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Youth Participation in Service and Volunteering: Exploring economic benefit in the Southern Africa Context – A youth perspective

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Abstract

The African continent, especially the Southern Africa region, has experienced dynamic GDP growth in the past decade. Concurrently, the continent has become the world's most densely youth populated region. While demographic dividend theory would suggest that this new generation of potential labour and leadership should see the continent poised to become a world leader, youth marginalisation continues to act as a substantial challenge toward sustainable socio-economic development. Building upon additional work related to youth volunteering and service as a tool for youth social and political participation, this study makes an additional contribution to conversation by focusing on the economic incentives and rewards related to youth volunteering. Importantly, the study explores the benefits to both individual volunteers and society, where volunteer-enabling policy is present, as well as highlighting collective action theory that promotes volunteering in society. Using qualitative research methods, the study finds that youth volunteering enhances the opportunities for youth to increase their cultural and social capital. Further, the research also finds that individuals' likeliness to volunteer is correlated to the amount of volunteering from others in the community. Importantly, the research finds that youth volunteering can be a vital tool for increasing social cohesion in the SADC region. Focusing on regional ("south-south") volunteering, this research is unique in that it focuses on volunteers who also exist as citizens in the recipient communities, and thus acting as a vehicle toward promoting "African solutions for African problems".

1 Introduction

The research on youth social and political participation with regard to service and volunteering lends itself to a discussion of the broad economic development benefits that can be considered in a thoughtful discussion of youth volunteering. This work explores the economic development benefits associated with youth service and volunteering in the SADC region, and considers the economic incentives associated with the phenomena of volunteering.

Why Southern Africa?

Too often the northern hemisphere has written off the SADC region as a region that exists as an outlier to a world that has experienced tremendous economic growth – a continent that, in the in the post-colonial era, has found itself plagued with a number of challenges that have hindered the region's social and economic development. And while there continue to exist certain development goals for the region (as well as other developing regions such as Central America, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe), the persistent notion of Southern Africa as “the bottom billion”, for instance, stands in contrast to the fact that that SADC region stands as one of the world's fastest growing economies. International institutions such as the World Bank have taken note of the improvement in African economies in the 21st Century. In fact, as recently as June 2011, the World Bank's press release for the semi-annual report *Global Economic Prospects* stated:

*Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa registered 4.8 per cent in 2010, up from the 2 per cent advance of 2009 and just shy of the region's 5 per cent pre-crisis average growth. The strong performance reflected both the global economic recovery and developments on the domestic front. **Excluding South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the fastest growing developing regions**, supported by the global recovery, a growing domestic middle-income class with discretionary income to spend, and rapidly rising business confidence. GDP in the region is expected to remain strong over the medium term, expanding by 5 per cent in 2011 and about 5.7 per cent in both 2012 and 2013.*¹

And, despite despairing criticisms that are often wielded toward SADC governments, the African Development Bank (ADB) has applauded the region's governments for their economic and financial regulatory policies:

*Due to prudent macroeconomic policies and debt relief initiatives undertaken during the 2000's, macroeconomic positions of African countries had markedly improved before the crisis. Moreover, the financial sectors were strengthened by regulatory reforms. **The continent was thus much better prepared to absorb shocks in this recession than prior ones.***²

SADC region policy makers have keenly turned their focus inward, recognising the needs of their own citizens, while at the same time paying attention to the global marketplace. Southern African nations have demonstrated their commitment to development and global inclusion, through implementation of governance strategies that promote a robust civil society.

¹ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGEP/Resources/335315-1307471336123/7983902-1307479336019/AFR-Annex.pdf>

² African Development Bank (2010) Policy Briefs on the Financial Crisis: Containing the Impact of the Global Crisis and Paving the Way to Strong Recovery in Africa. February

Why youth?

In the Southern Africa context we find that the issue of youth is of special and critical importance: according to the United Nations, the median age in Sub-Saharan Africa, in 2010, was 18.6 years old, compared to a World median age, in 2010, of 29.2 years.³ As home to the world’s youngest population, the SADC region leaders cannot afford to overlook this crucial, and growing, segment of the population – not only for the wellbeing of the youth, but also as a sizeable portion of the population that ought to be utilised by the state.

COUNTRIES WITH THE YOUNGEST AND OLDEST POPULATIONS, 2011

YOUNGEST	% AGES <15	OLDEST	% AGES 65+
Niger	48.9	Japan	23.2
Uganda	48.3	Germany	20.7
Mali	47.6	Italy	20.2
Angola	47.3	Greece	18.9
Zambia	46.5	Sweden	18.5
Burundi	46.3	Portugal	17.9
Congo, Dem. Rep.	46.0	Bulgaria	17.7
Mozambique	45.3	Austria	17.6
Chad	45.3	Finland	17.5
Burkina Faso	45.2	Latvia	17.4

Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2011 Population Data Sheet (http://www.prb.org/pdf11/2011population-data-sheet_eng.pdf)

Data indicate, however, that the youth population of Southern Africa has become overlooked:

Africa has had significant growth over the last decade. In fact, GDP growth averaged more than 5 per cent over the last decade. The continent is now being praised for a speedy recovery in the wake of the global financial and economic crisis. Unfortunately, high GDP growth has not led to employment growth. As reported by the International Labor Office (ILO), about 7.2 per cent of Africa’s youths are unemployed and an additional 46.9 per cent are underemployed or inactive.⁴

Although it is nearly impossible to fully understand how the region has reached this state of youth marginalisation, David Westendorff (2003) asserts, in his essay for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development “Uneasy Partnerships between City Hall and Citizens”, that the poor “have been characterised as part of the problem – a burden on the city and its residents, rather than a symptom of

³ Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>

⁴ Brookings Institution (2011) *The Crisis in Tunisia: Africa’s Youth Unemployment Time-Bomb*.

the inegalitarian social and economic systems”.⁵ With this insight in mind, there is clear understanding that youth are often dismayingly lumped into a similar context – considered a “burden” on societies and governments who have deemed them uneducated, ungovernable and unemployable.

Why service and volunteering?

Volunteering presents a unique and phenomena: to perform “unpaid non-compulsory work; activities performed either through an organisation or directly for others outside their own household”⁶. While economic crises, recession, and inflation have forced individuals around the world to evaluate spending and saving habits, volunteer and service work has persisted.

“With insufficient levels of government and private sector resources available and many challenges in accessing vulnerable communities, many are turning to volunteers as a key resource.”⁷

– Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General (2011)

While a great deal of work has already been dedicated to exploring how volunteering benefits development, this research uniquely aims to understand the link between economic incentives for volunteering, and the economic benefits to both society and the individual volunteers, notably: education and training (including job skills and cultural capital), as well as social entrepreneurship and community improvement. And, as the region grows to become a stronger global player, it cannot be ignored that there continue to exist outstanding challenges that threaten Southern Africa’s growth. It is in the purview of this paper, however, that solutions for challenges such as the HIV / AIDS epidemic, lack of regional social cohesion, and youth marginalisation can be found within youth volunteering and service participation.

A paramount goal of this paper is to provide a thought-provoking contribution to the literature on economic development for the SADC region, through an understanding of volunteer and service. The ADB has stated that the continent, in order to sufficiently grow, needs to, *inter alia*, i) build social safety nets, and ii) contribute to the development of a sizeable middle class⁸. In conjunction with the continental rally for “African solutions to African problems”, this work aims to suggest that youth volunteering and service work are practical and useful tools for sustainable economic development in the 21st Century, for a modern, independent Africa.

⁵ Westendorff D (2003) Uneasy Partnerships between City Hall and Citizens.

[http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/projects.nsf/\(httpAuxPages\)/F2FFB5D72F6386BC12575BC004219E4?OpenDocument&category=About+the+Project](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/projects.nsf/(httpAuxPages)/F2FFB5D72F6386BC12575BC004219E4?OpenDocument&category=About+the+Project)

⁶ Definition of volunteering, as suggested by the International Labour Organisation’s *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* (2011)

⁷ Ban Ki Moon (Source: United Nations Volunteers. *Volunteering for the Millennium Development Goals*)

<http://www.undp.org.lb/unv/documents/Volunteering%20for%20MDGs.pdf>

⁸ African Development Bank (2010) Policy Briefs on the Financial Crisis: Containing the Impact of the Global Crisis and Paving the Way to Strong Recovery in Africa. February

2 Incentives for volunteering

Introduction: Volunteering is by, and for, the masses

When attempting to unearth incentives that lie behind the phenomena of volunteering, there tends to be considerable prejudgment of those individuals who volunteer.

One such prolific bias, that higher levels of volunteer and service work are positively correlated to higher economic-status, dates back to some of the earliest research on individual volunteers. The study, conducted by Wendell Bell and Maryanne T. Force in San Francisco, dates back to 1956⁹. Notably, volunteering and service work were considered novelties in the United States at that time – volunteering did not become “mainstream” in the United States until the 1960s, with programs initiated under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations¹⁰. Similar to the Southern Africa region today, a burgeoning middle class, combined with a dynamic and large youth population, fueled U.S. growth in the 1960s.

In the U.S. as early as 1969, there was already evidence to contradict the claim that volunteering was an activity only for those of wealth. In that year data from the U.S. Department of Labor was analyzed to conclude that:

One remarkable aspect of change is that many customary recipients of the volunteers' services are now serving their own and their community's interest.¹¹

More recently, Arthur Gillette's research, published in cooperation with VOSESA (2003),¹² explored this notion to an even greater degree: examining volunteer work from neither those who are privileged members of society, nor middle-class members of society, but rather those who are extremely underprivileged – the “excluded” members of society. While Gillette's work undoubtedly highlights the strong social bonds that develop from service work, it further serves as what we might consider a final nail in the coffin of the theory that volunteer service is a luxury of the leisure class.

Another prejudgment made on those who volunteer is the idea that they possess a heightened level of altruism – unique, and uncommon to the general population. While volunteers might be happy to support this image, the theory does not hold weight in an economic sense (indeed, even when religion is a primary motivator, economically speaking it might be better classified as cultural capital). It is important to consider that volunteers will be prompted to serve by a variety of motivators. While a sense of altruism may be a paramount impetus, it is unlikely that one would continually devote his/her time and energy based on altruistic motivators alone.

This research suggests that the motivations for volunteering are as concrete as those for paid labor. Ulrike Schaede (1996) presents an interesting inference on civil servants – an analysis that may be applied toward volunteers, as well:

⁹ Bell W and Force MT (1956) Social Structure and Participation in Different Types of Formal Associations. *Social Forces*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (May, 1956), pp. 345-350. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2573668>

¹⁰ Chambré SM (1989) Kindling Points of Light: Volunteering as Public Policy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

¹¹ Chambré. 251.

¹² Gillette A (2003) Taking People out of Boxes and Categories – Voluntary Service and Social Cohesion. *Service Enquiry*.

*Civil servants, like all human beings, will preserve their self-interests. **To assume that they will be more self-sacrificing than the general population is unrealistic.** In circumstances where people must concentrate on day-to-day survival, civil servants are not preoccupied with public service.¹³*

Ubuntu

While this paper encourages the idea that altruism does not likely stand as the sole incentive for volunteer and service work, with respect to the African context, it is relevant to introduce the related theme of *ubuntu*, as “the spiritual foundation of African societies... a unifying vision or world view enshrined in the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, i.e. ‘a person is a person through other persons’”.¹⁴ The *ubuntu* ideal naturally lends itself to a culture of volunteer and service work. The United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV) introduces the term, with relation to volunteering:

In African countries volunteering is a traditional manifestation of community solidarity (described inter alia as ubuntu in isiZulu, letsema in Setswana and kujitolea in Kiswahili) that makes it possible, even in the 21st Century, to mobilise citizens to work together in the public interest.¹⁵

As this research aims to highlight and introduce the motivations in volunteer and service work that are specific to SADC youth, it is important to consider *ubuntu* with respect to additional volunteer incentives that are considered in this paper: cultural capital; self-empowerment; provision of a collective good, and even as an incentive to mitigate free-riding.

Education and job training, social and cultural capital

Beyond intrinsic, altruistic motivation, a major incentive that drives young people to volunteer and service work is the opportunity to receive practical “real-world” education, work experience and job skills. Indeed, the opportunity to learn concrete job skills is widely advertised as an incentive to attract individuals – especially younger individuals (inherently with less work experience) to join the volunteer work force.

Young people cannot be reduced to “human capital”... employment is not simply the “magic bullet” for economic and social development.¹⁶

In addition to practical job skills there also exist a broad host of benefits that volunteering brings to the individual performers of service. Although the literature on volunteering has separated the categories of cultural capital, social capital and job skills, this research sees them as having a particular correlation with one another.

Defining cultural capital as intellectual assets, it can be inferred that the “soft skills” obtained through employment may fall under that category. And when we identify social capital as the networks between

¹³ Schaede U. Reviewed work(s): *The Japanese Civil Service and Economic Development-Catalysts of Change* by Hyung-Ki Kim; Michio Muramatsu; T. J. Pempel; Kozo Yamamura. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. 55, No. 4 (Nov., 1996), pp. 1003-1004.

¹⁴ Luow DJ (1997) *Ubuntu: An African Assessment of the Religious Other*

¹⁵ United Nations Volunteers (2011) *Youth Volunteering, Social Integration and Decent Work: Inspiring Leadership*

¹⁶ PravaH and Oxfam India (2011) *The ocean in the drop: A perspective on youth ownership of common spaces*

people, we may classify employment as a type of network that exists to unite individuals. In this sense we can see that social capital, cultural capital and employment support one another.

The World Bank has identified social capital as “the norms and networks that enable collective action” and further, that “increasing evidence shows that social cohesion — social capital — is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development”¹⁷.

Social capital has also been shown to “reduce inefficiencies associated with gridlock arising from political polarisation or change-resistant elites. Where trust and norms of reciprocity are stronger, opposing sides are more likely to agree on the ground rules for debate and resolution of disagreement”¹⁸. In this way, when volunteering is viewed as a tool for increasing social capital we can see a link toward societies with more trust between both citizens and government.

Aside from the stated connection between cultural and social capital, there is significant literature and popular media indicating that there is a strong connection between cultural capital and marketable employment skills. For example, the African Union’s highlights the importance of soft skills:

*African youth lack the soft skills of pro-active “agency”, critical thinking, design and research and development expertise, team working, management, leadership and entrepreneurship. These aspects have been said to affect young peoples’ initiative, ability to be innovative and have promoted passivity and a pessimistic culture that devalues work, discourages risk taking and harbours mistrust, which affects the attitude to work in general... The education systems and curricula need to be broadened to address aspects of career guidance, cultural competencies, soft skills, work ethics and integrity and a sense of service in young people as well as the hard skills required in ICT, engineering and other manufacturing.*¹⁹

It is in the aim of this research to demonstrate that when government promotes youth volunteering, it presents a practical, tangible and productive route for youth to gain the “soft skills” that lead to cultural and social capital, and increased employability.

Being asked to volunteer/empowerment

There is significant research illustrating that asking an individual to volunteer constitutes one of the strongest motivators for unpaid service. Bussell and Forbes (2002), for example, cite a Gallup poll report from the U.S. stating, “People are more than four times as likely to volunteer when asked than when they are not”.²⁰ Importantly, we find that being asked to volunteer exists as a pervasive motivator that is in line with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations; in a collective action sense, it is a simple form of coercion.²¹ As Bryant, et al, assert, “the solicitation of either money or time puts social pressure on the individuals asked and increases the likelihood that they will agree to donate or to volunteer”.²²

¹⁷ <http://go.worldbank.org/COQTRW4QF0>

¹⁸ Knack S (2002) Social Capital and the Quality of Government: Evidence from the States. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 4

¹⁹ African Union (2011) Background Paper on Youth Employment. <http://www.au.int/en/content/8th-ordinary-session-labour-and-social-affairs-commission-african-union-11-%E2%80%9315-april-2011-y>

²⁰ Bussell H and Forbes D (2002) Understanding the volunteer market: The what, where, who and why of volunteering. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*

²¹ Olson M (1965) The Logic of Collective Action, Public Goods and the Theory of Groups

²² Bryant WK et al. (2003) Participation in Philanthropic Activities: Donating Money and Time. *Journal of Consumer Policy*

UNV (2011)²³ included the following brief:

Yuliya Makluik's experience with Challenge Europe has enabled her to identify herself as a leader in the area of climate change. After being asked to coordinate the "clean transport" activities of the organisation she went on to initiate an Information Centre on Climate Change at her university in Kiev, which she now coordinates.

Worldwide, and historically, volunteer-involving organisations have relied upon inviting individuals to volunteer – this is nothing new. But, recent research has indicated that those who are asked are often targeted, as individuals who have signaled that they are connected to, and involved in their communities. In this way we find that asking individuals to volunteer increases the connectedness that one feels with his or her community, and – similar to the case of Yuliya Makluik – we see increased future participation.

Importantly, asking an individual to volunteer reiterates that individuals have choice and autonomy – factors that further encourage an individual's feeling of empowerment. At a time when youth marginalisation is a substantial barrier in SADC development, actions that foster empowerment are beneficial to bridging the gap between youth and the rest of society.

This paper promotes youth volunteer and service work that is *not* conscripted; in fact a recent study²⁴ (2006) found that "for OECD countries, military conscription indeed has a statistically significant negative impact on economic performance... the losses in individual lifetime earnings, which a number of micro-econometric studies observe for former conscripts, indeed translate into substantial reductions in income and growth on the macroeconomic level, rendering military conscription a socially unnecessarily costly way of military recruitment." This research aims to highlight the benefits of youth service as voluntary, and non-conscripted – both because of the positive gains that choice brings to empowering youth, and because of the negative aspects that may be associated with conscripted programs.

Collective good and social entrepreneurship/community improvement and regional integration

When government and even private industry fail to provide a necessary good in the community, there exists a palpable demand for a public good – and, in relationship with an enabling environment toward social capital, there exists as well an impetus toward social entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by:

- *Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value);*
- *Recognising and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission;*
- *Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning;*
- *Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand; and*
- *Exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.*²⁵

²³ United Nations Volunteers (2011) Youth Volunteering, Social Integration and Decent Work: Inspiring Leadership

²⁴ Keller K et al. (2006) Military Draft and Growth in OECD Countries

²⁵ Dees JG (1998) The Meaning of "Social Entrepreneurship"

A relationship between volunteering and the creation of a public good is essential for considering the economic motivations and payoffs of volunteering; it represents a critical link between volunteering and extrinsic motivation. When volunteers, within their own communities, are able to take advantage of the newly created public good, they are able to consume some of their own output. And, it may be inferred, their own cultural capital is increased as they are seen to add value to the community.

As the SADC region grows at a vibrant pace, the region becomes an increasingly powerful global player. Sustained growth in the region – as well as solid strength in the world market – must come with increased regional integration. SADC leaders have publicly, and widely, acknowledged the need for increased regional integration; the African Development Bank (2010) has stated that regional integration is crucial for “increasing countries’ resilience against exogenous shocks”²⁶. No country or region, however, exists in total peace: unfortunately, in the SADC region, xenophobic violence in the last decade has reminded us that there still exist schisms within the region that stand in the way of regional unity. Through increased volunteer and service work, particularly on the part of the region’s youth, an increase in social entrepreneurship can be considered a mechanism that may foster SADC regional integration.

Collective action and free riding

As citizens are prone to volunteer in order a societal need to provide a public good, it has been stated that organisations must, “provide some attraction distinct from the public good itself that will lead individuals to help bear the burdens of maintaining the organisation”²⁷. It is this coercion to join (and by-product of membership) that promotes individuals to volunteer their time.

There exists, however, a further query as to under what conditions one will continue to provide volunteer labor, and not merely act as a member of a group (supporting the mission, but not actually contributing labor, for instance – acting, in effect as a “free-rider”).

*In his simplest statement of the logic of collective action, Olson presents the equation of costs (C), gross benefits (V_i) to the individual (i) and net benefits (B_i) to the individual accruing from i’s own contribution to a group’s collective good: $B_i = V_i - C$. In the absence of a selective incentive, individuals will contribute to the collective good if $B_i > 0$. In Olson’s formulation, **collective action will take place if the net benefit for each individual is positive**²⁸.*

Viewing group volunteer behavior as parallel to the common game of “prisoner’s dilemma”, there is theory to support a claim that “if everybody defects, all players will lose”²⁹. There is, therefore, a prolific group pressure put on one another to remain committed to the group. In the case of supplying a public good where the individuals themselves benefit from the good, in order to mitigate the incentive to free-ride, each actor individually finds it optimal to match other actors’ contributions, leading to a *Pareto optimal outcome* – that is, the profit of one actor cannot be increased without reducing the profit of another.³⁰ Succinctly:

²⁶ African Development Bank (2010) Policy Briefs on the Financial Crisis: Containing the Impact of the Global Crisis and Paving the Way to Strong Recovery in Africa. February

²⁷ Olson M (1965) The Logic of Collective Action, Public Goods and the Theory of Groups

²⁸ Enjolras B, “A Governance Structure Approach to Voluntary Problems”

²⁹ Diekmann A (1985) Volunteer’s Dilemma. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 29, No. 4 (Dec., 1985), pp. 605-610

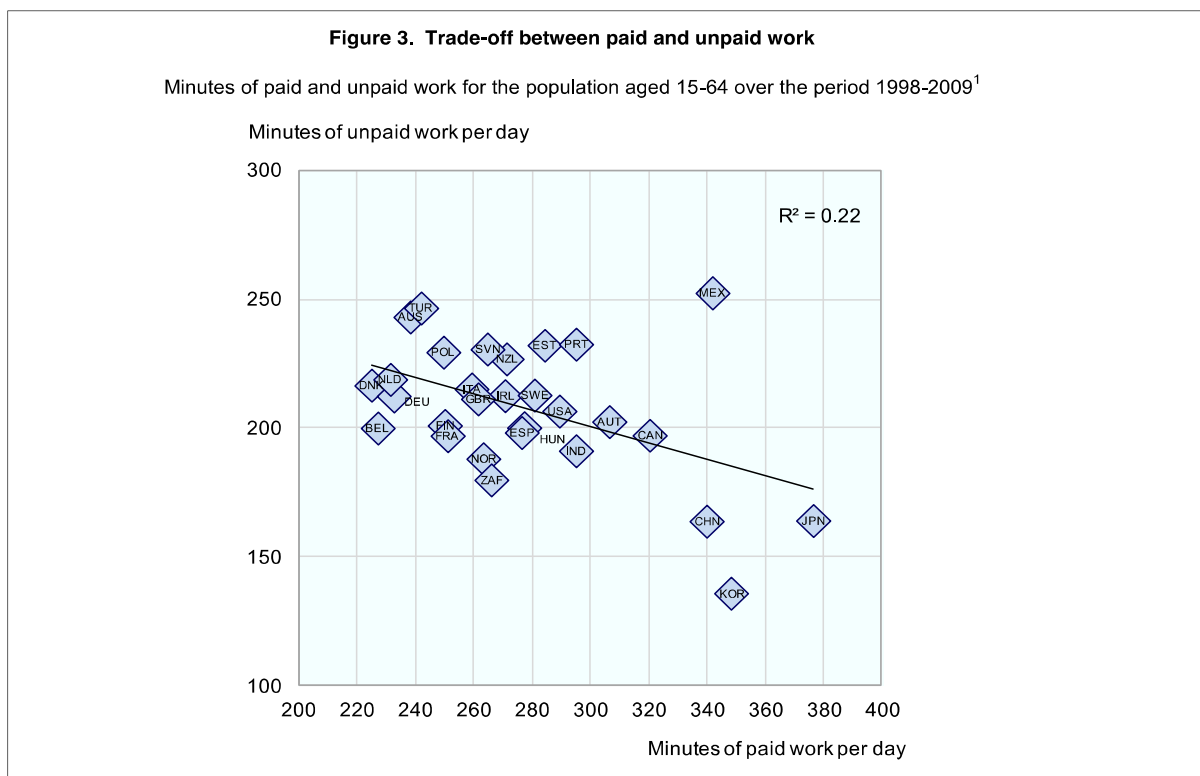
³⁰ Guttman J (1978) Understanding Collective Action: Matching Behavior. *The American Economic Review*. Vol. 68, No. 2

Voluntary contributions are considered as a quasi-price paid in exchange for a collective good. Each individual decides his contribution according to the utility provided by the increase of the collective good supply that his contribution produces.³¹

Opportunity cost/A true demographic dividend?

In order to fully grasp the economic motivations and benefits of youth volunteer and service work, it is relevant to consider the opportunity costs to both volunteers, and the communities in which they serve.

In volunteer and service work there is an inherent opportunity cost that exists for each individual who donates his or her time – despite the fact that this paper has thus far argued for the various economic benefits of volunteering. The OECD (2011) Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs study of 29 countries (26 OECD member countries plus three OECD enhanced engagement countries) spells out this opportunity cost – reporting that there is a negative correlation between paid work and unpaid work.³²



Source: Miranda (2011)

When individuals are carelessly assigned work, and considered to be “free labor” there will be no profound social cohesion benefit to society – indeed, “community members are not merely purveyors of

³¹ Casas-Pardo et al. (2001) Volunteer Nonprofits’ Provision of Collective Goods as a Public Choice Decision

³² Miranda V (2011) Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work Around the World. *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 116*

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free or below-market price labor or materials in return for services or complementary resources from the state”.³³

However, we can also see positive correlations between volunteering and socio-economic development. M. Sharon Jeannoté’s (2003)³⁴ found that “cultural capital may determine the quality of social capital”. Her research in Canada found this through looking at activities that would fall under the categories of either social and cultural capital and compared participation rates between those who volunteer and those who do not. In the context of a cost-benefit discussion on volunteering, research like this suggests that the socio-economic benefits of volunteering are present and factual.

TABLE III Selected cultural participation and volunteer rates—Canada, 1998

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Volunteer rates (%)</i>	
	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Non-participants</i>
Attended children’s performance	61	42
Attended choral music performance	57	43
Attended dance performance	55	43
Attended classical music performance	52	44
Attended theatre performance	51	38
Attended opera	51	45
Visited commercial art gallery	51	46
Visited science museum	51	44
Attended cultural heritage performance	48	32
Attended popular stage performance	48	32
Attended cultural or artistic festival	47	30
Visited historic site	47	27
Used library	46	29
Accessed the Internet	45	29
Visited nature park	42	26
Read book for pleasure	36	22
Went to movie theatre	38	26
Read magazine	37	24
Read newspaper	36	22

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey (1998).

Source: Jeannoté (2003)

Often, youth in the developing world are considered to be little more than a group of people who can be minimally educated, and then put to work in menial positions. As this research has already stated, employment alone is not the key to economic development. Additionally, youth are not the key challenge toward achieving a prosperous society – rather, the region’s youth are a tool for economic and social development, for the present and certainly for the future. International economists are often too quick to highlight the demographic dividend with respect to development economics – that is, a rise in

³³ Westendorff D (2003) Uneasy Partnerships between City Hall and Citizens

³⁴ Jeannoté MS (2003) Singing Alone? The Contribution of Cultural Capital to Social Cohesion and Sustainable Communities. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*

the rate of economic growth due to a rising share of working age people in the population. The SADC region, however, has not yet reaped the rewards of the Demographic Dividend. Although it is impossible to speculate the future – especially via a counterfactual (i.e. increased youth volunteering and service) – this research aims to suggest that methods such as volunteering and service, in conjunction with academic education, would set up the region's youth with the necessary tools to tackle the future, and position the younger generation as the champions for a successful future of the SADC region.

3 Conclusion

As part of a broader discussion on social and political participation of SADC youth involvement in volunteer and service work, this work has been positioned to discuss the economic participation, through an illustration of the socio-economic incentives behind volunteering. And, in addition to the incentives, the work has also examined the economic benefits that are present to both the individual volunteers as well as the recipient communities. Uniquely, this is a discussion of inter-regional volunteering, a model in which - unlike historic models of volunteering that have been prevalent in the SADC region (such as international volunteer labor from the north) - the volunteers themselves exist as recipients who benefit from the labor.

In keeping with the *ubuntu* spirit that permeates throughout the SADC region, volunteering is not a new idea; it is not a paradigm shift. The residents of the Southern Africa region understand well what it means to work together for the sake of the community. In light of sustainable economic development in the region, however, it is worth considering the concrete economic theory that exists within a volunteer industry, so that the youth of the region may be empowered to manifest their own future, and carry the continent forward.

Questions for further discussion

- 1 What do you understand by the term "economic participation" (with regard to youth volunteering)? Does this invoke the idea of financial compensation (to either the volunteer or the recipient), or of economics (in a more philosophical manner)? And, similarly what is meant by 'economic benefit' and 'economic incentive'.
- 2 How do volunteer labor and paid labor complement one another? Can paid youth labour act as a substitute for adult labour? Can youth volunteer labour act as a substitute for adult volunteer labour? Can volunteer labour act as a substitute to paid labour?
- 3 What limitations in the SADC region inhibit youth volunteer participation? Are there economic incentives that could help to mitigate these limitations?
- 4 We propose that the economics of volunteering is a story that is dependent on collective action theory – that others will volunteer at a level that is consistent with how much others volunteer. Does this seem viable? Or are there exogenous factors that will determine how much a person will volunteer?

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- 5 While increased regional integration stands as a lauded social goal, there is also an argument that increased economic integration (i.e. trade) could deter development in the SADC region. Thoughts on this? Is social integration strong enough to produce its own economic incentives?
- 6 This work focuses on youth, as they represent both the future as well as an underrepresented group. How is it useful to consider other marginalised groups?
- 7 Is the idea of a 'demographic dividend' merely an economist's fairy tale? Or is it a phenomenon that is bound to occur in Africa? Or is the African continent an outlier to the theory?