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Strengthening the Policy Environment for Volunteering for Peace and Development in Southern Africa

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

The difference UNV makes is by demonstrating peace and development results and impact through volunteerism. UNV's comparative advantage is the ability and knowledge to bring about transformational change through volunteerism, community voluntary action and civic engagement through active partnerships with civil society, volunteer involving organisations, UN agencies and Governments. This is inspiration in action.

In 2011, UNV's additional priorities have been the marking of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers and the State of the World's Volunteerism Report to be launched on 5 December.

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Abstract

As countries in Southern Africa examine peace and development challenges in pursuit of sustainable social, economic, and environmental national goals, the MDGs and beyond 2015, volunteerism is being increasingly recognised as an important and under-recognised asset. For governments to fulfill their responsibilities in enhancing local governance, access to services, and capacity development, volunteers in communities and through civil society can be important partners in achieving development and enhancing well-being.

This paper proposes that for volunteerism to reach its full potential in contributing to peace and development, there must be a supportive and an enabling environment for volunteering. The components of such an enabling environment are a strong government and civil society partnership to ensure shared appreciation of volunteerism; supportive public leadership, policies and legislation; adoption of a diversity of approaches to facilitate inclusive volunteerism; and sustainable funding.

This paper discusses the process of ensuring an enabling policy environment for volunteering and service in the context of Sub Sahara Africa. Based on the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) Research and the Guidance Notes, lessons for identifying, drafting, adopting and implementing appropriate policies and laws are drawn from SADC and other national initiatives. The second part focuses specifically on new trends in youth volunteer and civic service corps, and the policy and programming lessons learned from national and regional examples.

At the end, suggested questions are to challenge participants to add their contributions to the discussion.

[Volunteers] lead more meaningful lives and are more socially and politically aware than others. They are less isolated, better informed, and more connected than many others. Civic engagement promotes democratic values and political participation. Individuals who are aware of and involved in social issues have a greater sense of human sympathy and responsibility and are more minded toward diverse interests and collective action. Moreover, the societies they serve are the richer for it.
- Amitai Etzioni¹

1 Introduction

As countries in Southern Africa examine peace and development challenges in pursuit of sustainable social, economic, and environmental national goals, the MDGs and beyond 2015, volunteerism, especially by youth, women, and marginalised persons, is being increasingly recognised as an important and under-recognised asset. For governments to fulfill their responsibilities in enhancing local governance, access to services, and capacity development, volunteers in communities and through civil society can be important partners in achieving development effectiveness and enhancing well-being.

This paper proposes that for volunteerism to reach its full potential in contributing to peace and development, there must be a supportive and an enabling environment for volunteering. The components of such an enabling environment are a strong government and civil society partnership to ensure a common understanding and shared appreciation of volunteerism; supportive public leadership, policies and legislation; adoption of a diversity of approaches to mobilise and facilitate inclusive volunteerism; and sustainable funding and capacities.²

Throughout Africa, traditions of volunteerism are rooted in social, cultural, and community daily practices and understood through a diversity of terms and concepts including *ubuntu*, *letesema*, *konday*, *santane*, *twize*, *mephato*, *kwitango*, *tirelo*, *vabatsiri* and *hunhu*.

Studies on volunteering and service in Sub-Saharan African commonly have found perceptions that volunteering can provide tangible and intangible benefits to individuals, families, neighbours, the community and the wider society, including the most disadvantaged; and that voluntary service involves giving of oneself freely with limited or no expectation of financial gain. There is a strong association of volunteering with a philosophy of reciprocity between the volunteer and the beneficiaries, the achievement of self-reliance, the empowerment of individuals and communities, and the fostering of civic responsibility. Also, that volunteering and civic service should be related directly to national development goals; and, finally, as already noted, volunteering has a social meaning shaped by the wider historic, socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of the societies.³

These expressions and values of volunteerism through mutual aid and self-help, service provision and civic participation are embraced within the United Nations definition of volunteerism as acts of one's own free will, not obligated by law, contract or academic requirements; not done primarily for financial gain; and for common good or community well-being.⁴

In Sub-Saharan Africa such expressions of volunteering are everyday occurrences. There is also the related, overlapping concept of civic service, which emerged in the post-colonial years in the form of national youth service corps. Civic service can be defined as formal, voluntary or mandatory

engagement through structured programmes, operated by private, civil society or public organisations, designed both to develop those providing service and improve social and economic conditions.⁵

At the Global Volunteer Conference (GVC) held to mark the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteers in Budapest, Hungary from 15 to 17 September 2011, civil society, government, private sector, academics and UN entities from more than 80 countries affirmed the valuable contribution of volunteerism to the well-being of people, their communities and our planet, national development priorities, the Millennium Development Goals, and sustainable peace and development. The GVC Conference Declaration includes a call for an enabling environment for volunteerism and support for infrastructure and recognition of the values of civic participation.

An enabling policy environment for volunteerism for sustainable peace and development

Since 1988, more than 2.5 billion children have been immunised against polio thanks to the unprecedented cooperation of more than 200 countries, generous international investments, and the community mobilisation of more than 20 million volunteers. All three factors have been critical to achieve success.⁶ To ensure individuals, communities and nations receive the full benefits that volunteerism can contribute, an enabling environment including supportive laws, policies, and resources are important. Engagement by all sectors of society—government, civil society, media, business and academia—are essential.

Global volunteerism policies and legislation research findings

A global research study by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) identified more than 70 laws or policies on volunteerism adopted since the International Year of Volunteers in 2001, a UN mandated year which aimed to highlight the value of volunteering for development and peace and to stimulate efforts, particularly at the national level, to establish laws, policies and mechanisms to support volunteering.⁷ Governments in sub-Saharan Africa were found to have embraced volunteerism laws and policies faster and earlier than many other members of the developing South. This was done especially to engage volunteerism as part of broader programmes that address specific issues identified as national priorities – most often, poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, rural development, health, and education. Since 2001, laws and policies on volunteerism have been passed in **Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa,** and **Togo** among others; draft policies and laws have been introduced and are currently being debated in **Mauritius, Namibia, Senegal,** and **Tanzania**.

Not all the new volunteerism laws and policies identified by the research were separate “volunteer” laws or integrated into thematic development policies. ICNL found that a common obstacle to volunteerism is a country’s existing laws and regulations. It identified that sometimes laws and policies can have a negative effect, such as labour, immigration, and tax laws which fail to properly distinguish between employees and volunteers. Existing laws need to be thoroughly reviewed and corrected as necessary. For example, **South Africa** amended the Immigration Act in 2004 to provide a procedure on granting visas for international volunteers.

The ICNL research also points out that ensuring a supportive policy environment does not necessarily require new laws and regulations. It may be better not to pass a law or regulation on volunteering than

risk impeding existing beneficial forms of volunteering, especially traditional, community, and non-formal or direct expressions.

Volunteerism policies also can follow and reinforce volunteerism laws, usually to encourage government actors to make use of existing laws and increase use of volunteers. For example, the **South Africa** Department of Health's 2001 *National Guidelines on Home-Based Care and Community Based-Care* proposed measures to bring government agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs) together to select, train, and provide support for volunteers in the healthcare system.⁸

ICNL also notes that the enabling environments for volunteerism and for civil society are intimately related. Civil society organisations are key institutions through which much volunteering takes place and often play key roles in supporting and capacitating broader volunteerism initiatives. Volunteerism initiatives will be more successful and easier to administer when civil society organisations are free of inappropriate restrictions on their activities or over burdensome requirements, such as excessive reporting mandates.

Guidance note and SADC country case examples

UNV and ICNL also drafted a guidance note outlining an approach in which policymakers, civil society, and other stakeholders:⁹

1. Determine appropriate measures to ensure an enabling environment. If policies are necessary, what are the specific goals of a volunteerism law or policy and the potential challenges to achieving these goals;
2. Embrace a participatory and open process for analysis, drafting, and implementation;
3. Draft laws or policies targeted to achieve the goals determined; and
4. Ensure that new laws or policies are effectively and sustainably implemented.

In the following, **Namibia, South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia, Mauritius, and Mozambique** provide examples of differing approaches and steps taken since 2001 to appropriately strengthen their enabling environments for volunteerism.

Participatory policy development process

Namibia engaged in multi-stakeholder dialogues, a feasibility study, and commissioned a legal opinion to review existing laws in its process to develop a National Policy on Volunteerism. Volunteerism as a development issue in Namibia has been the consideration of the Office of the President through the National Planning Commission (NPC) and other Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs). These organisations have organised themselves into the Volunteering for Development Coordinating Committee (V4D-CC) under the Chairpersonship of the National Planning Commission (NPC). On 17th to 18th March 2009, the V4D-CC convened Dialogue meetings to consider volunteerism in Namibia. One of the recommendations of the forum was to conduct a Feasibility Study on Volunteerism in Namibia and formulate a National Policy on Volunteerism.

The Feasibility Study consulted governments, VIOs, CSOs and traditional authorities. The study examined the meaning and expressions of volunteerism in Namibia; analysed existing laws and policies on volunteering; identified volunteering gaps; documented experiences from existing volunteering

initiatives; identified opportunities and recommendations on strengthening volunteerism at all levels of the country.¹⁰

In addition, a legal opinion analyzing the implications of some labour, immigration, national youth service, public service, social security, income tax, and employees compensation laws on volunteering was commissioned by the National Volunteerism Coordinating Committee, Office of the President, National Planning Commission. To support the Policy, the opinion called for a legislation providing for volunteerism and volunteer related activities in the country:

Such legislation shall, as a direct consequence, amend the existing legislation, whose provisions contradict the spirit of volunteerism in Namibia, as outlined above. It should also create an independent organ to coordinate voluntary activities, especially the regulation and monitoring of voluntary organisations operating in the country as well as vetting international volunteers wishing to offer their services in the country, among other things. Enacting an independent legislation providing for volunteerism and voluntary related activities in Namibia will have an advantage of having a single law covering the field of volunteerism, rather than having the law scattered in various legislation. It will also give opportunity to legislate for details which are specific to volunteerism and may not be accommodated in other legislation dealing with other matters.¹¹

The National Policy on Volunteerism was subsequently drafted, which is currently being discussed by the government and at cabinet level for adaptation.

Integrating volunteerism into sector or thematic policies and laws

In **South Africa**, the government has not defined the term “volunteer” in any legislation or policy. Instead several laws and policies addressing specific national priorities reference rights or obligations of volunteers and promote volunteering as a means to achieve its purposes. For example, *South Africa’s Disaster Management Act (2002)* and the *2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee Volunteer Policy for South Africa*.

In 2010, VSO **Malawi** studied national and community volunteers in the education sector in Karonga, Mchinji, Blantyre and Thyolo districts to help develop a national volunteering strategy for the education sector.¹² Respondents included various volunteer groups, including School Management Committees (SMCs), PTAs, volunteer teachers, mother groups; as well as government officials, head teachers, civil society, UNICEF, and Care Malawi. The only specific policy proposed was to lobby the Ministry of Education to develop a policy to encourage communities to engage only qualified persons as volunteer teachers. The remaining recommendations, addressed both to the Ministry of Education and CSOs, focused on sensitisation of communities about volunteering and improving volunteer management, including recruitment campaigns targeting gender equity, and continuous training programmes for the different volunteering groups.

Country appropriate processes

Not only should the existence of policies and laws be considered, but also the political and economic contexts in support of implementation of existing and possible new laws. In 2008, UNV conducted a review of the regulatory and institutional framework on volunteering in **Zimbabwe**.¹³ A variety of laws and policies were reviewed including customary law regarding practices such as Zunde reMambo (a

traditional food security practice); thematic acts addressing HIV and AIDS, traditional leaders, gender and youth which integrate volunteering; the operating environment for NGOs; and the legal and administrative situation for volunteerism. Ongoing national economic and political challenges were found to not support full operationalisation of existing policies and strategies, and a national volunteer law was not identified as a priority of the new government.

Each process of drafting and approving a volunteerism policy or law is country specific. In 2007, the government of **Tanzania** released the *Draft National Volunteer Policy*, which is a comprehensive package of measures to be taken to ensure the recognition of volunteers and promote volunteerism in Tanzania.¹⁴ The collaborative process began in 2001 with a Government commissioned study which recommended a national policy. Another study by UNV Tanzania in 2005 repeated the recommendation. During the next two years the Government worked closely with UNV, civil society and the donor community on the policy. Implementation will involve coordination by the relevant government ministry with the involvement of various national ministries, regional and local authorities, CSOs and other stakeholders. The draft provides several protections for volunteers and prescribes a role for CSOs to collaborate with and facilitate capacity development for local agencies and government entities. Most significantly, Government, in collaboration with stakeholders, shall put in place a legal framework to provide guidance for volunteerism activities throughout the country. Currently, the draft policy remains on the government agenda, still awaiting debate.

Development of volunteer centres as an enabling strategy

Zambia and **Mauritius** are among those choosing one of the most common approaches globally to enable volunteering. They are creating national volunteer centres or councils to promote and facilitate volunteerism and provide information, training, education, CSO capacity development, and volunteer matching services.

In 2007, the **Mauritius**¹⁵ Minister of Social Security (MoSS) requested technical support to develop a national volunteer coordinating body to enable senior citizens to further contribute to society, as well as opportunities for disabled persons and non-formal learning opportunities for youth. A feasibility study in late 2008 was a participatory process with representatives from ministries, private sector and civil society organisations. The main findings affirmed the relevance of volunteerism for the development of Mauritius for reinforcing both social cohesion and adding capacity for fighting poverty; that recognising and rewarding (e.g. stipends) will ensure participation and retention of volunteers; and that there is a lack of capacity among CSOs in management of volunteers.

The strategy, now underway and supported by UNV, to develop the National Volunteer Centre includes implementing institutional and policy changes. For example, modifying School Leaving Certificate to include volunteer experience as a valuable experience; modifying at least one academic curriculum to include additional credits through approved volunteer experience; including formal serving volunteers in the National Pension Act; having them covered with a customised insurance in case of injuries to the volunteer or to third parties; including in human resources regulations for public servants the possibility to obtain a fixed amount of free time for volunteering in formal projects; and legitimising in State budget (through the individual Ministries engaging volunteers for the implementations of programmes or of activities) and in grant requests from CSOs to existing funds (NGO Trust Fund, etc.) the possibility of providing volunteers with allowances according to some common parameters.

Addressing capacity development of the CSOs to improve volunteer management will also be an important element. This will help address the challenge of lack of capacity to mobilise, and retain formal and part time “bénévoles” types of volunteers. This will be achieved through targeted trainings for CSOs conducted through cooperation with other national and international actors including volunteers.

Ensuring strong civil society and government engagement throughout the entire process

Mozambique¹⁶ has established a participatory process to support the assessment, drafting, implementation, and monitoring of the law on volunteerism. Mozambique has a long history of volunteerism with significant support to local communities in their development through volunteers with community, national and international organisations. In 2009, the Government, based on national dialogues, with the support of national and international volunteer involving organisations, set up a National Volunteer Council, to strengthen civil society organisations and traditional authorities, and involve them in the support of the national strategy against poverty at both on national and decentralised level. The agency supports the law on volunteerism, coordinates between Government and civil society organisations, and trains national organisations for volunteer projects and management.

The government approved the Volunteering law for Mozambique in 2010. It was developed by the National Volunteer Council through wide consultation with the volunteer-involving sector and volunteers. The law has the following objectives:

- to promote volunteering and the solidarity spirit in Mozambique;
- to promote a legal framework that will support and bring recognition to those involved in voluntary activities in areas such as: development of democracy and the fostering of human rights, consolidation of national unity, promotion of social welfare and public health care, preparatory activities and response to natural disasters, promotion of culture, protection and preservation of historical and artistic heritage and environmental protection and preservation;
- to promote research on voluntary work carried out in Mozambique and the projects performed by volunteers, including its impact, social and economic value as well as its dissemination;
- to ensure the recruitment and retention of volunteers in the organisations taking into consideration the rights and duties of volunteers;
- to facilitate the implementation of fiscal or other measures that stimulate the organisations' activities that work with volunteers;
- the acknowledgment of the volunteers' role in the development of the country.

The NVC has also recognised that it must have a strategy for sustainable and effective implementation after the law has been passed. Specific regulations will be required and where appropriate policies written to support aspects of the law. Substantial work will also be needed to promote the law to VIOs and volunteers. Some individuals and bodies are already aware of it but others aren't and it is recommended that some work is done to bring the law to life – to ensure VIOs and volunteers know what this means to them and what changes, if any, they will need to make. In the long term and to underpin the law, it has been recommended that the NVC develops some standard volunteer management training and example guidance, policy and practice for VIOs to use and to develop standards of volunteering and volunteer management linked to the law on volunteering. The law on volunteering will also be revisited periodically by the NVC to reflect changes in practice and developments within the sector.

Summary

The above case examples highlight the participatory and strategic approaches to review, enact, and implement appropriate enabling volunteerism policies and legislation in the country specific contexts. Sub-Saharan African countries are commonly taking the approach of promoting volunteerism through individual policies and laws addressing specific issues—most often poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS prevention, post-conflict recovery, health, and education based on national development plans. The lack of national volunteering laws and policies risks inconsistent approaches, lack of coherence, and missed opportunities to mobilise and capacitate volunteering for other key peace and development priorities. On the other hand, one-off policies and laws tend to be easier to design, approve, fund, and implement than broader national policies. Many of the national volunteerism policies and laws discussed focus on supporting national coordination and capacity development of volunteerism, usually in relation to a specific volunteering scheme, such as a volunteer centre or youth volunteer corps.

2 National and regional volunteer and service programmes

After independence, national service programmes featured strongly in nation building and the national development policies and plans of countries including **Botswana, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe**. Faced with high youth unemployment and emigration of unskilled young people from rural to urban settings, national service programmes were hailed as a solution, often with expectations of enhancement of citizenship, national integration, and contribution to development added on.¹⁷ These government-led youth-focused service programmes were often compulsory, placing them on the borders of volunteering and civic service. Nevertheless they delivered tangible benefits for both beneficiaries and participants, supporting national unification, cultural tolerance, and development agendas. Youth service programmes declined in the 1980s due to maladministration, corruption and nepotism; and financial and political problems, including allegations of elitism in many African countries. Some, like Nigeria, reinvented the programme and returned.¹⁸

In recent years, there has been renewed interest by governments in Sub-Saharan Africa in youth volunteer and service programmes. The African Youth Charter called for the inclusion of volunteering in National Youth Strategies. In response, countries throughout Africa are exploring national youth volunteer programmes, including **Botswana, Mozambique, and Lesotho**.

For example, in **Lesotho**,¹⁹ the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, with UNDP and UNV support, will implement a National Volunteer Corps programme to mobilise youth graduates to support the implementation of various national development programming, including the MDGs, and also improve their job prospects by obtaining work experience and training. Coordination among VIOs in the management of the volunteers and their contributions will also be promoted. This action is viewed as the stepping stone to a longer-term National Volunteer Corps, established by statute as a separate legal entity, supported with funds from the national budget, with an independent, multi-stakeholder board under a line Ministry.

In an effort to support and inform such initiatives, the following highlight experiences from national service and volunteering programmes in West Africa; and programme development road maps for a national youth volunteer programme (Liberia) and two regional volunteer programmes (ECOWAS and Africa Union).

Mano River Union countries learning exchange

In **West Africa**, the model has been practiced in many countries with Ghana and Nigeria having more experience of such schemes. **Ghana** started its scheme with the aim of social and economic stabilisation while **Nigeria** started the scheme with the main objective of fostering national unity after civil wars and tribalism experiences in the country. For both countries, involving the youth was imperative if not inevitable for their recovery and development. Following a prolonged series of the civil wars in the country and their aftermath to the country, the government of **Liberia** in 1997 launched a pilot project called the National Youth Volunteer Service Program (NYVS) whose objectives were to provide an opportunity to the youth in the whole process of recovery and development. The project is implemented in support of UNV and UNDP Liberia.

A conference was organised in Monrovia in May 2009²⁰ with the main objectives of providing a platform for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices from various West African countries on the establishment of national youth schemes so as to inform better the Liberian initiative that is in the pilot phase and the prospective ones in the Mano River Union countries; to establish a regional network on youth, volunteerism and nation building; to learn from the experiences of Ghana and Nigeria the legal framework required in the setting up of a National Youth Scheme; and to promote volunteerism and the involvement of youth in development. The Liberian President, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, officially opened the conference commending a spirit of service among Liberian youth.

The key recommendations of the conference included a need to have legal framework that govern activities of youth schemes; a need for strong political will and government commitment; government budgetary allocation and sustainable funding. Involvement of employers, civil society and youth based organisations were also highly recommended as key to sustainability of schemes. All the youth schemes presented were government mandated and administered.

Currently, the Liberia pilot program continues to be managed through the Ministry of Youth and Sports with the overall management by the Steering Committee with representatives from government ministries, universities, civil society organisations, youth organisations (Federation of Liberian Youth) and UN entities. The government commitment remains strong and communities value the volunteers as “sons and daughters of Liberia.”²¹ In 2009, the second batch of 121 NYVS volunteers worked for 12 months on healthcare, education, governance and agriculture in six counties. Work continues to secure a government budgetary allocation and sustainable funding.

Burkina Faso: roadmap for a National Volunteer Scheme

Faced with widespread poverty and severe unemployment among young people, the government of **Burkina Faso** identified national volunteerism as a promising solution. The Burkina Faso National Volunteer Programme (PNVB),²² currently with more than 900 national volunteers, maximises ownership by national and local government, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to ensure inclusive volunteer contributions, especially by youth and women, to poverty alleviation, achievement of the MDGs, and good governance through mobilisation and capacity strengthening of local communities and civil society. Volunteering also provides a way for young people to acquire professional experience and to increase their competitiveness as they contribute to the development of their country.

The following chronicles the steps taken in developing the PNVB:

2003-2005: Several ministries (including health, education, and youth) wanted to start their own volunteer programmes. In addition, recommendations from the International Volunteer Day from civil society and other stakeholders resulted in a decision by the Head of State to designate the Ministry of Employment and Youth to lead the process for a unique national volunteer programme. This ministry therefore requested UNV and UNDP to undertake a **feasibility study** on the creation of a National Volunteer Programme in Burkina Faso that should provide an opportunity for Burkinabé youth to revitalise the tradition of volunteerism and to get engaged in the development of their country. An international expert consultant on volunteering and youth service conducted interviews and workshops with a large range of local authorities, civil society organisations, government ministries and trade unions. Following a positive assessment of the situation, a multi-year project approach was validated by local partners in December 2005. The plan of action included two phases.

Phase 1: Establishment of a legal and operational volunteer infrastructure—the necessary pre-conditions for the launching of a National Volunteer Corps. It includes five major elements:

- Preparation and adoption of a legislation on national volunteering;
- Constitution of a neutral, independent body as “Groupement d’Intérêt Public (GIP)” which will facilitate an innovative partnership with representatives of the counterpart ministries, civil society organisations, universities, private sector etc. and promote recognition and celebration of volunteerism, e.g. National Volunteer Day;
- Establishment of National Coordination Entity for the National Volunteer Programme (the board of the GIP);
- Creation of a Regional Volunteer Centre in all six pilot regions as regional interfaces for the Volunteer Programme and as focal points for local volunteer management capacity development and global promotion of volunteerism. After the launching of the programme, volunteers (UN Volunteers) will be assigned to the regional centres to support their tasks.
- Definition of operational modalities and procedures for the National Volunteer Programme.

Phase 2: Launch a first wave of “Volunteers for Development”

During the second phase, the actual launching of the National Volunteer Corps will be experimented. A first class of “Volunteers for Development” will be assigned to institutions of the identified priority sectors (health, education, environment, economic development, and capacity-building of local communities) for a period of 6 to 12 months. In this context, a tripartite contract between the volunteer, the host institution and the National Volunteer Programme will be signed in order ensure adequate training, integration and monitoring of the volunteers. There will be ongoing efforts to ensure public and other financing to ensure sustainability. At the end of these assignments, the National Volunteer Programme and its impact on development will be evaluated and its lessons learnt integrated into the management of the National Volunteer Programme.

2006-2007: The national coordination office was established and UN Volunteers and other volunteers were recruited to support the development of the Regional Volunteer Centres and national office. The launching ceremony for the National Volunteer Corps programme was organised on 13 February 2007. Six civil society organisations were selected to coordinate the regional centres.

National CSOs organised several conference to promote interest in supportive legislation. It was important to identify appropriate stakeholders, including several ministries, to support the drafting process. The President of the Parliament presided at the launching of the workshop on developing the

legislation. Informational campaigns to promote volunteering, increase public endorsement of volunteers, and to education parliamentarians were important to the process.

The bill on volunteering was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 19 September 2007 and the law was approved by the National Assembly on 29 November 2007. The legal framework of national volunteerism of Burkina Faso is based primarily on three legal documents that frame various dimensions of this sector. The primary legal support for national volunteerism, *Law Number 031-2007/AN*, provides for comprehensive legal recognition of volunteer status. This law provides a definition of national volunteerism that distinguishes it from similar concepts like the traditional *faso baara* and mandatory National Service. It creates safeguards for the volunteer and provides standards for working conditions. A convention—the Constitutive Convention of the Grouping of Public Interest / National Program of Volunteerism in Burkina Faso—was adopted in April 2008 and governs various dimensions of the National Volunteerism Program. Volunteers who have at least a year of engagement as a volunteer can be exempted from National Service.

2008-2010: The financing, conditions of service, living allowance, recruitment and management plans for PNVB was finalised and approved. More than 1,300 candidates applied and 75 requests to host volunteers were received. 35 facilities were selected and 40 national volunteer placements were launched in 1 November 2008. In the subsequent years, partnerships, especially with the Ministry for Basic Education and Elimination of Illiteracy, have resulted in more than 900 volunteers supporting the achievement of MDG #2. In 2009, the government nominated the General Director of the independent national body that will be funded by the Government of Burkina Faso and other interested stakeholders. For the volunteers, increased attention is being paid to support the transition to employment for the young people after completion of their assignment.

2011 onwards: PNVB extended the number of regional centres to 8 and is continuing to reinforce its institutional and organisational structure with the objective of expanding to all areas of the country by the end of 2012. A key task is to continue to diversify its institutional and resource partners among all sectors.

ECOWAS Volunteers Programme: roadmap for a regional youth volunteer scheme

In line with its vision 2020, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has set up a Volunteers Programme to cut across all sectors of activities of all ECOWAS institutions.²³ The programme will involve volunteer men and women between the ages of 18 and 35 years from the 15 Member States, with the capacity to adapt to different social, cultural and political circumstances. The volunteers will be deployed to countries in the region in selected government institutions, community-based associations, national and international NGOs, and specialised agencies active in cultural, political, and humanitarian work. The volunteers will contribute to the consolidation of peace, national reconciliation, recovery and rehabilitation in crisis-affected communities. They will also be expected to help strengthen the capacities of local organisations by assisting them in the development and implementation of projects and programmes as designated.

The pace of this roadmap for the ECOWAS Volunteers Programme reflects the political and administrative challenges of programming at the regional level.

2003: In August, ECOWAS organised the First Youth Forum in Abuja, Nigeria. One of the recommendations of this forum was that ECOWAS should set up a platform that could impact positively on young people in the region, in asserting their role as major stakeholders in development and progress.

2004-2005: The ECOWAS Commission initiated its Volunteer Programme with the support of the African Development Bank (ADB), based on a joint agreement signed on 5 November, within the framework of the Support to ECOWAS for Peace and Development Project (PADEP), under the ECOWAS Peace Fund. A partnership was established with UNV in 2005 to help implement the initiative.

2006-2007: The process of establishing the ECOWAS Volunteers Programme started in 2006. Fact-finding missions to Member States (Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Togo) were conducted to develop the programme taking into account the realities on the ground. The development of the Programme has been participatory and interactive, involving stakeholders from various departments and divisions at the ECOWAS Commission, ECOWAS Member States, Civil Society organisations, youth, UNV, UNESCO and ADB among others, with coordination by the ECOWAS Peace Fund and the ECOWAS Youth & Sports Development Centre. A comprehensive project concept paper was developed including the implementation strategy and a Manual on Management and Administrative Procedures for the ECOWAS Volunteer Programme.

2008-2009: The ECOWAS Volunteers Programme was endorsed in 2008 by stakeholders, regional Ministers of Youth and Sports and the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, which enjoined the ECOWAS Commission to fast-track the implementation of the programme.

2010 onwards: Four countries – Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone – were selected as pilot countries for the launch of the programme, which will involve 160 volunteers recruited from the 15 Member States placed in the four pilot countries. For promoting regional integration, no volunteer will be service in his/her home country. There is a Regional Coordinating Council at the ECOWAS HQ in Abuja (Nigeria) supported by a Regional Coordinator located at the ECOWAS Youth and Sports Development Centre in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), which is responsible for daily implementation of the Programme. The National Coordinating Council supported by a National Coordinator is located in each of the four countries. It is chaired by the ECOWAS Focal Point with representatives from ECOWAS decentralised structures; civil society network; Government officials; youth groups and national youth councils; the national volunteer programme, an ECOWAS volunteer; UNV; an education institution; and the National Coordinator. The ECOWAS Peace Fund will coordinate the resource mobilisation and monitor the programme.

The President of the ECOWAS Commission officially launched the ECOWAS Volunteers Programme in March 2010 in Monrovia, Liberia. Implementation of activities will gradually cover the other three pilot countries as financial resources are mobilised. The first class of volunteers about to be deployed, will serve in communities in primarily in health and education, as midwives, nurses, doctors, secondary schools teachers, teachers for specialised education for handicapped children, etc.

African Union Youth Volunteer Corps: roadmap

The African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) recruits and engages youth volunteers to serve in all 53 countries in Africa. It promotes volunteering to deepen the status of young people in Africa as key participants in the delivery of Africa's human development targets and goals, bringing diverse people

together to share skills, knowledge, creativity and learning to build a more integrated Continent and by implication strengthen Africa's relevance in the globalised world.²⁴

The AU-YVC is also in the pilot stage and has benefited from experiences of other national and regional youth schemes.

2006: In July, the African Union adopted the African Youth Charter, committing Member States to developing policies and programmes for youth volunteerism at local, regional and international levels. The project to establish an African Union Youth Volunteer Corps also builds on consultations during the Fifth Africa Development Forum (ADF-V November 2006) organised jointly by the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and UNDP, with international development partners, including UNV and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Fifth Africa Development Forum (ADF-V November 2006) recommended the establishment of an African Youth Volunteer Corps within the Chart framework.

2007-2009: The African Union Commission developed a Proposal for a Global AU Volunteers Programme led by CIDO (African Citizens Directorate) with the Peace and Security department and the Human Resources, Science, and Technology department. A concept note and operational research helped in identifying appropriate outputs and models for designing an effective mechanism. The paradigm focus is for African governments to focus on young people not as a problem but as an important solution to Africa's rising challenges of poverty, unemployment, environment, and sustainable growth and development.

A series of stakeholder meetings including a European Commission and UNV co-funded youth volunteer exchange involving 25 countries, and development partners, have been conducted. In 2009, steps were outlined to ensure collaborative and timely development of the establishment of the AU-YVC project in accordance to the AUC process. Steps included ensuring operational and functional preparedness of project take-off; development of evidence-based performance indicators; expanding and concretising indicated funding and partnership sources; securing official endorsement to the project work plan and adoption of the Draft Framework for Youth Volunteerism in Africa; and effective project branding among relevant stakeholders.

2010-2011: Drawing from lessons from other initiatives such as the ECOWAS Volunteers Programme, as well as from UN entity partners, international volunteer organisations, and youth experts, the AU-YVC Youth Volunteers Handbook was published in 2010 as a guide to volunteers in their preparation for volunteerism, during deployment, and post deployment.²⁵

AU-YVC was officially launched on the 3rd of December 2010 in Abuja, Nigeria, in the presence Youth Ministry Officials, high level AU and UN Agency representatives, Ambassadors, Volunteer Organisations, Partners and Africa's Youth at large. The launch was followed by a 2 weeks pre-deployment training of the first batch of volunteers to enhance volunteer's professional, social and life skills. In the first round 57 Volunteers representing 16 different countries from across the Continent participated in the first pre-deployment training. In June 2011, second batch of volunteers were trained in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, on the sidelines of the 17th Ordinary AU Summit.

Summary

In examining these roadmaps for developing volunteer service corps, four areas can be identified as key:

1. **Governance:** Enabling policy, legislation or regulation to legitimise the programme. Also, a coordinating body with strong commitment by the appropriate government ministry or ministries, but with significant engagement of civil society, private sector and other appropriate volunteer involving entities and partners.
2. **Management:** Sufficient human resources, either staff or volunteers, with both programme and volunteer management expertise. This includes expertise in supporting volunteers in all aspects of their assignments from recruitment, through training and conditions of service, to post service adjustment.
3. **Strong partnerships with institutions which host volunteers:** Before deploying volunteers, the Burkina Faso programme focused for two years on ensuring the capacity of the institutions which would host the volunteers by establishing regional volunteer centres which developed networks and provided trainings. In addition, since volunteering is not free, resource mobilisation strategies should also include providing resources to the host entities to ensure their ongoing capacities.
4. **Resource mobilisation:** In most cases, government is expected to provide a portion of the funding for the volunteer schemes. In addition, all three roadmaps included strategies to solicit resource and volunteer placement partners from government, private sector, and development partners.

3 Discussion and suggested questions for further consideration

This paper has discussed the process of ensuring an enabling policy environment for volunteering and service in the context of Sub Sahara Africa. Based on the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) Research and the Guidance Note participatory decision tree process for identifying, drafting, adopting and implementing appropriate policies and laws, examples are drawn from SADC and other national initiatives. The second part focused specifically on new trends in youth volunteer and civic service corps, and the policy and programming lessons learned from national and regional examples.

To maximise mobilisation of volunteering contributions to national development plans, the MDGs, and sustainable development, it is important for governments in collaboration with civil society, with capacity development support by international partners, to conduct assessments of the volunteering context to identify assets and obstacles. Policies and laws which negatively affect volunteering and civil society should be identified and changed. Often volunteerism has been integrated as a strategy into sector related policies and legislation to address national plans. The enacting of new laws and policies should be based on strategic assessments to identify clear objectives and to avoid dampening expressions of traditional expressions of volunteering or creating over-burdensome rules and regulations. The examples of policy and legislation initiatives in Africa display common practices of initial mapping and assessments, strong multi-stakeholder participation, and concern not only for passing of laws, but also for the need to be able to support to implementation. In several examples, the focus was more on building the volunteer and organisational management capacity of volunteer involving organisations and promoting increased public awareness and recognition of volunteering, than on developing new policies and legislations.

Volunteering can enhance social inclusion and enable traditional recipients of aid to become development actors. Following the call of the African Youth Charter for youth volunteering schemes at local, regional and international levels, countries and regions are increasingly exploring volunteering.

Most of the youth volunteer schemes discussed as well as some being planning, such as Lesotho and Mozambique, target unemployed university graduates. It is true that young graduates can come with skills that can support peace and development programmes; and the experiences they gain as volunteers prepares and qualifies them for future employment, which could ease the high unemployment issue. However, as noted, one factor for the decline of some of the youth national service programmes in the 1980's was that they were seen as elitist.

The lessons from the Mano River Union countries and the Burkina Faso, ECOWAS and African Union road maps make it clear that embarking on national volunteer service initiatives require careful and methodical planning and development with balanced attention to governance, management, strengthening partnerships and resource sustainability.

Finally, the volunteer policy and legislation research and guidance note and several examples of sharing of experiences have been mentioned—Mano River Union countries, and African Union EC and UNV co-funded youth volunteer experience exchange. Researchers regularly lament the lack of knowledge products and exchange of information in the Africa region. Given that so many sub-Saharan African countries are developing volunteerism policies and legislation and national volunteer service programmes, cross-national networks should be encouraged in order to exchange practices, lessons, and knowledge products.

Questions for further consideration

- How can volunteering contribute to the achievement of your national plan? What should be done to ensure the enabling environment necessary to engage the maximum efforts of volunteers from all segments and strata of your country in achieving sustainable peace and development?
- Do addressing volunteerism policies and civil society policies separately make sense?
- Volunteering is not free. Is there realistic policy, legislation or other strategies which can better ensure volunteer management resources not only for volunteers, but for the institutions which administer and host them? Are there ways to engage others, e.g. private sector, in also supporting an enabling volunteering environment?
- What can national youth volunteer programmes do to avoid perceptions of elitism, or other stereotypes, such as being job training for the poor?
- Too often we leave conferences pledging to continue to exchange information, but it is not done. Are there practical suggestions for how to make this really happen?

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