



Engage Empower Experience

Youth Volunteerism in Fiji



UN

Volunteers

inspiration in action

“I wish we had more conversations about the power of volunteerism ... social injustice, holding people accountable, feeling empowered ... young people should be more exposed to discussions about it, to really appreciate the power of volunteerism.”

Young volunteer and activist
Suva, Fiji



Engage Empower Experience

Youth Volunteerism in Fiji

United Nations Volunteers

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization 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 mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced UNV volunteers throughout the world. UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity as well as the values that sustain it: free will, commitment, engagement, and solidarity.

National Youth Council of Fiji

The National Youth Council of Fiji (NYCF) is a registered Charitable Trust Organization. NYCF is the umbrella body for two operational arms, the Provincial Youth Forum of the Fiji Islands (PYFFI) and the Youth Assembly of the Fiji Islands (YAFI). Under the PYFFI arm are the 14 provinces, Rotuma, Rabi, and Kioa. YAFI, the second operational arm, comprises NGOs, FBOs, alumni associations, uniform groups and others.

NYCF's objective is to advocate and represent the overall needs, issues, and concerns of youth to government and non-government authorities and relevant organizations; and to assist in the sustainable development and implementation of youth activities nationwide. It does so by networking through partnerships and affiliations with national stakeholders, and regional and international organizations. The council is guided by a mission to promote, assist and facilitate youth development in Fiji, and by a vision of fostering valued and capable youths for Fiji in the near future.

Published by: United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in Fiji & The National Youth Council of Fiji
Design: Jon Bergmann @ <http://www.nonni.graphics/>
Printed in Fiji
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Credits and acknowledgements

In the spirit of the topic at hand, this publication is a product created by a team of volunteers. The process was initiated and managed by the United Nations Volunteers Field unit based in Suva, Fiji, in partnership with the National Youth Council of Fiji (NYCF).

UNV Programme Officer Ulla Helena Gronlund coordinated and managed the development of this publication with support from NYCF representatives Emily Erasito, Chonet Nawaikula, and Manasa Vatanitawake. Tegan Rowles, who volunteers as Youth Coordinator Mentor for Cakaudrove Provincial Youth Council through Australian Volunteers International, ensured the report includes a significant northern perspective. Leann Kendall, a student at the University of South Pacific in Suva, conducted several stakeholder interviews to collect perspectives of volunteer based organizations.

The design of the report was created by UN Online Volunteer Jon Bergmann from Iceland whose professionalism and contributions we thank and appreciate greatly. UN Online Volunteer Cindy Godin from United Arab Emirates did great work in proofreading the report.

The printing of this report was made possible by a financial contribution from the UNDP funded project “*Strengthening Youth Participation in the Transition to Democracy*”, which is implemented by the Fiji National Youth Council and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Apart from time and effort dedicated to realizing this publication, this fund was the only financial contribution needed to make it a reality.

We would also like to thank UNV Headquarters staff for their advice and support. A very special thanks goes to UNV colleagues and volunteers in Sri Lanka whose publication *Sri Lankan Youth: Volunteering to Make a Difference* provided us useful examples and tried and tested tools we were more than happy to benchmark. Although the surveys implemented in Sri Lanka were considerably larger and more in-depth, we did come up with findings that were interesting to compare to the results our Sri Lankan colleagues attained. We appreciate the efforts of the following individuals and organizations who took time to submit texts to this report and to compile information that was not readily available including: the National Employment Centre and their volunteers, Sevuloni Ratu from Fiji Red Cross, youth volunteers in WWF Pacific, and Roshika Deo.

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to all volunteers who responded to our survey, and to the following organizations who were willing to share their time, knowledge and ideas for the publication. Without them, this publication would not have been possible:

- 350.org Fiji
- Aspire Network
- Australian Volunteers International
- Citizen Constitutional Forum
- Dream Nest Youth Club
- The Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee (FASANOC)
- FemLINK
- Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)
- Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation
- Fiji Red Cross
- Malawai Youth and Sports Social Project
- National Employment Centre (NEC)
- Fiji Volunteer Service (FVS)
- The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO)
- Strengthening and Empowerment Network of Peer Educators Forum (SENPEF)
- St John's Ambulance
- The Apprentice
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Pacific
- Suva City Council
- Global Vision International

Foreword

I lived and worked in Fiji from 2004 to 2008, during which time I had the privilege to meet many young Fijians: young men and women eager to follow the footsteps of those who went before them, to adjust to the challenges of the new millennium and build an even better society.

The sheer number of young people in the world makes youth issues relevant: 1.8 billion adolescent and youth make up a large proportion of our global population. In Fiji, every third person is between the ages of 15 and 35, the commonly agreed definition for youth in Fiji. The Government of Fiji and development agencies recognize the importance of responding to the unique challenges young people face, and realize how critical it is to harness the immense potential that is vested in them.

Volunteerism is an effective way to engage young women and men in development efforts. It helps foster their energy, motivation, and capacities, and widens opportunities for young people to become active citizens, leaders, and agents of change in society. When well supported, coordinated, and resourced, volunteerism can provide a route for participation that anyone can undertake, regardless of his or her social status, economic background, gender, or location.

In Fiji volunteerism is an integral part of communities where people, young and old, dedicate their time and efforts to the benefit of others. Many barriers to youth volunteerism remain, as described in this report. Lack of information and difficulty in accessing information about opportunities prevents young people from finding meaningful ways to volunteer. Organizations engaging young people are hindered by the lack of support, tools, and methodologies to develop their volunteer management capacities. While youth volunteerism is common in Fiji and it positively contributes to society in many ways, we actually have relatively little data to support this assumption as the body of research and recorded knowledge on volunteerism is limited.

With this publication, which is developed in collaboration with the National Youth Council Fiji, we will explore some of the opportunities and challenges youth volunteerism faces in Fiji. A youth volunteer who was interviewed for this publication called for dialogue about the power of volunteerism, and how it can tackle social injustices, contribute to holding people accountable, and help young people to feel empowered. This publication is our response to that call, and we hope it will inspire all stakeholders to further engage in discussions about the role and benefits of youth volunteerism in a move toward sustainable human development in Fiji.

We are looking forward to enhancing our efforts also in Fiji, and working with other stakeholders in ensuring that young men and women can be part of development solutions through well-supported and facilitated volunteerism.

Richard Dictus
Executive Coordinator
United Nations Volunteers

Preface

Ensuring young peoples' full participation and empowerment is essential to achieving sustainable and inclusive development. The long-standing commitment of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to inclusion of young people across all areas of the organization's development work is clearly articulated in the UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017 "Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future". In line with this global strategy, the UNDP Fiji Multi-Country Office (MCO) continuously seeks to integrate a youth-centered approach in the design and implementation of all its programmatic work. The Fiji MCO has furthermore sought to support projects specifically targeting the needs and priorities of youth.

The "Fiji Strengthening Youth Participation in the transition to Democracy Project" is an important example of UNDP's youth-focused programming. Since 2012, UNDP has been working in close partnership with the Fiji Ministry of Youth and Sports for increased representation and an amplified voice for youth in key national decision making processes. This work has taken on added importance on the background of the country's journey of political transformation leading to the 2014 elections. The project contributed meaningfully to ensuring that youth are active actors in this historic process of change through better capacitated youth-led bodies, notably, the National Youth Council of Fiji (NYCF).

Demographically the population of Fiji is very young. Around 46 percent of citizens who registered and voted for the very first time in Fiji's recent elections were below the age of 29. Like other Pacific Small Island Developing States, due to increased urbanization and migration, the shift from traditional subsistence to a competitive cash economy, youth are experiencing many pressures that can at times deepen inter-generational divides as traditional family structures evolve.

This report on youth volunteerism in Fiji is testimony to the energy and dedication of Fiji's youth to contribute as volunteers to address some of the country's development challenges, such as supporting vulnerable members of society and promoting a culture of human rights, equality and justice. The report also celebrates the strong culture of volunteerism in Fiji. UNDP is a strong champion for volunteerism, working in close partnership with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV). Our hope is that the report which showcases the potential of young people to be shapers of Fiji's future, will inspire more young people to volunteer, and encourages many others of all ages to appreciate the contributions of young people to development and the importance of supporting them.

Osnat Lubrani
UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator

Message from the Minister for Youth and Sports

Young men and women are important contributors to development and are an essential component of nation building towards fostering growth and accomplishing targets. This report seeks to identify how young men and women through volunteerism have contributed towards achieving these targets and the state of volunteerism in the country in general.

Volunteers have an enormous impact on the health and well-being of communities world-wide. Volunteering takes up much of a person's time and effort thus the basis for the Fiji Volunteer Report serves to envisage ways to implement strategies to improve on the state of volunteerism in Fiji.

To fully understand the impact that youths have in the country, there needs to be a quantitative measure to justify just how immensely the youth population contributes towards economic and national development. Thirty six per cent of the country's population are young people and their contributions to the country are undeniable.

Volunteerism is an effective pathway these young people can take to fully realise their potentials, skills and passions.

To any Pacific Islander, volunteerism silently plays a role in customs and traditions without much fuss about. Back in time this was viewed as a highly respected and estimable act as the nature of volunteerism is giving without expecting. Today this lingers in a slightly different nature as the community settings and values alters.

Young people as assets and wealth to a nation ought to be provided the opportunity towards volunteerism but this could only be a success if the meaning of volunteerism is visibly made known with its importance. Woven within details of this report is the authentic approach of youths in Fiji towards volunteerism, a view and approach of the so called "Developed Today".

Laisenia Tuitubou
The Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports



**More
collaboration
to develop
volunteerism
is needed.**

Introduction

Volunteerism, in all its multi-faceted forms and manifestations, is universal and exists in all societies, providing avenues for participation by people of all ages and backgrounds. Volunteer action and civic participation, whether done through formal organizations or in communities in a more informal setting, is a key to “people centered development”. It enables all citizens to actively participate in the development of their society and communities, to respond to their own needs, and to become drivers of change.

In Fiji, volunteerism plays an integral role in society-at-large as well as individual communities; keeping their wheels turning in many ways. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are often established and run by volunteers, and church groups rely on volunteers in organizing their activities. Many people, guided by notions of cultural expectations and duty to care, and underpinned by social practices, dedicate their time and efforts to the general benefit of their communities without pay.

For young people in Fiji, volunteerism provides avenues through which they can become active citizens and engaged members of their communities. Through volunteerism, the energy of young citizens can be harnessed in a positive way toward national development goals while simultaneously providing them an opportunity to influence issues and topics they find important, as well as opportunities to enhance their skills and capacities.

Despite the prominent role of volunteerism in society in Fiji, and a fairly good recognition of the role it plays, there is very little information about it available. There is no significant research into volunteerism in Fiji or publications solely dedicated to the topic; evidence-based studies, statistics and other data are equally lacking in supply. Most of the information available about volunteerism relies on anecdotal evidence and is usually intended for consumption by a general public for awareness raising purposes. The same applies to youth volunteerism. It is a generally accepted argument that young people in Fiji volunteer actively through which they develop skills and capacities that pave the way towards employment, attachment to the community, and active citizenship. Again, there is little evidence to support these assumptions. Nor do we quite know how many young people volunteer, why, for how long, and for what causes, or what perceptions they hold about volunteerism in general. To take a step further, we are equally in the shadows as to the impact of volunteerism in Fiji – whether at the community level or society at large, on organizations engaging youth volunteers, or on volunteers themselves.

This publication intends to start filling those gaps. Firstly, it will draw a picture of the volunteer sector in discussing what volunteerism is and what the so-called ‘volunteer infrastructure’ looks like in Fiji.


Furthermore, views of young volunteers and organizations engaging youth volunteers are explored, and the report will touch upon topics relevant to young volunteers such as the role of volunteerism in education and as a pathway to employment.

The publication limits itself strictly to volunteerism and does not attempt to explore all forms of civic participation such as voting, or certain un-paid activities such as internships. Data collection and its analysis took place to inform this publication, but the process did not intend to be an academic one. Instead, it was more of a stock-take exercise that will hopefully provide practical information to practitioners, decision and policy makers, and youth groups themselves.

Due to a lack of primary data available on the extent and type of youth volunteerism in Fiji, there will be no elaboration on development of youth volunteerism in recent years. Instead, we are looking forward and will propose recommendations to various stakeholders on how youth volunteerism could be developed and enhanced in the coming years.

Ultimately, the importance of volunteerism in society is measured by the well-being or positive impact it creates on volunteers themselves and communities around them.

While the data-gathering of this inaugural endeavor is modest, this report will nonetheless provide new information and topics for discussion and further action.



**100 % agree
Volunteerism
contributes to
development**

Process and objectives

The purpose of the Youth Volunteerism in Fiji publication is to promote and enhance recognition of youth volunteerism in Fiji by creating baseline information and mapping the nature of youth volunteerism in Fiji. It also intends to support informed and evidence-based decision and policy making regarding youth and volunteerism; to provide information to youth organizations and groups in order for them to develop their capacities to more effectively engage young people; and to enhance understanding of youth volunteerism and its role in society.

The first section of the publication is based on a literary review of existing documents and information about youth volunteerism. To collect information about motivations and perceptions of youth volunteers themselves, a survey was conducted. The number of young people who responded to the survey totaled 114, in which 56 percent were female and 44 percent male. A total of 14 organizations engaging volunteers shared their ideas through an online survey, and 14 organizations were interviewed face-to-face. Finally, a focus group participated in by six stakeholders representing different CSOs was held in order to elaborate on findings and recommendations outlined in the last chapter.

Enabling environment for youth volunteerism in Fiji

Why youth volunteerism?

In Fiji, those between 15 and 35 years of age are considered to be “young people”. The definition is used to reflect the transition or process from childhood to adulthood or from dependence to independence, where youths become independent from their families and begin to have their own families to look after and support. Solely the sheer number of young people of that age make youth issues relevant in Fiji as they make up a significant portion of society, comprising approximately 36.8 percent of the total population.¹ The proportion is projected to increase considerably within the next few years, requiring increasing investment in resources and public services such as education, health, and infrastructure.

A number of fairly recent publications on youth demonstrate that young people all across the Pacific face very similar challenges and issues. The State of the Pacific Youth, Urban Youth in the Pacific, The Pacific Youth Development Framework, Situational Analysis of Youths in Fiji, among others draw a comprehensive picture of how the society of Fiji presents itself in front of their young people. Youth unemployment is one of the most pressing issues in Fiji. With the youth unemployment rate at twice the national rate, young people are finding it difficult to attain quality employment or other ways to participate in commercial activities. Educational opportunities, particularly at secondary

and vocational levels, are limited and although the enrolment rate in education has significantly increased since early 2000, the number of young people out of employment or education is still high.²

Health issues, including access to services, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and non-communicable diseases are among the big issues relevant to young people. Growing urbanization and issues and services relevant to young people who choose to remain in rural areas are equally relevant. Addressing needs of people who face disadvantages and vulnerabilities – whether due to gender, disabilities, sexual orientations or something else – is considered one of the key challenges. Furthermore, limited opportunities for effective youth participation in local and national governance and decision-making, and in social and cultural institutions, keep many young people in Fiji from fully realizing their potential as active citizens and individuals.

¹ Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Population Census (2007)

² Ministry of Youth and Sports, Situation Analysis on Youth in Fiji (2011)

What is volunteerism?

Definitions of volunteerism are usually as many and varied as there are people discussing it around a table. Limited academic literature and legal framework for volunteerism in Fiji means that there have been very few attempts to define it. One of the few definitions is offered by the National Employment Centre Decree 2009, which established the Fiji Volunteer Service (FVS), and states as follows:

Volunteering is considered one of the best and productive forms of personal and professional development, richly adding value to society in the most cost-effective and caring ways through free contribution of efforts, skills and time in charitable ventures and humanitarian assistance to the less fortunate people in society.

The UN defines volunteerism as a wide range of activities including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of participation and civic engagement. It has three underlining principles: undertaken of free will, for the general public good, and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor.

At times, these three principles seem to have grey areas among them. For example, cultural and social obligations may pressure a person to volunteer, and schools might expect students to engage in volunteer

activities. Nevertheless, activity should be taken out of one's free will and not as an obligation stipulated by a law or other contract. Secondly, defining what "public good" means can be tricky. However, volunteer activity should be of benefit to someone other than the volunteer, or to society at large; cleaning one's own backyard does not therefore constitute volunteerism. At the same time, it should be recognized that volunteering can bring benefit to the volunteer as well.

Finally, although volunteerism should be undertaken not for financial gain, volunteers might at times receive an allowance or reimbursement of costs when the activity is organized and facilitated by an organization.

Some stakeholders interviewed for this report defined volunteerism simply as "un-paid work or activity". In informal settings this makes more sense: people undertake activities freely in their communities and receive no remuneration for it. In a formal setting, the definition is less useful. For example, not paying employees their salaries would not turn them into volunteers, but simply into workers who have not been paid accordingly. Unpaid internships and traineeships are sometimes presented as volunteerism. In Fiji the lines are blurred on this issue and there has not been enough discussion about the interface between the two, nor is there legal framework that could bring us clarity. However, internships and traineeships are in

principle designed to ease the transition from education to employment and the labour market, and as such the principles are distinctly different from that of volunteerism.

Volunteerism also refers to 'activity' therefore making it different for example from donating money or blood, even if undertaken out of free will and for the benefit of someone else. Volunteers are also distinct from 'members'. For example, a CSO can have members who do not necessarily participate in the activities of the organization in any way, but their contribution can be a membership fee paid annually.

In general, 'volunteering' as a concept is foreign to many people in the Pacific, including Fiji. People and communities engage in activities that are conceptually similar to volunteering, but individuals would not call it volunteerism. These activities are closely associated with concepts such as to serve, duty to care, a requirement to sustain the community, a cultural expectation or obligation, and a form of love and reciprocity.³ Interestingly though, whether one calls it 'volunteerism' or something else, the emphasis is on the values that sustain in.



**Training for
volunteers
is saying
"thank you".**

3. Tamasese et al, A qualitative study into Pacific perspectives on cultural obligations and volunteering (2010)

Youth volunteers in Fiji offered the following definitions:

- *Volunteer is someone who is contributing their talents to the society or to the cause they believe in.*
- *Volunteers are people who are not paid, professional people who contribute their skills in a specified area.*
- *Volunteerism would be taking the opportunity to use your time to take part in something with passion.*
- *Volunteerism is a sense of social justice, about giving time back to the community, it is finding a connection with civil society and social movement and being able to feel that you are doing something that is not about remuneration. For young volunteers it is about finding yourself, being able to emerge stronger, defining yourself better, gaining skills that the formal education and work place system does not provide.*
- *Giving your all without any desire for acknowledgement. The benefit/satisfaction of helping others.*
- *Something that you give your time to, not necessarily get paid for. You are passionate about the issue.*
- *Volunteerism is a great opportunity to do something great based on your values.*
- *To me volunteerism is about giving time and resources to help someone without asking anything in return. It is unconditional.*
- *A service that is provided without any remuneration. It is entirely voluntary.*
- *To me, volunteerism is a very noble service that is provided to the country as a whole. It creates self-discipline, creates love for others and it makes one aware of their capability in providing assistance without a financial gain and discrimination of creed or colour.*

Formal and informal volunteerism

Formal volunteerism refers to an activity undertaken in an organized and structured setting, often through a CSO, but at times also through a public institution, private sector company, or some other institution. The term makes no judgement about the size of the organization: it could be small group, club, or association organized and run by volunteers, or a large professionally run non-governmental organization (NGO).

Informal volunteering, on the other hand, refers to a wide range of mutual help and collaboration between individuals and communities. It is not organized by a third party and tends to be organic in how it is undertaken and how it develops. Nevertheless, both contribute to the wellbeing of communities and individuals, as a result of time, energy, and care dedicated by others.

There are no national data in Fiji on volunteerism so it is impossible to say how common either formal or informal volunteering is. However, it is fair to say that informal volunteerism – even if not called as such – is an integral part of society in Fiji and a way of life in the communities. It is part of social relationships, structures, and institutions, and many people in Fiji volunteer informally out of the commitment to their community and to fulfil their cultural obligations.

While this report is not able to discuss in detail the differences, similarities, and relationship between formal and informal volunteerism, it is evident that

more discussion about what volunteerism is and how it manifests itself in both formal and informal settings is needed. If we are interested in how volunteerism contributes to the wellbeing of young people themselves, and how young people contribute to the well-being of their communities through volunteerism, both aspects should be considered.

Youth organizations engaging volunteers

There are plenty of youth organizations in Fiji registered as non-profit organizations (NFOs) as stipulated in the Charitable Trusts Act. Some of the notable youth organizations include Girl and Boy Scouts and Young Women's Christian Organizations. However, many CSOs – large and small – do not identify themselves as youth organizations but are categorized according to some other thematic issue such as environment, gender, or humanitarian response, and engage a high number of young people as volunteers in their activities. Fiji Red Cross, Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding, Transparency International Fiji, WWF Pacific and FemLINK are just a few good examples. While there are no national data as to how many youth volunteers CSOs annually engage (and statistics on the number of CSOs overall are somewhat unreliable), some of the individual organizations monitor the level of engagement. For example, Fiji Red Cross consistently engages over 100 volunteers each year and has a database

of 500 registered volunteers. Approximately 60-70 percent of them are under the age of 30. In general, volunteers supply a major resource to CSOs in Fiji where many CSOs rely heavily or solely on volunteers in the absence of paid staff to deliver their services and activities.⁴ It would be fair to say that volunteers are the back bone of the civil society sector. If all volunteers went on to strike for 6 months, how many organizations would be able to continue their work as normal? Most likely only a handful.

Youth clubs across the country are one of the largest mobilizers of youth volunteers. There are 60 registered Youth Clubs across the country that are run almost exclusively by young volunteers, and for the benefit and use of the young people themselves. Youth clubs are not necessarily formally registered as NFOs, nor are they required to register with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS). However, registering allows them to access financial support and assistance from the Ministry and connects them to the network of information and other assistance provided by the MOYS. Any interested groups can apply to register a youth club, by providing details such as the aims, activities, and assets of the club, projects already underway, and by signing a constitution template for which is provided by the MOYS.⁵

The MOYS also strongly supports the National Youth Council of Fiji (NYCF). Over the years NYCF has seen ups and downs, but has recently revived itself – with support from the Ministry and from UN agencies – as a relevant actor in developing youth participation and structures in Fiji. NYCF is increasingly well-placed to provide support both to the MOYS and youth groups across Fiji in developing and creating meaningful and effective volunteer structures for young people.

Faith based organizations (FBOs) such as the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, which is the largest Christian denomination in Fiji, are important mobilizers of youth volunteers. Youth volunteerism is common in all church communities, by active engagement of young people in organizing functions, delivering activities and leading church youth groups. The Pacific Conference of Churches, for example, has a Youth Empowerment Programme with an objective to enhance participation of youth and strengthen their leadership roles. However, many people do not necessarily identify these activities as volunteerism, but as roles and responsibilities young people are expected to undertake as a reflection of their cultural and social obligations.

4 UNDP Pacific Centre, A capacity assessment of CSOs in the Pacific (2012)

5 Ministry of Youth and Sports www.youth.gov.fj

There are also plenty of organizations that are not registered or groups that exist in villages, settlements, and neighborhoods. Some advocacy groups, which can be particularly attractive to young people, dedicate themselves to single or specific issues and do not necessarily want to register but prefer to retain their independence and exert influence through advocacy. The environmental movement in general is also full of examples of loose networks of activists and volunteers who do not need formal organizations to take action. While we do not have figures on how many young people volunteer through these kinds of groups, it can be presumed that they are increasingly popular.

**CSOs want to
enhance their
volunteer
management
capacities.**

Volunteer infrastructure facilitating youth volunteerism

Volunteer infrastructure (VI) refers to all *“the systems, mechanisms, and instruments needed to ensure an environment where volunteerism can flourish”*⁶. While the national priorities and realities influence what kind of VI is useful and needed, the following factors form a backbone for an effective structure that enables the harnessing of volunteering:

- *Reaching a common understanding of volunteerism and a shared appreciation of its value;*
- *Establishing and nurturing an enabling environment;*
- *Adopting a diversity of approaches to mobilizing and facilitating volunteerism;*
- *Ensuring sustainable funding.*

Various interventions to create VI could therefore include issues such as an enabling legal and policy framework on volunteerism, national volunteer schemes and programmes, systematic and institutionalized collaboration of volunteer involving organizations (VIOs) and other relevant stakeholders, reliable and systematic research and data, volunteer centres or other coordinating bodies, and promotion, recognition, and public discussion of volunteerism.⁷ Building capacity of VIOs as well as volunteer managers and coordinators to develop effective volunteer programmes and to mobilize volunteers are equally relevant.

Common understanding of volunteerism

More public dialogue is needed in Fiji on what volunteerism is. Whether one speaks to community based organizations and groups, national CSOs, international organizations working in Fiji, individual volunteers or representatives of public institutions, a variety of understandings and approaches are offered. While not everyone has to agree on the exact same definitions for volunteerism, a common understanding on the role and nature of volunteerism is needed. Particularly for young people, our ‘ideas’ about volunteerism can result in very practical outcomes; the interface between volunteerism, job related training, and paid employment would benefit from common dialogue. As volunteerism takes many forms and manifestations, the whole sector can appear confusing to many people.

To reach shared appreciation of value of volunteerism would require assessment of the extent of volunteerism in Fiji and contributions it makes in different sectors, both in financial and social terms. Furthermore, assessment of impact it has on volunteers, organizations themselves as well as beneficiaries and communities would be required. Currently some assessments are available from a limited number of organizations, but an overall picture of the sector is very difficult to paint.

6 UNV, Developing Volunteer Infrastructure: A Guidance Note

7 UNV's Experience in Strengthening Volunteer Infrastructure (2014)

Key policies affecting youth volunteerism in Fiji

The current National Youth Policy makes no reference to volunteerism. However, through the policy the (MOYS) commits itself strongly to the empowerment of youth, and many of the programmes it delivers contribute directly towards creating an enabling environment for youth volunteerism. The Voluntary Youth Organization Training Grant, which supports youth development work and initiatives by CSOs, has distributed funding to 27 youth organizations since 2011. Through The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, the MOYS encourages young people to give volunteer service over a set period of time while simultaneously experiencing the benefits that their service provides to others. Furthermore, support and funding directed to the NYCF and youth clubs across the country is an effective method in enabling young people to volunteer for their chosen causes.⁸ Overall, MOYS has a strong mandate as well as commitment to drive youth initiatives and to improve standards of youth participation and engagement in national and sub-national levels in Fiji.

The National Youth Policy has been implemented alongside and in support of the national development plan Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable

Socio-Economic Development 2010 – 14, which has a chapter dedicated to children and youth. It calls for more funding and better implementation and coordination of youth issues, and also notes the role of volunteers in sports administration.

A new youth policy will be launched in 2015; whether a specific commitment by the MOYS to promote and facilitate youth volunteerism is included remains to be seen.

A very recently adopted National Policy on Non-Formal Education in Fiji, which was approved by the Cabinet in November 2014, has potential to contribute towards recognition of volunteerism as a form of non-formal learning.

Legal framework on volunteerism

The National Employment Centre (NEC) Decree 2009⁹ is the key legal document relating to volunteerism in Fiji. It established the Fiji Volunteer Service, outlining its goals and objectives including an obligation to provide life and employment skills training to unemployed youth who are mobilized as volunteers through the service.

There is no other law specifically on volunteerism that would stipulate obligations to any government institution to promote or to develop an enabling environment for it.

The Immigration Act (2003) is considered by some

⁸ Ministry of Youth and Sports www.youth.gov.fj

⁹ National Employment Centre Decree No 54 of 2009

CSOs who mobilize volunteers from abroad as restrictive in terms of volunteerism: for visa purposes, international volunteers are equated with paid employees. Following the same logic, foreigners residing in Fiji are not allowed to volunteer without a relevant work permit.

Fiji Volunteer Service

The Fiji Volunteer Service (FVS) was established in 2010 based on the NEC Decree adopted a year earlier. The main function of the FVS is to engage unemployed young people and retirees who wish to serve society in the spirit of volunteering in local and regional initiatives and organizations. Young people eligible to be mobilized through the FVS should be 18-35 years of age, have tertiary education, and be registered as unemployed with the NEC. FVS provides them a stop gap while looking for employment, and an opportunity for skills and capacity development. According to the figures provided by the NEC, 730 young people have been mobilized through the service since 2010. The volunteer assignments are full-time assignments generally lasting between 3-12 months, and the majority of the opportunities are provided by public sector organizations. All volunteers receive a weekly allowance of F\$ 90 during the assignment, payment of which is divided between the NEC and the host organization. Participation in the volunteer

scheme is not mandatory to young unemployed people; however, it is an attractive opportunity through which an individual can gain valuable experience, while being supported by an allowance that helps to manage daily expenditures. It is worth noting that there is no universal unemployment benefits in Fiji, which young unemployed people would otherwise receive.

The FVS emphasizes the values that in general underpin volunteerism. The programme wishes “to promote a strong sense of service and civic pride amongst the young people of Fiji” highlighting volunteerism as a means to engage people in tackling development challenges and adding value to society through free contribution of effort and skills. However, since the FVS is established under the public employment services, it naturally has first and foremost an underlining objective to support the pathway to employment of young, unemployed people. To enhance employability, the NEC provides training to all volunteers including life skill training, professional counseling, aptitude assessment and employment skill training. Youth volunteers are also expected to receive coaching and mentoring by a supervisor as well as in-house training provided by their host organizations.

FVS is a first formal volunteer scheme between the Pacific Islands States, and provides a unique opportunity in the region for a transfer of knowledge, experience and capacity from Fiji as a form of South-

South cooperation. To date, deployment of volunteers to serve abroad has been restricted only to qualified, retired people, but a new Youth Ambassador scheme that is under development, will provide opportunities in the future also for young people to volunteer abroad. The Government of Fiji has invested a substantial amount of money and effort into the FVS and is very committed to developing it further. The main limitation to the FVS is its scope. It is only available to young people who are registered as unemployed with the NEC and it requires full-time engagement. Considering the NEC's mandate, this is reasonable. However it does leave a gap to some other public institutions to facilitate and promote volunteerism among all young people, independent of their educational background or status in employment or education.

Based on the experiences the FVS has gained so far, it is now in a unique position to collect information about volunteerism that has not been available to date. For example, what are the capacities and skills young people develop through volunteerism, and to what extent is their employability enhanced through the scheme in comparison to those who have not participated in full time volunteer service? How do the employers evaluate the volunteers in terms of attitudes and capacities gained, and do they recognize

volunteer after their engagement through the scheme, or do they simply view it as a pathway to employment? Does the scheme change them otherwise?

**Volunteering is
freely given, but
not cost free.**

FCOSS National Volunteer Centre

“FCOSS National Volunteer Centre” (FVC) was a service or a project, implemented by the Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) over three years in 2010-12. It was aimed particularly at mobilizing unemployed youth to participate in projects that are of value to the community. The project was funded by Vodafone ATH Fiji Foundation by 220,000 FJD.

The Volunteer Centre is a great example of how in collaboration a civil society organization and the private sector can promote and enable youth volunteerism. During the project, the Volunteer Centre facilitated dozens of community volunteer projects, organized capacity building trainings for young people, created casual employment for over 100 young people, and registered 1,200 volunteers. Approximately 6,000 individuals benefitted from the project activities.

Since the end of the project, the Volunteer Centre has continued to exist but in a considerably smaller role. The Vodafone Foundation continues, for example, to support youth development work and to enhance the capacity of FCOSS by funding one full-time coordinator, and by providing opportunities for innovative use of technology in youth work.

However, the example of the Volunteer Centre highlights a typical challenge faced by many organizations engaging youth volunteers: organizing sustainable youth engagement programmes requires investment

in the appropriate coordination and implementation of activities, and as the funding ends, so do many of the activities. It is worth noting though that FCOSS as an organization has extensive experience and knowledge in youth volunteerism, and would be well placed to assume tasks in the future that would contribute towards development of effective volunteer infrastructure in Fiji in general.

National Volunteer Steering Committee

One of the attempts in Fiji to enhance collaboration on volunteerism between stakeholders is the National Volunteer Steering Committee (NVSC), which defines itself as “a collaborative working committee that advocates for the recognition and promotion of volunteerism in all its forms in Fiji”. The NVSC, initially known as the International Volunteer Day (IVD) Committee, was established in 2001 with the facilitation of United Nations Volunteers, bringing together national actors from civil society, the government, community and youth groups, and the private sector. The NVSC has annually organized and coordinated celebrations on IVD on 5th of December, which is dedicated to celebrating and recognizing the invaluable services provided by volunteers worldwide.

In 2014, NVSC created its first ever terms of reference, in which it expresses its commitment to further recognize and strengthen volunteerism, and calls

for the need to promote and develop volunteerism throughout the year. It has also outlined the following objectives, towards which it intends to work in the next few years:

- Organize and enhance dialogue and discussion on the role of volunteerism in the society.
- Contribute to the collection of existing knowledge and creation of new knowledge such as data, research, and evaluations to showcase the value of volunteerism towards development in Fiji.
- Share expertise, information, and good practices on volunteerism among its members and other stakeholders.
- Conduct awareness raising and advocacy campaigns, including International Volunteer Day, to promote and to celebrate volunteerism.
- Encourages all stakeholders to invest in quality volunteerism and to develop their volunteer management capacities.
- Advocate for the development of relevant volunteer structures and policy framework to create an enabling environment for volunteerism.

There are currently approximately ten members in the NVSC, and with the introduction of the terms of reference, it wishes to renew its efforts to integrate volunteerism into development efforts at all levels, and to invite new members to the group that is open to any interested parties.

It is worth noting that the NVSC is purely a collaborative body of various organizations based on their willingness to work together towards commonly agreed goals. It has no external funding or permanent secretariat.

Regular and systematic research

There is very little academic research into youth volunteerism in Fiji, and currently there are no publications available solely dedicated to the topic. Youth participation, however, is a well-researched area and volunteerism as a form of participation gets a mention in various reports and publications. A survey conducted by the Citizen Constitutional Forum for a report *Young People & Democratic Participation in Fiji (2014)* concluded that 22 percent of young people participate through volunteerism¹⁰; however, the report does not elaborate on what is considered volunteerism and separates it from thematic issues such as ‘environmental activities’. Patrick Vakaoti in his discussion paper on *Mapping the landscape of Young People’s Participation in Fiji (2012)* argues that “In Fiji, volunteering exists as the most common form of youth participation.”¹¹

However, there is plenty of information and knowledge on volunteerism vested in organizations who engage volunteers. In particular, larger CSOs systematically collect data on their volunteer programmes including the number of volunteers engaged, and results and change created through volunteerism, whether on volunteers themselves or within the communities they work. However, much of the information is not readily available to the public, and is challenging to combine in a format that would draw a bigger picture

of volunteerism and its role in the society of Fiji. Furthermore, a significant number of CSOs rely in general on their knowledge and data collection through ad hoc and informal mechanisms to collect data, with a clear focus on reporting rather than a systematic approach to data collection, evidence, and analysis. In general, CSOs identify monitoring and evaluation as their key area of weakness.¹² In regards to volunteerism, most commonly, organizations tend to publicize information that is intended for awareness raising such as success stories and personal accounts of volunteering.

Currently in Fiji, statistics on youth volunteerism do not exist. World Bank, in its report *Giving South Pacific Youth a Voice: Youth Development through Participation (2008)*, reported that in two survey areas, Suva and Namosi, 42 percent and 56 percent of survey respondents volunteered. While this might give an indication of the popularity of volunteerism among young people, it does not quite reveal the whole truth. Currently it is impossible to make conclusions as to what percentage of young people in Fiji volunteer, in what kind of setting, how often, and how many hours in a typical month.

¹⁰ Young People & Democratic Participation in Fiji (2014)

¹¹ Patrick Vakaoti” Mapping the Landscape of Young People’s Participation in Fiji (2012)

¹² R. Spence et al., Survey of Fijian Civil Society Organizations Summary Report (2010)

Measuring youth volunteering

VIOs around the world have in recent years promoted systematic measurement of volunteer work in order to highlight its social and economic value. Volunteerism is essentially a social phenomenon which is difficult to measure in numbers. However, numbers are one aspect that could help us to determine societal impact created through volunteering, and as such are important. Measuring the value of volunteering would help volunteers themselves to recognize the results they have created; for organizations to enhance their accountability, public relations and resource mobilization; and for the government to enhance its understanding of the extent and value of volunteering in the country, in order to support evidence-based policy development. Only through reliable data are they able to develop appropriate policies and strategies in order to harness volunteerism towards the national development goals.¹³ The Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies has developed, at the request of Statistics Bureau of the International Labour Organization, in collaboration and with support from UNV, the Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work.¹⁴ It is currently the best available data collection tool that has been adopted in a number of countries around the world, and is also the only one that provides internationally comparable data on volunteer work. The tool is designed to be a cost-effective, simple

questionnaire to be used as a supplement to national labour force surveys or other household surveys, and if implemented, would considerably enhance the evidence base on youth volunteering in Fiji.



100 % agree
volunteerism should be
encouraged and
facilitated through the
formal
education system.

¹³ UNV, State of the World Volunteerism report (2011)

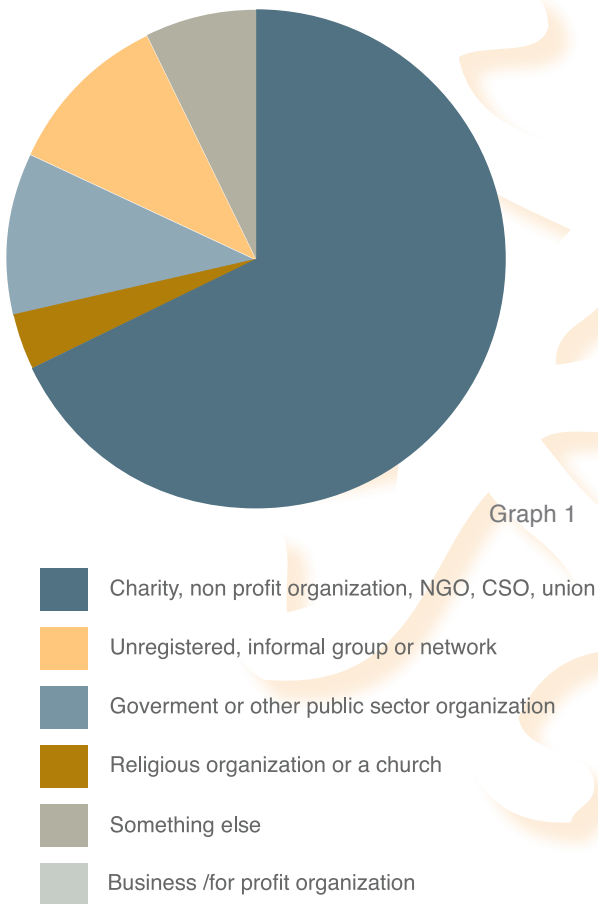
¹⁴ http://www.ilo.org/stat/Publications/WCMS_162119/lang--en/index.htm

**Engaging young people
through volunteerism:**

**Challenges
Opportunities
Good practices**

Perspectives from organizations

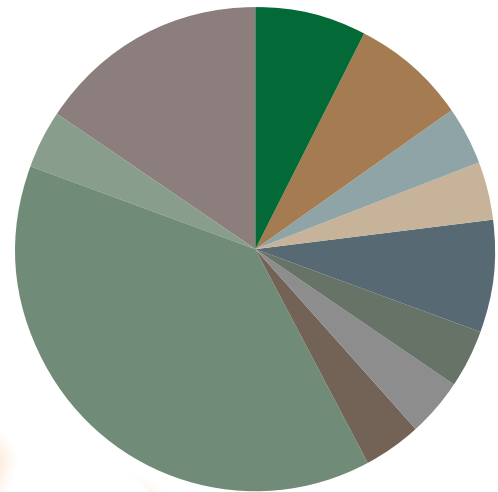
To explore perspectives and ideas about youth volunteerism in Fiji, 28 organizations working in the volunteer sector were consulted. 14 organizations were interviewed face to face, and 14 organizations responded to a survey. Most of the respondents were representatives of civil society organizations, as shown in the chart below (Graph 1)



Graph 1

The results were further discussed in a focus group meeting with six participants, which provided more meat around the bones on issues raised.

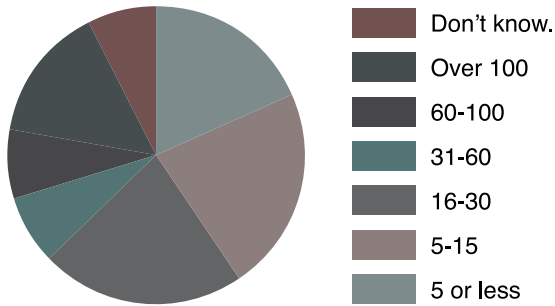
Survey participants identified themselves as working primarily in the following thematic sectors. (Graph 2)



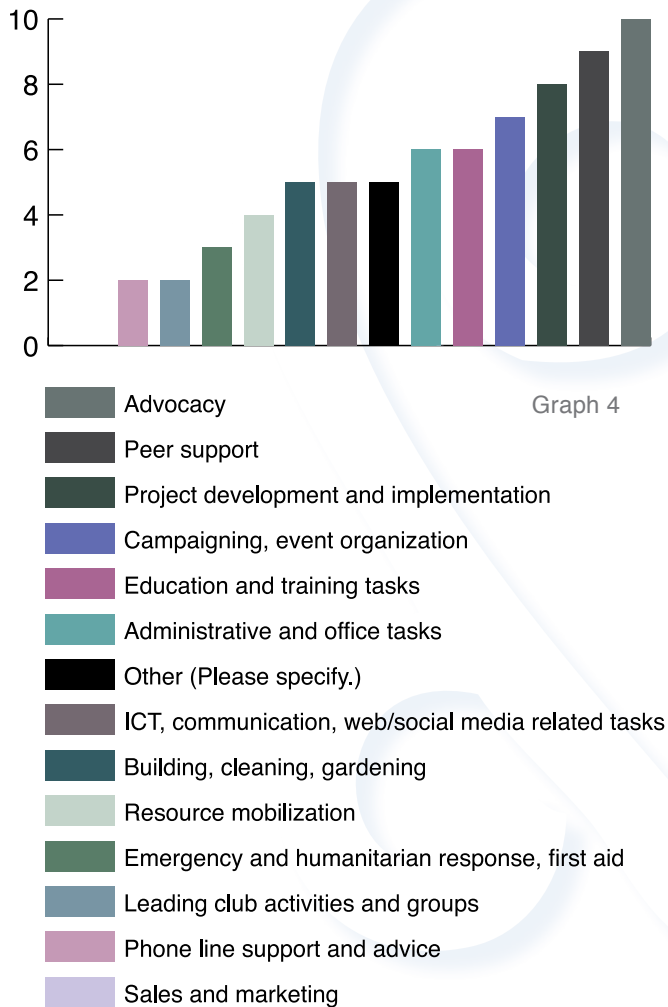
Graph 2

Number of volunteers mobilized typically by these organizations ranged from five or less to over 100 volunteers (Graph 3)

Organizations also typically engage volunteers in various tasks and activities such as advocacy, campaigning, but do not restrict them to tasks in a single area. (Graph 4)



Graph 3



Graph 4

volunteers to swap tasks among themselves:

“We do this in order for them to become ‘a jack of all trades’ – and even if they do not get competent with everything, at least they see the bigger picture and see all the various tasks that need doing,” an interviewee explained.

1) Volunteerism and development

All respondents to the survey agreed with the argument that “volunteerism contributes to the development of Fiji”. They saw the role of volunteerism in development roughly in three distinct categories: as a supplement to formal service delivery such as in the areas of health and disaster management; as glue to social cohesion and a reflection of commitment to communities by individuals; and as a route to empowerment of people that allows them to become not only active agents of change to the betterment of their communities and society at large, but also as a source of information on what the needs are within the communities.

“Specifically during disasters volunteers provide a service where they provide relief to many. In providing these services they make the livelihood of many citizens better which aids the development of our nation.”

“Volunteers help public institutions to deliver their services.”

“Generally, many sports organizations don’t have financial backing and they have to rely on volunteers, and through voluntary efforts youths gain life skills which empower them, leading them to make decisions that positively impact their communities, consequently developing Fiji.”

2) To what extent volunteerism benefits organizations?

Volunteerism is often a backbone of CSOs in terms of human resources. In Fiji, operations as well as governance boards are staffed by volunteers, many dedicating their time, even full-time, towards the activities of CSOs.¹⁵

However, the organizations interviewed for this report recognized that the benefits volunteerism can bring to them are considerably more multi-faceted than that. Volunteers also play an important role in enhancing organizations’ relationships with the community and reflecting the public support of its activities and programmes. In essence, involvement of volunteers enhances the legitimacy of an organization. Volunteers can also help to build a more positive image for an organization as they become not only visible torch bearers for their mission, but are literally seen and noticed in communities.

One organization that has been consistently developing its volunteer programme for the last two years,

reported:

“We have received feedback from partners, including our funders, due to volunteers: it is helping us to build stronger partnerships and positive image for our organization.”

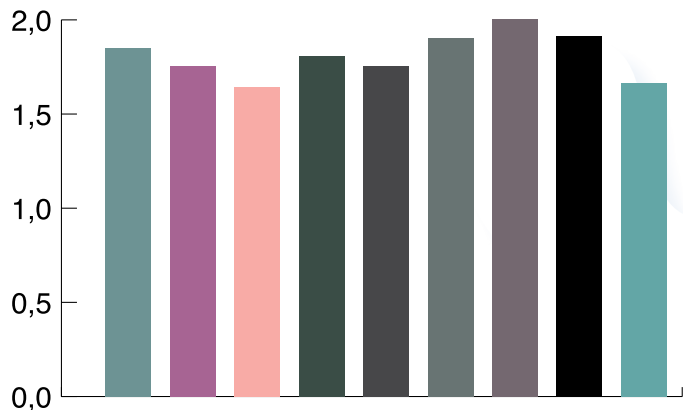
Positive feedback from external partners has in turn enhanced recognition of volunteers within the organization itself. Not all the paid staff had previously acknowledged the value that volunteerism can bring to their organization, and the feedback from stakeholders has begun to change that. A similar situation was evident in two other organizations where both a senior manager and a programme level staff member highlighted the role of volunteers in helping to deliver services and activities, as a tool for the empowerment of young people, in bringing new people into their activities, and through ideas they bring to the organization.

Apart from resulting in cost savings and filling in capacity gaps, most of the organizations participating in the survey strongly agreed that volunteers also bring with them specialized skills and knowledge, energy and enthusiasm, as well as other people such as friends and family members into their activities, therefore further extending the reach of an organization.

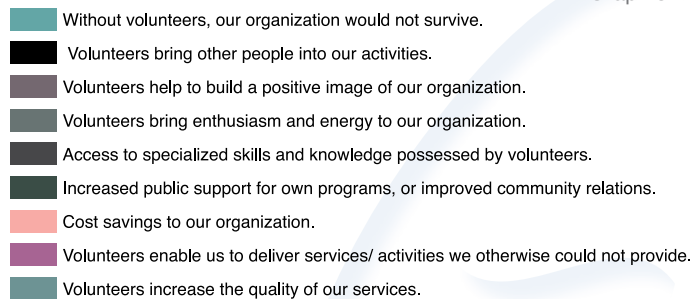
¹⁵ UNDP Pacific Centre, A capacity assessment of CSOs in the Pacific (2012)

To what extent volunteerism benefits your organization?

0 = not at all, 1 = to some extent, 2 = to great extent



Graph 5



3) Young women and volunteering

The organizations participating in the survey reported a high number of women volunteering for them. As shown in the chart 6 (p. 38), indicating the percentage of women of all the volunteers, half of the respondents reported that over 50 percent of their volunteers are female, and for another 20 percent of the organizations females account for between 31-50 percent of their volunteers. (Graph 6, p. 38)

Why are young women keen to participate in voluntary activities? In the absence of research, we can only speculate – so let's do exactly that.

Some of the survey participants wondered if this is due to women being more caring by nature than men. It can be quite easy to fall for this stereotype. However, surveys around the world, for example World Giving Index 2014 which looked at charitable behaviour across the world in over 130 countries, reports that men are overall more likely to volunteer time outside their home and families than women.

At least some of the explanation might lie in limited opportunities for young women to participate in decision-making, and take leadership roles in social institutions and civic and political life in general, both at the local and national level. Volunteerism can provide an alternative avenue through which women can be part of something they find important, and to influence the society around them. One interviewee from an organization working with gender issues described volunteerism as follows: *“Volunteerism is a sense of social justice, about giving time back to the community, it is finding a connection with civil society and social movement.”*

The results from the survey of youth volunteers do not contradict the idea. According to respondents, *“opportunities to be involved in a range of different and interesting experiences”* was selected as the most common motivation to volunteer.

“As a young woman, volunteering has helped me to access opportunities”

My journey as a volunteer began ten years ago. I was in a stage in my life where I was looking for grounding, and value and satisfaction in life. A friend invited me to become a volunteer for a charitable club and a decision to join changed my life.

Life skills such as confidence and self-esteem primarily, teamwork, conflict resolution, multi tasking, project management and leadership skills are some of the many things I have learned through volunteering over the years.

Apart from my full time paid employment, I used to spend on average 6-8 hours daily working on (unpaid) volunteer activities, and during peak activity times even longer hours. Nearly every weekend and most weeknights I was involved in some form of volunteer activity. I still continue to volunteer nearly the same hours, but in different context now.

It was “*acceptable*” for me as a young woman to be involved as a volunteer in charitable or religious organizations. It took place at community level, was non-confrontational, and society “*approved*” it; as a result families and friends were supportive and even joined in. Now when I volunteer, for example in providing service support to women at police stations, or advocating for democracy or challenging street harassment, it is met with resistance and disdain.

Given the restrictions on movement for girls and women, volunteering or joining a charity organization, has provided me the opportunity to gain some sense of freedom of movement - to meet people, travel away from home, socialize in the evenings, and spend time with friends. Permission and approval from home was more forthcoming if it had to do with charity or religious volunteer work.

Initially, when I joined my first volunteer club I was a passive member - things were stagnant in my opinion. When I started making decisions, sharing my opinions, prompting decision-making based on discourse and consensus, or disagreeing, I was also very quickly labeled as “*aggressive*” “*intimidating*” “*cold*” etc.

In the beginning it upset me, but very quickly I realized that I was making an impact in my community. Quality and delivery of projects was improving and I, was learning new skills.

During certain volunteer activities, I noticed that there were more women than men. Women come to do hands on projects like giving out gift packs, cleaning, cooking and cataloguing books. However, if there was

a social activity, leadership task or a meeting, more men participated. There was somewhat a division of labour between women and men. Often I remember hearing comments such as *“it’s your job as a girl”*. It was a challenge in trying to complete the tasks, because not all volunteers attended if they felt the task was too *“feminine”* or *“inappropriate”*.

There were times when in certain meetings, women didn’t contribute their views and opinions for fear of being ridiculed or labeled – I experienced that fear many times and stopped myself from sharing my ideas or opinion. It was frustrating, and I had to work several times harder to gain credibility and get the job done. As a result I hardly had any time for self-care.

Persistence and a small group of volunteer friends supported and encouraged me in transforming these norms that were limiting all of us in one way or another. I remember one large project that involved extensive painting and tiling, and medium construction works, which more women volunteered for. Women were breaking stereotypes and enjoying themselves whilst doing it.

Nearly all the media coverage I have received and the public profile that I now have has been because of the various volunteer work and activities that I have been involved in. For some, Hibiscus Pageant competition provides a platform to talk about issues; for me, had it not been for the effort I put in volunteering for things I am passionate about and strongly believe in, I would not have been able to gain a public profile. There are not many platforms available where young women, especially one with my age, socio-economic status and ethnic background, can become visible and be recognized for their work and intellect.

The networks that I have built through volunteering have helped me in my professional career and also during the recent election campaign. They prove valuable time and time again. The volunteering work has helped me access and acquire more opportunities, networks, success, and skills.

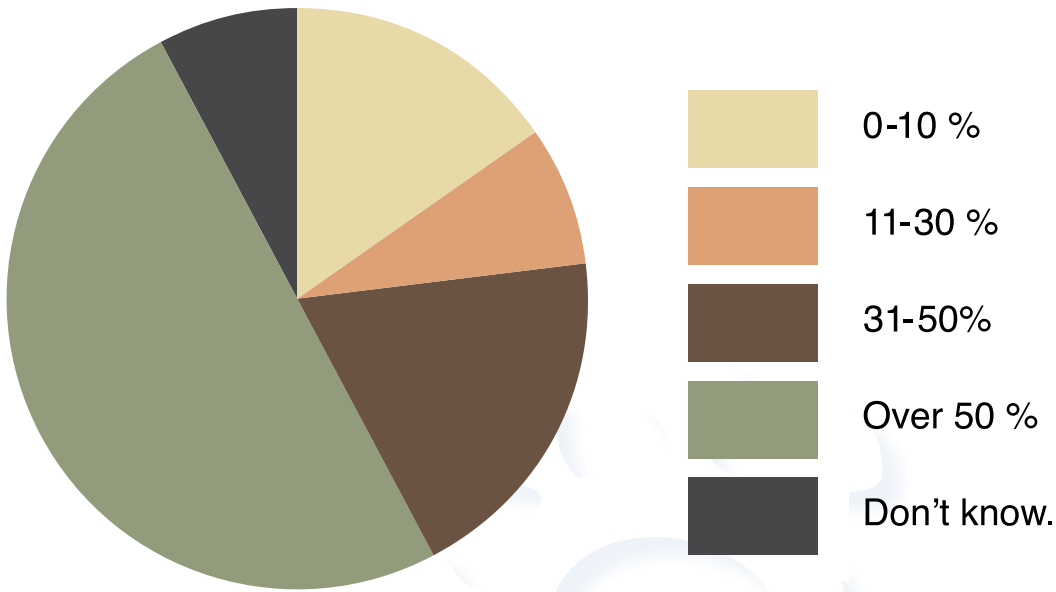
In fact, all the volunteer activities over the years became the building block on which my political career and public profile is made today.

Roshika Deo

Feminist and Politician (an independent candidate in 2014 parliamentary elections)

34 years old

Percentage of female volunteers



Graph 6

One youth volunteer specifically described leadership and facilitation skills of women in his organization: *“In (organization X) coordinators are women. Their skills to facilitate tell much about their leadership skills. It is fascinating to see women’s ability to bring people together – they create space for participation that is safe and inclusive. The good leadership from female leaders has kept me with (organization X).”*

More research is needed. Do women – young and old – feel they can impact social and political issues around them through volunteerism? Does it help them to become leaders in their communities? Does volunteerism empower them? Are opportunities VIOs provide to young men and women underpinned by gendered roles and expectations, or do they provide

more egalitarian avenues to participate through volunteerism? Is volunteerism instead “gendered” in how it provides opportunities to young people, directing both young women and men to undertake tasks that are traditionally seen as appropriate for them, hence reinforcing gender stereotypes?

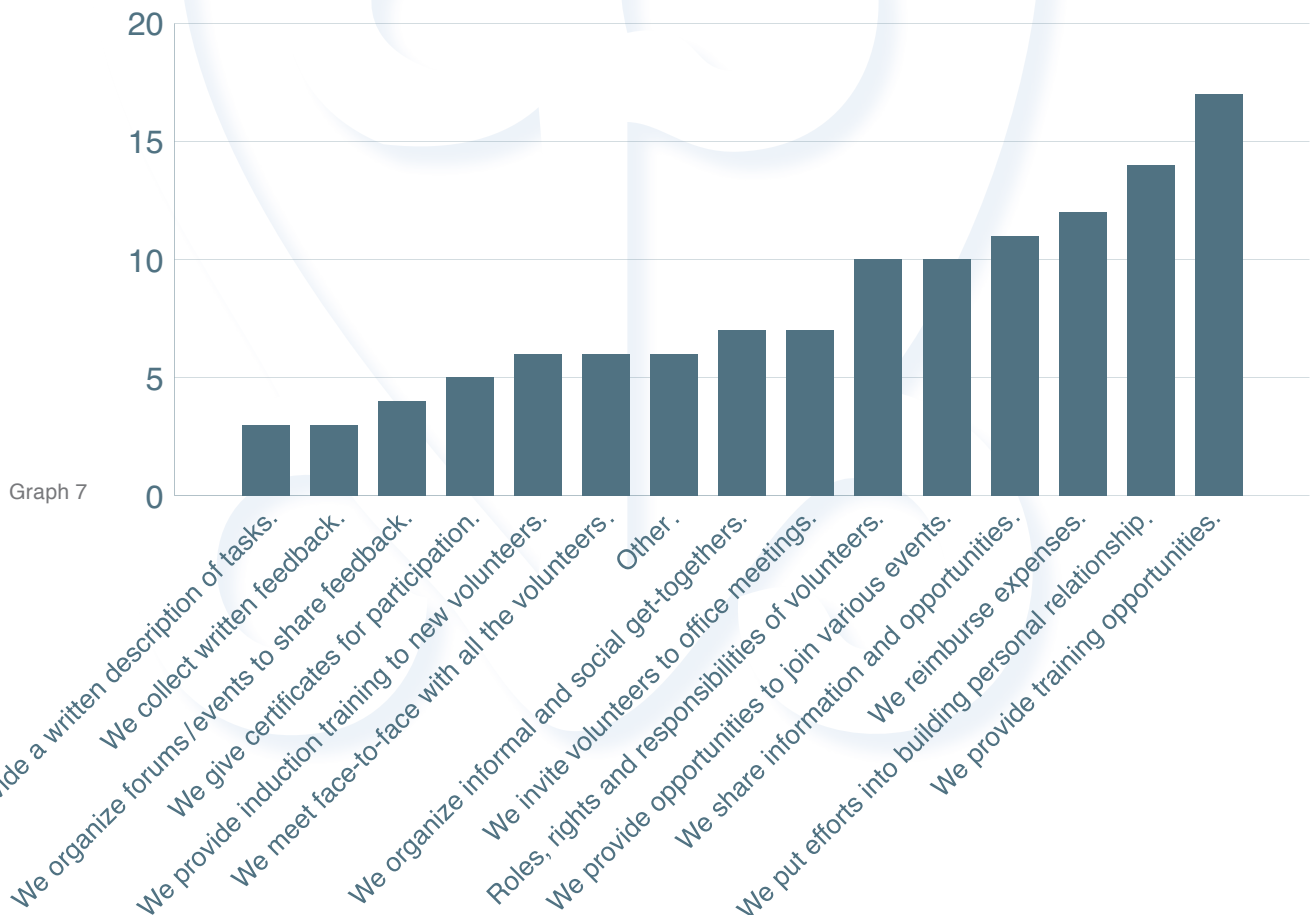
**Policy level action
to promote
volunteerism is**

4) Organizational capacity to engage volunteers

Survey respondents described numerous good practices of volunteer management in their organizations. While only 30 percent had a written volunteer policy, 60 percent confirmed they have identified and written down roles, rights, and responsibilities of their volunteers and 85 percent of the organizations involve volunteers in the decision-making processes.

The level and support provided to volunteers varied significantly between respondents. Graph number 7

illustrates various ways to support volunteers from which respondents were able to choose all relevant options. Unsurprisingly, large organizations with high professional capacity, number of paid staff members, and funding, had impressive tools and methods to support their volunteers. One organization selected all the options provided and had also developed 15 full training programmes available to volunteers ranging from village infrastructure assessment to health and safety, volunteer management, leadership training, and various technical trainings.



Another organization that provides trainings, for example in leadership skills, working with children, code of conduct, and first aid commented:

“Trainings are a way to say thank you to the volunteers, and we want to provide something that is worth other than financial value. We see a lot of appreciation for this from volunteers.”

Many organizations provide trainings to volunteers on topics which are mastered by someone within the organization itself thus avoiding significant additional training costs.

Organizations with limited funds resort to methods that can be equally affective but require little money such as sharing information about relevant issues, developing personal relationships, and providing opportunities to join various events.

Some showed imagination in their support to volunteers. For example, one organization has an effective mentoring system where more experienced volunteers – although young people themselves - mentor less experienced ones. This does not only facilitate knowledge sharing and learning, but helps the organization to retain its volunteers. The interviewee explained that their organization recognized the fact that many active volunteers spread their wings and move on to other things in their lives. The mentoring system ensured that new active volunteers were *“coming through the ranks”* at all times, hence also ensuring sustainability

of the organization as a whole.

Other support offered to volunteers included opportunities to provide feedback, participation in bible and prayer groups, and skills development for example in literacy and numeracy.

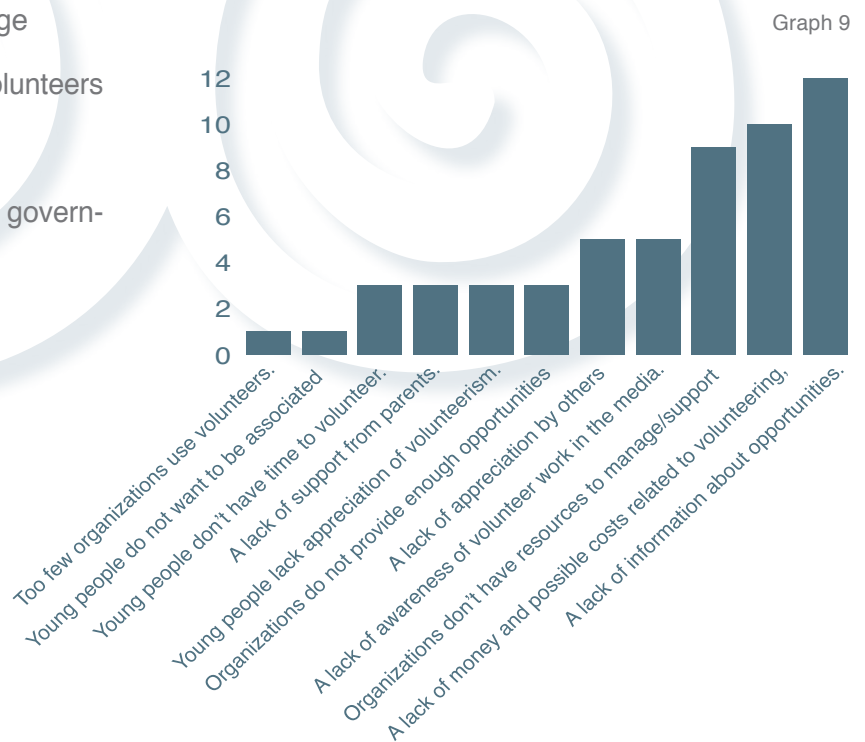
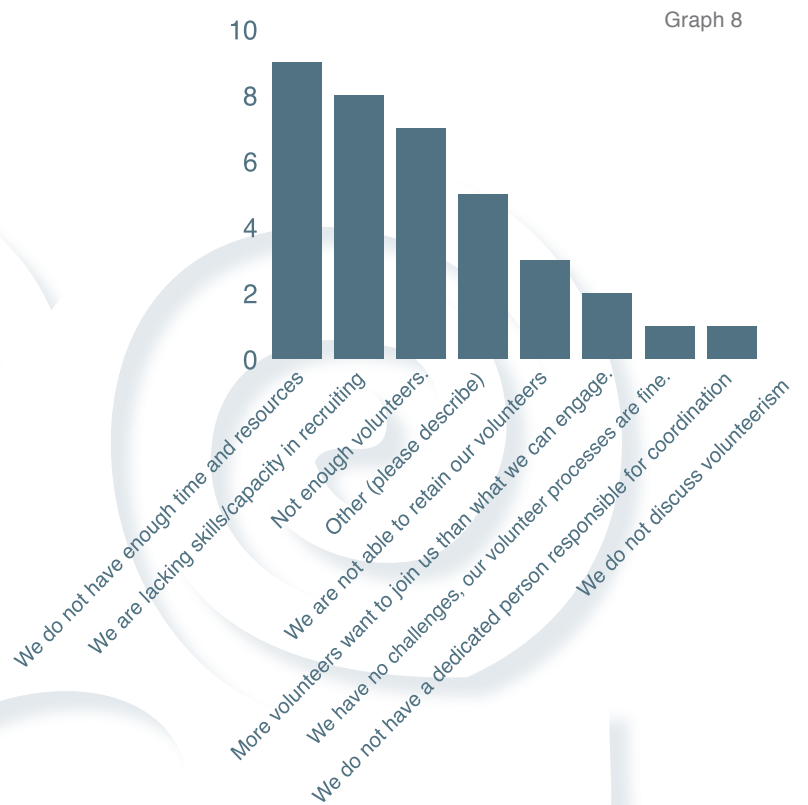
Surprisingly few organizations reported to be providing certificates to their volunteers. Why not, particularly as many of them recognize volunteerism as an important way to learn new skills and competencies? Luckily, this is an easy gap to close.

Overall, the stakeholders expressed a strong interest in developing their volunteer management capacities and would like to receive training on volunteer management for their staff working with volunteers, as well as facilitation or technical advice on developing internal volunteer policies and the volunteer management cycle. All of them agreed that *“tools and methods helping organizations to enhance quality of volunteer programmes would be useful”*. Respondents were also given six specific issues relating to volunteer management to agree or to disagree with. The most common capacity challenges seem to be that organizations do not have enough time and resources to engage volunteers. They are lacking skills/capacity in recruiting, managing, and supporting volunteers, and simply do not have enough volunteers.

Stakeholders were also asked to consider challenges of youth volunteerism both in general and in their own organization. A number of ready options were offered with a possibility to choose a maximum of three options. The graphs, at right, illustrate the results.

Other challenges faced included:

- Finding volunteers with relevant skills and capacities that were needed
- Providing continuously motivating and meaningful things to do
- Not having a space in which to meet with volunteers
- Expectations for remuneration by volunteers
- Challenges in communication and personnel management
- Limited time for volunteers to engage
- Stigma and lack of appreciation to volunteers towards the work they do
- Lack of recognition and support from government institutions



An environment of helping hands

Managing Volunteers in WWF Pacific

Starting as a pilot project in 2011, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Pacific Volunteer Programme has quickly grown into a unique and well-respected forum that involves young people in a range of environmental activities from turtle tagging to mangrove protection.

Run by the WWF Pacific office in Suva and now with a database of more than 150 interested individuals, the Programme has its own volunteer office bearers and organizes its own events and activities, which are monitored and assisted by WWF staff. It is self-funded through the volunteers' own initiatives, and does not receive financial support from WWF Pacific to implement its activities.

Office bearers are elected annually, and they meet with other volunteers monthly to discuss potential projects and to share ideas. Additionally, they organize two or three fundraising events a year to ensure all projects can be completed.

The original purposes of the Volunteer Programme were twofold:

1. To build a pool of suitably trained volunteers to support the delivery of WWF Pacific's campaigns, its Vision, and the goals of the Strategic Plan;
2. To provide an opportunity to introduce to and train passionate young people in the conservation sector.

Unaisi Tagicakibau, WWF Pacific Sustainable Land-use and Livelihoods Officer, oversees the volunteers' projects and provides the link to the WWF office when resources and expertise are needed to help the activities along.

"The Programme has established itself as an entry point for those interested in conservation work, with the majority of members being students or graduates in such fields as environmental science or marine biology," Mrs Tagicakibau explains.

In the past 12 months alone, the volunteers have contributed to WWF Pacific turtle programme in the Macuata and Bua, helped with replanting at the Sigatoka Sand Dunes, assisted ANZ Bank staff with replanting along

the Lami River, and been on hand to support the WWF Earth Hour and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (Pacific Island Roundtable Conference).

“This work has not gone unnoticed by other conservation groups,” Mrs Tagicakibau notes. “And we now get requests from other NGOs when they are in need of support staff for field work. It’s a very positive experience and has helped WWF Pacific to foster stronger relationships with other conservation groups.”

“Overall, there’s been a great satisfaction from WWF Pacific’s side in that it has given us important human resources when needed, and also from the volunteers themselves in their own capacity-building and the way they work as a team.”

For their part, WWF Pacific staff members carry out regular workshops in their fields of expertise to give the volunteers more background and knowledge of the organization’s work. WWF Pacific recognizes the volunteers’ contributions with certificates of achievement presented at the end of the year.

Current committee president Kalisiana Marama says the next step the volunteers are looking at, is to take their projects into schools.

“We are trying to set up a network within schools to get them started on composting and paper recycling,” Ms Marama said. “We did something similar with the Villa Maria settlement off Mead Road in Suva, and now we’re talking to a couple of schools in an effort to get more young people interested in conservation.”

“We see young people as the future of conservation,” she said. “We need to get the next generation to look at environmental issues much more seriously than the last one did.”

The WWF Pacific Volunteer Programme creates benefits by introducing members to environmental work; helping to spread awareness of environmental issues; making a difference in environmental work of other agencies; and providing members valuable experience as they look for work in the sector.

By WWF Pacific Volunteers

Stakeholders saw at least two possible solutions to developing their professional capacity. All stakeholders agreed they *“would benefit from exchanging good practices and ideas on volunteerism and volunteer management with other organizations working with volunteers”*. They would enhance more purposeful collaboration between organizations, for example, by sharing ready tools and advice. The exchange of ideas and peer support with others facing similar challenges was mentioned also. When asked if *“collaboration between VIOs is sufficient and effective”*, no respondent fully agreed. One stakeholder elaborated:

“Currently organizations are working too much in silos and lacking openness and transparency.”

To help opening the silos, trainings could be provided for example with support from development agencies, the MOYS, some other ministry, or in the future by some kind of “coordinating body” that provides services to CSOs as well as decision makers on volunteerism and volunteer management. Alternatively, National Volunteer Steering Committee could facilitate exchange of information, ideas and tools. Currently, the committee is already planning to implement a series of short trainings relating to volunteer management practices during 2015-16. Furthermore, informal peer networks of volunteer coordinators could help in bridging the

gaps between organizations.

The key challenges VIOs face relate mainly to their capacities to engage volunteers. They need to be better at informing potential volunteers of opportunities available to them and develop their volunteer management capacities in order to attract and retain volunteers. This of course requires funds, which is also seen as one of the key challenges. While volunteerism can be cost-effective, it does not come for free. Investments both in time and money to support, train, and coordinate volunteers are required.

5) Identifying impact of volunteerism

The relevance and the role of volunteerism in a society are ultimately determined by the impact it creates: how it impacts volunteers themselves, the organization they volunteer for, the beneficiaries and service users, and the society as a whole. In this survey and through a desk review, no volunteer impact studies from Fiji were identified. Only two organizations interviewed reported consistent recording to showcase the value and impact of volunteerism:

“Collecting data is extremely difficult but extremely important, because only through that can we show the impact volunteerism creates. Donors should recognize that everything is straight lined from the doer – the volunteers. As an example, we delivered

dengue messages to 70,000 thousand people with a small budget, and it was possible only with the help of volunteers.”

While determining the impact of volunteerism as a development intervention is not easy, organizations recognize the importance of doing so, and would like to see support in developing appropriate and practical methods for the purpose. Indeed, evidence based impact studies would help organizations to better demonstrate to donors, other partners, and volunteers the difference they make. It would not only help to attract funds, other support, and new volunteers to activities, but also help to improve their volunteer policies and programmes to deliver sustainable development results.

6) Covering costs for volunteers

Covering costs for volunteers is clearly a hot topic among volunteers and those who work with them.

“A lack of money and possible costs related to volunteering, such as bus fares” was considered one of the key challenges youth volunteers face in Fiji by both volunteers themselves and organizations engaging them.

While the majority of the stakeholders interviewed would like to cover bus fares or provide lunch to their volunteers, many also felt increasing expectations

from volunteers to be paid for their efforts. Some felt that unemployment and economic hardship faced by many young people contributes towards this.

The prevalence of international volunteers in Fiji receiving allowances has probably influenced this thinking. There are a number of organizations who mobilize volunteers to Fiji from abroad, and many of them pay allowances in order to make their programmes inclusive and available to a diversity of people, not only those with other financial means. The term ‘paid volunteers’ was mentioned several times, and it is often raised particularly when international volunteers are discussed. One stakeholder explained:

“Fiji as a nation gets volunteers from abroad and most have seen these young people having enough financial means to commute, commit and complete the task they volunteer to do when coming to our foreshore. We do not understand how they have been funded to be able to do this; most of our local volunteers also feel they need to be paid in order to get the job done. There needs to be a lot of clarification on this bracket!”

In general it seems that apples and oranges are mixed up in the discussion about payments provided to volunteers. Allowances paid by some organizations are equated in discussion with salaries, while the intention of the two - as well as the level of them - tend to be distinctively different. If allowances are paid to

volunteers to combat economic hardship and to provide income, it moves the discussion clearly to the arena of employment. More clarity is clearly needed in the discussion. Some organizations, however, reported their volunteers having no monetary expectations from the organizations, nor do they feel pressured to pay any. The explanation could lie in their otherwise efficient volunteer management practices in which volunteers receive other rewards for their efforts such as respect, appreciation, the opportunity to do meaningful things, and to develop skills and character; receiving monetary rewards become less relevant.

Some organizations also emphasized that creating a well-supported and safe environment is the most valuable thing they can offer to their volunteers. For example Fiji Red Cross, whose volunteers might have to work in hazardous situations, are provided with insurance. This is made possible for national societies by Red Cross' international volunteer insurances scheme.

Curiously enough, while the role of money in volunteering was discussed by number of stakeholders, none of them mentioned a form of international volunteering where volunteers themselves pay an organization for the opportunity to volunteer, known as "volun-tourism". Globally a multi-million dollar sector, volun-tourism has come under a lot of scrutiny, and is often criti-

cized for being designed to provide feel-good travel experiences for volunteers than to support needs of local communities through well planned volunteer engagement. In Fiji, there are a number of local and international organizations providing opportunities for volunteerism for a fee, but many of them provide professionally run volunteer programmes that are generally positively received: maybe for that – at least in this study – the concept did not appear to be of importance to the stakeholders.

7) Volunteerism and education

When stakeholders were posed the argument that "*volunteerism should be part of education curricula*", all agreed. However, some stakeholders suggested a careful approach in integrating volunteerism into the school system, and emphasized the inherent nature of volunteerism where duties are to be taken upon voluntarily and should not be imposed upon young people. Nevertheless, organizations would encourage schools to provide and enable participation through volunteering in order to enhance and to develop children's and young students' understanding of active citizenship and volunteerism.

"Volunteerism is a way to teach to the children that they need to contribute to the society, and volunteerism will give a sense of unselfishness and belonging to their communities and society. So yes, volunteerism

should be addressed in schools. However, it needs to be addressed in a culturally appropriate way and in a way that it responds to the local needs.”

Creating and facilitating volunteer opportunities for students in higher education was seen as beneficial in terms of personal growth and development.

8) Policy level action on volunteerism

Volunteer practitioners would like to see more consistent efforts by the government at a policy level to develop and to promote youth volunteerism. Only one respondent did not agree with the argument that *“more action should be taken on a policy level to develop volunteerism in Fiji further”*. While CSOs do not wish to see more regulations on volunteerism, they called for government to contribute to an environment that facilitates diversity of volunteerism, and to clearly articulate its recognition of volunteerism through relevant policies and related action, therefore encouraging more young people to volunteer for their chosen causes.

The National Youth Council of Fiji (NYCF) was specifically called on to initiate and lead dialogue on development of policies on youth volunteerism, recognizing the benefits created through it, and to encourage all youth groups across the country to invest in volunteerism.

Stakeholders also called for more collaboration between

public institutions and CSOs on issues relating to volunteerism. However, since CSOs are the primary mobilizers of volunteers, and much of the professional knowledge about it is vested in the civil society sector, it was emphasized that while policy level support to volunteerism is called for, relevant policies should be developed in collaboration with CSOs and volunteer practitioners. Overall, governments lead in recognition of volunteerism, in developing common understanding of volunteerism in Fiji, and ensuring sustainable funding for volunteer initiatives was called for.

9) Volunteerism on the Internet

Internet and particularly mobile phone coverage in Fiji is fairly good. However not all young people have internet access, or the means to pay for its use. Nevertheless, the use of them is growing at a quick rate.

CSOs currently do not seem to be taking enough advantage of the internet to promote volunteerism. In our survey, youth volunteers informed us that finding information about opportunities for volunteering is the most common challenge preventing or hindering them from volunteering. We tested this by trying to find information about opportunities on the internet.

Visits to websites of twenty, randomly selected Fijian CSOs of at least medium size, revealed that only five of them provided any information about how to volunteer for them. Since many organizations do not have the resources to run websites, we also visited social media sites of 15 different organizations. One of them had one post on their social media site mentioning volunteerism.

While the test was far from scientific, it seemed to suggest that the internet could be used more effectively to inform potential volunteers on how to get involved in various activities.

Organizations who participated in our survey all agreed that a portal or a search engine listing volunteer opportunities and serving all organizations who engage volunteers would be beneficial and useful.

It would not only be an effective one-stop-shop for potential volunteers, but also help those organizations that do not have the resources or capacity to maintain their own websites or social media sites. Organizations further welcomed an internet based resource bank that would allow them to share information and resources relating to volunteerism, as well as good practices amongst each other.

Volunteering over the internet is not very common yet in Fiji but could immediately provide new opportunities for both organizations and volunteers themselves. In our survey, only six percent of volunteers disagreed with the claim that *“online volunteering should be promoted in Fiji”*, and only one organization disagreed with the claim that *“online volunteering provides a good opportunity for young people to volunteer”*. Reservations related to the unequal access to internet particularly in rural areas.

UNV manages an online platform www.onlinevolunteering.org through which people can commit time and skills over the internet, to the benefit of an organization that might be anywhere in the world. Equally, CSOs in Fiji could take advantage of the service, which allows them to tap into the skills, capacities and enthusiasm of volunteers from all over the world.

10) Donor recognition of volunteerism

All organizations participating in our survey agreed that *“donors should recognize volunteer efforts as in-kind funding”*. One stakeholder reported doing calculations to show how many volunteers have been involved in delivering a service or activities in order to highlight the human resources required for the purpose.

For a donor, the use of volunteers by an organization is a positive message that can suggest at least the following things:

- The organization has community support and legitimacy expressed through people’s willingness to volunteer for a given cause or issue.
 - Volunteers create sustainability within an organization, as it does not rely solely on monetary funding to support its operations, particularly in the case of project funding where some activities can continue through the help of volunteers.
 - An organization is able to deliver more effectively its services and activities.
 - An organization wishes to involve a variety of people in its activities, therefore creating wellbeing to both beneficiaries as well as to the volunteers themselves.
- Accepting volunteer contributions for example as in-kind funding, or simply as one of the criteria to be eligible for funding, would encourage organizations themselves to develop their volunteer programmes and practices.

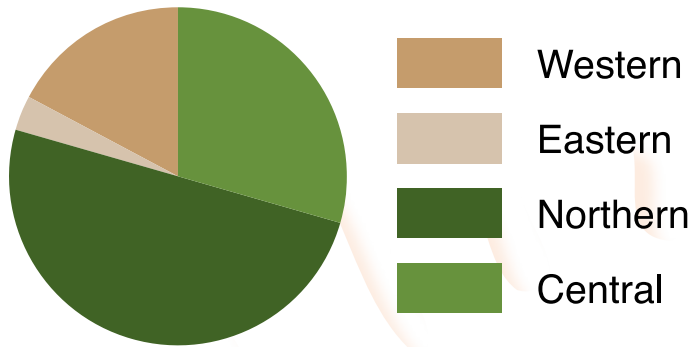
**“Volontold”
can discourage
young people
from volunteering.**

Youth volunteers of Fiji

Motivations Benefits Challenges

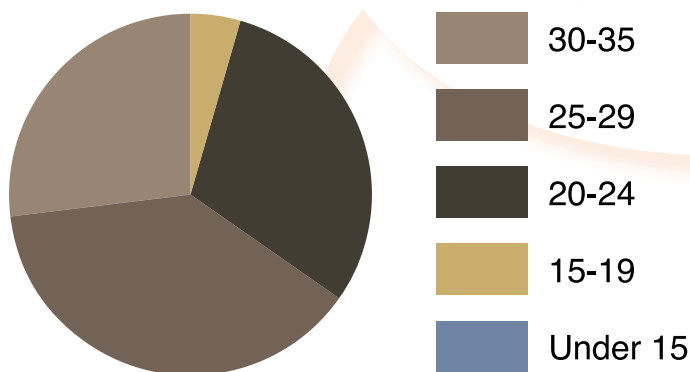
Perceptions of youth volunteers

To collect ideas and perceptions about volunteerism, a survey was conducted among 114 youth volunteers across Fiji.



Graph 10

Exactly half of the responses came from the Northern Division and approximately one third from Central Division. The Western and Eastern Divisions submitted altogether 21 percent of the responses. Therefore, the survey reached youth also in rural areas. (Graph 10)

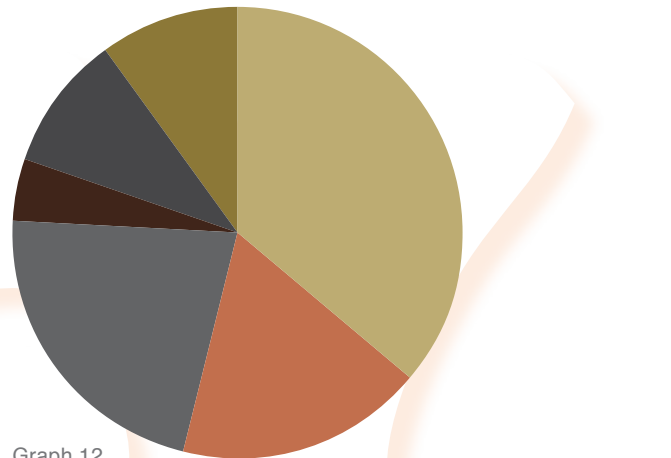


Graph 11

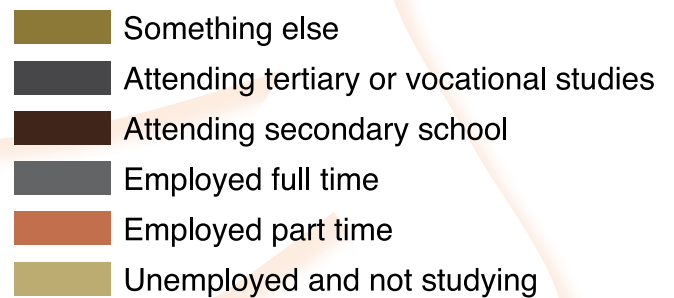
The majority of respondents were between the ages of 20-35 years whereas the 15-19 year age group represented only 4.5 percent of the respondents; the 20-24, 25-29 and 30-35 year olds contributed 30.4

percent, 38.4 percent and 26.8 percent respectively.

(Graph 11) 36 percent of survey respondents were not employed nor in education; 40 percent were employed; 14 percent were in education; and the remaining 10 percent selected "something else". (Graph 12)



Graph 12



Respondents were also asked to describe the setting they volunteered in by choosing the most relevant of five options. With 219 selections, the results suggested that young people volunteer through more than one way. It also highlighted that informal volunteerism is more common than formal volunteerism in which 44 percent helped community members voluntarily, and 50 percent participated in community organized projects

and activities. Alternatively 29 percent of respondents volunteered through an organization, 31 percent for a youth club, 30 percent volunteered through a church, and 6 percent selected “something else”.

A survey of 114 youth volunteers was conducted to collect their ideas and perceptions about volunteerism. Some of the topics were also discussed in stakeholder interviews, providing more meat around the bones. (Graph 13)

1) Power of volunteerism

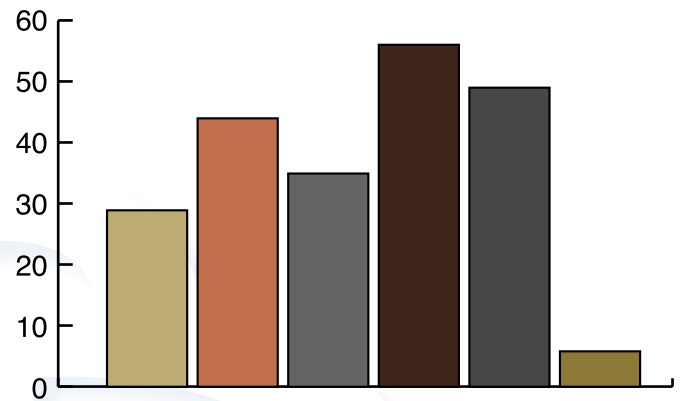
Survey respondents were given nine options for potential benefits of volunteerism to the society, out of which empowerment was selected far more than any other options.

Empowerment is a feeling that comes from within. Satisfaction gained, finding one’s own feet, and direction in life are clearly very important to young people who volunteer. Some of the stakeholders expressed this beautifully, linking it to passion and values that drive their volunteering:

“Social injustice, holding people accountable, feeling empowered – young people should be more exposed to discussions about it, to really appreciate the power of volunteerism.”

“Volunteerism is doing something you are passionate about. Something you believe in.”

“My life would be totally different if I had not started



Graph 13

- Other (please describe)
- Voluntarily helping community members
- Community organized activities and projects
- Volunteer activities through my registered Youth Club
- Volunteer activities through my church
- Formal volunteering through a registered organisation/ NGO/ CSO

to volunteer.”

“To volunteer is to support my peers and encourage them.”

“Volunteerism gives us an opportunity to help others but helps us gain knowledge and understanding. It is good to see others benefit from the works we do: this gives us satisfaction and peace.”

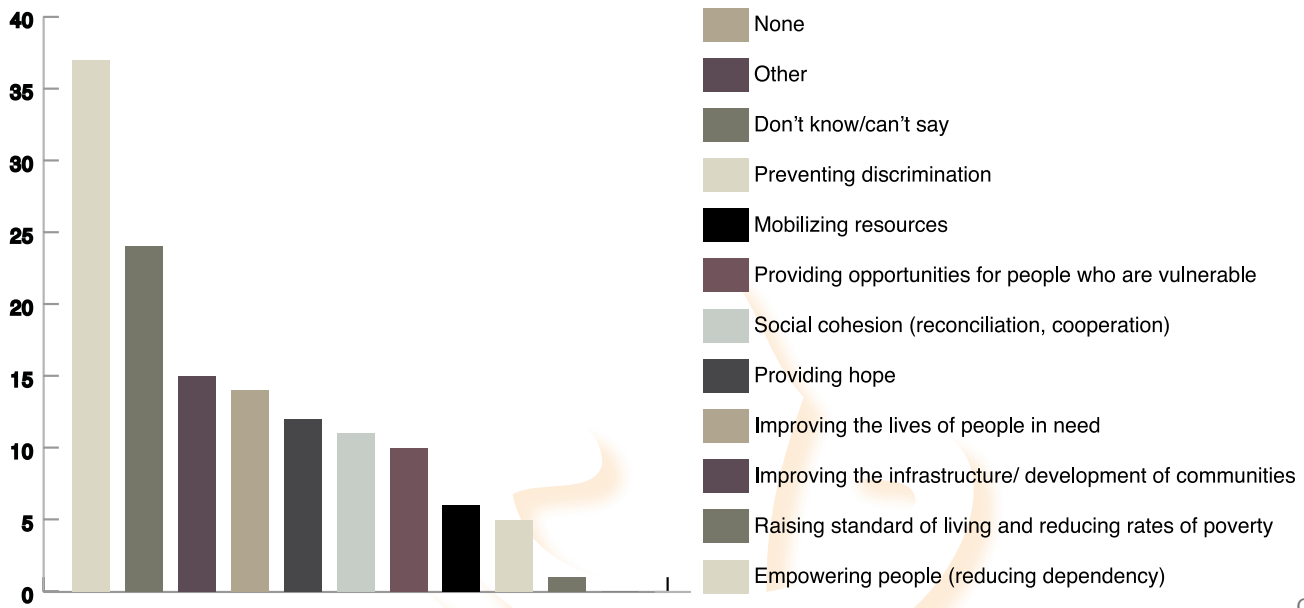
“Being a Volunteer is a passion that’s why I love volunteering.”

“Volunteerism is a great opportunity to do something great based on your values.”

“People are stuck with concepts of volunteerism, employment, professional volunteerism, unskilled volunteerism – this confuses people. If you come to volunteer, you come to share your passion.”

Raising the standard of living and reducing rates of

Benefits of Volunteerism



Graph 14

poverty was the second most important perceived benefit of volunteerism.

2) Motivations and perceived benefits

Motivations to start volunteering seem to come strongly from within young volunteers. A desire to make a difference (56 percent), a desire to meet new people and have new experience (44 percent), and faith (37 percent) were the most common influences out of 10 options provided in the survey. External influences, such as media, schools, charity organizations and other people seem to play a considerably less important role. (Graph 15)

One survey participant pondered:

“When I see volunteers I see hope. Even though people have different motives for joining volunteer groups, the

work volunteers do is amazing. Even if they joined merely to get a reference letter, I’ve never met a volunteer who hasn’t felt a sense of fulfillment or regretted volunteering because in my and their small way we’ve contributed to making the world a better place.”

Volunteering in essence is not totally altruistic; one always receives something in a form of enjoyment from volunteering their time and effort. To this survey’s participants, learning new skills and developing existing skills came up as the most important enjoyment arising from volunteering (31.5 percent). *“To learn about a cause or to work for a cause that is important to me”* (13 percent) and *“contributing in positive ways to my community”* (13 percent) were second runners up.

Issues such as getting to know new people (0.9 percent), feeling good about myself (1.9 percent), a sense of

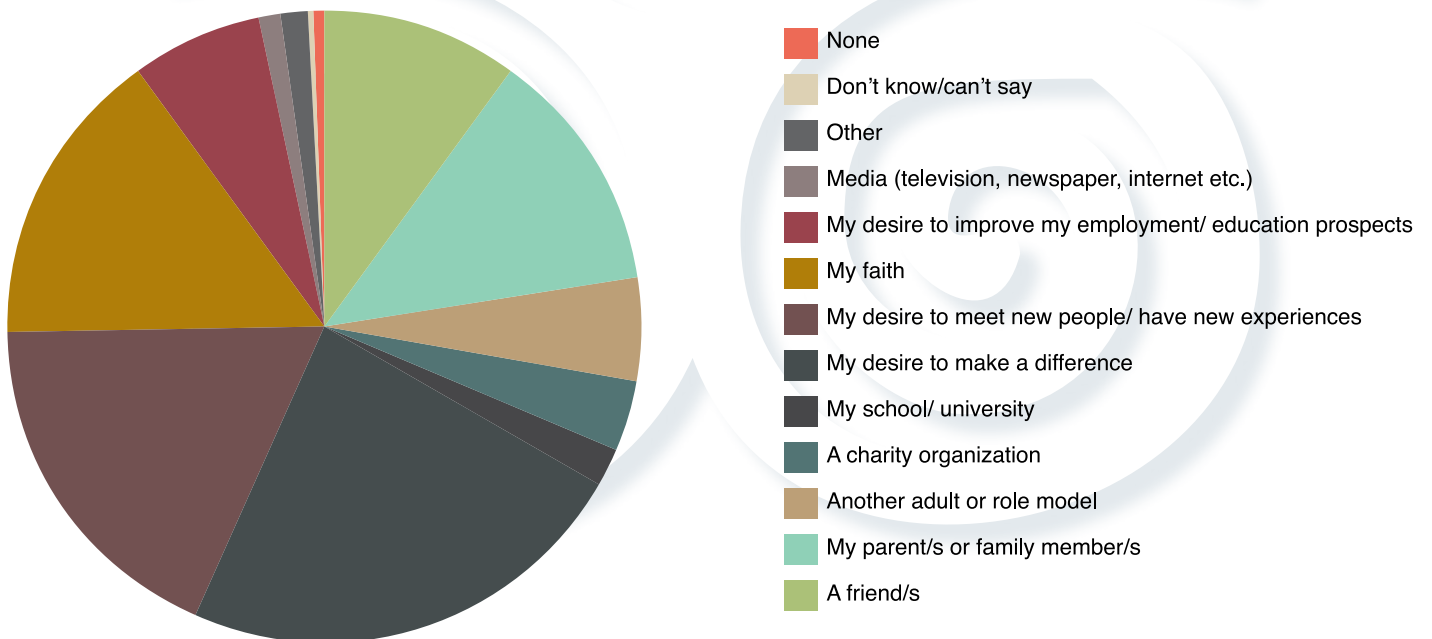
teamwork (0.9 percent) or social recognition (1.9 percent) were not considered important. (Graph 16)

Motivations that keep young people volunteering over a period of time seem to strongly reflect their initial motivations and enjoyment received. In the survey, six options were provided as motivations to continue volunteering. *“Opportunities to be involved in a range of different and interesting experiences”* was the most common reason (42.6 percent), with *“feelings of commitment to the organization/ group/ community*

with whom I volunteer” as a good runner-up (20.2 percent). *“Good connections and support from the people with whom I volunteer”* was selected by 18.1 percent of respondent. Feelings of personal achievement (4.3 percent) and gaining credit for a CV (1.1 percent) were considerably less popular.

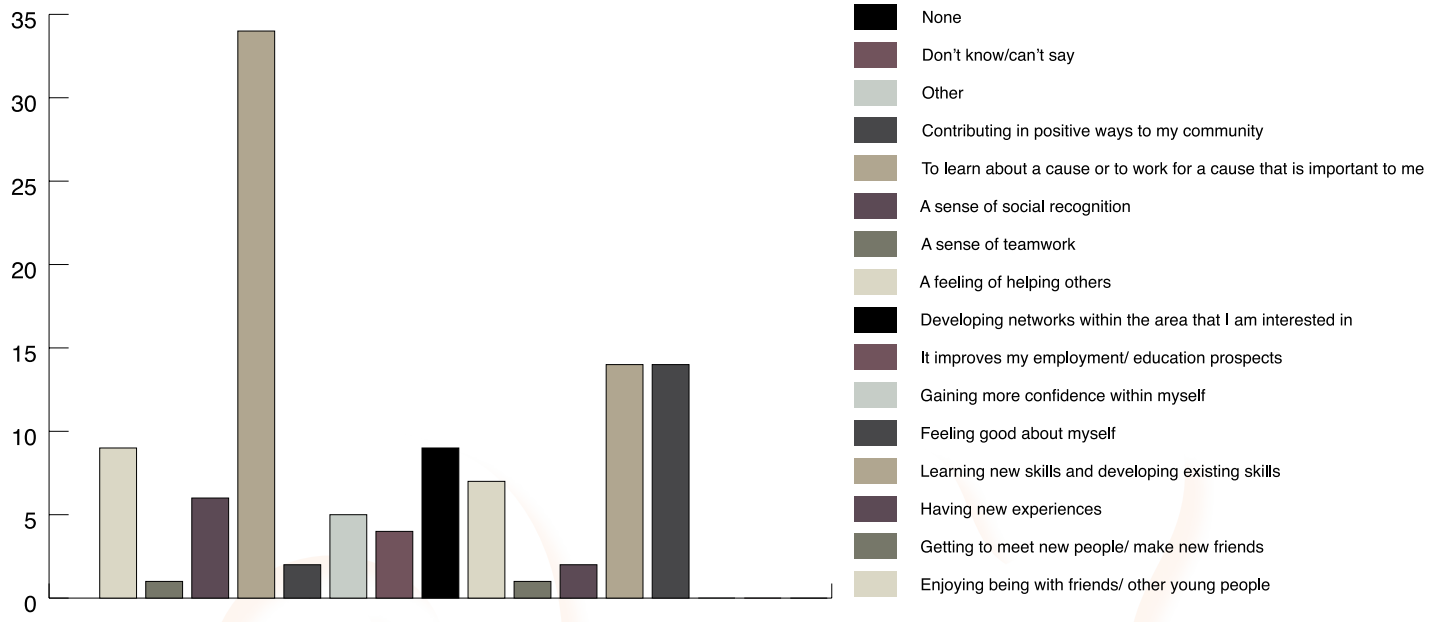
This sends a strong message to organizations wishing to engage more volunteers. Providing good support and appreciation from people and organizations to (continue to p. 56)

Motivations to start volunteering



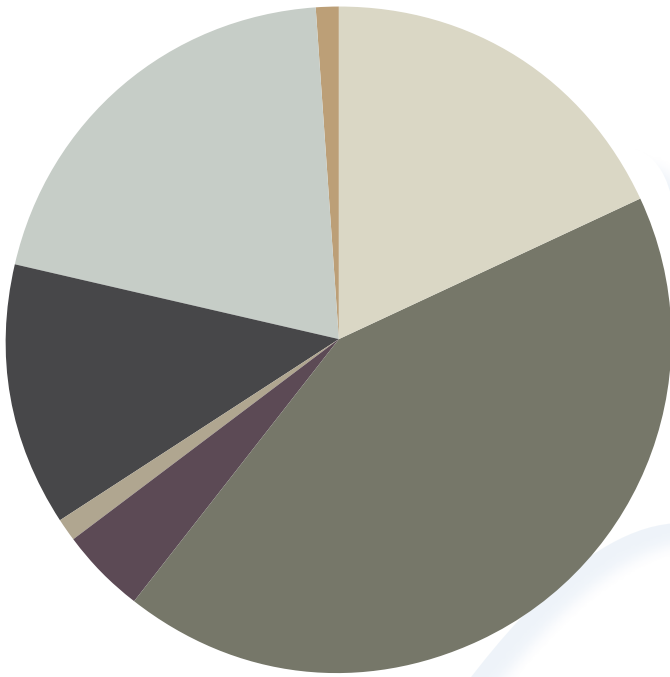
Graph 15

Enjoyment arising from volunteering



Graph 16

Volunteerism is a social based issue with a power to bring about change.



Graph 17

- Good connections and support from the people with whom I volunteer
- Opportunities to be involved in a range of different and interesting experiences
- Feelings of personal achievement
- The longer I volunteer the better it looks on my CV
- To develop good skills and knowledge takes time
- Feelings of commitment to the organization with whom I volunteer
- Other (please describe)

their volunteers plays an important role in retaining volunteers, and it translates into loyalty and commitment from the volunteers themselves.

3) Challenges

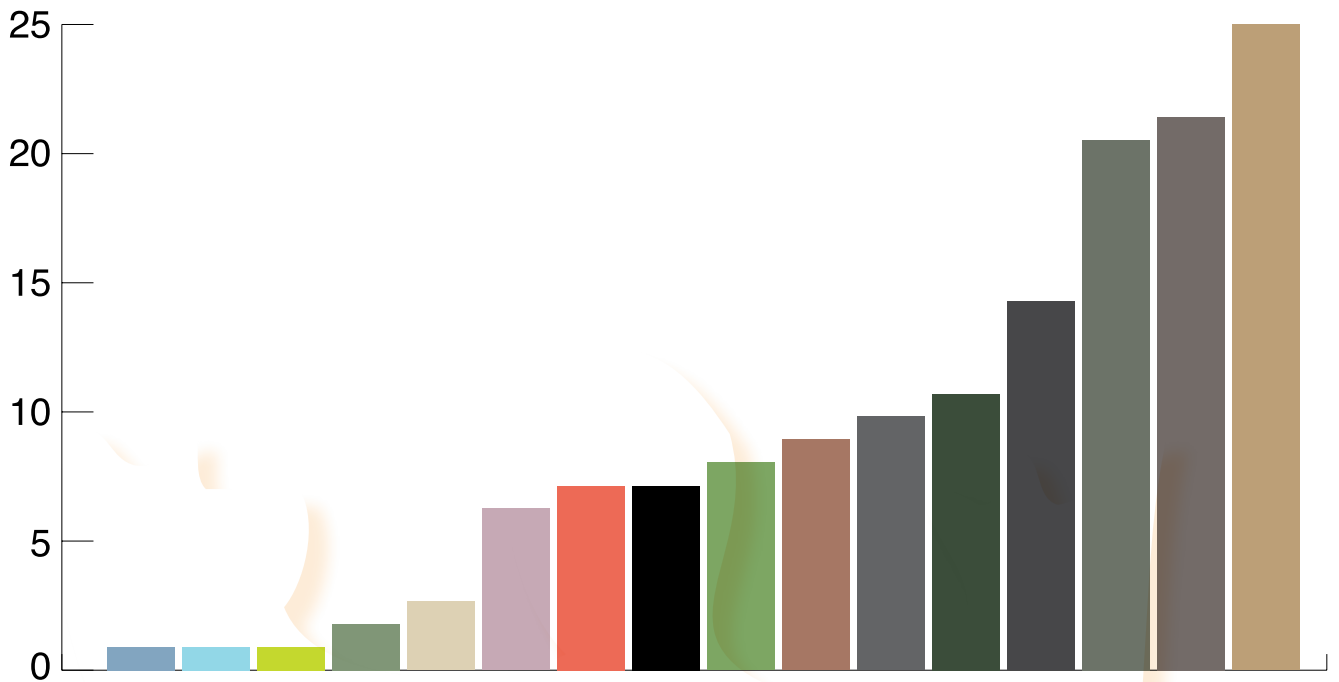
Survey results showed 39 respondents who had at some point stopped volunteering. For 22 of them, the reasons were related to time: either due to obtaining employment (5), committing to studies (5), community or family commitments (5), or otherwise limited time to commit to volunteering (6). Five people stopped due to *“not feeling supported or included by those*

who “I was volunteering for”, and four for not having money to travel for the purpose.

The survey also asked respondents to consider the key challenges youth volunteerism faces in general in which 14 different options were provided, and out of which up to three options could be selected. For the options and results see the graph 18 on page 57.

Lack of information

The lack of information about opportunities available is assumed to be the most common challenge for youth volunteerism. As discussed elsewhere in this report, at least on the internet, information is difficult to find and is often insufficient. There is also very little information about volunteerism in local and national media and 23 percent of survey respondents welcomed *“more media coverage to promote volunteering”* as an effective way to encourage young people to volunteer. What might make finding information challenging is not necessarily solely the amount of it but the way it is scattered. If one does not know where to look or where to begin, finding information about opportunities to volunteer can become quite a journey in itself. From the point of view of an individual volunteer, it would be helpful to find information about opportunities in one place, whether on the internet or from physical places such as provincial offices and youth centres. Some kind of *“central body”* that can disseminate



Graph 18

- A lack of information about opportunities available.
- A lack of money and possible costs related to volunteering, such as bus fares.
- Organizations don't have resources to manage/ support volunteers well.
- Pressure from parents for youth to work in positions only where there is financial gain
- Young people don't have time to volunteer.
- A lack of support from parents.
- There is little structure to volunteering nationally.
- A lack of awareness of volunteer work in the media.
- Volunteer based organizations are too top-down, and do not support initiatives young people want to implement.
- Too few organizations use volunteers.
- Poor perception of volunteering.
- A lack of appreciation for the work done.
- Don't know/can't say
- Other
- Volunteer opportunities available are not relevant to young people and therefore not interesting.
- Young people do not want to be associated with any specific organization.

information about volunteer opportunities in various organizations was suggested by a number of stakeholders, as was a website providing links to CSOs who engage volunteers and link them to specific volunteer opportunities. SMS was suggested as an effective way to reach young people in rural areas

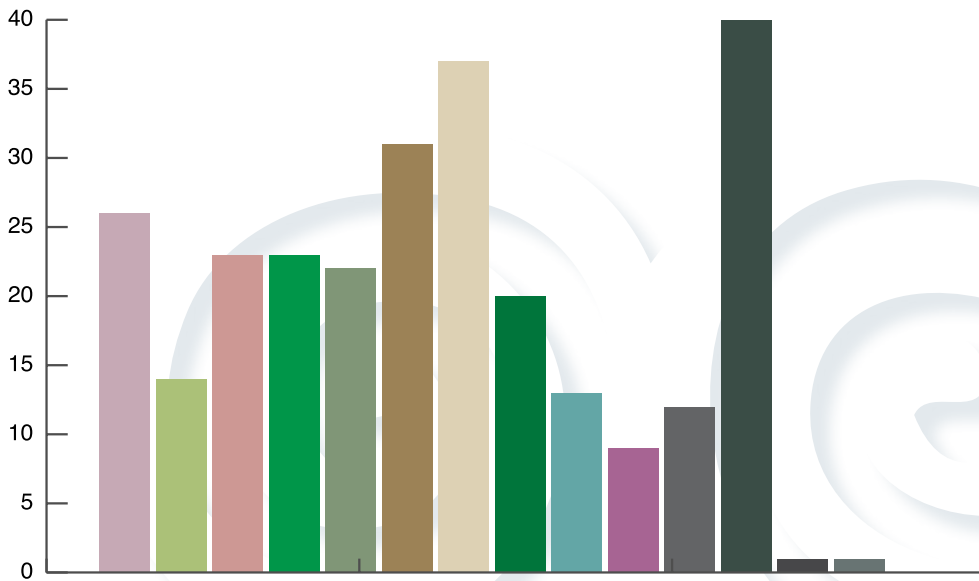
where there is no internet access.

Time

If a lack of time seems to be a common challenge for young people to volunteer, how could youth organizations respond to this?

One stakeholder suggested that organizations should

Which of the following ideas would encourage more young people to volunteer?



Graph 19

- None
- Don't know/can't say
- Other
- Better volunteer training and support from organizations engaging volunteers
- More encouragement from parents
- More support/ policy at political level
- Schools/ universities/ employers allocating time for volunteering
- Schools encourage students to volunteer
- A website designed for young Fijians to sign up and receive alerts about real volunteering opportunities near them
- A campaign to enhance public perception and understanding of volunteering
- More appreciation/ recognition from employers/ organizations
- More appreciation/ recognition from the community
- Preference given to those who volunteer when applying for universities/ jobs
- Famous Fijians (sports people, business persons, etc.) encouraging us
- More media coverage to promote volunteering

provide volunteers with a variety of opportunities, not only in tasks and roles, but also for different amounts of time. For example some young people might wish to volunteer during holidays for a shorter period of time but for a greater number of hours per week, while others may prefer an hour or two each week over a

longer period of time.

However, when we asked if “schools/ universities/ employers allocating time for volunteering” would encourage young people to volunteer more, only 18 percent of respondents thought it would be an effective method.

Costs

The unemployment rate for young people in Fiji is high and many are financially reliant on their parents. However, generally the costs for utilizing a volunteer are not high and mainly relate to travelling such as bus fares. How could organizations engaging volunteers tackle this? Currently primary school children in Fiji get subsidized bus travel: could this support be extended to youth volunteers through CSOs?

Appreciation and recognition

In the survey, a lack of appreciation for the work done (1.8 percent) and poor perception of volunteering (4.3 percent) were not considered as common challenges for youth volunteerism. However, some respondents as well as a number of stakeholders interviewed felt strongly about both the lack of appreciation volunteerism in general received.

“Volunteer workers are looked down upon. Stigma and discrimination attached to volunteerism among youths.”

“Volunteering is seen as unimportant. Volunteering is considered inferior.”

One youth activist believed that this is the case among young people themselves:

“I wish we had more conversations about the power of volunteerism, or the need for volunteerism. Young people do not understand the value of volunteerism,

but it is seen as something negative.”

The same stakeholder identified himself as an activist instead of a volunteer, as he felt the word volunteering is not necessarily attractive to everyone, but can be instead identified as *“moving chairs in a church”* instead of a *“social based issue with a power to bring about change”*. He called for more inspiring discussions about the value of volunteerism and how it can tackle social and economic injustices.

Social pressure to volunteer for something was also considered as a hindrance in the long run, sometimes ruining the idea of volunteerism in the eyes of young people. It was coined as *“volontold”* by one of the stakeholders interviewed.

Furthermore, when we asked survey respondents what would encourage young people to volunteer more, they placed high value on enhancing appreciation and recognition of volunteerism. Appreciation from the community (22.2 percent) and from employers and organizations (24.4 percent) were considered almost equally as important. A campaign to enhance public perception and understanding of volunteering received even higher support (26.7 percent)

One stakeholder called for every organization to provide certificates to their youth volunteers as a

The Value of our Volunteers in Fiji Red Cross

Volunteerism is at the centre of our humanitarian effort. The Red Cross movement was founded by Henry Dunant, a Swiss businessman who volunteered his time and effort after witnessing the aftermath of the battle of Solferino in 1859, and his example still inspires the organization. One of our key fundamental principles is “*Voluntary Service*” which clearly articulates the essence of volunteerism and that the Red Cross is a movement made up of volunteers. Our mission statement “We are a dynamic Fiji humanitarian organization dedicated to saving and improving the lives of the most vulnerable through mobilizing the power of humanity and the spirit of volunteerism” reflects our determination to improve the lives of the most vulnerable through mobilizing the power of humanity and the spirit of volunteerism.

In Fiji, membership of the Red Cross (amongst its network of 15 branches and sub branches) is made up entirely of volunteers and approximately 70% of our total volunteer base is made up of young people between the ages of 16 - 31. Volunteers are present at every level of the organization from the highest governing body (i.e. National Council, the National Board including leadership and membership from our branches) to community volunteers.... The organization values the contribution and effort of our volunteers and the work that they do. In the organization we usually say “*without volunteers we can't do the good work that we do*”. Indeed this is true; the social value generated by the Red Cross volunteer workforce is arguably even greater than its economic value. Our volunteer workforce reaches 100,000 beneficiaries a year in disaster contexts alone and even more through other program areas. For example in 2014, during an outbreak of dengue fever, our volunteers reached 75,000 beneficiaries. The value of our local volunteers' knowledge and the understanding they have of their own communities enables us to respond quickly and efficiently, reaching and assisting the most vulnerable community members.

Volunteering for the Red Cross generates social value for the community, for the organization and for the volunteers themselves. Volunteers gain a deep sense of fulfilment through helping and contributing valuable services to the community. Voluntary service is at the heart of community building – it encourages community members to be active, effective citizens and provides them with an opportunity to be engaged in, and make a difference to, their community. It also adds value to the organization as the Fiji Red Cross would not be able to deliver programs and services without the engagement and support of our volunteer networks.

In terms of the economic value of Red Cross volunteers globally, a study by the International Federation of

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) ,which used the methodology proposed by the ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work, indicated that active Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers donated nearly 6 billion US dollars worth of volunteer services in 2009 worldwide, or nearly 90 US cents for each person on Earth. The report further states that the ratio of paid staff to volunteers extends the Red Cross workforce significantly. This reinforces the knowledge that investment in community development yields excellent returns and help Donor dollars to go much further.

This illustrates the importance of recognizing the value of volunteers and creating an enabling environment that allows volunteers to actively participate and engage in a meaningful way within the organization. The Society has a Volunteer Policy which is an important aspect of volunteer support and recognition. To supplement this, a Volunteer and Staff Advisory Group known as “VOSA” was established in June 2005. VOSA is a forum that allows volunteers to share and discuss their opinions, raise issues and ensure their voices are heard. Overall, measuring the value of volunteers is important as it will provide vital information to the organization to be able to address the challenges and changing needs of its volunteers, as this directly impacts the organization’s programs and service delivery.

The Fiji Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and is Fiji’s largest humanitarian organization dedicated to improving the lives of the vulnerable through the provision of high quality services. The Red Cross is guided by its seven fundamental principles which are Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and University.

By Fiji Red Cross

form of recognition:

“One of the conditions every volunteer has a right for, is to receive a certificate of participation.”

Support to volunteers

Many survey respondents felt that organizations do not have enough resources to support their volunteers. Organizations who responded to our survey seemed to agree with this judgement, also hoping for more resources and capacities to support and train their volunteers. Some stakeholders felt that a lack of support is not solely a question of capacity, but links to attitudes prevalent in an organization. One youth volunteer said:

“Organizations need to spend more time thinking what volunteers mean to them and why they want to have volunteers. Organizations need to remember that volunteerism needs to create benefits also to volunteers themselves: they are not solely a resource to someone else. Particularly in the case of young people organizations need to pay specific attention to how to help them to build competencies and skills.”

Youth volunteers in this survey believed that “better volunteer training and support from organizations” would be the most effective method to encourage more young people to volunteer.

Volunteerism and employment

A number of the stakeholders interviewed raised their concerns about volunteerism being used as a strategy to replace paid employment. They called for more discussion on what constitutes volunteerism versus employment. A youth volunteer elaborated:

“I would like to strongly highlight the abuse of the term of volunteerism: while our organization supports volunteerism of young people, we do not support exploitation of young people under the disguise of volunteerism. Volunteerism leads to human development and makes a contribution to the society: but you cannot call it volunteerism, when a young person is working for free in an office in the private sector.”

Clarification on the difference between internships and volunteerism were also called for. One youth volunteer highlighted that volunteerism is not a solution to employment challenges, or an alternative to employment.

Envisioning the future:

Top 10 conclusions and recommendations

1) Recognizing volunteerism

Volunteerism plays an important role in the society of Fiji by providing opportunities for participation of young people, by creating social cohesion and wellbeing in communities, and by contributing considerably to the capacity of VIOs and development goals in general.

We recommend that:

- Development partners, public institutions, academia and CSOs alike should actively engage themselves in dialogue about the value and role of volunteerism in the society.
- Donors and funders could recognize the role of volunteers as an in-kind contribution from organizations, and as a factor that enhances sustainability and even the very existence of an organization, while at the same time reflecting support and legitimacy in the eyes of the communities within which the organizations work.
- Government should genuinely recognize the role and contribution of youth volunteerism – both formal and informal - in different sectors in Fiji such as environment, climate change, disaster relief, sports, and culture and it should be adequately reflected in relevant policy documents and action.
- CSOs should recognize the multifaceted benefits of volunteerism to their organizations, and celebrate and thank their volunteers for their efforts and

contributions.

- Organizations engaging volunteers should collaborate more with media in order to create visibility for volunteerism, to raise awareness about its contributions, and to encourage young people to volunteer more. Campaigns to enhance public perception and understanding of volunteering should be implemented.
- All stakeholders should celebrate volunteerism by recognizing International Volunteer Day on 5th of December.

2) Policy and enabling environment

CSOs do not wish to see more regulation on volunteerism, but call for all stakeholders, including public institutions, to contribute towards creating an enabling environment for volunteerism.

We recommend that:

- Government should encourage young people to volunteer through appropriate policies and relevant action, and by raising awareness about benefits, contributions, and opportunities through volunteerism.
- Public institutions and all development actors should engage all stakeholders in further discussions on how volunteerism could be more effectively integrated into development efforts and harnessed toward national development goals and priorities.

- VIOs should consider developing internal volunteer policies or similar documents which give them direction towards systematic development of their volunteer programmes and engagement.
- VIOs and other stakeholders should enhance systematic collaboration, coordination and exchange of good practices on volunteering issues.

3) Research and knowledge on volunteerism

Plenty of information and knowledge about volunteerism lives on within organizations and volunteer practitioners, but not much of it has been recorded and analyzed in Fiji. The body of research and data is very limited, and decision makers have very little to rely upon in decision-making.

We recommend that:

- Government and academia should commit to undertaking practical, robust, and consistent research about volunteerism and its benefits and impact on the society. Knowledge gained and generated should be used to enhance both practice and policy.
- ILO Manual for the Measurement of Volunteer Work, which provides a cost-effective, scientifically-backed and statistically-tested tool for collecting comparative data, should be used in Fiji to collect reliable data and to support evidence-based policy development.

- Traditional and cultural knowledge about volunteerism in Fiji should be collected and documented appropriately.
- CSOs should systematically collect information and data about volunteerism and impact it creates. Information collected should be used to improve volunteer programmes and experiences of youth volunteers.
- All organizations involving volunteers should collaborate more systematically to exchange good practices, knowledge and tools amongst each other. Volunteer coordinators could initiate peer networks to provide support and learn from each other.

4) Volunteer management and capacities

Capacity to engage, coordinate, and support volunteers is critical to CSOs, who are generally very committed to improving their volunteer processes. However, lack of resources including time, and at times skills, hinder them from doing so. Support in developing volunteer management capacities is often needed.

We recommend that:

- CSOs should develop meaningful, attractive volunteer opportunities, which are responsive to the needs and aspirations of young people. Organizations should provide opportunities for feedback from young volunteers based on which

lessons can be learned, and the support provided to them improved. Organizations should look for new ways and methods to inform and advertise the volunteering opportunities they offer.

- To a diverse volunteer base should be offered a diverse variety of opportunities, for example long-term and short-term, few hours per week or full time over the school holidays, via the internet or in a close neighbourhood.
- While recruiting volunteers, CSOs should clarify and describe what skills and competencies are needed in order that the right people and a right organization find each other.
- VIOs could establish knowledge sharing and training networks on volunteer management and how to develop volunteer management capacities. Trainings could include support to develop volunteer policies; trainings to new volunteer coordinators and managers; training on how to monitor, record and evaluate the impact of volunteer activities; and conduct analysis on how volunteerism contributes to development priorities. Development of professional qualifications in volunteer management should be considered.
- The NYCF should consider providing support and training to youth groups and organizations in developing their volunteer processes, from how to recruit, retain, support, recognize, and train

volunteers.

- CSOs should develop volunteerism that is reflective and respectful of local cultures and traditions.

5) Motivations to volunteer

Our survey suggested that young people are motivated to volunteer because of *“opportunities to be involved in a range of different and interesting experiences”*. Interpersonal relationships and support from fellow volunteers, and feelings of commitment to the organization or community with whom a person volunteers were also important motivations. Young people are proud of the work they do as volunteers and inspired to volunteer by their values, willingness to contribute to their communities, and passion for making change.

Volunteering is hindered by a lack of information about opportunities; by other commitments to work, study, and family; and insufficient support from organizations.

We recommend that:

- CSOs should consider exploring in more detail what the motivations of young people to volunteer, or not to volunteer are. It may help in leveraging those motivation, improving support needed by volunteers, and as a result in recruiting and retaining volunteers.
- Barriers to volunteering are not high. Organiza-

tions should consider what they are, and respond by providing a diversity of opportunities to volunteer.

6) Learning and Volunteerism

Volunteerism is a way of informal and non-formal learning. Young volunteers value the learning opportunities they receive through volunteerism, and appreciate accompanying training opportunities provided by organizations. Young people develop both hard and soft skills through volunteerism such as teamwork, planning, leadership skills, and communication skills.

We recommend that:

- The MOYS and Ministry of Labour should consider introducing a 'volunteer pass' in which young volunteers can document their volunteer activities and learning in various organizations and initiatives.
- All CSOs should recognize contributions and learning of young people by providing certificates and references.
- CSOs should systematically support learning through volunteerism by providing trainings and support to volunteers.
- Through volunteerism, young people can learn skills and competencies that supplement formal education and cannot necessarily be attained through it. CSOs, educational institutions, and employers should recognize this.

- Universities and other educational institutions should facilitate and make possible volunteerism and civic engagement alongside formal studies. When relevant, learning gained through volunteerism could be accredited as an additional achievement to academic studies.

7) Volunteerism as a pathway to employment

Through providing an opportunity for learning and skill development, volunteerism supports young people's pathway to employment.

We recommend that:

- Employers should recognize experience and skills gained through volunteerism.
- Volunteerism should not be viewed as an opportunity only for unemployed youth. All young people in different life situations – in employment, in education or something else – should be encouraged to volunteer and develop skills and competencies that helps them in their employment and life paths.
- CSOs could recognize volunteer experience in their recruitment for staff assignments.
- While volunteerism is an important step in the employment path, volunteerism should not be used as a replacement of employment where it can exist nor be used as a strategy to avoid fair employment practices. More discussion on the boundaries and

interface between volunteerism and employment, internship is needed, and on how they complement each other.

- More research is needed on how volunteerism helps in the employment path of young people

8) Women and volunteerism

CSOs report a high number of women and girls volunteering for them. Anecdotal and personal evidence from young women who volunteer tell a story of personal empowerment and achievement through volunteerism.

We recommend that:

- Government, CSOs, and development partners should implement research to explore the role of volunteerism in the empowerment of young women, and how it provides them an avenue for participation in the social, political, and cultural life of Fiji.
- Governments should, through appropriate policies, create an environment that encourages young women to volunteer and recognizes the contributions women can offer and create through volunteer engagement.
- CSOs should purposefully engage young women in their activities and harness their potential; training and support should be provided to encourage development of skills and competencies.

9) Online technology and volunteerism

Volunteering online is still a new phenomenon in Fiji and not everyone has internet access or can afford to use it. However, access is improving and opportunities ICT can create for volunteerism are being recognized.

- Lack of information on how to volunteer prevents some young people from volunteering. A portal or search engine of volunteer opportunities across the country would be a useful, one-stop-shop service to all potential volunteers. This would also serve VIOs in their volunteer recruitment, and as a platform to share information and good practices on participation and volunteerism. Funders, particularly those with innovation funds, should consider funding such a platform. Furthermore, UNV's Online Volunteering platform model will be available also for Fiji to adapt to the purpose.

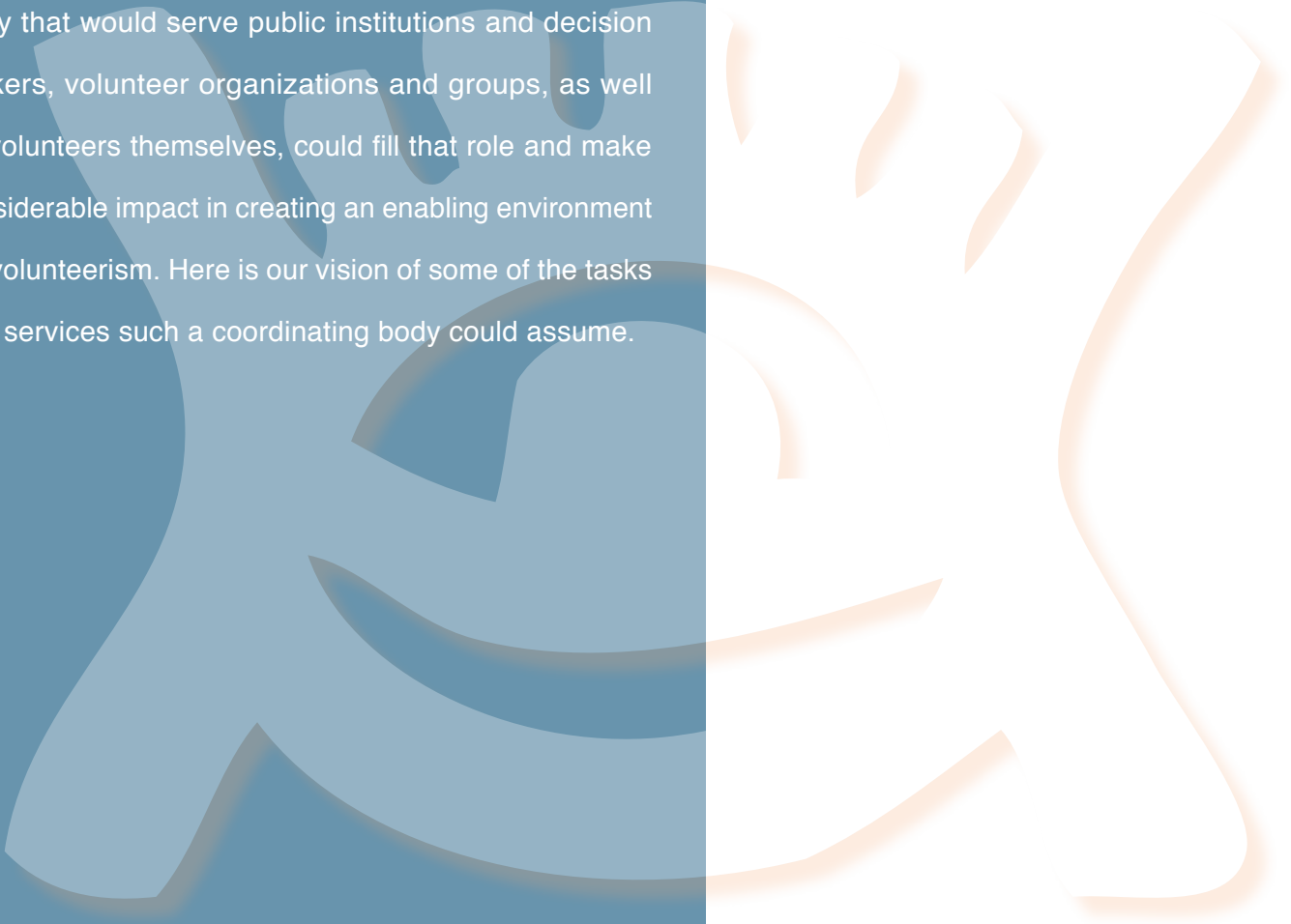
We recommend that:

- All CSOs should consider providing information on their websites and social media accounts on how to volunteer, what volunteer opportunities they offer, and what the requirements and benefits are.
- To make volunteer opportunities available and to support VIOs, an "Online Volunteer Directory" or a portal could be developed. It would contain volunteer opportunities across the country, and tools,

practices, as well as information for organizations.

10) Collaboration and coordination

There is no one organization or stakeholder vested with the interest in and resources to develop youth volunteerism in Fiji in general, for the benefit of the young volunteers and organizations that work with them. A coordinating body that would serve public institutions and decision makers, volunteer organizations and groups, as well as volunteers themselves, could fill that role and make considerable impact in creating an enabling environment for volunteerism. Here is our vision of some of the tasks and services such a coordinating body could assume.



Coordinating Body for Volunteerism in Fiji

Services to public sector and decision makers:

Knowledge and data on volunteerism to support policy development and decision making
 Partnership development with volunteer sector
 Support in engaging and empowering youth, including disadvantaged youth
 Training and support to volunteer host organizations
 Facilitate mobilization of volunteers for events, in disasters etc.

Services to volunteer involving organizations (VIOs):

Trainings on volunteer management (recruitment, deployment, training, support, retention)
 Support in developing volunteer policies and volunteer programmes
 Facilitate recruitment through advertising volunteer opportunities in all organizations
 Facilitate exchange and sharing of good practices and information
 Support and facilitation to corporate volunteerism to both private sector and CSOs
 Quality tools, criteria and accreditation
 Support to M&E, and how to identify impact/value
 Information on motivations to volunteers
 Information on funding opportunities
 Enhancing visibility of VIOs and volunteer groups
 Trainings to volunteers
 Facilitate collaboration and thematic working groups
 Contacts with schools

Services to volunteers:

Information on how to volunteer
 Involvement of young people
 Collection of feedback, motivations, needs of volunteers
 Volunteer passport and accreditation of learning
 Meeting other volunteers
 One stop shop information point on volunteerism
 Information about volunteer opportunities online and via SMS

Strategic development of volunteer sector

Policy development

Online portal or search engine of volunteer opportunities

Promotion and development of corporate volunteerism

“Brokering” between CSOs and employers.

Research, data collection & statistics

Advocacy and awareness raising about volunteerism

and its benefits on behalf of all organizations

Impact of volunteerism

Recognition of volunteers

Good Practice Bank/resource centre

International collaboration

Support to learning and skills development for all

young people.

Visibility and credibility of volunteer sector

New innovations

Space for meetings to volunteer groups

Benefits

Volunteer mobilization and engagement is increased.
 Visibility, awareness and recognition of volunteerism is strengthened.
 Decision making is supported through evidence, knowledge and research.
 Volunteerism is integrated into policies and supports effectively national development objectives.
 Young people find meaningful things to do and are empowered.
 More beneficiaries are reached and well-being of communities is enhanced.
 Volunteers are well supported.
 Learning and employability of volunteers is improved.
 Capacity of VIOs is strengthened.
 Organizations find volunteers easier.
 Good practices are transferred and replicated.
 Partnerships are expanded and diversified.

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