
Incentives and volunteerism in Zambia: A review

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Abstract

Zambian NGOs rely heavily on the involvement of unpaid volunteer workers to provide developmental services. Increasingly, questions are being raised about the morality of using an unpaid volunteer labour force, most of whom are unemployed with no income, to provide essential social welfare services. The debate around volunteer incentives in Zambia tends to focus on monetary incentives such as salaries and stipends. It does not take into account the role of non-monetary incentives in attracting and retaining motivated volunteer staff. Multiple incentives are needed to attract and retain volunteers in under-resourced developing countries. Zambia requires a policy and legislative framework that will define volunteerism, clarify the roles and relationships among stakeholders, and identify necessary legal, social, administrative and financial support.

Key words

Zambia; civic service; volunteerism; incentives

Introduction

State welfare services in Zambia are limited. Non-government organisations (NGOs) play a vital role in meeting the social welfare needs of vulnerable people by providing a range of community-based services including education, home-based care and child care. Zambian NGOs rely heavily on the involvement of unpaid volunteer workers to provide these services, and, increasingly, questions are being raised about the morality of using an unpaid volunteer labour force, most of whom are unemployed with no income, to provide essential social welfare services. Most NGOs use volunteers as a cost-saving mechanism, and while some provide non-monetary incentives such as supervision, training and job supplies, few are in a position to provide monetary incentives. While monetary incentives can play an important role in sustaining a volunteer workforce (Friedman, 2002), on their own they do not address the complexities of volunteer motivation (Pawlby, 2003) and a more holistic approach is required. The provision of multiple incentives has proven successful in attracting and retaining volunteers in under-resourced developing countries as it enables organisations to address the full spectrum of motivating factors (Kironde & Klaasen, 2002; Bhattacharyya et al., 2001). External factors that need to be addressed for NGOs to provide a supportive environment for volunteers include a sympathetic legislative framework, and investment of public funds in developing a volunteering infrastructure (Manuel-Ubaldo, 2003). There is currently a lack of clarity in Zambian public policy on the role of volunteers in the provision of social welfare services, and tension exists between state and NGO service providers.

This article examines the type of incentives provided by Zambian volunteer programmes and their implications for service delivery. Firstly, it provides an overview of the Zambian socio-economic and political context. Then it provides an overview of volunteer services in Zambia, including the meaning of volunteerism and a description of the nature and scope of services. The next section reviews the different kinds of incentives available to Zambian volunteers, and is followed by concluding comments.

This article is based on the findings and analysis of a Zambian country study, undertaken as part of a five-country study on civic service and volunteering by Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA) in 2005. The overall aim of the study was to document and analyse civic service and volunteering in five countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with a view to examining their implications for social development policy and practice in a regional context. The countries participating in the study were Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Methodology

The Zambian research team adhered to the qualitative descriptive research methodology outlined in the generic five-country research proposal. This methodology included a literature review of civic service and volunteering programmes in Zambia; in-depth interviews with five key informants; two focus group discussions with service providers; and an in-depth analysis of five service programmes.

The research data was categorised and analysed thematically, using the research questions as the key thematic areas.

Zambia: An overview

Zambia is a land-locked Southern African country sharing borders with eight other countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Zambia's population of 10,8 million is young, with 67 per cent of Zambians under the age of 15 years. Most of its people (66 per cent) live in rural areas (Bureau of African Affairs, 2006).

The country has some of the largest copper and cobalt deposits in the world (Central Statistical Office, 2004) and the Zambian economy has historically been based on the copper-mining industry. Zambia was one of the most prosperous countries in sub-Saharan Africa after attaining independence from Great Britain in 1964.

However, the country's dependence on the copper industry left the economy open to external shocks, and in the 1970s the country began to slide into poverty when copper prices declined on the world market and oil prices rose. In the same period, the country embarked on a programme of economic restructuring aimed at restoring economic growth, which continued through the 1980s and 1990s. This period also saw the government resorting to excessive and misprioritised borrowing to finance consumption, and supporting import-substituting industries. In spite of such measures, or perhaps owing to them, the economy continued to contract at a rapid pace.

In 1991, following a change of government and the political system from a single-party state to pluralism, there was an increase in the pace and coverage of economic reforms. Government introduced an array of measures aimed at liberalising the economy and promoting private enterprise. Nevertheless, growth remained sluggish with the gross domestic product (GDP) registering a downward trend of 1,5 per cent per annum.

Fortunately, there are some encouraging signs of improvement. Since 2002, the performance of the Zambian economy has strengthened considerably, with real GDP growth averaging 4,7 per cent per year from an annual average of 2,2 per cent in the preceding four years. Contributing factors include the election of a new government led by Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, favourable global economic conditions, the overall impact of the economic reforms that started in the early 1990s, and debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative (Government of Zambia, 2006). However, these gains have yet to have a positive impact on the living conditions of the poor.

The social costs of the country's years of economic depression have been immense. Currently, over 70 per cent of Zambians live in poverty and the United Nations Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2005), placed Zambia at 166 out of 177 countries in 2004, with an average per capita annual income of US\$430, a life expectancy rate of about 37 years, and a maternal mortality rate of 729 deaths per 100 000 pregnancies.

Along with pervasive poverty, HIV/AIDS poses one of the greatest challenges to Zambia's social and economic development. With a 16 per cent prevalence rate among the adult population, nearly a million Zambians are HIV-positive or are living with AIDS. An estimated 100 000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2004, and AIDS-related deaths have left over 750 000 Zambian children orphaned (Bureau of African Affairs, 2006).

The Zambian social welfare system is chronically under-funded and under-resourced and, as a result, has been unable to respond to these multiple social problems (Nsutebu & Walley, 2001; Noyoo, 2000:75). Widespread corruption and donor-driven economic and public sector reform programmes have also undermined an effective response. It is estimated that Zambia's debt servicing obligations exceed its combined annual spending on health, education, water, sanitation and social welfare projects.

Policy and legislative frameworks for NGOs operating in Zambia are yet to be developed. A draft *National Policy on Non-Government Organisations* was developed in 1997 (Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, 1997). However, when the draft NGO Bill was presented to Parliament, NGOs fiercely contested the document and refused to be associated with it (National Technical Committee for the Review of the Non-Governmental Organisations Bill, undated), alleging that it had been heavily "doctored" by government. This has led to a stalemate in the process of finalising the NGOs national policy and legislative framework.

Both government and NGOs see the need for regulation or a mechanism to promote accountability, transparency and legitimacy in the NGO sector. However, the contentious issue still remains – who will drive the process and how will this

be done to allay the fears of NGOs based on their previous experience? Government recently decided to revive this process, although it is not clear how they will be taking it forward. A National Technical Committee for the Review of the Non-Governmental Organisations Bill, 2000, and Development of the Draft Code of Conduct for Non-Governmental Organisation has been convened to co-ordinate the NGO response.

Overview of volunteer services in Zambia

The meaning of volunteerism in Zambia

The meaning of volunteerism is closely tied to the political, social and economic context in which services are provided, as well as the individual motivation of volunteers. In Zambia, state welfare services are rudimentary and in many instances, families and communities have stepped in to fill service delivery gaps by working co-operatively to meet their social, economic, health and educational needs.

Most volunteers in Zambia are unemployed. Some key informants argued that it was unrealistic to expect a person – with no income to support themselves or their families – to work with no monetary compensation. They were of the view that the main motivating factor for Zambian volunteers was the possibility of an opportunity to make money or earn a livelihood: “Social problems like unemployment and street children lead people to come together to do something about it. However, their motivation is not always true. Some pretend that they want to assist, but the real motivation is [getting a slice of] donor funds”.

Other key informants were of the opinion that the main motivation for some volunteers was their desire to help others/the underprivileged. They may not have been financially secure but through serving others, their emotional needs were fulfilled: “Although there is no material gain, there is always some benefit”.

The study found that where servers were motivated by the opportunity to serve and the recognition that came with it, then the experience was perceived as positive. However, those who were motivated by material gain, and failed to benefit from the programme on their terms, had an experience that was perceived as negative.

Pawlby (2003) noted, “It has to be recognised that different individuals may be engaged in the same act of service, but from completely different ends of the motivation spectrum”, and this is also relevant for understanding the motivation of Zambian volunteers.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic and the worsening poverty levels were understood by key informants to have created a crisis that required a response from service programmes and was therefore a key factor in promoting volunteer services. Government was failing to cope with the worsening situation and they needed to

work with volunteers to help respond to the situation (Nsutebu & Walley, 2001). At the 2005 International Volunteer Day commemorations, the Zambian government said it was committed to promoting the spirit of volunteerism and supporting initiatives aimed at empowering the community for national development. Community Development and Social Services Deputy Minister Ronald Banda noted, “Volunteers are critical and key towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (Zambia News Agency, 2005).

While the Zambian government publicly supports volunteerism, the Social Welfare Policy (2004) makes no reference to the role of volunteers in the provision of developmental services, although the role of families and communities in meeting welfare needs is highlighted. Neither is there clarity on the relationship between state service providers and non-profit service providers. Policy and legislative frameworks for NGOs operating in Zambia are yet to be finalised (Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, 1997). The only legislation that exists is the requirement for NGOs to register with the Registrar of Societies.

Nature and scope of volunteer services

Earlier exploratory research on civic service in Africa (Patel & Wilson, 2004) found that most civic service and volunteering programmes were provided by the non-government (NGO) sector. These findings were confirmed in the Zambian study, with NGOs being understood by key informants as implementers of urban-based formal volunteering programmes, while community-based organisations (CBOs) implemented less-formal programmes in the rural areas.

There are international, national and local volunteer programmes in Zambia, with local service types dominating. Formal and informal local service types were found, with most volunteer services operating under the auspices of some organisational structure, either an established or an emerging NGO or CBO, as this increased their opportunities to access donor funds.

The study found that civil society in Zambia is still relatively small with about 1 500 organisations registered with the Registrar of Societies, which seems to correlate with the nature and extent of service in the country. While there is legislation requiring organisations to register, there is no over-arching policy or legislative framework to promote civil society engagement in service delivery. The relationship between the state and civil society is ambivalent, with tensions around access to donor funding and the role of civil society in direct service delivery.

There was insufficient documented information on registered NGOs to quantify those organisations that were implementing volunteer programmes and more research is needed in this area.

In addition to services provided by NGOs/CBOs, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services' Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) was the main public sector civic service programme in operation. The PWAS had 5 506 Community Welfare Assistance Committees (CWAC) throughout the country, which were set up to provide social protection to vulnerable households in the informal sector. With 10 volunteer committee members per CWC, there are 55 060 volunteers serving in this programme, making it the largest formal volunteer programme in Zambia. Volunteers are required to serve for at least a year, but this is not a full-time service as they are only required to provide three full days of work a month (Schubert, 2003).

Building the capacity of local CBOs appeared to be a key service area of international service programmes and national NGO programmes. For example, the international Voluntary Service Organisation (VSO)² worked with a local NGO, the Zambian Organisation for Community Schools (ZOCS), to build the capacity of the organisation. Three volunteers provided technical assistance in different areas, namely, building skills to train the local community to construct their own school; fundraising skills; and micro-finance and income-generation activities to fund school running costs. Ultimately their goal was to assist the ZOCS to achieve self-management.

The Society for Women and AIDS in Zambia (SWAAZ) provides an example of a national NGO. The activities of SWAAZ are undertaken by affiliate CBOs. According to a study in 2003 (Swidler, 2004), SWAAZ was estimated to be the most widespread AIDS intervention on the ground through its formation of volunteer "clubs" of various sorts. SWAAZ claimed a membership of about 10 000 women organised in chapters throughout Zambia. They held meetings across the country to educate market women, factory workers, villagers, school youth and so forth about AIDS. SWAAZ volunteers were not required to work full-time and received no compensation for their engagement.

Local service programmes provided direct services to beneficiaries to meet social, health and educational needs. Key informants identified traditional birth attendants and community schools as examples of unique local community-based services in Zambia.

Traditional birth attendants are women from the community who assist people giving birth at home for a number of reasons, including the fact that many women lack funds to pay hospital bills, and rural health centres are far away and have inadequate facilities to cater for all the women giving birth. Traditional birth attendants do not have any professional training but draw on their own

experience to help pregnant women during delivery. They do not appear to be formally organised. Zambia has more than 40 000 traditional healers, with only an estimated 1 000 Western doctors (Nyau, 2000). Traditional healers include diviners, herbalists, spiritualists and traditional birth attendants. The exact number of each is unknown.

NGOs and CBOs have provided training and capacity building for traditional birth attendants to recognise their crucial role in society, formalise their duties, and make their work more professional and less risky in the light of HIV/AIDS and preventable children diseases. For example, Christian Children's Fund,³ through the Sky Siegfried Fund, helped train 36 traditional birth attendants in safe motherhood procedures, including clean and safe child delivery. Each attendant received a bicycle for transportation and a delivery kit with a flashlight and batteries; candles and matches; aprons, masks and gloves; razors, cord clamps, string and a foetal scope.

Community schools have emerged largely in response to high school drop-out rates (up to 40 per cent) as a result of poverty and increasing numbers of children being orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.

A community school is defined as a community-based, community-owned and community-managed learning institution that meets the basic/primary education needs of students who cannot enter government schools. These schools function in the most basic of circumstances without a formal school structure – often operating out of a church hall or even under a tree, using whatever resources are available (Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development, 2004).

Government-funded schools are concentrated in the cities and are difficult for many children to attend for financial and social reasons. As a result, community schools are growing and expanding at a rapid rate, with an estimated 1 925 community schools in Zambia run by NGOs, communities, churches and ad hoc committees (Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development, 2004), compared with about 100 registered community schools in 1996 (Cashen et al., 2001). However, the provision of community-based education has not been matched by quality education.

In general, the quality of service provision by NGO service providers appears to be cause for concern, and the absence of norms and standards for the provision of services to, for example, orphans and vulnerable children or for community schools makes it difficult to monitor performance and ensure compliance. It appears that the capacity (in terms of finances, personnel and technical know-how) of the responsible state departments to monitor and evaluate service provision is weak.

Profile of volunteers in Zambia

According to figures released by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (Zambia News Agency, 2005), there are over 20 000 organised and thousands of unorganised volunteers engaged in the socio-economic development of the country.

Key informants believed that the majority of volunteers in Zambia were youth because “most of them are unemployed and so have extra time and need to do something”. Also, there was a perception that youth engaged in service programmes in the hope that they would get opportunities for training and employment.

Women were seen to be more concerned with community service and would therefore be more likely to become volunteers, while men dominated where there was a benefit like politics and food-for-work programmes: “Men will fall off if they see no benefit”. Another perception was that the better-off members of a community were more likely to volunteer because they did not have to concern themselves with survival issues.

The analysis of volunteers serving in five service programmes (see Box 1 below) found that, contrary to the perceptions of the key informants cited above, the volunteers were mostly adults (not youth). There were also substantial numbers of men serving and there seemed to be a strong grassroots involvement, which countered the perception of mainly the “better-off” members of a community volunteering.

Box 1: Profile of volunteers in five service organisations

- Children in Need Network (CHIN): Volunteers were mainly students, female and mostly older than 25 years.
- Fountain of Hope Outreach Programme: Of the 17 volunteers, 6 were male and 11 were female, aged between 20 and 30 years. These volunteers were all reformed street children.
- Zambia Voluntary Community Development Association: Volunteers were executive members and ordinary members of the community. Of the 26 servers, 16 were men and 10 were women.
- Our Lady’s Hospice: Of the 120 volunteer caregivers, 110 were female and 10 were male, all aged between 20 and 67 years.
- Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS): Servers were members of the community elected to the various committees. They were aged between 25 and 60 years and, of the 55 060 servers, 30% were female.

Incentives and volunteerism in Zambia

Volunteer attrition

One of the challenges of volunteer management is the retention of a volunteer workforce to reduce attrition. Although studies on rates of attrition amongst volunteers are limited, available research suggests that rates of attrition among volunteer workers in developing countries are high (Friedman, 2002; Kironde & Klaasen, 2002; Bhattacharyya et al., 2001). The Bhattacharyya (2001) study found rates of attrition in community health projects to be between 3,2 per cent and 77 per cent, with higher rates of attrition generally associated with volunteers. It appears that the main reason for the high rates of attrition was that volunteers were driven by the hope that their involvement would lead to paid employment. When this did not materialise they became frustrated and left. Other reasons for leaving were that volunteers did not feel accepted by the community and felt that their work was not appreciated.

The impact of volunteer attrition on an organisation depends on how volunteers are being utilised where volunteers are performing core functions of the organisation. As is the case with most Zambian volunteers who provide a range of essential social, health and educational services, attrition can seriously undermine effective service delivery.

No information was available on attrition rates amongst Zambian volunteers, however the study found that one of the most frequently mentioned problems of voluntary programmes related to the ability of the organisations to retain the services of volunteers because: “They have to survive as well as do voluntary work”.

Types of monetary and non-monetary incentives

As discussed in the previous section, volunteers engage in service programmes for various, often complex, reasons, ranging from altruistic to self-serving, and they are motivated by different incentives (Pawlby, 2003). These incentives can be monetary or non-monetary. The successful application of these incentives depends on an understanding by the organisation of the complex set of personal and contextual factors that affects individual volunteers.

Monetary incentives can include payment of a salary/stipend, a transport or clothing allowance, or even medical insurance. While monetary incentives can reduce attrition, they are not a problem-free solution. Many donors and organisations do not pay salaries/stipends because they are concerned about funding sustainability. In addition, the amount paid may not be sufficient and could create more dissatisfaction. The payment of a salary may also create unrealistic expectations among the volunteers of formal employment and a market-related salary.

In-kind payments from the community are another type of monetary incentive and have been used successfully in some countries (Bhattacharyya et al., 2001). Examples of in-kind payments include assistance by beneficiary families with cooking, providing food and housing, help with agricultural work, and child care. In Peru, beneficiary families of a community nutrition programme have taken turns working for free on the farms of volunteers in recognition of their important contribution.

Non-monetary incentives include community recognition and respect for the volunteer's work, personal growth and development, appropriate training and skill acquisition, supportive supervision and peer support, identification (badges, T-shirts, etc.) and job aids (e.g. home-based care kits), clear roles and task descriptions, and flexible and supportive working arrangements. Non-monetary incentives are critical to the success of volunteer programmes. For instance, ongoing training and supportive supervision promote a sense among volunteers that they are valued by the organisation and that their work is worthwhile in the community, while wearing an identification badge provides them with status in the community.

Incentives in Zambian service programmes

According to key informants, most volunteers in Zambian service programmes appear to participate with few incentives, and a stipend or salary is rare. In some instances, incentives were provided in the form of allowances and transport refunds given at seminars, as well as certificates of attendance. But, as some said, "these seminars only come once in a while".

An analysis of Zambian service programmes found that volunteers receive a mixtur of monetary and non-monetary incentives (see Table 1 below), while monetary incentives are limited, non-monetary incentives were evident in all programmes in the form of training and supervision. No examples of in-kind monetary incentives were found.

The international programme (Peace Corps) provided substantial monetary incentives to its expatriate volunteers, setting them apart from the other national and local programmes. The only other programme to provide a monthly allowance was a hospice. Volunteers in this programme received training in clinical nursing care and worked full time.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of service programmes in Zambia

Programme	Time and tasks	Incentives
US Peace Corps (International)	Full-time: 8 hours a day for a period of 2 years Assigned to specific development projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation from US to Zambia • Training • Supervision • Living allowance • Medical and dental care • \$6 000 on return to the US
Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (National)	Part-time: 3 days a month Identification of needy individuals and households and the transfer of assistance from government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One bicycle per committee • Training in monitoring and evaluation (M&E), targeting, basic accounting • Supervision
Children in Need Network (National)	“Volunteers expected to fill in as much time as they have available ... but time is flexible” “Help out with any task given to them on a day-to-day basis”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation programme • “Modest” transport allowance • Supervision
Our Lady’s Hospice (Local)	Full-time: 8 hours a day Nursing care, counselling and nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-month clinical care course • Monthly allowance • Vehicle • Clinical kits • Supervision • Spiritual retreats
Foundation of Hope Outreach Programme (Local)	Part-time: 3 days a week Counselling, street visitation, case follow-ups, home tracing and re-integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic qualification in child care • Small administrative budget • Daily supervision • Quarterly review meetings
ZAVCODA (Local)	Part-time: 1 day a week Community-based alcohol and drug rehabilitation and sensitisation work camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in peer education and counselling • Supervision

Different programmes were understood to have different structures for the supervision and mentoring of their volunteers. In most NGOs, a full-time employee supervised the servers. Programmes that were funded by donors were required to submit progress reports and this required them to monitor their work on an ongoing basis. For example, the Fountain of Hope Outreach Programme had an office managed by a director and two salaried assistants. The director was responsible for supervising the 17 volunteer outreach workers and monitored their work on a daily basis.

Most organisations provided their servers with opportunities for critical reflection on their experiences through quarterly or annual planning and review

meetings, although this depended on the programme, the nature of their work, and the availability of resources. For example, volunteers at Our Lady's Hospice were given opportunities to go for a spiritual retreat for a week. During this period they reflected on their work and experiences in dealing with terminally ill patients. Other programmes such as the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme did not have the necessary resources for formal reviews, so there were no opportunities for critical reflection.

A key non-monetary incentive is acceptance of volunteer services by the beneficiary community. Key informants were of the opinion that most Zambian servers were welcomed in their communities as they were seen to be improving the welfare of the communities they served: "They have been appreciated as people who want to help".

However, not all beneficiaries welcomed the servers. In some instances, volunteers were seen to be under pressure from recipients, especially where the demand for support was high but resources were minimal. When support was not forthcoming, beneficiaries become suspicious that maybe they – the volunteers – had diverted the resources to themselves.

Sometimes servers were received with hostility and were called names, "for example if you are carrying out sensitisation about cholera, people begin calling you 'cholera', or, for instance, when doing VCT campaigns, the community was suspicious about the collecting of blood and labelled the servers 'satanists'" (feedback at a focus group discussion). Servers were also sometimes viewed as less-educated people who had nothing better to do with their time.

These negative perceptions usually occurred only when programmes had been started by NGOs without consulting communities, resulting in a situation where communities were not well informed. Also, some communities had seen various interventions being implemented in their areas but their circumstances had changed very little, so they were tired of being approached by people claiming to come and "better their lives" (focus group discussion).

Impact of incentives on Zambian volunteer motivation

Some key informants highlighted the issue of monetary incentives as a contentious area in the Zambian context, where most volunteers came from as impoverished social and economic circumstances as the beneficiaries they were serving. Monetary incentives were seen as being too little or non-existent.

It was questioned whether volunteers could be expected to provide services with no salaries or living allowances when their own basic living needs were not being met. One key informant was of the opinion that "the situation of volunteers is pathetic.

There are no allowances. Some of them are now independent and need to survive. So it's difficult to devote time to voluntary work. As such they only become active when there is donor money”.

The absence of non-monetary incentives was also found to impact negatively on motivation. For example, an evaluation of the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) found that poor conditions of service and minimal operational funds resulted in members becoming discouraged and apathetic. There was ample evidence that community members would work tirelessly for an initiative that they felt brought genuine benefits, however they quickly lost motivation if the expected benefits were not delivered. Delays, shortages and broken promises quickly destroyed a local committee. In some instances, members were accused of theft, being held responsible for the disappearance of expected benefits (Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development, 2004).

Nevertheless, the study also found that non-monetary incentives played a positive role in motivating Zambian volunteers. Some of the positive benefits provided by volunteering included:

- Improving one's experience and CV
- Gaining recognition in the community
- Greater exposure to opportunities
- The possibility of benefiting financially in the future.

Role of the state in promoting volunteerism

The absence of a regulatory framework on volunteerism in Zambia was identified as a barrier to effective volunteer management. Key informants stressed that the Zambian government needed to provide a clear and unambiguous policy framework and guidelines for NGOs on the use of volunteers in service provision, including the issue of incentives for volunteers that would enable them to meet their own economic needs while providing services to the vulnerable.

Another contentious issue requiring attention was the roles and responsibilities of NGOs and government in the provision of social welfare services. The HIV/AIDS crisis has generated renewed interest and support from international donor organisations, resulting in increased funding opportunities for national and local service programmes. However, key informants said that NGOs and government were competing for donor funds, and programme effectiveness was hampered by the lack of funding.

Conclusion

The debate around volunteer incentives in Zambia tends to focus on monetary incentives such as salaries and stipends, and does not take into account the role of non-monetary incentives in attracting and retaining motivated volunteer staff.

The study found that Zambian volunteers receive a mixture of monetary and non-monetary incentives, with non-monetary incentives such as training and supervision predominating. There does not appear to be a generic set of incentives that will motivate volunteers and reduce attrition. Rather, organisations need to take into account the complex set of factors that influences volunteer motivation when making decisions about incentives.

The success of any volunteer programme depends on the relationship between the volunteer and the community. Where there is a positive relationship with the beneficiary community, volunteers feel recognised and needed. Poor planning and consultation with communities in the design and implementation of volunteer programmes can result in lack of interest and even hostility on the part of the host community. Organisations must therefore do everything they can to support and strengthen this relationship.

The development and strengthening of voluntary service in Zambia requires a policy and legislative framework that will define volunteerism, clarify the roles and relationships among stakeholders, and identify necessary legal, social, administrative and financial support.

Further research that could be undertaken to support the development of volunteerism policy and legislation includes:

- Quantification of service organisations and volunteers in Zambia
- Assessment of rates of attrition in service organisations and the reasons for high rates of attrition and/or retention, particularly amongst volunteers who are unemployed and have no other means of support.

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Endnotes

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