is real potential for increased joint working to make a tangible difference. One option to be explored, for example, is whether more established partners in the network could play a mentoring role to smaller organisations. Other possibilities include ensuring emerging CBOs are exempt from paying membership fees to networks (the VIA Network does not charge at the moment but may in the future), providing learning and training opportunities for developing CBOs within the network, and investigating options for small organisations to develop into partners of larger CBOs and NGOs.

The case of the VIA Network illustrates how joint working can increase the impact of volunteering efforts and reveals interesting possibilities for how such approaches can potentially reach out to the poorest and most marginalised communities. At the heart of the issue is the interplay between three factors: the collaboration between partners, the effects of organisational systems and the impact on marginalisation and inequality. Findings suggest that when partners come together for mutual benefit and their organisational

systems enable such an approach, then combined efforts can have an increased impact. However, challenges and obstacles do exist. Partners need to be committed to working collaboratively and see the bigger picture in terms of outcomes rather than being driven purely by specific organisational targets. A lack of flexibility in organisational systems also has the potential to undermine joint efforts. However, when the motivations of partners align with flexibility in organisational systems, then real opportunities exist for increasing volunteer effectiveness and the impact of initiatives.

Implications

1. **Collaborative working has the potential to have a greater impact on reducing poverty than organisations working individually.** However, the effectiveness of joint working depends on a number of factors. Firstly, partners need **flexibility within their systems** (such as budgets and capacity) to allow for joint projects to be pursued or collaborative activities need to be designed into their programmes. Secondly, **partners need to value the mutual benefits of collaborative working** over the potential for individual organisational gain. Developing effective monitoring, evaluation and learning processes around joint projects can be useful in demonstrating their worth to partners. Thirdly, collaborative working generally requires a **shared agenda or common goals** around which partners can mobilise. This can be essential for demonstrating the mutual benefits of joint working. When these factors are present, there is real potential for solutions to be co-produced that have significant impacts on reducing poverty.
2. **Increased networking and collaborative working can improve the wellbeing of volunteers and improve volunteer management within organisations.** Networking opportunities for volunteers between organisations allow them to share experiences and learning, develop new ideas for joint working, increase awareness of their rights as volunteers, and may potentially lead to them pressing for improved volunteer management processes in their host organisations. Similarly, greater collaboration between organisations provides opportunities for sharing learning and undertaking cost-effective training on subjects such as volunteer management.
3. **Organisational networking has the potential to develop small CBOs that operate in poor and marginalised communities.** Through networks, larger CBOs and NGOs can provide opportunities for smaller CBOs to increase their capacity and improve their skills. Crucially such emerging organisations may provide valuable entry points into poor communities for larger NGOs that lack a presence in such areas. Options for supporting the growth of indigenous CBOs through networks include: having more established partners play a mentoring role to smaller organisations; giving them exemption from paying membership fees until they are more established; providing learning and training opportunities through the network; and establishing routes for small organisations to develop into partners of larger CBOs and NGOs.

5. Reflections on the research process

The value of the process

A strength of the research process was the key role played by the local research team which not only steered the project but also enabled unparalleled access to some of Mombasa's communities. Without the efforts of the local researchers the inquiry would not have been possible. It is also noteworthy that the role of the international VSO volunteer was critical in providing the links between the Nairobi-based lead researcher and the local research team. The VSO volunteer essentially acted as the initial entry point or gatekeeper, but whereas some gatekeepers can be protective of their roles, the volunteer's self-awareness of the need to ensure sustainability beyond the length of their placement meant they were keen to hand over to the local team as soon as sufficient connections had been made.

For many the research approach challenged them to think differently and view issues in alternative ways (Box 5 provides some of the reflections of members of the local research team). The result was that participants gained greater appreciation of the complex interrelations between issues and how small changes can have larger unexpected consequences. Members of the research team observed how, in other research projects, such critical thinking was rarely encouraged, with local volunteer researchers more often treated purely as a resource for collecting data, usually in the form of surveys. The *Valuing Volunteering* approach, in contrast, made a conscious effort to involve local volunteers in the design, implementation and analysis phases of the research.

BOX 5: Reflections on the research process from members of the team

As part of the training on Participatory Systemic Action Research, local volunteer researchers were asked to reflect on the process. The following is a selection of their comments:

"The techniques work really well for finding and exploring relationships and knock-on effects".

"Things that were thought not to be significant at the start ended up becoming more important".

"The approach created more work but was useful in identifying what to focus on. It acted as a good reflective tool and generated questions".

"The community inquiries were a good way to gather information in a more natural way as the researchers went to the local people to ask their opinions rather than the other way round".

"When doing the mapping exercise and going to talk to the community, it was difficult to know where to start".

"The systems maps were a good and engaging way of showing how the local researchers supported their findings. The technique was also a good way of bringing all the information together into one place".

"Understanding how to construct the maps and how they worked was challenging at the start but it became easier".

Challenges during the research process

Over the course of the research, five main challenges were encountered:

i. Sustaining the momentum of the research

Sustaining momentum was a challenge throughout the research process. This partly resulted from the physical distance between the lead researcher, who was based in Nairobi, and the research site, and the workload of the lead researcher which resulted in visits being less frequent than initially planned. This was partially compensated for by the enthusiasm of the local research team, whose members showed considerable dedication in undertaking research activities independently. However, the overall result was that research occurred during a series of short bursts of activity rather than more continually throughout the process.

ii. The turnover of volunteer researchers

The turnover of volunteer members of the research team did provide a challenge and also made sustaining the momentum of the group more difficult. The main causes of volunteer turnover were gaining paid employment, which left them with little time to volunteer, or migration to other parts of Kenya in search of work. Of the initial 14 members, half did not stay actively involved throughout the project. However, 5 new members did join after the official start of the research which meant that membership remained between 10 and 14 throughout the process, and even with the high turnover, the team retained enough original members to provide continuity.

iii. Security issues

In May 2014, in response to a number of incidents and a perceived terrorist threat, the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and a number of other developed country governments issued travel warnings against all but essential travel to the Mombasa region. The VSO Jitolee country office quickly followed suit, relocating its volunteers based in Mombasa and restricting all travel to the region. The timing of the security advisory had a substantial impact on the research, as a major validation exercise across the three Mombasa communities was due to be conducted. Plans were also in progress to undertake a number of action-orientated elements. Although it was possible to stay in contact with the research team via email, the travel restrictions did disrupt the research process.

iv. Scope and timeframes

The city-wide scope of the research investigation did present a challenge in terms of the timeframe and resources available. Overall, the decision to take a wide perspective did successfully lead to valuable insights being gained into the nature of inter-community dynamics. Additionally the selection of three areas for community inquiries also helped to give focus and structure to the research. However, more could have been achieved with more resources to support multiple research teams, and longer timeframes. The adopted approach, utilising systemic action research, placed great importance on letting issues emerge from their settings and then testing them for resonance accordingly. The challenge this posed was the extra time required in contrast to projects that start with predetermined questions and schedules. As a result, some of the richest findings only started to emerge toward the end of the investigation. It is hoped that the local research team can continue to learn from the process, but in terms of presenting research findings within the set timeframe of this research project, there is a strong sense that there is still much to learn.

v. The action in systemic action research

Whilst the sense-making, reflection and planning phases of the PSAR approach undoubtedly worked well, undertaking the action element was much more challenging. Most of the action elements were restricted to networking opportunities for volunteers from different Mombasa organisations which, although important, were not as much as had been hoped for. Nevertheless, it is still hoped that the local research team will be able to carry out some action-orientated activities in the future.

The lead researcher's positionality with regard to the research site

The lead researcher as an international VSO volunteer and based in Nairobi was acutely aware of their position as an 'outsider' in the Mombasa research setting. For example, in a negative sense, a strong sense of resentment exists amongst some people in Mombasa who feel they are dictated to by people and organisations based in Nairobi that have little understanding of the realities of life on the Kenyan coast.

However, this positionality as an outsider also had a number of positive side effects. Foremost was the realisation that the research could only succeed by involving, empowering and making the best use of local volunteers and expertise. This was incredibly important as it meant the research did not fall into the trap of trying to impose an approach that was incompatible with the local context. It also necessitated that relationships be built with local volunteers which, in turn, increased local ownership. Another positive side effect was the freedom that being an 'outsider' gave the lead researcher in asking pertinent questions and encouraging people to explain things in a way that someone new to the issue and local context would understand. Crucially this was probably most valuable in acting as a tool to enable local volunteer researchers to think more critically.

Some of the challenges associated with being an international VSO volunteer from the UK were less prominent in the Mombasa research than in other research sites across Kenya. The main reason for this was that a UK VSO volunteer was already placed in the host organisation from which a number of the local researchers were recruited. As a result, most of the local research team were already accustomed to working with international volunteers.

As in other research sites in Kenya, a challenge was posed when it came to the lead researcher going into communities to conduct fieldwork. Language barriers often became more pronounced in communities with higher levels of poverty and illiteracy. More problematic were community reactions to seeing a mzungu ('white person') in their neighbourhood. For many local residents living in poverty, mzungus are perceived as having money and the wherewithal to provide handouts. As a result, the challenge in terms of conducting community research was that many respondents would either adjust their views according to what they thought the researchers wanted to hear, or refuse to cooperate without receiving some kind of payment. To avoid this complication the lead researcher often did not accompany the local research teams into the field and would instead stay on standby to provide advice and answer questions over the phone.

6. Conclusions

Volunteerism in Mombasa is a complex issue affected by a multitude of factors including community and inter-community dynamics, perceptions and receptiveness to volunteers, differing levels of trust, volunteer life journeys and community dependency.

However, within the interrelations between issues are also opportunities for volunteers and development organisations working through volunteers to make a difference. The joint activities run by Mombasa's VIA Network are one such example of progressive steps toward working better with volunteers. Central to improving volunteer effectiveness is better understanding how, when, where and why it makes a difference; and, for volunteer-involving organisations, having the institutional maturity to admit when things do not work and learn from volunteering failures. This *Valuing Volunteering* inquiry has identified and analysed a number of areas in which better understanding may improve volunteerism's impact.

A prominent finding related to the way in which change happens. Evidence from the experiences of international volunteers showed that change is often indirect, unexpected and sometimes slow. Of crucial importance are how volunteers navigate internal politics and the challenges of vested interests. Longer-term volunteer placements, the ability to establish relationships, build bridging social capital through networking and self-awareness and 'critical consciousness' were all important aspects in helping volunteers overcome challenges to bring about change.

The ecosystem of volunteerism in Mombasa varies across its constituent communities. Whilst most contextual or situational analyses for volunteering and/or development initiatives are conducted at a city-wide or community level, the research found three important dynamics which are worthy of specific attention. Firstly, community interventions need to be informed by an understanding of issues at the local level. Pulling statistics from secondary evidence about conditions in informal settlements is all very well but is no substitute for listening to the views and experiences of people living in those communities. By working with local volunteer researchers in conducting fieldwork, issues and relationships were revealed that were entirely unexpected beforehand.

Secondly, important dynamics exist between communities, which affect the ecosystem of volunteering in Mombasa and potentially beyond. These inter-community dynamics reveal that in terms of volunteering, some communities are inherently linked to others whilst some are more self-sufficient. Understanding these dynamics is vital for revealing flows of volunteers and explaining why volunteering occurs more in certain locations than others. It also suggests that volunteering is connected to wider employment trends and migration in Kenya. Potential exists to explore how volunteering may be promoted and facilitated with regard to the relationships that many rural-to-urban migrants maintain with their home communities.

Thirdly, analysis of the life journeys of volunteers reveals interesting insights that have the potential to improve how organisations work with volunteers. Understanding how many volunteers do not volunteer continuously throughout their lives (often due to economic pressures and other commitments), how most volunteers start at a young age, the importance of support from networks of family and friends (and the challenge if they are unsupportive), and how small acts of recognition from organisations can make a big difference in motivating a volunteer, are all factors that are rarely given attention when designing volunteer programmes or interventions.

Community perceptions of volunteers and the receptiveness to working with them are key to the potential impact volunteering can have. Perceptions vary from community to community but are sometimes more negative in communities with lower levels of social capital and higher levels of dependency on external financial assistance, where volunteering is often seen as a low-status activity. Respondents also highlighted how residents in such communities often expected to be helped by volunteers and so gave little acknowledgement to their efforts, leaving volunteers feeling unappreciated and exploited. Perceptions are skewed by confusion over the motivations of volunteers. Whilst there are those who genuinely volunteer to make a difference, there are also many who opportunistically 'volunteer' in the hope of receiving a small allowance or stipend. For these people, volunteering is a livelihood or survival mechanism. However, their explicit personal motivations for volunteering mean they are less trusted by communities.

Overly high expectations of volunteers and generally poor perceptions of them negatively impact their ability to build constructive relationships with people in communities. Trust was identified as a critical enabling factor in establishing positive relationships. Interestingly the degree of community trust varied according to different types of volunteers and much also depended on the individual volunteer in question. In terms of implications for volunteer organisations, communities appear to trust volunteers that they know and international volunteers. National volunteers from outside the community face the initial challenge of having to build trust and relationships. How volunteers deal with confidential and sensitive personal information is a divisive issue, with heightened community suspicions of volunteers working in such areas. Unfortunately, a lack of community trust was also observed to undermine the confidence of some volunteers and reduce their effectiveness. To build positive relationships, findings suggest that volunteers should be confident, patient and take time to gain the trust of the community.

Gender was a recurring issue which also linked to other findings such as volunteer journeys, community perceptions and levels of trust. Across the community inquiries, women were found to face greater challenges in volunteering, largely associated with gender differences in family pressures, social expectations and norms and cultural values. However, women were still observed to be finding ways to volunteer, particularly in well-established NGOs.

Communities with high levels of dependency on external assistance were generally seen to have a negative relationship with volunteering. Low social capital and individual agency combined with community 'suspicions' that development would not happen in their neighbourhood acted to disincentivise people from volunteering. Communities such as Shanzu often felt victimised and marginalised from decision-making processes and state service provision, which heightened dependency on handouts. Some cases of volunteer efforts in the form of mutual support were identified, such as *Harambees*, which provided a method for local resource mobilisation.

Better partnership working, through examples such as the VIA Network, were seen as having the potential to increase the impact of volunteering. Crucially a key dynamic existed between the ability of organisations to engage in joint working whilst maintaining flexibility in their organisational systems (and budgets) and an appreciation of what could be achieved through working together. When these aligned there was real potential for volunteering to make a difference in reducing poverty, marginalisation and inequality.

7. Recommendations

- 1. The process of bringing about positive change is often messy, indirect, unexpected and slow.** When working with volunteers – particularly in this case international volunteers – volunteering-for-development organisations need to incorporate an understanding of the following into their programme/project design and implementation:
 - i. The service duration of international volunteers has a direct impact on their ability to bring about change.** Volunteers serving for longer durations, typically in excess of 12 months, are more likely to have the time to navigate internal politics and guide organisations through often lengthy change processes. Having more time also provides additional opportunities for building long-term relationships that may help facilitate change.
 - ii. The time-limited nature of international volunteer placements can mean volunteers are more likely to challenge unfair practices** as they are not bound by the same unequal power relations that may restrict the voices of local/national volunteers and/or staff.
 - iii. International volunteers often undertake a range of activities outside of their official placement descriptions.** Critically, this can be vital in achieving impact as change does not always occur in the most direct way or as envisaged in project documentation.
 - iv. International volunteers can add significant value in terms of building ‘bridging social capital’ through networking.** This can help in raising resources and giving a voice to marginalised people, yet the role of networking is often under-acknowledged by volunteering-for-development organisations.
 - v. Volunteers can suffer from the negative impacts of organisational politics, to the point where their wellbeing is reduced.** As a result, they need to be better supported and trained in navigating sensitive workplace dynamics.
 - vi. Self-awareness and ‘critical consciousness’ are valuable qualities for international volunteers.** Professional skills and qualifications are not enough, on their own, to ensure that change occurs in a participatory and inclusive way. Volunteers need to be self-aware, value the promotion of participation and inclusion and be self-reflective as to their own role in bringing about change. This approach can be sought during volunteer recruitment but also developed through relevant training.
 - vii. International volunteers find it easier to build relationships and earn the respect of colleagues and local people when they are embedded in the local community.** Being ‘close’ to the community encourages the co-production of context-specific solutions as volunteers gain local insight and develop relationships with local partners. However, this can be easier to achieve in smaller communities and/or when the volunteers live near to their place of work.
- 2. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to make a clear distinction between partners that are chosen because they share common development goals or a common outlook toward development and those that are selected because they are necessary to engage with in order to bring about (system-wide) change.**
- 3. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to ensure their context/situational analyses are more robust, incorporating in-depth understanding of macro and micro factors as well as the complexity of interacting factors.** Too often the context or situational analysis conducted by development organisations simplifies context to a fairly simple set of socio-economic characteristics. Furthermore, **volunteering-for-development organisations thus need to take inter-community dynamics into account, particularly in terms of where their interventions are geographically targeted and where their volunteers are recruited from.**
- 4. Volunteering-for-development organisations in Kenya need to understand volunteering through the lens of national perceptions.** The reality in Kenya is that formal volunteering opportunities that come with attached stipends/allowances are often seen as a form of low-paid work. This has blurred the line between volunteering and paid employment. As a result, **volunteering also needs to be analysed in the context of wider employment patterns and associated factors such as rural to urban migration.**

5. Opportunities exist to explore new models of volunteering in Kenya that build upon the strong links that many rural-to-urban migrants maintain with their home communities. The desire of those who have moved to urban centres to help more remote and often poorer 'home' communities has potentially powerful implications for volunteering, particularly as it may act as a form of redistribution of wealth and skills from wealthier cities to more impoverished areas. **For volunteering-for-development organisations, such context-specific models have significant potential for increasing volunteerism's development impact.**

6. In terms of better encouraging and supporting local/national volunteers, a number of emerging points should be seen as critical:

- i. **Most local/national volunteers start volunteering at a young age, either through schools or religious institutions.** Volunteer programmes targeted at this age group can have lasting impacts in establishing and embedding a spirit of volunteerism and enlarging the pool of future volunteers.
- ii. **Local/national volunteers face particular challenges at key transition points in life, such as leaving school. Volunteering-for-development organisations should consider targeting recruitment and support at such times in order to attract new volunteers and sustain existing ones.**
- iii. **Support structures play an important role in sustaining voluntary activity.** The support of friends and the social networks developed through volunteering can be crucial, along with the support of family members. As a result, fostering and highlighting the social aspects of their volunteer networks should be seen as a valuable practice for volunteering-for-development organisations.
- iv. **Volunteers are more motivated when they witness first-hand the positive impact of their efforts. Volunteering organisations can therefore create a 'virtuous circle' if they manage to use volunteers to implement well-designed interventions that make a visible difference to people's lives.**
- v. **Not acknowledging efforts is demotivating for volunteers.** Conversely, even small acts of appreciation, such as awarding a certificate of participation, can have significant positive impacts on the motivation of volunteers, leading them to try harder and continue their voluntary activities for longer. **For volunteering-for-development organisations, providing some form of (even basic) recognition should be seen as both a crucial and cost-effective means of motivating their volunteers.**

7. Negative perceptions of volunteering erode community trust in volunteers, which can severely reduce their effectiveness. In such situations, **volunteering-for-development organisations should investigate appropriate community engagement strategies as a way of more effectively managing community expectations and changing perceptions.** It may also be that the 'volunteer' label has too many negative connotations and ceases to be a useful term. In such cases, alternative terms, perhaps based on local understandings, may offer greater potential for recruiting the right volunteers and emphasising the positive contribution of volunteering.

8. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to be particularly aware of the distinction between volunteers motivated by personal monetary gain and those who volunteer for the benefit of others (although monetary compensation may still be a contributory motivation). Volunteer recruitment and management processes should be developed that support volunteering as

an activity based on altruistic principles. An example could include providing non-monetary incentives such as certificates of participation rather than daily stipends.

9. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to fully understand the dynamics of how different types of volunteer (international, national, local, etc) are perceived and build this understanding into the design and implementation of volunteer interventions. Crucially, this understanding needs to be based on community-specific contexts and dynamics.

10. Building positive trusting relationships is a critical element in enabling volunteers to make a difference. Confidence, patience and relationship-building skills should be prioritised as criteria for volunteer selection, alongside any professional skill requirements. Induction processes and training should also include a focus on these 'softer skills'.

11. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to be better aware of and seek to better understand the additional challenges that women face when it comes to volunteering. Where possible, flexible volunteering opportunities which better enable women to combine volunteering with their other responsibilities should be explored. For example, group childcare could be provided for women whilst they volunteer.

12. Volunteerism risks perpetuating, rather than reducing, marginalisation and inequality when it occurs more in affluent areas than it does in poor ones. This is potentially accentuated when volunteers in poor communities choose to travel to more affluent areas. **Volunteering-for-development organisations need to better understand these local contexts and the local flows of volunteers so as to ensure that volunteerism acts as a tool for reducing inequality and marginalisation.**

13. There are issues around which local communities will mobilise to take collective action. Self-organised efforts tackling security concerns are one such example but can lead to activities that are illegal and/or not condonable. However, the fact that there is local desire to address such issues **presents possibilities for volunteering-for-development organisations to work with communities to devise much-needed volunteer solutions** that can also be more acceptably endorsed by development organisations.

14. Volunteering-for-development organisations need to seriously look at the potential for collaboration and co-production with partners as a means to improve their effectiveness in reducing poverty. Designing collaboration in projects, maintaining some flexibility within budgets for joint working, and prioritising greater mutual benefit for those living in poverty over individual organisational gain should be seen as vital.

15. Organisational networking has the potential to develop small CBOs that operate in poor and marginalised communities. Through networks, larger CBOs and NGOs can provide opportunities for smaller CBOs to increase their capacity and improve their skills. Crucially such emerging organisations may provide valuable entry points into poor communities for larger NGOs that lack a presence in such areas. **Volunteering-for-development organisations should prioritise the development of indigenous volunteering organisations in poor communities and look to use organisational networking as a tool for achieving this.**

8. References

Action Aid (2012) *People's Action in Practice*.

London, UK: Action Aid.

Available at http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/1._peoples_action_in_practice_final_20_07_2012.pdf

[Accessed 17 July 2014].

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*.

London, UK: Verso.

Burns, D. (2012), "Action Research for Development and Social Change"

IDS Bulletin, 43(3), 88–100.

Burns, D. (2014) Systemic Action Research: Changing system dynamics to support sustainable change.

Action Research, 12(1), pp. 3–18.

Chambers, R. (2012) *Provocations for Development*.

Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing.

Flyvbjerg, B. (1998) *Rationality and Power: Democracy in practice*.

Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press.

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy on the Oppressed*.

New York, USA: Continuum

Gaventa, J. (2006) Finding the Spaces for Change: A power analysis.

IDS Bulletin, 37(6), pp. 23–33.

Government of Kenya (2013) *Kenya Population Situation Analysis*.

Nairobi, Kenya: National Council for Population and Development.

Hildebrand, M. and Holst, B. (2010) *A Rapid Urban Diagnostic and Proposed Intervention Strategy for DIG in Mombasa, Kenya*.

Mombasa, Kenya: Development Innovations Group.

Kenya National Coordination Agency for Population and Development (2005) *Mombasa District Strategic Plan 2005–2010 for Implementation of the National Population Policy for Sustainable Development*.

Nairobi, Kenya: National Coordination Agency for Population and Development.

Lefebvre (1991) *The Production of Space*.

Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Lough, B. and Matthew, L. (2014) *International Volunteering and Governance*.

Ottawa, Canada: International Forum for Development.

Moser, C., Norton, A., Stein, A. and Georgieva, S. (2010) *Pro-poor Adaptation to Climate Change in Urban Centers: Case studies of vulnerability and resilience in Kenya and Nicaragua*.

Washington, USA: The World Bank.

Other case studies that are part of the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* series

Lewis, S. (2015), *Community Volunteering in Korogocho*.

Lewis, S. (2015), *International Citizen Service in Kilifi*.

9. Appendices

Appendix A: Research methods

Throughout the research a number of specific research methods were utilised under the overall framework of systemic action research. The following provides a brief synthesis of the methods used:

1. Informal discussions and community inquiries

A central research technique employed by the local researchers was the use of informal discussions and semi-structured interviews in the communities. Conducting conversations in the community was vital in terms of power dynamics as it allowed respondents to express their views in settings in which they felt comfortable. Throughout the research, it was common to hear of examples where organisations had transported respondents out of their communities and into consultation venues (or 'invited spaces'), thereby changing the power dynamics in favour of those conducting the research (Gaventa, 2006).

Before undertaking community fieldwork, the research team received training in interview technique and practised with role-play exercises during which participants would take it in turns to be the interviewer, interviewee and note-taker. A number of small groups also undertook their role-play exercise in front of the wider research team, with members providing constructive criticism and suggestions. The research team discussed and agreed an appropriate procedure for approaching people in the field including introductory explanations and questions and asking for permission to take notes. From this an interview guide was developed, a copy of which is attached as Appendix B. Although an interview guide was used, which implied a semi-structured approach, participants were also encouraged to adopt a natural style and to try to engage community members in conversation rather than view it as a question-and-answer exercise.

During the community inquiries, volunteer researchers generally conducted interviews in pairs or small groups. Typically, small teams of four would split into pairs but stay in relatively close proximity to each other for security purposes. In some cases groups found it easier to split into all male or all female pairs as it better enabled them to approach respondents of the same gender. Local researchers were encouraged to take turns in asking questions and taking notes so that they gained experience in a range of skills. Following the interviews, notes were either typed up or used directly to inform the construction of systems maps.

The community inquiries, as a general approach, were very fluid, with the local researchers encouraged to investigate issues as if they were investigative journalists. As such, no systematic sampling technique was used in selecting who the local researchers should speak with; instead they interacted with people who were willing to give their time and engage in talking about the issues that were important to them. As issues were raised, the local researchers would dig deeper and either ask for recommendations as to who they could speak to next about the subject, or seek out people or organisations that were referenced during the discussion. For example, one group decided they wanted to speak to the police and local authority after they were repeatedly mentioned in conversations with local people. As this process unfolded, it generally evolved so that, even if one issue had initially appeared to be dominant, other issues would emerge which allowed the local researchers to explore the links between them.

2. Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were regarded as a useful tool during sessions with volunteers, the local research team and representatives of volunteer organisations. They were also used by local researchers with members of the community as part of the community inquiries. Although workshops often used other participatory techniques as well, focus group discussions were an important component part.

Focus group discussions with the research team and volunteer organisations were facilitated by the lead researcher and members of the research team. On these occasions, conversations were generally held in English, with small amounts translated from Swahili when participants felt they could better describe something that way. Sessions generally started by agreeing ground rules and discussing expectations and finished with reflections on the issues that had been raised. In the community inquiries, local researchers conducted focus groups in a mix of English and Swahili depending on which language participants felt more comfortable using. Views and comments expressed during discussions were either recorded by the facilitator on flip-chart paper or by local researchers in their notepads.

3. Systems mapping

Information gathered through the community inquiries was used to construct systems maps which graphically illustrate the relationships between issues and stakeholders. The tool works effectively as a way of making sense of complex environments where exploring links between seemingly unrelated issues can reveal important and unexpected dynamics.

The systems mapping technique used standardised colour-coding to allow comparisons across maps conducted by different groups and over time. On the maps, the colour red signifies issues, blue denotes stakeholders, green shows factual information and observations, and black indicates possible solutions and future lines of enquiry. Figure 8 shows a systems map constructed by members of the local research team.

In a number of cases the hand-drawn systems maps were digitalised using a program called Visual Understanding Environment (VUE), a freely available software application developed by Tufts University to provide a visual environment for structuring and presenting information. Figure 9 shows a digitalised version of the initial systems map of the Shanzu community based on the hand-drawn map by local researchers.

Digitalising the maps provided a number of benefits. Firstly, it allowed the local research team to keep the original maps and use them as tools in further fieldwork in the communities. Secondly, their large size combined with being drawn on relatively flimsy flip-chart paper left the maps prone to damage particularly when being transported. Digitalising them as well as taking multiple close-up photographs of the content ensured the information was preserved. Thirdly, constructing a digital version made the information more interactive. Whereas the hand-drawn maps emerged organically and could look 'messy' as a result, the digital versions allowed for information to be moved around and grouped according to themes, thereby making them easier to interpret.

[illegible][illegible]

Whilst constructing the systems maps, participants were encouraged to discuss their findings with each other, take time to view the maps being produced by other groups and ask questions. The process of explaining the links between issues and stakeholders proved useful for participants in critically analysing the emerging findings. Figure 10 shows members of the research group constructing and presenting their systems maps.

In addition to exploring relationships between issues and stakeholders, the approach proved to be useful for sharing the learning and experiences across members of the research team. Whereas each local volunteer had had their own experience and had made their own notes as part of the community inquiries, the systems maps provided a canvas for every researcher's evidence to be documented and shared in one place.

Figure 10: Members of the Mombasa research team construct and present their systems maps



4. Organisational analysis tools

During a workshop with members of the VIA Network, a number of organisational and strategic planning tools were used. Firstly, as an introductory exercise, participants were instructed to think of the successes of the VIA Network and the challenges it faced. Two pieces of flip-chart paper labelled 'successes' and 'challenges' were put up on opposite sides of the meeting venue and participants were encouraged to consult with each other and move between the flip chart noting down their thoughts. The responses were subsequently used as the basis for discussion.

Secondly, participants were asked to produce an **organisational timeline** of the VIA Network. Multiple pieces of flip chart were taped together and a horizontal line depicting time was drawn across them. On the right-hand side was noted the present day – it was left up the group as to how far back in time the timeline went. On Post-it notes participants were instructed to individually write down key events in the network's history and subsequently place them on the timeline. It immediately became obvious that most events could be placed into four main categories: international celebration days, network activities, internal management and training. The facilitator grouped the events accordingly and they were used as the basis for discussion. Figure 11 shows how multiple events were noted which gave a layered effect to the timeline.

Figure 11: A close-up of the VIA Network organisational timeline



By initially writing down the events on Post-it notes individually, the exercise revealed how certain events were remembered by nearly every member whilst others were only remembered by one or two people. The exercise thus served as a tool for reflection on how some people had greater organisational knowledge of its history and the importance of sharing information across the network.

Thirdly, a tool called '**force-field analysis**' was used to identify objectives and the helping and hindering factors in achieving them. Taking the network's vision as a starting point for discussion, participants were asked to formulate key objectives and note them down on a central piece of flip-chart paper. Following this, a sheet of flip chart was placed to the left of the objectives and labelled '**helping factors**' and another put to the right and titled '**hindering factors**'. For each objective the facilitator encouraged participants to identify factors that would help and hinder the network in achieving it. Figure 12 illustrates the approach using the factors mentioned in relation to one particular objective.

The exercise proved to be useful in helping the VIA Network identify its strengths that could be better utilised and the challenges it would need to address in order to achieve its objectives.

5. Newspaper front pages

'**Newspaper front pages**' was used as a team-building exercise and information-sharing tool as part of the training of the local research team and in a variety of other contexts in the wider *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research. In Mombasa, the representatives from various volunteer organisations that formed the local research team were asked to get into groups of four to five, ensuring that there was a mix of members in each group. Participants were provided with marker pens and one sheet of flip-chart paper per group and asked to design a newspaper front page detailing descriptions of each organisation represented in the group. Groups were encouraged to use their creativity, give their newspaper a name and to imagine they were describing their organisations to readers who had never heard of them before. Figure 13 shows some of the front pages that were produced.

Once completed, groups presented their front pages to the wider groups and discussion was facilitated on the range of skills and organisations present within the team.

Figure 12: Example of a force-field analysis

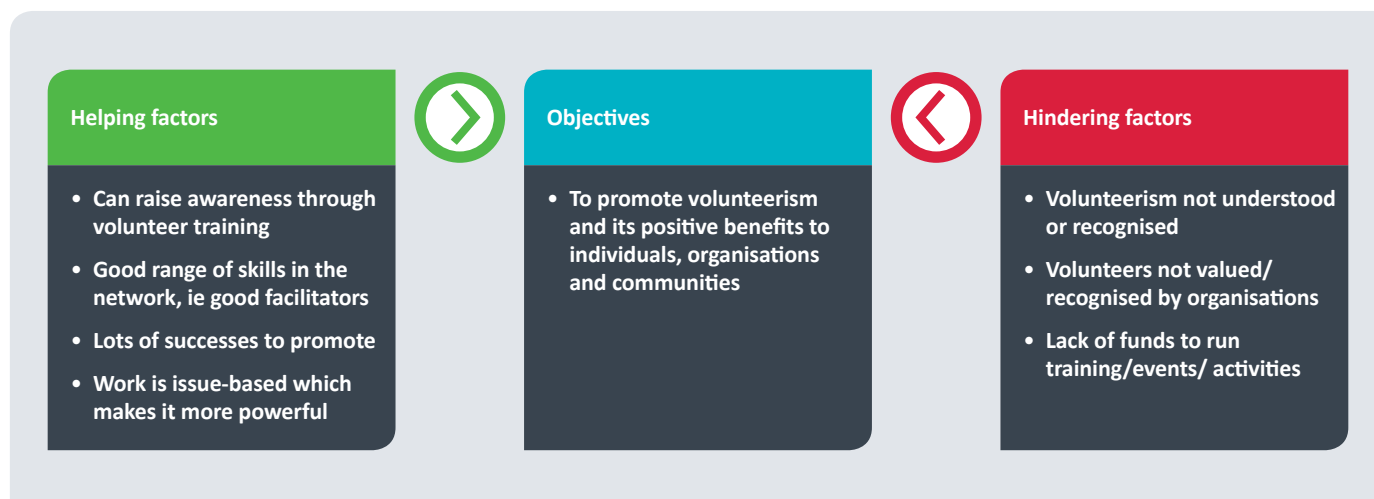
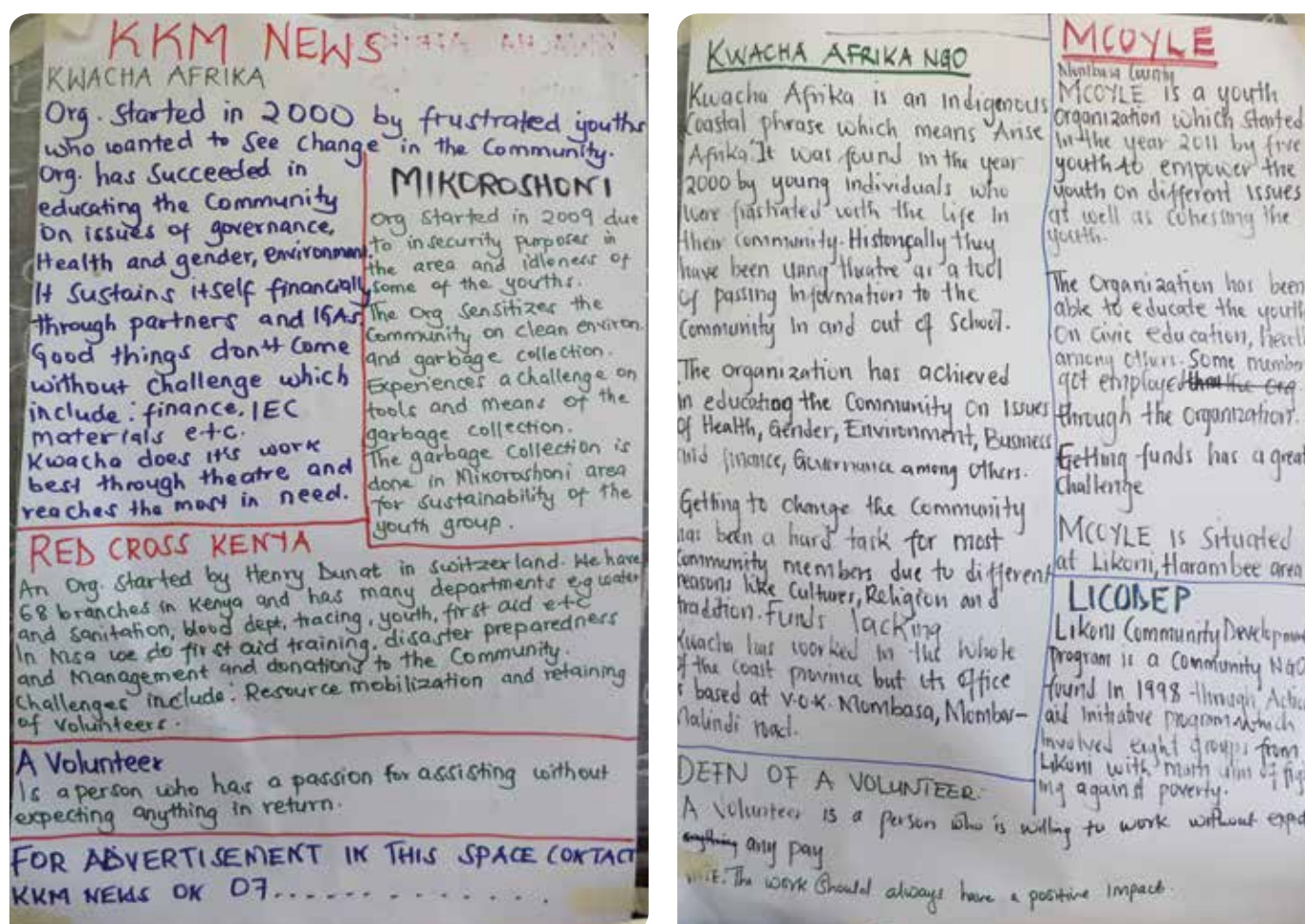


Figure 13: Newspaper front pages describing the organisations represented in the Mombasa research team



6. Network mapping

'Network mapping' was used to establish a profile of volunteer-involving organisations and individual volunteers, and the interactions and relationships between them. On a large canvas of flipchart paper, participants were asked to choose a small space and develop a profile of their organisation (or personal skills in the case of individual volunteers) including details such as key work areas and basic history. Once completed, participants were asked to draw links between the organisations and individuals indicating relationships. This was used as a basis for discussions on the nature of the relationships being depicted and why some organisations had more connections than others. An example of a network map from a Mombasa workshop with volunteers is shown in Figure 14.

The session concluded with a reflective discussion evaluating the importance of networks and exploring possibilities for organisations and individuals to work better together.

Figure 14: Network map showing the interconnections between volunteer-involving organisations in Mombasa (where there are blurred or blanked out sections this has been done deliberately to protect personal information)



7. Rivers of experience

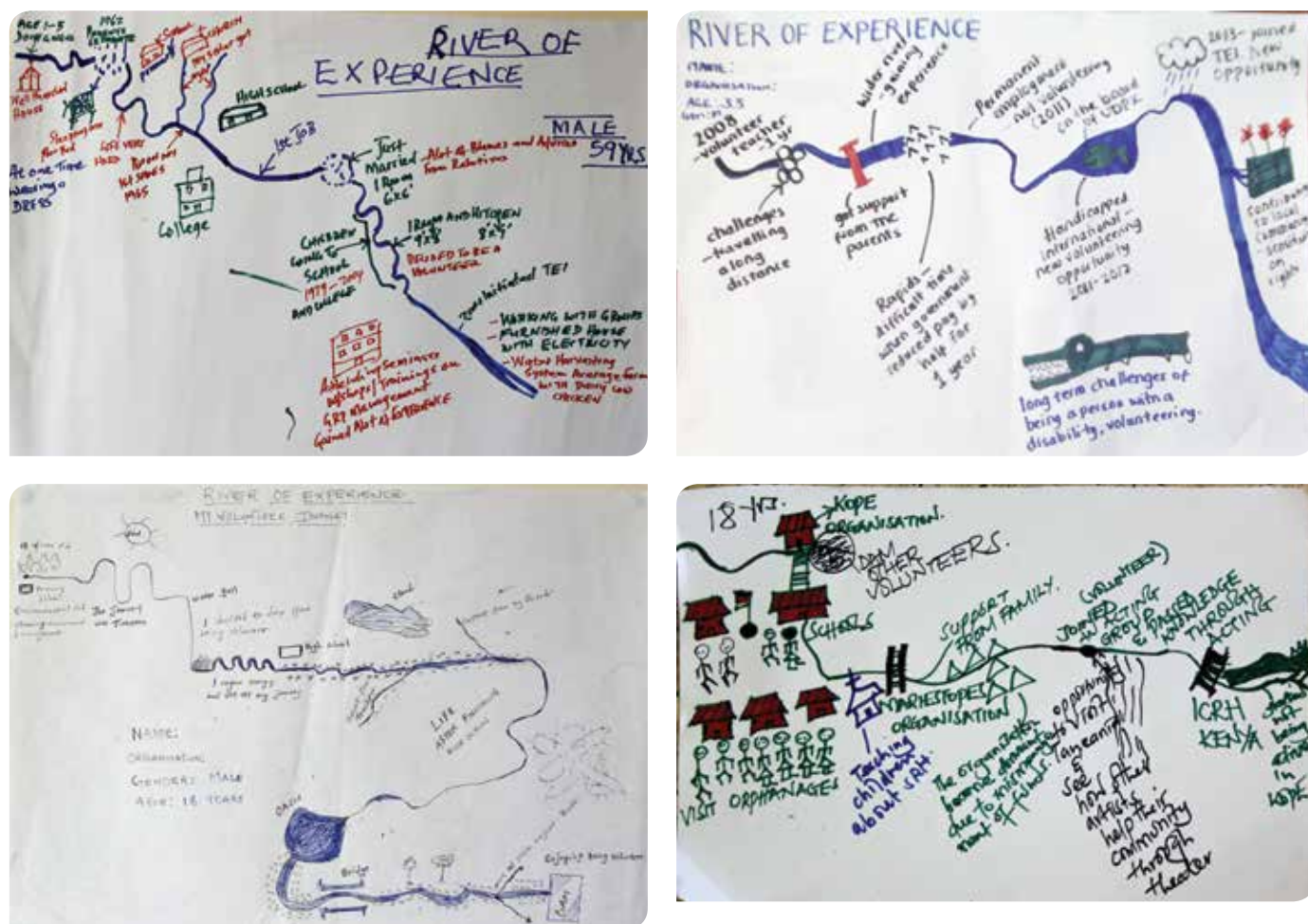
In order to explore the life journeys of volunteers in Mombasa, participants were asked to take part in a 'river of experience' exercise. They were provided with pens and paper and told to imagine that their volunteer journey was the course of a river. They were encouraged to be as creative as they liked and to annotate their drawings with notes explaining the main steps in their journey and the symbolism of key features. A range of possible features in a river system and what they could mean were provided to provide some initial ideas. For example, whether a river flowed straight or meandered could be a sign of having or lacking a sense of direction, or the smoothness of the volunteering experience; rocks or rapids could indicate challenges or troublesome times; bridges could illustrate helping factors or links to people or opportunities; irrigation or extraction of water from the river could show volunteer exploitation or alternatively volunteer efforts leading to outcomes; lakes or seas may depict easier times or being lost at sea; river animals could represent key people; and waterfalls may be dramatic events. Participants were also encouraged to consider wider contextual factors and include them on their river. Examples included volunteers drawing clouds to depict opportunities and hills in the distance showing wider changes and challenges in society. Ultimately it was up to each participant as to what they felt the features in their rivers depicted in real life.

The results were impressive and the technique acted as a great way of gaining rich insights into the experiences of volunteers throughout their lives. A number of the Mombasa examples are discussed in the findings section, and four examples from across the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research are shown in Figure 15.

In order to demonstrate the approach, the lead researcher talked through a guided illustration of a hypothetical volunteer river of experience. One challenge that quickly emerged was that some participants simply exactly copied the demonstration picture. However, this was quickly addressed by emphasising that participants needed to depict their own journeys. Once completed, the images were photographed and those wishing to share their volunteer journey presented their river of experience with the rest of the group. With permission, a number of the presentations by participants were video recorded.

The exercise was conducted as part of a workshop with over 30 Mombasa volunteers who either volunteered with organisations or individually. The same technique was also used as part of the wider *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research and used with volunteers in Malindi, Kilifi, Wundanyi and Nairobi. In total over 100 volunteers constructed rivers of experience for the research.

Figure 15: Four examples of volunteer rivers of experience from across the Valuing Volunteering Kenya research (where there are blurred or blank sections this has been done deliberately to protect the identity of the volunteers)



8. Semi-structured interviews

Throughout the *Valuing Volunteering Kenya* research the lead researcher conducted a number of semi-structured interviews with representatives of volunteer-involving organisations and partners as well as serving volunteers. In each case a basic template was used that included standard questions, and others that were tailored to volunteer-involving organisations, partners and volunteers. Specific questions relating to individual interviewees were also included and the templates generally evolved over the course of the research as issues emerged which warranted further investigation or verification.

Over the course of the research, more than 50 interviews were conducted. They varied in length from around an hour to the longest which was just under six hours. In the majority of cases, question templates acted as a guide for discussion rather than a restrictive formula. The interviews were allowed to flow with the conversation; the lead researcher prompting for additional details and points of view as and when relevant. In a number of interviews, visual techniques were also used, with interviewees typically asked to use drawings to structure their responses. Examples included timelines, organograms and spider diagrams.

Most interviews were recorded using a digital Dictaphone, whilst the lead researcher also took detailed written notes. Approval for recording was sought from all interviewees and the Dictaphone was always placed in a visible, though non-intrusive, location. Relevant sections and extracts of interviews were later transcribed and the digital files stored securely with personal details anonymised.

Appendix B: Valuing Volunteering Mombasa interview guide

Valuing volunteering interview guide

REMEMBER: Write as much down as you can in people's own words. Use "quotes" to tell their story and ask if it is ok to take notes.

- 1. Introduce yourself (and others with you)** – give your name, the organisation you work/volunteer with. Ask for their name.
- 2. Introduce the research** – you can use your own words but here is an example of what you could say:

"We are doing a community-owned research project called Valuing Volunteering that is looking at better understanding the roles and impacts of volunteers. It is being supported by Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), an international volunteer organisation, and the UK's Institute for Development Studies".

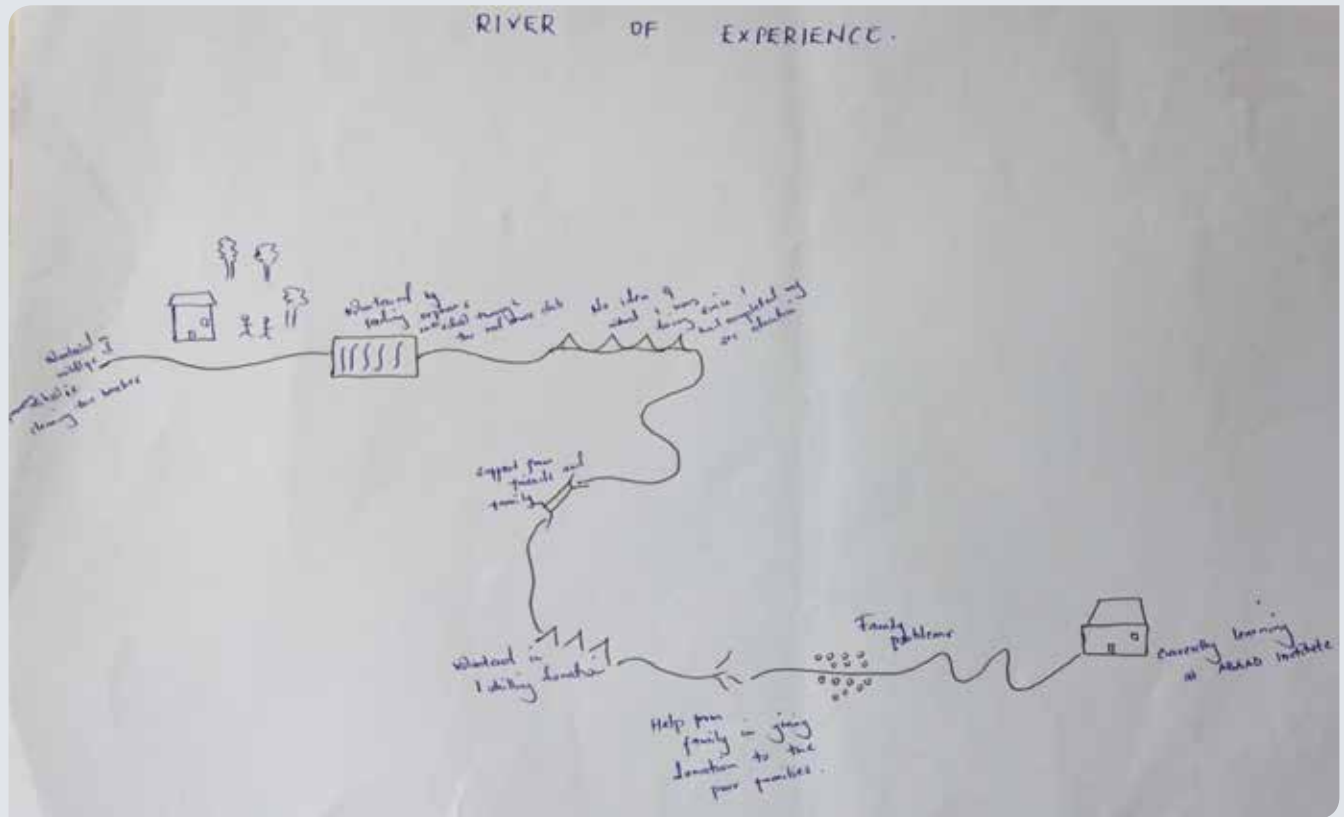
[If people ask for money or appreciation, you can say that the research will benefit the community and because it is looking at volunteering there is not money to hand out].
- 3. Ask them if they could give you a few minutes to discuss their views on volunteering.**
Explain that their views will only be used for the research and their identity can be kept anonymous if they choose.
- 4. If they agree, ask if it is ok to take some notes** – you can say that it will help to remember important points.
- 5. At the end ask for their permission to use any quotes, their contact details and if they can recommend anyone else who may be good to speak to.**

General questions to ask

1. Have you ever volunteered? If yes, doing what and why? If no, why?
2. What do you think about volunteering? Do you view it positively or negatively?
3. Have you come into contact with volunteers? If so, what kind?
What did you think of them?
4. Is there much volunteering in [insert community name]?
Yes or no, please explain why you think this is.
5. What are the challenges or issues that [insert community name] faces?
What challenges do you face in your daily life?
6. Do you think volunteering could help tackle any of these challenges?
7. Do people volunteer through Church? If yes, what do they do?
8. Do you take part in any *Harambee* activities? Do others? If yes, what activities?
9. Tell me a story about a community effort in [insert community name]?
What happened? Did things improve or get worse?

Appendix C: Additional examples of volunteer 'rivers of experience'

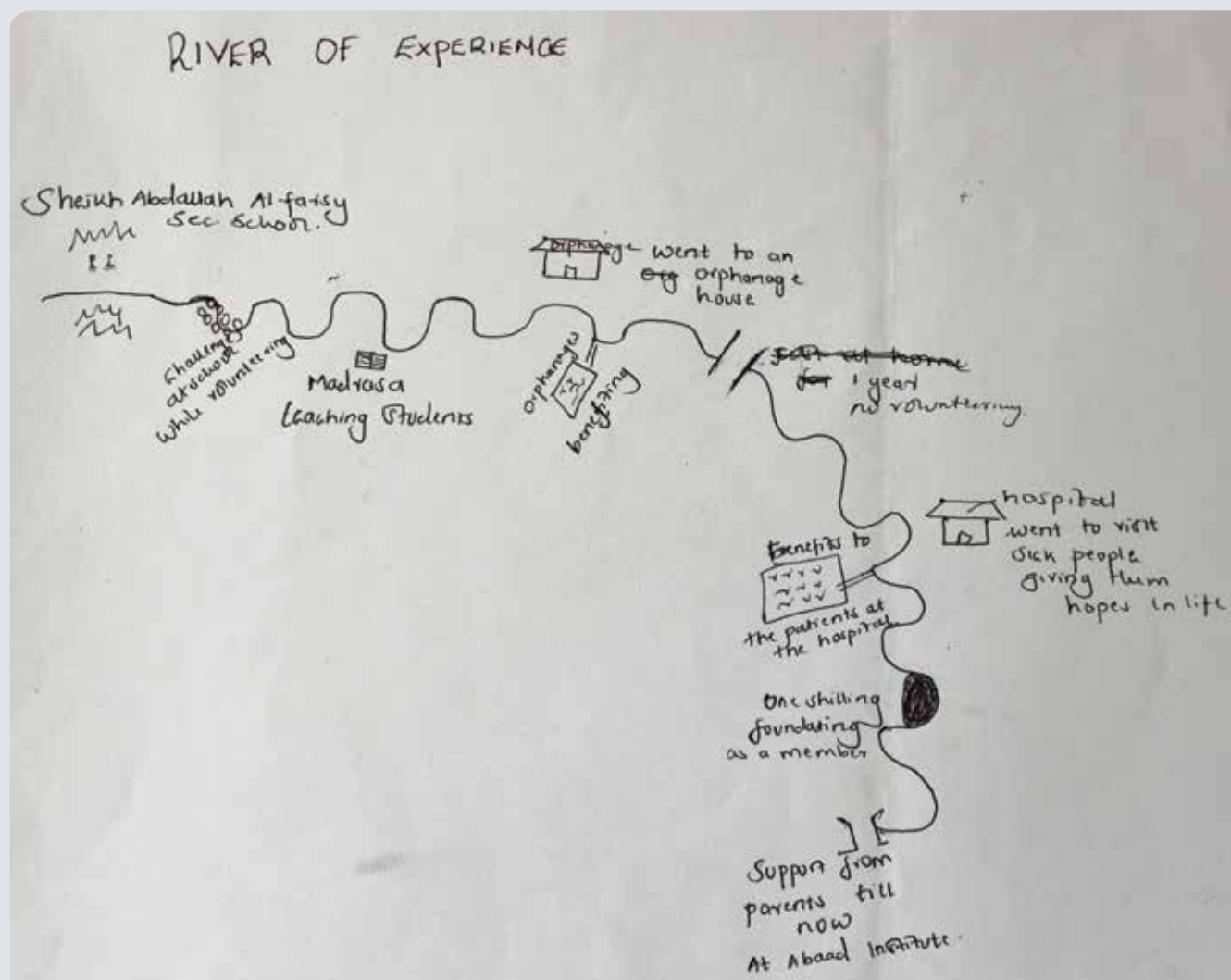
BOX 6: Precious's river of experience



Precious began volunteering through wildlife projects and environmental clean-ups whilst at school. She helped feed children at the local orphanage through the Red Cross club. After school, she was left not knowing what to do, depicted in her river by jagged rapids. Luckily she had lots of support from friends and family and decided to volunteer with a local charity, the One

Shilling Foundation. Her family even helped by giving donations to poor families. Unfortunately, family problems later created problems in her volunteer journey, shown here by rocks and bends in her river. Precious is not currently volunteering whilst she studies at the local college.

BOX 7: Beatrice's river of experience



Beatrice started her volunteer journey at school but experienced challenges to volunteering whilst there. After a break of a year, represented as a barrier in her river, she volunteered to help people at the local hospital. This led Beatrice to become a

member of a local charity, the One Shilling Foundation. However, she is currently not volunteering as she has gone back to studying, with support from her parents.

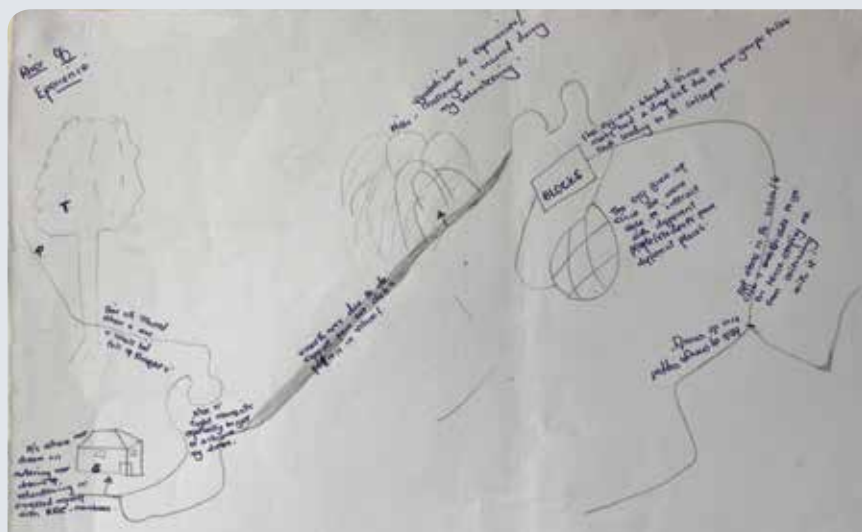
BOX 8: Ann's river of experience



Ann started volunteering through her church when she was 15 years old. Over the course of her volunteer journey she has undertaken a variety of activities. She's participated in environmental, clean-ups, visited a refuge to donate food as part of a school project, volunteered at an orphanage during school holidays, been a community volunteer and after high school joined the Red Cross. Ann has faced challenges in that her parents do not understand why volunteering might be a good thing. Being given a certificate of active participation was a real morale boost

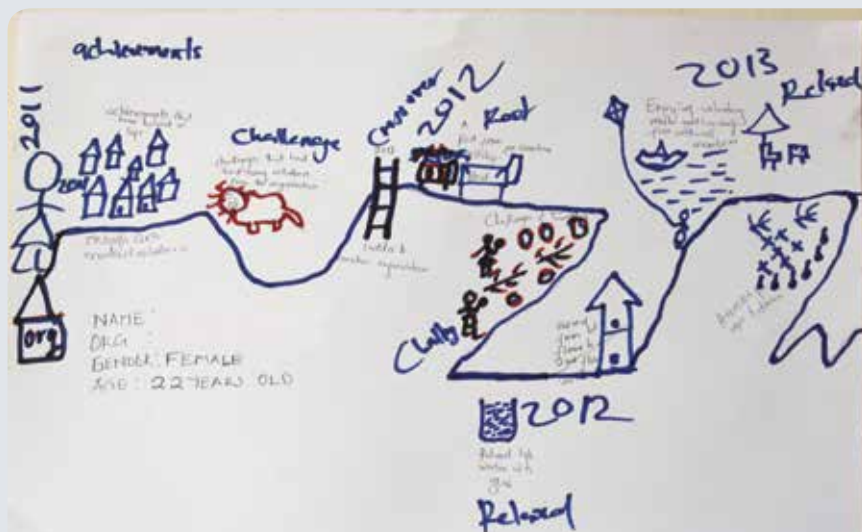
for Ann and led to her being full of enthusiasm for volunteering, represented in her river as a waterfall. She's looking forward to where her volunteering journey will take her.

BOX 9: George's river of experience



George first dreamed of volunteering when he was a child and enrolled as a member of the Red Cross club at school. Support from the club's patron at school helped smooth George's volunteer journey but he later experienced a number of challenges. His volunteering club collapsed because a lot of members dropped out, leaving him unable to continue on his own. Additionally a lack of support from local society, represented by a fork in his river, undermined his volunteer efforts. It is unclear whether George is still volunteering.

BOX 10: Doreen's river of experience



George first dreamed of volunteering when he was a child and enrolled as a member of the Red Cross club at school. Support from the club's patron at school helped smooth George's volunteer journey but he later experienced a number of challenges. His volunteering club collapsed because a lot of members dropped out, leaving him unable to continue on his own. Additionally a lack of support from local society, represented by a fork in his river, undermined his volunteer efforts. It is unclear whether George is still volunteering.

Valuing Volunteering was a two year (2012 – 2014) global action research project, conducted by VSO and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) to understand how, where and when volunteering affects poverty and contributes to sustainable development. This case study is part of a series of inquiries conducted in the Philippines, Kenya, Mozambique and Nepal which explore the role of volunteering across different development contexts and systems. Using Participatory Systemic Action Research it asks local partners, communities and volunteers to reflect on how and where volunteering can contribute to positive, sustainable change.

For more information about the global *Valuing Volunteering* study please contact: enquiry@vso.org.uk

Dr Simon Lewis is a social researcher and strategist with over a decade's experience in various policy-related fields from international development to national, regional and local government. He has particular passions for social innovation, complexity, and participatory approaches that put people at the heart of decision-making processes. Simon was the lead researcher and project manager in Kenya for the *Valuing Volunteering* action-research project. After completing the research, Simon was a core part of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) team commissioned to review the work of Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) in the fields of participation and governance. He currently works for VSO developing the evidence base for volunteerism's role in reducing poverty and devising approaches for more effectively utilising volunteers in development interventions. Prior to this research Simon worked in policy and strategy in UK local and regional government, provided policy advice to a UK Member of Parliament and held a teaching post at Durham University. He holds a PhD in applied social sciences from Durham University and has an undergraduate degree in geography.



VSO Jitolee

Timau Plaza 5th Floor
Argwings Kodhek Road
Nairobi
Kenya

+254 20 387 1700
+254 20 501 6000

www.vsojitolee.org

VSO International

www.vsointernational.org

Institute of Development Studies

www.ids.ac.uk

ISBN 978-1-903697-86-3



9 781903 697863 >