



Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA)

in collaboration with

Association of Voluntary Service Organisation (AVSO)

Report on Seminar on International Volunteering for Development

Held in Johannesburg on 29 October 2009.



Welcome by Helene Perold, Executive Director of VOSESA

Welcome to everyone who has joined us at this event, we are thrilled to have you here between Johannesburg and Pretoria, between Johannesburg and Brussels! It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this unique seminar in the African context. Before we start, I would like to ask the participants to introduce themselves because we have a unique gathering of people here.

About the Ubuntu International Voluntary Service Award

The [Ubuntu International Youth Voluntary Service Award 2009](#) is a project that was initiated by the Association on Voluntary Service Organisation (AVSO). AVSO applied for the Youth in Action grant and received the grant in 2008. Although VOSESA focuses its core work is in research and publishing, we had worked with AVSO before and saw value in the idea, so decided to participate.

In discussing how we were going to make the project work, we talked about what we meant by international voluntary service and what 'ubuntu' means in this context. Is international voluntary service a one way process from Europe to Africa? Who benefits? It became clear to us that the Ubuntu International Youth Voluntary Service Award is about joint service and cooperation, about mutual learning, about reciprocity. It is what its name stands for: it is *ubuntu*. It takes into account the fact that the difficulties that Europe is facing and that Africa is facing have some meeting points: we both have large youth populations, we both have growing unemployment among youth, we both have poverty in different ways. We did not want Ubuntu to be a colonial construct; we wanted it to be a 21st century project that draws on the energy, innovation and creativity of young people, to learn from each other: for Africa to learn from and teach Europe, and for Europe to learn from and teach Africa.

In June 2009 we held a seminar in Brussels during which our jurors went through the applications that we received for the award. We had devised a set of criteria, which we will tell you about a little later. They made recommendations for a shortlist of finalists and the finalists are here today. We have learnt a lot from them.

In that week a similar conference to this one was held in Brussels from a European perspective; [Youth international voluntary service and development education](#), which is a key issue in Europe. Here today, we are looking at *The Role of International Service in Development* which is more of an African perspective.

First let's look at some information that VOSESA has managed to collect about international voluntary service in the SADC region. We wrote to various organisations asking them for information, and it took a long time for us to get this data. We are still in the process of collecting information, so this is a very brief picture so far:

Source	No of volunteers p.a. on average	In how many SADC countries
19 AVSO member organisations 2008	221	8
Canada World Youth 2007-2009	25	3
Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) 2005-2008	253	6
Skillshare Jan 2009	50	6
Weltwärts 2008-2009	408	10
Connect 1-2-3 2008	300	1

VSO brings volunteers, not only from Europe but from other developing countries as well, from India, from Kenya, etc. This gave us a new perspective on the work that VSO does and it provided new learning for us. Usually when you say “VSO”, you think that British people are coming to work with organisations in SADC, but in fact when you look at the spread of diversity and where the VSO volunteers are coming from, there is a range of people from different countries. For us that creates a very interesting spectrum for cultural exchange and we were please to see that.

The new German international voluntary service programme, Weltwärts, emerged as one of the biggest in the region and it is interesting to note that South Africa receives the largest number of volunteers from Weltwärts.

SADC country receiving Weltwärts volunteers in 2008/9	Number of Weltwärts volunteers in 2008/9
Botswana	1
Lesotho	3
Madagascar	5
Malawi	6
Mozambique	31
Namibia	19
Zambia	15
South Africa	247
Swaziland	4
Tanzania	77
Totals	417

These figures create a context in which we have the opportunity to say, here is a rich resource coming into the region: who are these people? Where can they be placed in order to make a constructive contribution to development and to empowerment within our own region? And what do they take away? The Weltwärts programme is mainly interested in what these volunteers bring back to Germany and how they will influence German perspectives of developing countries and the process of their development – their understanding of how things work in these context. This background provides a context for today's discussion

I will hand over to Flavia and Linden, both from AVSO, to briefly explain the Ubuntu aims and goals ([Download the Ubuntu Presentation](#))

Panel Discussion facilitated by Helene Perold

In order to draw from the wisdom of the people in the room; we would like to have an informal panel discussion: please feel free to ask questions. I would like to start by asking Elwyn Pitt from loveLife to share with us their experience of hosting international Youth Volunteers from the Weltwärts programme.

Elwyn Pitt , loveLife: For those of you that do not know loveLife and the groundBREAKERS programme, groundBREAKERS is a peer education programme where young people are selected from all over the country to run or facilitate life skills to young people within the communities that they come from. We were privileged to have received two volunteers from the Weltwärts programme in 2008 and they left this year 2009 in August. Their experience was as much a culture shock for them as well as for us: it was the first time for us to have young people from Europe coming to work for us. They came to work in South Africa and to experience the South African side of things. They started off living in Sandton, based at our national office, and then they lived in Port Elizabeth in Eastern Cape and they lived with host families: they were living with fellow groundBREAKERS and they participated in facilitation of the life skills programme together with the groundBREAKERS as well as running extra-mural activities at the youth centre. At the end of that programme they came back to head office and learnt some administrative skills.

I must say we learnt a lot from the German volunteers in that as young as they are (they were 19 and 20 when they arrived), they were an asset to us: we could rely on them to do quite a lot of things. I can recall instances where I would ask for some data and in no time, it was done with German precision, on time and sometimes before the time. I got so used to having them around to the extent that even now, I will say “Janine will take care of it” and then I remember, they are not there anymore. These young people came in and they set a standard.

They taught us a lot and we really want to continue hosting more Weltwärts volunteers. We have a new set of volunteers that came in August and we placed them with groundBREAKERS in the community and they have acclimatised very well. I think we will have a problem with getting them out of the communities after their service period because they have made themselves feel at home! There have been some sticky issues with the arrival of the volunteers, but in general it has been a good experience and the young people have left with quite a number of skills that they have learnt while they were with us, such as how to mobilise people, how to put together a campaign and other skills.

Helene Perold: I met Janine at a conference in Bonn and she is an extraordinary young person, as are many of the volunteers. Just to emphasise what Elwyn said about expectations, one of the young women who was placed as a volunteer in East London spoke at the conference in Bonn about how, when she first went into the Provincial Department of Sport where she was placed, they were expecting her to do all kinds of things. She is very articulate and mature in the way she puts herself across, and they

gave her a number of things to do and a level of responsibility that she felt was just beyond her. She told them that she doesn't know how to do those things and that she came here to learn. I don't know why the officials in the Department of Sport would ask her to take such responsibility, but they did. It's just a small illustration of some of the things that Elwyn was raising.

So now I would like to ask Evans this: when we talk about international volunteers contributing to development, what kind of contribution can they make? What do they do in some of the projects that YAZ is involved in Zambia? What do these international volunteers do to assist the development process?

Evans Musonda, YAZ: The notion of volunteering is very important when it comes to development. Volunteers that we receive from all over the world, including Africa, are involved in the communities. Some of these volunteers do not just come empty-handed; they come with skills which they use in development at community level. Some of the projects that they are involved in are projects to do with HIV/AIDS.

We have a partnership with Sweden: we come up with a theme, we look at the challenges of the community and we align the theme to these challenges. The theme that we have come up with for this year is entrepreneurship. So they try to come up with projects that help the local communities. One of the projects that was done by volunteers this year is that they looked at the communities, they identified a need for that community and they decided that they should start a piggery. They decided that they should buy some pigs for the piggery and it was handed over to the mothers looking after the orphans as an income-generating activity for that community.

The young volunteers also gained enormous skills because within that process they learnt how to mobilise the community, how to mobilise funding for a project. There are many projects that the young people become involved with such as the orphanages, teaching and a range of activities that the community benefits from because it is a two way process. The volunteers have something to put on the table and they also have something to take from the table: that's why we believe in mutual cooperation and mutual exchange so that we all benefit.

Helene Perold: If that is the case Deline, what would you say are the ingredients that have to be in place if international volunteering is going to be a benefit for development and what are the risks?

Deline Van Boom, Cape Town Volunteer Centre: Picking up from where Evans left off on mutual learning, I think it is critical that in the environment of international volunteering, that there is an element of exchange that the volunteer is giving as much as they are receiving and they are learning from the local community while they are taking skills back home with them. It is important that when partners are seeking placement with people and projects, that the level or ability of volunteers is honestly assessed and recognised because it can be very frustrating for a volunteer to be placed and be unable to handle tasks.

There are many other elements towards contributing to the community and civil society organisations; there are certainly examples of that. There are exchange elements where international volunteers and African volunteers are given an opportunity to share skills and we need to recognise that. Of course there are some elements of volunteerism that do not have the cycle that Linden spoke about. For example, voluntourism is growing in South Africa and that has enormous repercussions for volunteerism. I have just made a note here that voluntourism can be described as supplying a human resource or a person to a specific local project or activity for a short term, so they are not necessarily coming for a six month period; sometimes they come for two weeks sometimes for six months and there is minimum contribution to development. They come into the community at great expense to the volunteer, those that come into the country for voluntourism often pay a lot of money for the experience and often do not feel fulfilled in that experience. They often do not follow that cycle of being mentored and all that, so while that is often beneficial to a project it does not follow the cycle followed by other forms of volunteering.

Helene Perold: Felix, from your view point and from your experience in Malawi, what do you think are the critical success factors for international volunteering to be sustainable in terms of development?

Felix Limbani, YONECO: Just looking at the figures that you gave us earlier on, you can see that it is entitled “expansion of international volunteer services”. I think the challenge is to manage that expansion. In our experience in Malawi, and I believe that is the experience across Africa, there is an increasing influx of volunteers in Africa compared to Africans going outside Africa and we need to manage that expansion. One thing that we need to consider is this: how do we associate that expansion with success? We need to know the critical factors that would ensure success at a time when international volunteering is expanding.

What is critical is to understand the background of international service. I think you will agree with me that the background of international service is encompassed within missionary services and some sort of post-war reconstruction and that has to some extent given a definition of what international volunteering is, it carries with it issues of inferiority and superiority, so some of the issues to consider are to develop international voluntary service programmes that are on equal platforms and what sort of skills are we learning from each other, and what decision making processes are we following. Everyone must have a say in the process because the challenge that we have is that nations with financial muscle tend to impose what they would want to do and that is at the expense of the value and needs of the communities where these volunteers are going. So that process of decision making must be checked.

The other issue is that volunteers are supposed to adapt to the communities where they will be serving and that process of adapting and adjusting is a critical process to the success of international volunteers. We need to ensure that information, training and communication is managed properly. Sometimes what makes us fail is that we fail to

provide orientation, we fail to provide proper guidance to the volunteers that we are sending as well as the volunteers that we are receiving so in order to ensure that at the end of the day, there is meaningful contribution to development. We need to emphasise facilitation so that it better prepares the volunteers to adapt to culture and language and their experience in a different set up. So that is again a critical factor in the success of international volunteerism.

Helene Perold: Thank you Evans that is very important and it provides a platform for my next question which is to Martin. Against the background and context that Evans has sketched for us, what are European countries hoping to get out of promoting international volunteering?

Martin Müller, Experiment, Germany: I think there are different motivations on the side of volunteers and the sending organisations. If we look at the Weltwärts programme, it is quite interesting to note how it appeared. The Minister who is in charge of the programme received a note from UN saying that the German government itself did not make enough contribution to development. Thereafter she came up with this programme of sending volunteers between the ages of 18 – 27 to volunteer and the target is to send 10 000 young people to volunteer in the first three years. So you can see that the goal of this programme was not to make development work, but the experience of young people in other countries is an enormous benefit to Germany. This is the background of what many countries are starting to do, but that is not the case in all circumstances: some young people want to go out and help, they want to go and rescue the world.

Helene Perold: Magnus as a representative from a sending organisation and being in partnership with YAZ and other organisations, why are sending organisations involved in international volunteering? What is the business of the sending side, how does it look, what is the landscape?

Magnus Anclair, CIU, Sweden: In our programmes we have an exchange of volunteers: Zambian youth are also going to Sweden. In all our programmes, we are both in Zambia and Sweden, so there is mutuality. So if we are in South Africa, the South African volunteer will also spend time in Sweden with their Swedish counterparts. So it gives a new experience to the volunteer and that is one way of encouraging mutuality between the projects. When it comes to the driving force for organisations to promote international volunteering, well first of all it is important to note that there are different types of organisations. For example there are large organisations such as AFS that have been doing this for a long time and then there are some smaller organisations. There are different motivations: some want to add value to the young people and to make a change in communities. And then there is the issue of profit.

Helene Perold: One of things that we got to know about through our partnership with AVSO is that the European Union is a very complicated entity and difficult to understand. What I learnt is that these sending organisations are part of a civil society fabric within European countries and that by getting state support and getting involved in these

activities, they play a very important role in the development of their youth. They have chosen international volunteering as a way to do it, and others do different things. I think it is important to recognise that because certainly in South Africa, our civil society is a bit shaky right now: it doesn't receive a lot of support, it hasn't had much profile, it is quite weak compared to what it was prior to 1994 because of a number of reasons that I won't get into now. From what Magnus and Martin have said, we need to see clearly that international volunteering is not necessarily only for the benefit of developing countries, but it is also making those sending countries strong in a changing global environment. One of the features of the global environment is that it is changing from a production economy to knowledge economy and if in a knowledge economy, knowledge and experiential learning becomes an important part of how you equip your citizenry with the skills to become effective.

We note that we have moved from the impetus for international volunteering being missionary intention and post-war reconstruction (as Felix mentioned) to a completely different scenario of the 21st century. This mutuality that we have been hearing about, with Africans going to Europe and Europeans coming to Africa, is a good development in this context.

My question now to Evans is why do African organisations participate in International volunteering? What's in it for them? What's in it for the community organisations.

Evans Musonda : African organisations participate for so many reasons. We all know that funding is not easy for these organisations and it also known that organisations in Europe are wanting to send young people to different continents. One of these continents is Africa. So now demand versus scarcity of resources by most of these organisations has actually attracted them to venture into this sector of volunteerism so they actually participate because it helps to sustain them. The volunteers bring some financial support, and they help increases or raise the profile of the organisation: if you are an organisation and you are fighting for limited resources and the number of international volunteers coming to you is increasing, the people around you will start looking at you on another level. So it raises their profile. In addition, it is one way of incentivising the volunteers: these volunteers are not being paid and sending them abroad is one way of incentivising them. So that is one way that they pay back to these young volunteers. When the volunteers come back they will continue working with the organisation and use the skills that they gained while they were abroad.

Helene Perold: I think in the South African context, volunteering is not that well organised: local organisations have to make their own way. Someone in Mpumalanga, who is expecting international volunteers from Germany wrote to Deline and said where can they go for support? This raises the question that where are the structures for that support and how can we grow them? I think what you are saying is that the profile of international volunteering can help raise those issues within local countries in Africa.

Discussion from the floor

Clayton Peters, South African National Youth Service: My question is, in Europe, what do you do with development education? This is a challenge that I would like to pose to the Europeans: it can't only be about the benefits of having people come here; the development challenges that we face on the continent are much more complex.

Arno Faul, Madikwe Rural Development: The system of Europe is quite dehumanised so there are a lot of soft skills and social skills that we teach them (in South Africa) – that is what we export to them. They then learn those skills when they are here with us and they apply those skills in Europe. Theoretically, if we have enough volunteers here, we could humanise them enough

Magnus Anclair: The Swedish government is implementing Development Education for three reasons: one of the reasons is to obtain willingness from the Swedish people to pay tax for development because if the population does not understand it then they will not want to pay taxes towards it. One of the clear objectives is to make sure that at least a few of these individuals will enter institutions of international organisations and make an impact there.

Flavia Buiarelli, AVSO: Development Education helps young people that have not seen the world to have an open mind and to start to understand things. These young people will become citizens and they will vote so it is about making people aware, because if you are living in a small city, you are not fully aware of what is happening in the rest of the world. We know it is not enough to change the world, but maybe it helps in raising awareness about the world. It influences citizenship behaviour.

Jury member: Yes it helps to shape citizen behaviour and I would like to link this to what Deline said earlier about voluntourism – if you look at it from the volunteering side of course it is not as useful as long term volunteering such as six months or so, but when you look at it from the tourism side, instead of the people spending 2 weeks of their holiday staying in a hotel etc they spend two weeks helping in a community.

Linden Farrer: It helps to build solidarity between people to prevent such a thing as the world war from happening again. International voluntary service can play a big role in promoting peace, particularly if there are more people travelling to Europe to learn about Europe and vice-versa

Grace Matlaphe, loveLife: What is the role of possible future trade with African countries, and to what extent does volunteerism prepare young people to possibly work with Africa in terms of business and trade? Secondly, you gave us data on international volunteers coming into Southern Africa and I was just wondering whether there is data showing Southern African young people in Europe which is an important thing for us because I feel that for us in South Africa, identity of young South Africans is very important and it is equally important for them to feel that they love Africa. It's also equally important in the process of shaping identity for young people to develop

international identities so that they feel that they are citizens of the world and to feel that they are the leadership of the future.

Helene Perold: Just on that, I was at a Sage-net conference in Bonn and a professor shared some research that he had conducted on short-term (two week) volunteering and its impact on the identity of the young people who had gone from France to Germany or wherever in the European Union. He found that the young people had grown in their self- awareness and developed a sense of 'other', with a better understanding of European citizenship. So I think your point is well taken because that was a longitudinal study and found that 10 years later, those people that had been interviewed could remember that short-term experience as vividly as though it were yesterday. It was one of those formative influences on them.

Joern Preuss, AIM, Ghana: I just want to point out that these young people are ambassadors for the sending organisations that they are representing and they act as role models to other young people. They then come back to their countries they are also ambassadors for the host country. They have a huge responsibility and we also shouldn't expect too much from these young people seeing that the most important thing is to breach the cultural gap between the countries. They are part of the society and they can bring change to those societies. They can become change agents depending on the quality of the volunteer experience.

Arno Faul: I went to a conference in Germany and if I remember correctly, the minister in charge of the Weltwärts programme said that she had been involved in international voluntary service and that her child had also been involved. She ended up being the Minister of Economic Cooperation and she initiated Weltwärts, so she as an individual said we are putting €70 million on the table for this programme: for me that is a huge return on investment.

Helene Perold: So international volunteering is definitely growing and is a feature of 21st century cooperation. Can we give the 2 jurors from Ubuntu a chance to tell us about their experiences and what they have learnt within the Ubuntu process.

Erika Celi and Nontokozo Zulu present lessons learn from the jury process.

Participant: The volunteer letters that were sent out to people that had volunteered in the organisations, were they structured, what was their form, how do you get information from a letter?

Response from presenters: The form was structured and it had certain questions that each individual had to answer. The reason why we decided on the volunteer letter was to cross check and verify the information that we had received from the organisations and to ensure that indeed the organisation works with youth volunteers and gives them opportunities for learning and development.

Magnus Anclair takes over the chair for the discussion on international volunteering as a tool for development

Magnus Anclair: It has been said that International volunteering is becoming a big industry and it is growing. I would like to focus on the needs of the hosting organisations. What demands would you like to put on the sending organisations to improve international volunteering as a tool for international development? While we think along those lines, I would like to ask two of the jury members to briefly explain their experiences as volunteers and what you think that did for development.

Lukasz Pastor, jury member: I did my voluntary service three years ago in England, in East London. For me it was the first time to meet so many people from different backgrounds and I used to work for a community centre where I did reception and youth work. I also used to have a project that was especially for the local people and the youth workers from the community centre. The local people had to learn how to deal with me and I had to learn how to deal with them. They had to learn how to deal with someone who doesn't speak English. My beginning in England was difficult because I did not speak English – that was my problem. So it was very challenging and it was a long learning process to work with children and to work as a receptionist. It was also difficult for the parents to work with someone who is responsible for their children and who is a foreigner.

From my experience as a volunteer, one of the things that I learnt was English. I also learnt about different cultures. Everything that is written in guidebooks for volunteers is just true and I have some friends from Germany that are doing voluntary work in my home town and I can really see what kind of mutual learning that they do with the local people. [It is important for Polish people] because in a small town it is not easy to see some foreigners. They can teach their friends English and German, for example, and they can learn Portuguese. They can also share their experience with the children in the orphanage where they work and they can also learn from the children.

Frida Söderberg, jury member: I had the opportunity to be a volunteer about two times, one time in Ghana as a school teacher and the other time I worked in a local NGO working in rural development. Thinking about what I can contribute to development in these communities is really difficult to see because I learnt a lot from the people and also gained a lot from them. I think being a volunteer is a learning process, I come there to learn and I learn a lot and while I learn I can also contribute. I think it is more like what you mentioned that development can come through people, through discussions', through those kinds of things and I think that being a volunteer is a process, while I learn, I also contribute, I teach them and they teach me.

Magnus Anclair: As you can see it is not always easy to see what international voluntary service is doing for development. So let's discuss how we can improve it. I would like hosting organisation to tell us what they see as needs to improve this.

Mpho Pekane, JICA: I am from Jica. As an organisation, there is one thing we try to do in the communities and that is to communicate with the receiving organisations. For example, we are working on bilateral agreements between governments. We sometimes have major problems with sending organisations, for an example you send a person who doesn't speak English into a school to teach science and mathematics. Now the problem is that the small children will not understand the person very clearly, actually, I am working with the Japanese, some of whom do not know the basics of English. The problem stems from the South African education system and the education system where they come from. However, what they do is they come up with methods of improving teaching and learning in the schools. Now the problem is that the hosting organisation sometimes lack information from the receiving organisations. So one of the most important things is to improve communication between the organisations, like in my situation, for example, the organisations involved include the Department of Education and the regional office and the school itself so it goes down three levels

Participant: I think that the environment that we are dealing with, the NGOs and the community-based organisations in South Africa are generally under-resourced – not enough staff and not enough money. The volunteer wants to help but has also come on a quest to find him or herself and when they come into the organisation, there always isn't someone to show them the ropes or be there for their needs or find out exactly what they need to do because they are also busy with their own work. As a sending organisation, we prepare our volunteers in Germany or wherever they come from (they are sometimes from different countries). When they come to South Africa, we prepare them again for their stay in South Africa. Even though we work very hard in preparing them for the children's home or the projects that receive these volunteers, there is still a lot of work for them and I think we haven't touched enough on that.

Yvonne Mathiesson, Durbanville Children's Home: I think there is a huge gap there and the projects need to spend a lot more time with the people on the ground and we need open communication there. What is important is, what is the host organisation telling the volunteer and is it the same thing as what they have been told because the expectation can be so different and it is the responsibility of the projects to supply the hosting organisations with very clear job descriptions and to be clear about who is in charge of the volunteer training.

Angela Makgabo, VSO: I think there is a need for the hosting organisations to really undergo some orientation on how to manage the volunteers. What often happens is that sometimes the volunteers are given job description but when they arrive sometimes they will sit with nothing to do or sometimes they are utilised for things that they did not come here for like sitting as a receptionist and many times, us a sending organisations we ask ourselves is this really worth it? Having a volunteer from as far away as Netherlands to come and sit as a receptionist when there are people available in a country to do that type of work does not really make sense so I think there is a need for the organisations to know how to deal with the volunteers so that you can maximise gain from their skills. And also do the organisations have the infrastructure to be able to manage these volunteers, is there training to be able to manage those volunteers so

that they can know what a volunteer needs, how do I make them happy how do I maximise them.

Halima Chande, UNV Programme Officer, South Africa: In my experience as a volunteer, the host organisations tell us what their challenges are and we develop a specific terms of reference for the organisation and these volunteers, even if they don't have much work experience they have something: they have some knowledge and they also use the knowledge that they received from the organisations that they have worked with at grassroots level. So I want to say that whenever we are sending out volunteers, let's try as much as possible to make sure that they are fully equipped for the tasks that they are sent to perform. In that way, they will learn as well as contribute to international development. If we receive volunteers that do not have any skills but need the skills for the job that they are supposed to be doing, then we should arrange training for them. For example, we recruited some national volunteers to go and do a campaign on HIV/AIDS and they had no knowledge about HIV/AIDS what we did was to train them for two weeks so that they could go and do the campaign. When they went there, they did very well so let's take this approach of training the volunteers before they go to their assignments. So we should take this lesson and train volunteers before we send them.

Beate Drager, Madikwe Rural Development : Something that has not been mentioned before which I feel is very important is the importance of the mentor to assist the volunteers someone who knows the volunteers as well as the hosting organisations. In our organisation, we have come to know the important role that a mentor plays. A mentor is even more important than a specific job description because a mentor can solve so many problems as they appear. I think that is very important.

Magnus Anclair: As I gather the problems are more around communication, both inside the organisation and between the sending organisation and the receiving organisation, and the preparation of the volunteer before departure and on arrival at the site. So let's together think of ways to improve this. It is about dealing with expectations on both sides. So let's all think of ways of improving this. Also bear in mind that solutions that could be implemented here in Southern Africa would be good.

Participant: I want to stress this communication issue: talking about the people [and providing] information helps people to prepare. Information should be shared between the sending organisations and the hosting organisations. The mentor should also be involved in the communication.

Muzi Miya, Department of Social Development: A joint tool has to be developed by the sending and receiving organisations around measuring performance and job descriptions in that way, we would be able to close the gap that had been identified, a situation where volunteers arrive at the organisation and they are not sure what to do. I think the process would be in the process of communication, where you develop a job description for the volunteers but beyond that come up with a tool to measure performance; the whole question around monitoring and evaluation comes into play.

Deline van Boom: Our organisation has realised that most organisations lack capacity as has been mentioned before. We also recognise that volunteering does not happen in a vacuum, there has to be a system at host organisation level. When we work with organisations, we often realise that there is a misunderstanding about the role that a volunteer is supposed to play in that organisation and that contributes to the miscommunication of the information that goes back and forth. In response to that, we offer volunteer management training courses that help to prepare volunteers and to develop those systems that are essential for proper management of volunteers – not only international volunteers, but also the local volunteers, because in order for us to make an impact, the volunteers really have to be equipped and we often assume that the volunteers are always prepared but that is not always the case.

Dennis Lane, Skillshare: I worked a lot in our Tanzania office and we used to have a training office which I think is still there. They used to have training in language and culture which I think is needed in Southern Africa and it could be broadened because we used the language and culture part, but we still had to look at the other issues which are really important. If we could work together to provide training that would be great; we should be able to provide training in terms of language and culture and other issues of development and all those broad issues and we should really be working together on this.

Question from participant: On impact assessment, who does it? Is it the volunteer, the hosting organisation or the volunteer themselves? And at what level does that come into play when it comes to placing the volunteers? Is it done at the initial stage?

Ntombi Swelinkomo, Big Brother, Big Sister: From the onset everybody benefits, but the impact you get from the person who is receiving at the receiving end. For instance at Big Brother Big Sister, even though we bring volunteers to the children, the most impact that we see is on the children. The organisations that care for the children are the ones that say “can you give us more, because it is helping us”. These children, they are the ones that tell us [about] the impact and that is how we assess the importance of the programme.

You were talking about communication between the hosting and the hosting organisation and the volunteers themselves: for us at Big Brother Big sister, we have people like me, the case managers. These are the people that are the linkage from the top to the bottom, whether from the organisation itself or between the volunteers. When the volunteers come, we break the cycle of curiosity, the level of expectation, what is expected of them and what should they expect at the end of the day.

Mpho Pekane, JICA: Based on what she said, we sent some volunteers to the University of Limpopo, the volunteers were designing science centres. The department of Science and Technology sponsored it. Unfortunately the volunteers did not have counterparts and did not share their knowledge with the community. In their reports they would write, I came from Japan, I gave knowledge, but they did not share their

knowledge with anyone because there were no counterparts. But they left a lot for the community in terms of the work that they did.

Patrick Mphale, National Youth Service South Africa: Is providing volunteers supply driven or demand driven? It seems from the discussions that there is interest in volunteering but at times the volunteers might have the knowledge, maybe from university or something but would lack the experience. I think it is important to categorise the volunteers so that when you have young people from host countries, you categorise them. Some of the young volunteers might be have the skills but not have the necessary experience. If you look at the other category, maybe 28- 35, these might be skilled and experienced. I am saying this because if it is demand driven, we have to align them [the volunteers] to national priorities of the hosting country, In this country one of our values is skills development therefore I assume that we need skilled volunteers who can pass their skills to the young people.

Elwyn Pitt: I want to go back to the point about the relations between the hosting and sending organisations. This is based on my experience with international volunteers. Sometimes the volunteers come with certain expectations which cannot be met by the hosting organisation. We now have joint orientation sessions, joint mentoring sessions. The point that was raised earlier about the mentors, the challenge still remains that the mentors are not familiar with the European culture and that's where we find a bit of a challenge in that we would like to match the young people with the right kind of mentors: the cultural side of things is always going to be difficult.

When we do the impact assessment, we are able to trace the progress of that person throughout the year through programmes that they are running as well as the monitoring and evaluation tools. What we want to know through the assessment is what are the tools that they have learnt and what have they contributed.

Evans Musonda: I think the missing link is that when the community is not aware of this concept of volunteering, usually it becomes very difficult for a volunteer who comes to feel like part of the community and to make meaningful contributions to the community because the community does not really know what he or she is supposed to be doing, So what we do is that when we want to place new volunteers in a community that we have never worked in, in order for us to make sure that the volunteer will be accepted, I went to the community to conduct an assessment and to check on the needs of the community, what kind of skills they would want from the volunteers. We also had to speak to the local politicians so that they could be aware of the plans of bringing in a volunteer. We basically had to align our objectives with the expectations of the community. We also had to speak to the chiefs and the headmen in those communities so that the whole community knows about the coming of these volunteers and why it is important to have those volunteers. Once the community gets used to the idea of having volunteers, it becomes very easy for the volunteers that come after.

I also want to speak about communication. I think that what is important is not only communication between the sending and receiving organisations, but there should also

be communication between the host community, the placing and the sending organisations. Usually, we tend to leave out the host communities.

What is also important is that the information shared with the volunteer during orientation should be accurate. If the information that the volunteers find on the ground differs from the information that they were given, it creates a lot of conflict between the volunteers and the sending organisations as well as the receiving organisation. So it is important to align the orientation and make sure that there is adequate and accurate information about the receiving country, the receiving community and the organisation so that whatever gets to these volunteers is not below what they should expect.

On measuring the impact, the way we do it, we do not just measure the impact; we measure impact for the participant on the programme to see how they were prepared and also with the community. What we used to do was just to check whether the volunteers got any skills through what they were doing, and whether it has contributed to their growth in terms of professional engagement and all that.

Participant: I think with communication, it depends on what you are communicating and how you communicate it. What type of volunteer programme are you running? Is it a volunteer programme that you are running to fill a skills need in the community? Is it a volunteer programme that you are running to help a young person find themselves? At that point is when you start defining what fits within the community.

On the other extreme you find your United Nations Volunteer, which is a pure and skilled volunteering with a specific developmental goal which is advertised as an opportunity to use your skills for development. So I think at the outset, you need to define what the programme aims to achieve.

Participant: I would like to come back to the point about providing information to the volunteer. The information received by the volunteer is very important. If the information is not accurate, it creates difficult problems for the organisations and also for the volunteers. And again I would like to point out the importance of the mentor who comes to deal with these kinds of problems.

Magnus Anclair: Thank you for your input into the discussion. I think it is an interesting session.

Helene Perold: Conclusion

Let me just conclude by thanking you for the issues that you raised in this discussion. When we started the Ubuntu project, some of the jurors were saying, well what is development? We didn't have time to get into that today but I think it is a big issue. In South Africa, we say we know what we mean by that, but there are some critical things that were raised here that I just want to stress.

- **Sustainability:** we all know that once-off interventions are usually useless; even worse, they lead to disappointment and failure. So the reality right now is that volunteering is supply driven, it is not demand driven. It is up to the receiving countries to get their act together and impact on the supply, because otherwise we cannot make demands.

- **The necessity of volunteer infrastructure:** The people that work with volunteers have to make it work. Sometimes they find themselves dealing with adolescents or people whose skills are not being applied and I some of the points that have been raised today are important in that regard. In the end, however, we have to come back to the point that Deline has made: where is the volunteer infrastructure in this country, South Africa? It does not exist and I have to turn to the Department of Social Development to make an appeal that we have to fix this fast, because we are missing opportunities here. People are banging on the door to come and help and I think we have seen some of the rich opportunities that can arise. So let's do something to make it work. The expertise in this room, both in the international players such as VSO, Skillshare, UNV and the local expertise through Volunteer Centre etc – we have a rich array of expertise at our disposal. So government must come to the party: stop talking and let's do something real to make volunteering work for all.

- **Stimulating volunteering in our region:** we must not only have African volunteers going to Europe or European volunteers coming to Africa. Let us also replicate something from the European Voluntary Service as a regional initiative in the SADC region. Let us send Nontokozo to Mozambique: she will learn to speak Portuguese, and imagine the difference that it would make to her life, even if she went for a month, or for six months, or a year. Let us bring young Tanzanians to Angola; let us send Kagiso from Botswana into Evans' projects in Zambia. Imagine what that would do for regional stability, growth and mutual understanding.

So let's conclude on that note and agree that we will stay in touch. VOSESA will write up the report of this seminar and put it on the Ubuntu website. I think you can see for yourselves that this project has triggered the opportunity for a discussion which we never had before, and I think that we need to start taking the lead now – for our region and our continent. The Europeans are well organised when it comes to volunteering. For them this is a big industry; for us in southern Africa it is one with great potential.

Thank you all for coming.

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