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Volunteering and Civic Service in the SADC Region: An overview

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Abstract

This paper was written to guide the Strategy Session discussion convened by United Nations Volunteers and VOSESA on 29-30 November 2010 to plan the Southern African Conference on Volunteer Action for Development to be held during the International Year of the Volunteer + 10 (2011). The paper represents a first attempt to provide an overview of different forms of volunteering in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and to describe how they relate to regional development priorities.

In an effort to address the persistent socio-economic challenges in southern Africa, the SADC member states adopted an indicative strategic framework (RISDP) outlining priorities for the promotion of regional development and the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The framework implicitly identifies participatory development as one ingredient necessary for regional development. Despite this, with a few exceptions, volunteering is generally not recognised or supported as a tool for development and peace among the SADC member states. Most of the countries lack the policy and infrastructure required to support and recognise volunteering as an asset and a form of development capital. As a result, the region is unable to harness the potential of civic engagement in its efforts to attain the MDGs.

This paper explores various forms of volunteering present in the region. It examines the potential of youth volunteering to make an impact on social integration in southern African communities and raises the question of whether it can increase the levels of skills and employability of the youth. While community-based volunteering is believed to be the most prevalent form of volunteering in the region, the paper shows that community based volunteering is not typically recognised as having particular value and is therefore often taken for granted. International volunteering in SADC is more formalised than the other forms of volunteering, and involves young people aged between eighteen and twenty-five years as well as professionals who are placed in the region by international sending organisations. If international volunteering is to contribute significantly to regional development in the SADC, the need for reciprocity and mutual learning between international volunteers and host organisations is a pre-requisite.

Corporate and employee volunteering is on the increase, but more research is needed to understand its scope and impact. The paper presents examples of companies that have not only deviated from the traditional practice of forking out funds as a gesture of corporate responsibility, but are using different models to encourage employee volunteering. In the higher education sector, community engagement is still an under-developed sphere of activity across the region, but has the potential to foster student leadership.

Part A Development priorities and voluntary service in the SADC region

1 The SADC regional context

Cooperation and integration within the southern Africa region was first initiated in 1970 by the so-called 'frontline states' comprising Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and, from 1980, Zimbabwe, which sought to to co-ordinate their responses to apartheid and formulate a uniform policy towards the apartheid government and the South African liberation movement. In 1980 the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was held in Zambia and in August 1992, at a Summit held in Windhoek, Namibia, the Heads of State and Government signed the SADC Treaty and Declaration that effectively transformed SADCC into the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SADC aims to develop regional cooperation and integration amongst its member states through socio-economic development, peace and security within the region.

Currently the SADC region is made up of 15 countries which have heterogeneous income levels. The World Bank (September 2010) classifies South Africa, Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia and Seychelles as upper middle income countries while Angola, Lesotho and Swaziland are considered to be in the lower middle income category. The rest of the region's countries comprising of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe are categorised as low income countries. Such heterogeneity in income levels and the different stages of development experiencing illustrate the economic imbalances that characterise the SADC region. Low investment and savings rates in most of the countries have resulted in high aid dependency and an increasing external debt burden. The World Bank considers DRC, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, (approx 40 % of the countries in the region), as highly indebted poor countries. Despite this high proportion, the region aims to adopt a monetary union by 2018.

Besides the economic challenges noted above, **the SADC region is also characterised by extreme poverty levels** with statistics revealing that **more than 70% of people in the region live below the $2 a day international poverty line, while 40% live below the $1 a day poverty line** (SADC, undated). These extreme levels of poverty can be attributed to high inequality and low economic growth evident in most of the region's countries. **Political instability and conflict** also explain for the existence of high poverty levels in countries like Zimbabwe, Angola and DRC. In other cases, economic growth effects have not trickled down to address the plight of the poor. For example, Angola's moderate growth rate in GDP terms has not impacted on the country's huge poverty margins. In addition to high poverty levels, the region's member states generally ranks low on human development indices. Most of the countries in the region are also burdened with **disease such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (TB)**. The United Nations MDGs Report (2010) highlights that Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most heavily affected region in terms of HIV/AIDS infections, accounting for 72% of all new HIV infections in 2008, and within Sub-Saharan Africa, SADC leads on HIV/AIDS infection rates.

In an effort to respond to some of the socio-economic challenges noted above, the **SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan** outlines intervention areas that need to be prioritised in order to promote regional development. The intervention areas are

categorised into two sub-groups: those of a cross-sectoral nature and those related to specific functional areas of cooperation and integration. The targets set for the intervention areas are shaped and influenced by the targets for the Millennium Development Goals. The Priority Intervention Areas are as follows:

- **Cross-sectoral intervention areas**
  - Poverty eradication;
  - Combating of the HIV and AIDS pandemic;
  - Gender equality and development;
  - Science and Technology;
  - Information and Communication Technologies;
  - Environment and Sustainable Development;
  - Private Sector
  - Statistics

- **Sectoral cooperation and integration intervention areas**
  - Trade/economic liberalisation and development;
  - Infrastructure support for regional integration and poverty eradication;
  - Sustainable food security; and
  - Human and social development.

Participatory development in meeting regional strategic goals

In pursuing the targets set for these areas of intervention, the SADC Heads of State crafted different protocols and strategies, which member states are expected to implement. Participatory development has been raised as one of the strategies on which member states can capitalise in order to be able to attain the set targets. Unfortunately, however, the role of volunteerism in addressing some of the regional socio-economic challenges seems to have been overlooked in this respect. Experience worldwide shows that volunteering plays a significant role in any development initiatives that prioritise the need for human capital and this paper illustrates different ways in which volunteering and civic service can be linked to some of the strategies in the regional strategic framework.

For example, the strategic framework aims to eradicate poverty through the adoption of institutions that promote inclusive development. Volunteering can be viewed as one such institution that promotes participation of both local and international communities in regional development initiatives. Volunteers from within the region can impact on both financial and technical constraints that hinder development in many SADC countries, while international volunteers (carefully selected and placed) from countries elsewhere in Africa and other regions worldwide can offer much-needed technical expertise to communities throughout the region. Community service for young people as well as community service opportunities for elders can and does already produce increased participation within countries. Already substantial evidence exists of the extent to which the burden of care is shouldered by women of all ages (Patel 2009; GEMSA & VSO-RAISA 2010) who provide service in the home and community-based care sector, to orphans and vulnerable children as well as in early childhood development. These forms of participation need to be interrogated as contributions to resolving the resourcing challenges that normally characterise development initiatives in the region.

Furthermore, the region plans to use peer education and youth specific HIV education as a strategy to combating HIV and AIDS pandemic. As is shown below, youth service can be an

important support for this strategy and SADC member states need to be encouraged to merge peer education and youth-specific HIV education with youth service. HIV and peer education programmes generally depend on volunteers and thus present the region with the opportunity to scale up and strengthen volunteering policy frameworks when pursuing this strategy.

Volunteering can also be of significance when tackling gender imbalances in the region. The Regional Indicative Strategic Plan identifies gender capacity building and training as one of the strategies to be used in order to achieve gender equality and development in the region. There are many civic organisations that are working in the field of gender equality and most of their activities are voluntary in nature. If the regional agenda for gender capacity building is to be successful, there is a need to incorporate and support such volunteering effort.

Utilisation of human capabilities is one other strategy adopted in order to promote human and social development in the SADC region. The Human and Social Development component of the Regional Indicative Strategic Framework could draw strongly on various forms of volunteering (international, regional and local) in order to mobilise and direct human resources towards meeting critical skills shortages and strengthening local level support through volunteers working on the ground. One strategy that holds significant potential in this regard is the possibility of scaling up exchange programmes and mechanisms for key stakeholders to participate in various development initiatives across the region. As is shown in the experience of organisations such as FK Norway, Canada World Youth, the Cape Town Volunteer Centre, SCORE, SayXchange and other organisations that presently run volunteer exchange programmes in the SADC region, such programmes can have positive impacts for both the host and the sending countries involved.

2 SADC progress on the MDGs

The Millennium Declaration by world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 saw the framing up of critical areas covering human needs and basic rights requiring urgent global attention. Under the auspices of the United Nations, eight critical areas were identified as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be achieved by 2015:

1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2 Achieve universal primary education
3 Promote gender equality and empower women
4 Reduce child mortality
5 Improve maternal health
6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7 Environmental sustainability
8 Global Partnership

The 2010 Millennium Development Goals Report highlights how different regions in the world are progressing towards achieving the eight MDGs. It is disappointing to note that, relative to the initial conditions in 2000, Sub-Saharan Africa has regressed instead of progressing in some of these areas. Although the Millennium Development Goals Report Card (September 2010) shows that some Sub-Saharan Africa regions, including southern Africa, are making considerable progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals relative to the pre-2000 era, the progress in SADC lags behind that of other regions such as North Africa, Latin America and Eastern Asia.

The evidence shows that macro-economic challenges within SADC countries still hinder progress towards the attainment of millennium development goals. High levels of poverty within the region impact on achievement of goals such as the reduction of child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS. As is shown below, SADC's progress on the MDGs varies by goal.

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger: Lack of reliable and updated statistics on income, consumption and expenditure in the SADC region makes it difficult for analysts to track regional progress on this goal. The UNDP Human Development Report (2010) alludes that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence of multidimensional poverty in the world, that is, most households in the region are suffering deprivations in health, education and living standards. The existence of such high levels of multidimensional poverty conforms to the forecasted failure of the region to meet the goal of eradicating extreme poverty made in the Millennium Development Goals Report (2010). Although the proportion of the population living below $1.25 a day between the periods of 1990 to 2008 has decreased in some SADC countries such as South Africa, Malawi, Namibia and Zambia, the Millennium Development Goal Report Card (September 2010) reveals however that in Zimbabwe the proportion has increased from 33% to 78% over the same period. Like in many countries in the region, the problem of high unemployment in Zimbabwe has resulted in the worsening poverty levels. High unemployment has also been reported in the Millennium Development Goals Country Reports for Namibia and Malawi as hindering the progress towards eradicating poverty. **Feminisation of poverty** appears to be an emerging challenge in the SADC region: There is evidence of higher poverty levels amongst female headed households compared to those headed by male counterparts in many SADC member states. **Regionalisation of poverty** is another trend manifesting in the region, with higher poverty levels evident in rural communities as compared with their urban counterparts. Addressing these disparities in poverty trends is critical to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in the region.

Achieving universal primary education: Many countries within the SADC region have made remarkable advances in this respect. South Africa is reported to have already attained an almost universal access to primary education (South Africa Millennium Development Goals Report, 2010) while Zambia's net enrolment in primary education increased from 80% in 1990 to 97% in 2006 (Zambia Millennium Development Goals Report, 2008). In Zimbabwe universal access to primary education was almost achieved, but was then set back by the economic crisis in the country which resulted in the decline of net enrolment ratio from 99% in 2002 to 97% in 2006 (Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007). Enrolment also declined in the Democratic Republic of Congo from 87% in 1991 to 59% in 2007 (Millennium Development Goal Report Card, September 2010). In Namibia, although current primary school enrolment stands at around 92%, the country believes that the MDG target of 99% will be difficult to achieve (Namibia Millennium Development Goals Report, 2008). Although many member states have thus made significant progress in campaigning for universal primary education, attaining the actual target by 2015 will be difficult. Concommitant issues include the marginalisation of disabled children, which often results in these children failing to attend primary education (evident in Malawi and Tanzania, for example). Furthermore, while most of the SADC countries emphasise the improvement of access to primary schools, they tend to overlook the need to improve the quality and functionality of education. Reports from South Africa and Zambia, for example, reveals how these two countries have progressed well in improving access to primary education, but show the strong need to address the issue of quality primary education.

The pace of **promoting gender equality and women's empowerment** in the region is still slow. This is evidenced by the gender disparities present in poverty, unemployment and HIV trends, which tend to favour men. The region has progressed quite well in resolving gender disparities in primary education, but gender disparities in secondary and tertiary education persist. The proportion of girls dropping out of secondary school is still much higher compared with their male counterparts. In tertiary education women tend to be overrepresented in the humanities and social sciences, while men dominate the science and engineering fields. Gender disparities are also evident in employment and politics. In most of the countries in the region, women are underrepresented in the formal employment sector, but dominate in the informal and agricultural sectors. Participation of women in political circles is extremely limited: for example the proportion of Zambian female parliamentarians in 2006 was 14 % while it was 27% for Namibia in 2007. South Africa is the only country in the region that has made solid progress in lowering the political gender gap as can be witnessed by the increase of representation of women in parliament that rose from 27.8% in 1994 to 44% in 2009.

The rate of improvement to **reduce child mortality** in the SADC is still insufficient to meet the MDG target. The Millennium Development Goals Report (2010) asserts that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of child mortality in the world, and under-five mortality has been increasing in South Africa and Zimbabwe between the periods of 1990 and 2008. Under-five mortality as well as infant mortality has also been reported as increasing in Namibia. Absolute progress in reducing infant and under-five mortality can be noted in Zambia and Malawi with both countries still hoping to attain the MDG target by 2015. Botswana, Mauritius and Seychelles seem to have attained the goal with infant mortality rate of 26, 15 and 11 respectively.

Though the SADC region has progressed well in **improving maternal health** as compared to other sub-regions in Sub-Saharan Africa, it must be noted that such progress still lags behind that of many other parts of the world. Countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Malawi and Zimbabwe report that they are unlikely to meet the target of reducing the maternal mortality rate to the MDG target of 38 per 100 000 live births by 2015. Maternal mortality rate still remains above 100 in many of the countries in the region.

Combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: Southern Africa has an average HIV infection rate of 21%, which makes it the region with the highest HIV infection rate in the world. The HIV prevalence rate amongst the youth has declined in countries such as Zimbabwe, Namibia and Zambia and is reported to have stabilised in South Africa. HIV prevalence and infection rates are, however, reported to have increased in Mozambique. The region has also experienced increased coverage of the Anti-Retroviral Therapy programme, with South Africa today having the largest Anti-Retroviral Therapy programme in the world. Malaria and tuberculosis continues to cause alarm in countries like Malawi where malaria remains the most common cause of illness and death among children under-five and pregnant women.

With regards to **environmental sustainability**, many countries in the SADC region have progressed well in providing safe drinking water to their populations. South Africa has already surpassed the MDG target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable water by 2005. Most of the other countries in the region are on track and have indicated that this target is still attainable. The only problem in this regard concerns the access of urban households to basic sanitation. Many countries in the region are still faced with the problems of providing decent housing to slum-dwellers in the urban areas. In most SADC

countries, however, the rate of provision of safe drinking water to rural areas has been slow and disappointing. When it comes to the provision of basic services, the rural populace in the region seems to be marginalised.

Global partnership remains a significant issue in the SADC region, which plans to adopt a monetary union by 2018. Many of the countries have progressed well in improving their communication networks, which are a critical and significant feature of global partnerships. Relevant progress has also been made in mobile telephony, but most countries have regressed on the fixed telephony goal. Progress on the access to internet by the majority of the population in the region remains constrained.

3 Regional policy trends on volunteering and civic service

Despite the strong tradition of volunteering for development and social and political change, particularly among poor communities and youth, volunteering is generally not recognised or supported as a tool for development and peace among countries of the SADC region. One reason for this is the lack of policy and infrastructure to support and recognise volunteering as an asset and as capital for development. However, this needs to be contextualised within the historical development of the SADC countries following the colonial period.

Patel (2007) points out that on gaining independence from the colonial powers, countries such as Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe positioned the ethos of voluntary service within the nation-building agenda. In the 1960s and 1970s youth service programmes grew in these and other African countries, but declined in the 1980s owing to being poorly administered and plagued by corruption, nepotism, financial and political difficulties (including allegations of elitism). Referring to VOSESA's study volunteering and civic service in five SADC countries, Patel comments:

> "In all five countries studied, it was evident that the nature and scope of service and volunteering changed in line with economic and political changes in the societies. In Botswana, a shift to conservative free market policies in the 1990s resulted in a worsening of the plight of poor people. In Zimbabwe, the declining political, economic and social situation and the failure of government impacted negatively on poor and vulnerable people. This declining situation resulted in a proliferation of service activities outside of the state, where civil society organisations and informal community and village level structures emerged to address the gap in meeting the needs of the people. The service ethos was strongly established in the social services and anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, and service continues to be a growing phenomenon supported by strong sectoral policies aimed at national reconstruction and development (Patel, 2007:10).

The research demonstrates that a further distinguishing feature of service in the contemporary southern African context is that the socio-economic profile of the servers corresponds closely with that of the beneficiaries: servers are poor and vulnerable, in contrast with the server profile in industrial societies where servers come from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds (ibid). Patel argues that this presents particular policy challenges for the design and management of service programmes in the region where some programmes depend on governments playing a major role, while in other cases programmes are the product of partnerships between civil society and community-based organisations, international agencies and donors.

A further feature of the southern African volunteering landscape is that there is limited infrastructure for linking volunteers and volunteering opportunities in the region's member countries. Most countries do not have specific formal social policies or legislation on service and volunteering. As already noted in various studies by United Nations Volunteers (UNV), there is no common understanding among policy-makers of the impact of volunteerism and the extent to which it is valued among people in the SADC region. This leads to the conclusion that neither basic beliefs about the value of volunteering, nor the practice of volunteering that is evident in the region, are sufficient to influence policies and procedures for promoting, engaging, managing and recognising the role of volunteers in development.

The United Nations Volunteers has thus been at the forefront of advocating for national volunteer infrastructure in the developing context in particular, including in a number of SADC countries. For example, the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Volunteers' (UNV) Namibia office, has initiated a process aimed at developing a national volunteer policy framework. The draft policy is currently before the legislative assembly for consideration. The Namibia volunteer policy seeks to recognise different forms of volunteering (formal and informal) in order to harness the latent resources available in youth, retirees and other population groups that wish to make a difference in society by freely using their expertise and time for the good of society and community. It is envisaged that the Ministries of Youth, National Service, Sports and Culture, Health, Social Services and the National Youth Service will benefit directly from the volunteer policy.

In October 2010, the Government of Mozambique passed volunteer legislation which will recognise and support volunteering as an asset that provides capital for development. The law will encourage the participation of the population in various volunteering and civic engagement activities, especially at the community level, thus using the combination of their knowledge and skills, values and motivation for development. The law was developed through the support of UNV and will also support the setting up of a National Volunteer Programme, which is intended to strengthen the work of civil society organisations in the national strategy against poverty at both national and decentralised level. A National Volunteer Agency will serve as a mechanism to coordinate initiatives between government and civil society organisations, and train national organisations for volunteer projects and management.

With the vulnerability of youth increasing in the SADC region, UNV has been collaborating with national institutions and governments in the region in order to respond to the social and development needs of young people in a strategic and comprehensive manner. In Lesotho in 2008, UNV supported the establishment of the National Volunteer Corps for young graduates. This programme provides a mechanism for young graduates to access volunteer opportunities in the public and private sectors. The scheme enables young professionals to be mobilised into development programmes while at the same time improving their job prospects through experience and training. The National Volunteer Corps Programme will also promote coordination among volunteer involving organisations in the management of volunteers and in coordinating their contribution to defined national development priorities.

The Government of Mauritius has, through the support of UNV-initiated efforts, set up a national body that will coordinate the implementation of the National Plan for Volunteerism. A feasibility study conducted in 2008 noted that volunteerism was recognised as significant capital for development Mauritius. The study noted that there was, however, a need to

establish a broad consensus for recognising and rewarding volunteerism to ensure the participation and retention of new generations of volunteers. In a middle income country like Mauritius, the study noted that volunteerism was an opportunity for reinforcing social cohesion and it was a highly needed resource to provide development programmes with sufficient outreach capacity to fight poverty.

In Zimbabwe, following a lean period of socio-economic and political challenges, steps are afoot towards the establishment of a volunteer centre with the objectives of supporting recovery, peace building and the attainment of the MDGs. With the support of UNV, the Zimbabwe Volunteer Centre (ZVC) will be established to facilitate a conducive legal, policy and institutional framework for volunteerism in the country. The proposed volunteer environment will promote the integration of volunteerism in development plans and policies at local and national levels, in addition to supporting youth volunteer initiatives for economic empowerment. Youth will be involved in programmes designed to advance social cohesion in communities, particularly as agents of conflict transformation and peace building for national healing and reconciliation.

In Swaziland and Malawi, UNV is supporting the strengthening of the capacity of national volunteer infrastructure for the health sector as well as making this part of the national response mechanism for HIV/AIDS care and support. As is the case in many countries of the sub-region, volunteerism in Swaziland hold the best hope for the care and support for populations affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, especially volunteering at the community level. The volunteer infrastructure in Swaziland is envisaged to increase support and community capacity enhancement of HIV/AIDS care givers.

In a number of countries in the region the service and volunteering fields are not separately catered for, but are integrated into other social policies and national strategies such as those concerning social welfare, health, HIV/AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children and rural development. For example in South Africa, volunteers are recognised in a range of policies as providing much needed human resources, particularly in the care of children, those infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS, and the elderly as follows:

- In 2001, the South African Department of Health ("DOH") issued the *National Guidelines on Home-Based Care and Community-Based Care*. The Guidelines mention support for volunteers, the monitoring and evaluation of the work of volunteers, and the integration of the role of volunteers into the regular healthcare system. The Guidelines reaffirm and draw heavily on the African traditional practice of providing care and assistance to members of the extended family and the community (a practice referred to in South Africa as *ubuntu*).
- Other legislation that mention volunteers are the *Disaster Management Act 2002* (DMA) and the *Immigration Act 2002* as amended by Immigration Amendment Act 2004.

The South African Green and White Papers on National Youth Service (1998 and 1999 respectively) identified four target groups that should be served by structured voluntary youth service programmes and recognised that the emphasis on core elements of service, learning and development would vary, depending on the target group served. The target groups are young women and men in higher education; learners in the further education and training band (Grades 10-12 and post-school vocational training); unemployed young women and men; and young women and men in conflict with the law. Other policy provisions in South Africa provide for a year's community service for health professionals

(the only instance of compulsory community service in South Africa), which is a requirement for professional registration. In addition, the Child Justice Act No 75 of 2008 mentions opportunities for using community service as a diversionary or rehabilitative pathway for young offenders and states that a child may be required to perform community service as an element of rehabilitation. Community service is also provided for in the school curriculum for Grades 10-12, but at this stage little is know about the extent to which this is being implemented.

In respect of the care sector, VSO-RAISA has taken the lead in the region to advocate for the policy recognition and support of volunteers, especially in relation to HIV/AIDS and the burden this is placing on women and girls to perform unpaid care work. In 2008/2009, VSO-RAISA and WHO Africa conducted extensive consultations with key actors in the care sectors in nine countries: Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (where VSO RAISA operates), Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia. According to the research, the feminisation of tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS has resulted in women and girls bearing the burden of infection, care and support in the region. This is compounded by the absence of national volunteering frameworks and policies across the SADC region, as well as the lack of standardised and sustained training and support for care providers. VSO-RAISA is now supporting efforts to develop stand-alone policy at national levels as well as advocating for the integration of volunteer policies into existing legislation so as to establish the connection between care work and volunteering across the region, emphasising the need for systems to support women and girls in this sector (GEMSA & VSO-RAISA 2010).

The region also needs to identify other entry points for promoting legislation and policy within existing national and regional policy and advocacy documents. For example, youth development policies often provide for service and volunteering since many recognise that volunteering is critical in promoting social cohesion, good citizenship and employability, especially amongst young people who lack the experience needed to enter the labour market. However, the risk is that in many countries youth policies are treated separately from mainstream public policy and do not achieve the necessary integration in order to foreground youth volunteering as a significant development strategy.

Finally, the Fifth African Development Forum (November 2006, Addis Ababa) which focused on Youth and Leadership in the 21st Century, suggested that governments should:

- Ensure that policy frameworks are in place;
- Factor youth volunteering and service into national development priorities and strategies;
- Allocate resources to youth volunteering strategies and structures within national budgeting cycles;
- Monitor and assess youth volunteering programmes;
- Develop awareness of youth volunteering for development; and
- Encourage research institutes and higher education bodies to undertake research on youth volunteering for development.

These initiatives suggest that in the SADC region the volunteer and service policy landscape is somewhat fragmented. Clearly there are opportunities for players in the volunteering field to engage more closely with policy makers in member states and at regional level, particularly in the areas of youth development, HIV/AIDS, and human development in order to influence government policies in respect of volunteering and service at the local, national and regional level.

Part B Nature and scope of volunteering and civic service in the SADC region

1 Youth volunteering

Often the discourse about young people is shaped by the media and, in the research context, by risk behaviour literature we read – young people are responsible for the high rates of HIV in the region, they are the most likely to be involved in violence, and they are the least likely to find employment. The literature tells us that young people are a problem. Many of our youth policies in the region also zone in on the challenges and vulnerabilities of young people. While these challenges are very real, this focus often detracts from the immense energy, creativity, talent and drive that young people bring to communities. Volunteering amongst young people offers an avenue to harness these assets, not only for community development, but also for young people's own development. However, this requires well designed and managed programmes that place youth development and participation at the heart of their vision. This section of the paper covers the key trends in youth volunteering in the region, the potential that youth volunteering might have for some of the challenges facing the region and young people in the region, and the issues that need to be dealt with to make this an effective strategy for development.

Defining youth and youth volunteering

Table 1: Definition of youth by age

Country	Definition of youth
Angola	15-24
Botswana	12-29
DRC	15-35
Lesotho	15-35
Madagascar	18-35
Malawi	14-25
Republic of Mauritius	16-25
Mozambique	18-35
Namibia	14-29
Seychelles	No data
South Africa	14-35
Swaziland	14-30
Tanzania	15-24
Zambia	15-25
Zimbabwe	10-30

Although the United Nations definition of youth is 15 – 24 years, in the SADC region, we include a wide range of people in our definition of youth. The table alongside demonstrates the age ranges for the definition of youth in the region, drawn from policy documents. It shows clearly that when we are speaking of young people we are faced with children from the age of 10 years through to adults of the age of 35 years.

Clearly these different groups have vastly different needs, talents, interests and experience and any initiatives focusing on youth volunteering need to tailor programmes to attract particular age groups, and involve them in activities that are age appropriate. In addition, when we are talking about young people in SADC, we are referring to a large proportion of the population. Some estimates place the under 35 population in the SADC as high as 40% of the total population. We are thus talking about a huge number of young people who can be targeted for volunteering and service programmes.

Involving young people in volunteering and service activities offers opportunities to instill in them a lifelong commitment to civic engagement. The Fifth Africa Development Forum (2006) recognised that the vigorous move towards integration required a paradigm shift in the role of young people and the role they played in volunteerism; it thus reiterated the

commitment to the creation of the Africa Union Youth Volunteer Corps. The Constitutive Act of the African Union and in particular the African Youth Charter (July 2006) make explicit mention of the need to institute youth volunteerism policy and programmes at local, national, regional and international levels as an important form of youth participation and a means for peer to peer training. New research suggests that in fact it is better to begin instilling a culture of volunteering amongst children – some would argue even as young as five years old! The logic here is that if young children experience volunteering, for example by playing with or reading to even younger children, volunteering becomes a way of life, rather than an add on to other pursuits. (A caution is necessary, however, to ensure that volunteering among children should not be exploited as a means of tapping children for their labour.) Thus, instead of talking about youth volunteering we could refer to child and youth volunteering. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper the term youth volunteering will be used.

Youth volunteering can be defined as:

> *Instances in which young people or children, out of their free will and with financial gain not being their primary objective, carry out activities with two primary goals:*
> - *the development of communities and society at large; and through this,*
> - *their own personal development that contributes to their ability to participate in society as adults.*
>
> (Adapted from UNV, 2006)

Although there is still a paucity of data available, VOSESA's Five-Country Study on Service and Volunteering in the SADC Region (Patel et al, 2007) showed that youth service was the dominant form of formal voluntary service in the five countries studied (Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The goals of these programmes were to inculcate a culture of service and nation building among youth, promote the role of the youth in achieving civic awareness and national reconstruction, develop the skills, knowledge and ability of youth, improve youth employability and harness the nation's untapped resources. "The Malawian and South African findings point to the growth of youth service and challenge the prevailing assumptions about low levels of youth involvement in service. In these countries, youth view service as an opportunity for realising personal development through skills transfer and preparation for work whilst contributing at the same time to community development" (Patel et al, 2007:41). Young people in the region are involved in a range of voluntary activities, either on a formal or organised basis, through youth and other development organisations, or informally, by helping out in their own communities, schools and religious spaces. The following section deals with some of the ways in which young people are contributing to development in the region, through voluntary service.

Youth volunteering for development

In Lesotho, young people between the ages of 16 and 35 are placed on short and longer-term placements in communities where they are required to assist on development projects in resource poor areas. Some of the programmes they may be involved in include building homes and clinics, and assisting with food gardens or other crops. The programme is run by Workcamps Association. UNV is a partner and supports the programme.

The programme illustrates how young people can be active agents of positive change in communities.

Like all volunteers, youth volunteers or servers contribute both to national development priorities as well as to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Connecting young people to opportunities in which they can see themselves making a positive change in their societies offers many advantages, provided programmes are well structured and training is provided. For example, youth volunteering can change communities' often negative perceptions of young people

thus allowing for better intergenerational understanding and dialogue; it can provide young people with a sense of purpose, meaning and hope that empowers them; and involving young people can bring new ideas and innovation to development projects.

One of the key development issues for Mozambique is the need for skilled people to live and work in rural areas. Like young people in many countries, the skilled youth of Mozambique are attracted to the towns and cities. Through an initiative called *Férias Desenvolvendo o Distrito* (meaning 'youth developing districts'), the National Youth Council and the University Students' Association have devised a means of addressing this issue. Supported by the government, they are using volunteering to build the skills of graduates whilst opening up possible alternative employment paths for them. Graduate students have the opportunity to volunteer at rural district offices. The initiative assists the government of Mozambique to fill in the posts that have been vacant and improve the level of service provision in fields such as agriculture, education, health, fishing, public administration, decentralised planning, environment and justice.

In addition to the above, volunteering and service opportunities that are development focused can contribute to social cohesion in our often fragmented societies. As Camay & Gordon (2004, in UNV, 2006) note, "volunteerism has enormous potential to bring societies together. In African countries volunteering is a traditional manifestation of community solidarity (described inter alia as *ubuntu* in Isizulu, *letsema* in Setswana and *kujitolea* in Kiswalihi), that makes it possible, even in the 21st Century, to mobilise citizens to work together in the public interest." The process of social integration is especially important for young people who need to experience a sense of belonging and responsibility to become productive citizens and participants in society, and to protect them against getting involved in a range of risk behaviours (Ward, 2007).

Whether the divides are based on class, race, geography or religion, when young people are volunteering in pursuit of a common development goal the opportunities for them to work with young people from different backgrounds and in communities that are different from their own are immense. SayXchange is a new initiative of AFS Interculture South Africa and the Southern Africa Trust, which seeks to connect young people from South Africa with volunteer opportunities in Mozambique and vice versa, in an attempt to build social cohesion in order to address some of the xenophobic attitudes that underpinned the violence experienced in South Africa in May 2008.

Involving young people as volunteers in development projects therefore offers great opportunities to harness the innovation and energy of young people to address pressing development needs within a country, whilst at the same time tackling some of the divisions that are a challenge within and between many SADC countries.

Youth volunteering and employment

A further advantage of creating volunteering and service opportunities for young people is that of enhancing their employability. One of the major challenges globally, and particularly in Africa which has such a large youth population, is that of youth unemployment. While unemployment is largely a structural issue that volunteering opportunities cannot change, the other side of the equation is that young people are often not employable because they lack of skills as well as workplace experience. Volunteering and service opportunities can provide young people with the opportunities to build both skills and experience, whilst at the same time helping them to build the social networks that are often necessary to find employment or opportunities for further training and education. Provided that programmes

are well designed and managed, and that training is a component of the programme design, volunteering and service can also help young people to build their confidence in their own abilities, as well as learn leadership and teamwork skills. loveLife groundBREAKERS in South Africa, for instance, are seen by community members, prominent business people and policy makers as leaders (loveLife, 2008). As one prominent businesswoman commented on her experience of loveLife groundBREAKER volunteers:

> *These young people are leaders in their field. They will be tomorrow's leaders.*

Many of the young people are also holding leadership positions in community fora because of their volunteer experience.

When young people are volunteering for development of their own communities, they might also begin to consider the possibility of a professional career in a development field such as child or youth work, social work, education or health.

Young volunteers involved in the International Movement ATD Fourth World street libraries programme in Madagascar are benefitting from a system that enables them to learn computer skills, life skills and language skills. Their volunteering activities enable them to gain work experience in the information technology sector. Many of the young people have since been able to access job opportunities in government positions, the private sector and in civil society. Even those that have not yet accessed jobs have still gained valuable work experience through the internships. For ATD international volunteer, Lucas Rodwell, this is a major success since many of the young volunteers, before joining the programme, had to make the difficult decision of leaving the work they were doing to help their families survive in order to come over and learn new skills. "There were young people who worked in a rubbish dump at night to find stuff they could sell in the day." By funding their studies many of the volunteers were able to learn the skills they needed to access better and more secure employment.

Volunteering and service therefore offer great opportunities for helping young people to develop their employability. In the South African context, some publicly funded community work programmes (which are paid work opportunities) now require evidence of community-based volunteering as one of the criteria for programme access. However, it is important that young people who are involved in development volunteering and service are not exploited in their positions as volunteers. All too often it is easy to use young people in development activities as volunteers without ensuring that their involvement leads them to a career path. As such young people can get 'stuck' as volunteers for many years. For example, in the South African context it is sobering to note that there have been instances in which young people enrolled as stipended volunteers in the Department of Health's home and community-based care programme have remained in these positions after year, without clear prospects for a career path that can take them into further education and paid employment.

Youth volunteering and youth development

If volunteering and service opportunities for young people are to lead to social integration and increased levels of skills and employability, it is important that programmes are designed in a holistic manner that places youth development at the heart of the programme. This is the second key purpose of youth volunteering – that of the personal development of young people. Young volunteers are unlikely to get involved in volunteering or service opportunities for altruistic reasons alone. The desire to develop themselves is a key factor that will drive many young people to engage in these opportunities. As such, it is important that programmes are designed to assist young people to develop life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and language ability as well as technical skills such computer skills. The volunteering opportunity itself often helps young people to learn these skills. As Monique Warden, Peer Education and Youth Outreach Coordinator for the YMCA, Cape Flats in South Africa notes,

> *We are discovering a new generation of leaders that are informed, active within communities, role models to their peers and advocates for change.*

However, when programmes are structured in such a way that young people are mentored and provided with opportunities to reflect on their experiences, the potential to build these skills is greatly enhanced. VOSESA's assessment in 2008 of the loveLife groundBREAKER youth service programme[1] showed that groundBREAKER graduates play a significant role as leaders in community organisations. Among groundBREAKER graduates who were members of organisations, about two-thirds played a leadership role. This is commendable given that in many cases, community organisations traditionally give preference to older people filling leadership roles. The groundBREAKER graduates have generally positive perceptions about their leadership abilities and Almost all indicated that they feel comfortable voicing their opinions, are able to influence other people, and take responsibility for finding solutions. The only significant difference was amongst female and male groundBREAKERS – women are lagging behind their male counterparts in taking up leadership positions. This could partly be explained by the patriarchal discourse that still dominates in South Africa.

One of the key issues facing young people in the region is that of risk behaviour, including risky sexual behaviour, substance abuse, and involvement in or victimisation by crime and violence. For instance, a recent study that VOSESA conducted for the Southern Africa Trust demonstrates that throughout the region, levels of domestic violence and sexual violence are perceived to be high. Collective acts of violence such as violence perpetrated by gangs or in mobs, as was experienced during the xenophobic violence in South Africa in May 2008, were also reported as being high in many parts of the region.

A range of factors can be identified as contributing to the high levels of violence that young people are involved in and by which they are victimised. These include structural level factors such as inequality and historical legacies of violence. But at the individual and community level, poor education, a sense of marginalisation and a lack of social cohesion were identified as some of the contributing factors to violence, and probably to other risk behaviours.

[1] The loveLife groundBREAKER programme is a South African one-year structured youth service programme in which young people provide peer education in the HIV/AIDS sector. Each groundBREAKER is supported by up to ten volunteers known as *mpintshis.*

Service and volunteering offer opportunities for young people to understand, firstly, that they are valued members of communities, and to feel part of something bigger (to develop what Putnam refers to as bonding social capital). Secondly, according to Pitner (2007) it offers the opportunity to challenge biases and prejudices rooted in group membership of identity such as class or race (referred to as bridging social capital). Volunteering and service therefore offer one mechanism that could build social cohesion and social capital and mitigate against some of the risks faced by young people.

Key issues arising

It is clear that in the context of a range of challenges facing young people in the region, including unemployment, involvement in risk behaviour, and community and societal fragmentation, volunteer and service opportunities for young people emerge as one strategy to address these.
Within countries, these opportunities need to be enhanced. While young people may be engaged in a range of volunteering activities on an informal basis, the potential to connect these activities to the benefits outlined above relies in large part on more structured programmes that offer young people spaces to learn, practice and reflect on skills learned. This however requires capacity and policy support. What can be done to enhance the infrastructure for youth development oriented volunteering and service opportunities in each of the SADC countries?

A key challenge that faces many structured programmes, on the other hand, is how to attract young people into volunteering, given that the consumer culture growing in the region instills an individualistic rather than community orientation. Linked to this is a perception that arises among some poor and marginalised young people that "volunteering is for losers" and in other communities that volunteering is boring or 'nerdy'. There is some evidence from Zimbabwe (Patel, 2007:24) that shows that the contribution of local volunteers perceived as being altruistic since both the volunteers and the beneficiaries are people of low socio-economic status who engage in daily struggles to survive or meet their basic needs. However, recent evidence from Tanzania and Mozambique (VOSESA 2010a forthcoming) shows that among local people, volunteering is often perceived as being the preserve of the wealthy and the privileged, and that it is only people coming from abroad who volunteer. The question arising then is how to make volunteering attractive and 'cool' for young people at the local level.

In addition, the achievement of diversity in youth volunteering remains a challenge in racially and class-stratified contexts. Youth service programmes in South Africa, for example, struggle to attract participants from the full range of race groups, a constraint that can undermine their goals to achieve social cohesion.

At the regional level, important opportunities are emerging for volunteer exchange. Both SayXchange and SCORE are beginning to make progress on introducing regional volunteer programmes that can build a regional identity amongst young people. The effects of these early programmes will need to be assessed to see if the benefits are being realised and if so, efforts to increase the reach of these types of programmes will need to be made.

International volunteering is currently dominated by young people coming into the region, mostly from developed countries, although there are programmes that place professionals from other developing countries (VSO being a case in point). Some research is currently taking place to determine the impact of these placements on the volunteers (conducted by

SAGE-Net in respect of the Weltwärts volunteers placed in South Africa) and on host organisations and communities in which these young people are service (VOSESA currently has a study in progress on the impact of international volunteering on host organisations and communities in Tanzania and Mozambique). Questions that arise include whether there are opportunities to partner young international volunteers with local young people for mutual learning and whether international volunteering can help the up-scaling of local volunteering.

2 Community-based volunteering

Local, community-based volunteering is widespread in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, is deeply rooted in African tradition and is the dominant form of volunteering, according to VOSESA's Five-Country Study on Service and Volunteering (Patel, 2007:27)**.** Historically, volunteering took the form of mutual aid whereby individuals practiced reciprocity and by committing to help others with the expectation that they will also be helped. While these systems of community support, kinship and cultural practice were undermined in many SADC countries during colonialisation, some beliefs and practices do continue today. For example, the philosophies of *ubuntu* (Isizulu)*, letsema* (Setswana) *and kujitolea (*Kiswalihi) still feature strongly today and encapsulate the essence of the volunteering spirit in southern Africa by stressing the relational nature of human existence and the importance of 'sharing and caring for others'. Mutual aid forms of volunteering are not only beneficial to individuals, but also help to build solidarity and social capital within communities, which in turn helps communities to overcome the challenges they face, whether economic, environmental or social (Patel et al, 2007).

While the quest for independence was supported by communities in which individuals volunteered their support for liberation movements, the advent of independence and the promises made by newly established nationalist governments for service delivery meant that volunteering declined and dependency on state became the order of the day. Where these promises did not materialise or where public spending was cut back under structural adjustment programmes encouraged by the World Bank, or where states went into economic decline such as most recently in Zimbabwe, community volunteering once again became the life-blood of survival, particularly in poor communities.

In the aftermath of independence, volunteering and service came to be viewed in relation to the imperatives of nation-building and development. Formal programmes were established by civic society organisations across the region while governments also initiated new service programmes, including national youth service programmes. VOSESA's Five-Country Study on Service and Volunteering (Patel et al, 2007) found that in Zimbabwe volunteering programmes have been in place for almost 20 years, on average, whilst in Malawi the programmes surveyed have been in place for between 10 and 22 years. In South Africa, national youth service is relatively recent, having been introduced in 1997 after the establishment of democracy in 1994.

Today volunteering and civic service are manifested informally and formally and remain highly relevant to social development in the region. Local community-based activities dominate the volunteering field and **are largely the domain and the achievement of the poor – the extension of a helping hand between equals.** In the Zimbabwean situation, VOSESA's Five-Country Study on Service and Volunteering (Patel, 2007) indicates a mutuality of benefit in giving and receiving:

> 'Participants in the Zunde raMambo (Chief's granary project) reported that they do not consider themselves as volunteers or those who help others, rather the programme helps them. In essence, they are helping themselves . . . service . . . is understood as a mutual relationship where the community works to alleviate its own suffering. Fulfilment comes from being able to solve community problems'.

Women make up the majority of volunteers in the region and their activities tend to reflect the traditional role of women and girls as care-givers, responsible for the family and the household. With so many countries in the SADC region suffering from a high incidence of HIV/AIDS and loosing a large portion of their population, older women are volunteering in order to sustain families and communities. Large numbers of individuals in the region are also participating in formalised community-based volunteer programmes, as can be seen with the Red Cross in Malawi which involves 33 000 local volunteers and the Public Welfare Assistance Programme in Zambia, which engages 55 060 volunteers.

Despite the prevalence of community-based volunteering, it is not typically recognised as volunteering and therefore is often taken for granted. As a result, volunteering lacks visibility in the SADC region and is not valued for its contribution to personal and societal development. How to ascribe a greater value to community-based volunteering and raise awareness about its benefits to individuals, communities and societies, then becomes an important question to answer. The presence of international volunteers in many communities further complicates this, since outsiders are often seen as possessing more skills, knowledge and expertise than community members and volunteers who posses a deep and personal understanding of the development needs in their environment and ideas for potential solutions.

Defining volunteering in a context of underdevelopment and high unemployment is a hotly contested issue. In many developed countries, volunteering is something that a person does entirely for free and even at one's own expense. This charitable notion of volunteering, however, does not fit easily into the SADC regional context given that a large percentage of the population is struggling to meet their basic human needs. Given this reality, many development agencies and NGOs provide their volunteers with incentives, often in the form of a stipend or in-kind contributions. For many, this is contrary to the spirit of volunteering and undermines the true value of volunteering, which is a life-long, non-remunerated commitment to active citizenship. While there is merit to this perspective, ethical issues arise when individuals with little are expected to contribute and are given nothing in return, especially given that most international volunteers receive a living stipend for their contributions. This then points to the need to broaden awareness about the diverse manifestations of volunteering and also perhaps the need to develop new terminology or categories that reflect the particular nature of volunteering in SADC countries.

Lastly, while volunteering has the potential to confer a whole host of benefits on the individual volunteer, it can also reinforce existing inequalities in society. For example, is volunteering among poor women the equivalent of unpaid work and just another example of how women's work is exploited and undervalued? Or is volunteering a pathway for women to gain greater access to resources and influence over decision-making within the private and public spheres? How volunteers are engaged at the community-level, and the opportunities and networks they gain access to as a result of volunteering determines, in large part, the extent to which the volunteering experience is empowering or disempowering? The intersection between gender and volunteering and the potential it presents for transformative change, as well as the risk that it further exploits women, is an

area that requires further reflection among the volunteerism, development and women's rights fields. Further to this, do involving community volunteers in development efforts (such as home and community-based care in a context of the high prevalence of HIV) place a burden on volunteers, a burden which should be carried by government?

3 International volunteering

The Center for Social Development (CSD) at the University of Washington in St. Louis, Missouri, USA defines international volunteering and service (IVS) as 'service across borders'. This includes unilateral service (volunteers from one country serving in another country), multi-lateral service (volunteers serving in each others' countries), as well as more complex arrangements in which volunteers serve in more than one country (Sherraden et al, 2006). North-South voluntary service, which involves sending a volunteer from a developed country to a developing country to share skills and knowledge, has been the predominant form of voluntary service in the 20th century. A study in the USA (Lough, 2006) shows that in 2005, nearly one million individuals reported volunteering internationally at least once. Over the last two years, the French and German governments have implemented new international youth voluntary service programmes and there are plans to increase the already high number of volunteers being sent to developing countries.

Scope of international volunteering in the SADC region

Despite information that international volunteering is a growing phenomenon, little research has been done to map the scale and scope of international volunteering in SADC countries. WorldWide Volunteering, a UK organisation, has a database of over 2 000 volunteer-involving organisations from all over the world that deploy volunteers internationally. While not an exhaustive list, the fact that many of these programmes are sending international volunteers to African countries suggests that a significant number of volunteers are being sent to Africa by various organisations – religious groups, governments, non-profit organisations, charities and, to a lesser extent, companies. The German Weltwärts international youth volunteer programme alone sent approximately 6,000 volunteers to developing countries in 2009, of whom over 400 were deployed to southern Africa. And in 2008, the United States Peace Corps reported sending an average of 593 volunteers each year to approximately 9 SADC countries.

In an attempt to start mapping the presence of international volunteering in SADC, VOSESA developed an online survey which was successfully sent to 201 volunteer-sending organisations, the majority of which are based in northern countries (VOSESA, 2010b forthcoming). The sample for the study was drawn from an IVCO Forum report on international volunteer-sending organisations, as well as a list of ICYE programmes and the implementing partners of the Weltwärts programme. A total of 61 organisations responded (a 30% response rate) from the following countries: Germany (27), United Kingdom (9), France, (5), Switzerland (4), Canada (3) Ireland (2), United States (2), Norway (2), South Africa (2), South Korea (1), Finland (1) Hungary (1), Ghana (1) and New Zealand (1). Of the organisations that took part in the study 89.1% send volunteers to Africa. The study shows that these organisations sent 2 704 volunteers to SADC countries in 2009 and 2 762 volunteers in 2010. While 31% of respondents reported an increase in the number of volunteers sent to SADC countries over the last five years, the reported numbers only indicate a slight increase and thus this issue requires further investigation. The Democratic

Republic of Congo[2], Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia receive the highest number of international volunteers who mostly originate from Western Europe. Angola, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Lesotho receive the smallest number of international volunteers.

Youth aged 18 to 25 years comprise the largest proportion of international volunteers in the SADC region and tend to be involved in medium to long-term volunteering programmes. Of the sending organisations surveyed by VOSESA this year, 41% place their volunteers in Africa for periods of 6 to 12 months, while 28% had placements of 12 to 18 months. Most organisations have educational requirements that volunteers need to meet in order to join the organisations: 41% of the organisations expect their volunteers to have secondary schooling and 31% require tertiary or university education. A very small percentage of the organisations (2%) ask that the volunteers have a postgraduate level of education and 17% of the organisations have no educational requirements. Some organisations also require volunteers to possess professional skills (34%) and relevant language ability (59%). Interestingly, the vast majority of organisations (52%) identified that 26%-50% of their volunteers as male while a further 16% of organisations stated that 51-75% of their volunteers are male. 42% of the organisations reported a female volunteer ratio of 51-75%, followed by 28% of organisations where 26-50% of volunteers are female.

The **presence of international volunteers in SADC countries is striking** and raises questions about the motivations behind IVS programmes. Undoubtedly, IVS programmes seek to promote certain political, social, cultural and religious objectives: many programmes are in fact an extension of a country's international aid to developing countries and, according to the responses provided, are seen as a cost-effective way of meeting development imperatives (International Service, Progressio, Skillshare, SPW and VSO). While international trade relations and international aid priorities do help to explain the trends in international volunteering, the motivations for IVS programmes are typically much more complex than simply combating poverty and underdevelopment. Other interests seem to feature in the creation, implementation and expansion of IVS programmes. They include addressing youth marginalisation and youth unemployment; fostering inter-cultural understanding, social cohesion and peace; engendering global and local citizenship; advancing international and personal competitiveness; volunteerism and promoting religion.

VOSESA's 2010 survey revealed that the five **most common activities** in which international volunteers engage in are education (64%), human and social services (56%), health services (39%), community development (34%) and disability (28%). Other common areas of engagement are environmental protection, gender and women's rights, peace and human rights and economic development. A 2010 report by International Service, Progressio, Skillshare, SPW and VSO also cites climate change as a critical and growing area for volunteer involvement. In relation to the volunteers themselves, most organisations were interested in promoting cultural understanding among their volunteer (80%) and increasing a server's social skill (53%). Organisations reported much less interest in promoting skill acquisition among volunteers, increasing their employability and expanding volunteers' career options.

The **design of IVS programmes** not only reflects the particular goals and objectives of the implementing agency, but also gives expression to the theories of change and development embraced by the organisation. **Australian Volunteers International (AVI),** which is deepening and expanding its presence in southern Africa, believes that effective

[2] The DRC received 800 international volunteers in 2009, which can be almost exclusively attributed to the United Nations Volunteers programme.

development comes through the promotion of people-centred development and working in partnership with local organisations. AVI also believes that placing skilled professionals in manner that is responsive to local needs is the most effective way to make a positive and sustainable impact on development. **Skillshare International** works exclusively with partner organisations in Africa and Asia to address issues of poverty, inequality and injustice. The concepts of social justice, social change and a right-based approach to development are central to Skillshare's approach to international volunteering. It finds form in the projects to which volunteers are assigned as well as in the advocacy and awareness-raising activities in which Skillshare participates, such as the Trade Justice Movement and the Stop AIDS Campaign.

While a great deal of research has confirmed the positive developmental impact of volunteering on the volunteers themselves, there are very few rigorous studies that assess the impact of international volunteering on host communities and host organisations. The few case studies and limited amount of cross-national research available (including Fantini and Tirmizi, 2007; Hammer, 2005; Jones; 2005) indicate that in addition to benefiting the volunteer, international volunteering and service has the potential for positive impacts on beneficiaries and host communities as well as sending and hosting organisations. However, research conducted by Comhlamh (2006) notes the complexity associated with international volunteering from the perspective of host organisations. Using a case study method in Tanzania and India, this study was able to identify challenges related to international volunteering in developing contexts. These include the fact that many international volunteers are motivated more by the experience of tourism than by real opportunities to contribute. Language barriers and poorly matched placements can complicate the relationship between the skills of the volunteer and the needs of the organisation.

Emerging challenges

A number of potential challenges still require attention in order to better understand the impact of international volunteering on all parties – international volunteers, local volunteers, beneficiaries, host communities and host organisations – and to unleash the full potential of international volunteering to effectively promote development and civic participation. Questions that emerge for exploration include the following:

- Are host organisations and host communities gaining as much from the volunteer experience as international volunteers?
- Is a focus on reciprocity built into the programme design of the volunteer programme in terms of how partners are chosen, how projects are developed, how volunteers are prepared and mentored, and how volunteers engage with host communities and host organisations?
- Are international volunteers replacing or displacing local workers and volunteers? Also, how can international volunteering be used to help motivate greater local engagement in development among community members including through volunteering?
- Does international volunteering create dependency of the host organisation on the international sending organisation or is it facilitating sustainable development? If so, what are the methods for promoting sustainability rather than dependency?
- Are international volunteers helping organisations to achieve their objectives or are they actually diverting organisational capacity aware from organisational priorities? This needs to be interrogated in relation to the different kinds of volunteers placed in the region (e.g. skilled volunteers versus young inexperienced volunteers), the volunteer

management capacity of host organisations, and the sending-organisation's IVS programme design.

- Are international volunteers valued more than local volunteers? What is the role of international volunteers in helping to ensure recognition and visibility of local volunteering?

Reciprocity and mutual learning

Much insight into these questions can be gained by looking at the new forms of international volunteering that are emerging today. Increasingly, organisations employing a South-South model of volunteering, where an individual from a developing country is sent is sent to a developing country, as well as South-North model, where an individual from a developing context is deployed to contribute their skills and knowledge in the developed context. There is also an increased interest emerging around reciprocal volunteer exchange programmes, which involve volunteers from developed and/or developing contexts serving in each other's countries. The following six organisations are at the forefront of promoting these new approaches in the field of international volunteering:

SayXChange/Southern African Trust: SayXchange was developed by the Southern African Trust, in collaboration with implementing agency AFS Interculture South Africa, following the xenophobic attacks in South Africa during the first half of 2008. SayXchange crosses borders and aims to promote regional integration and a southern African regional identity amongst young people. The programme utilises a reciprocal volunteering approach as well as a South-South model of volunteering. Mozambican and South African youth serve together for a number of months in a volunteer placement in Mozambique and then go to South Africa to volunteer for an additional period of time. Embedded in the SayXchange programme is a commitment to drawing on the assets among youth in southern African to help promote development as well as to forge greater social cohesion, peace and equality in the Southern African Development Community's (SADC).

Canada World Youth/Volunteer Centre, Cape Town: Canada World Youth (CWY) is a world leader in developing international educational programs for young people aged 15 to 29. A non-profit organisation, CWY is dedicated to enriching the lives of young people that have a desire to become informed and active global citizens. CWY programmes are designed to help youth experience the world for themselves, learn about other cultures and diverse Canadian communities while developing leadership and communication skills. Since 2004 Volunteer Centre, which is based in Cape Town, South Africa has been in partnership with Canada World Youth (CWY) and has been hosting youth exchange programs where a group of Canadians and South Africans between the ages of 18 – 24 years, spend three months volunteering together in a Canadian community followed by three months in a South African community. During the experience, the volunteers have an opportunity to live with a local host family, volunteer at a local organisation and become involved in community activities. Like the SayXchange programme, the CWY model embeds reciprocal learning throughout all aspects of the programme and does this in relation to both North-South and South-North volunteering.

FK Norway/SCORE: FK Norway (Fredskorpset) arranges reciprocal exchanges of individuals between organisations in Norway and developing countries. The exchange occurs in a partnership between two or more organisations or companies, with support from FK Norway. The explicit aim is to promote the mutual exchange of knowledge, experiences and skills, which goes both ways: the organisation or company both sends and receives

participants. SCORE is an international non-profit organisation specialising in community development through sport and recreation, has partnered with FK Norway for at least 10 years. In addition to participating in FK Norway's mutual exchange programme, SCORE has also developed a South-South volunteering programme among its national offices in South Africa, Namibia, Zambia and the Netherlands, each supported by the SCORE International office in Cape Town. Here the models of North-South, South-North, and South-South volunteer are joined together along with a focus on reciprocal learning and exchange.

4 Corporate and employee volunteering

Corporate sustainability is increasingly being understood in terms of the triple bottom line approach that merges corporate social responsibility with environmental sustainability and profit-making. While the nature and scale of corporate social responsibility (CSR) varies across developing countries, an initial scan suggests that in sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa has the most information available on the scope and nature of corporate philanthropy and social investment. A brief exploration of available company data in other SADC countries suggests, however, that CSR activity is taking place in a variety of ways, and indicates that this is an area that merits further research.

The growing realisation that many socio-economic problems cannot be solved by governments alone is driving more serious and sustained engagements by business in education, health and other sectors. In addition to corporate giving, it is now commonly accepted that the skills and resources of private and public sector employees and their employers can help support communities in need. Lester M Salamon's review of corporate social engagement in Latin America points to the extent to which the business sector in that region "is in the midst of rather dramatic, and generally quite positive, change. The spirit of corporate social engagement … is propelling some truly imaginative innovations … [and] has important implications for companies elsewhere as well" (2010:17). He cites five dimensions of corporate social engagement that are emerging as important features in that context: the *proliferation* of corporate activity in the social realm, the *professionalisation* of business activity, *partnering* as a strategy for collaborative engagement with other companies and grass-roots non-profit organisations, *participation* as a strategy for making progress on longstanding social and economic problems, and *penetration*, which measures the movement of philanthropy into the core business of business function.

Employee volunteering is one strand of corporate social responsibility that produces outcomes said to be good for the individual, the community and business. From the corporate viewpoint, employee volunteers potentially improve a company's reputation and credibility, improve its ability to recruit and retain staff, raise staff morale and productivity, and can prove to be a strategic tool during times of change. Through volunteering, employees, on the other hand, get a shot at enhanced personal development, exposure, employer recognition, and engage in varied activities outside the workplace that are enjoyable and provide an opportunity to participate in meaningful initiatives.

The shape of CSR in the SADC region

As is evident from the steady increase in private sector initiatives, the idea of business as part of society, with certain responsibilities to society, is certainly gaining currency in Sub-Saharan Africa. Insights from Kenya and Zambia highlight a growing realisation that poverty reduction and sustainable development require more than government action alone. With

the exception of South Africa, the picture of corporate social investment (CSI) within the SADC region remains sketchy, but some examples of different forms of CSI are available.

For instance, in Zambia corporate donations to orphanages is a common practice. This is followed by sponsorship of sporting events, cultural ceremonies, education and health provision, and donations to religious and arts organisations. Increasingly, there is a shift towards mainstreaming corporate support of HIV/AIDS programmes. In Tanzania, the focus is on four key areas including education, health, economic empowerment and social welfare in line with Tanzania's National Development Priorities. The trend in the Democratic Republic of Congo is on security and human rights; infrastructure, including provision of electricity, water, healthcare and economic empowerment. This is one of the few examples in the SADC region of corporate spending on human rights and social justice programmes.

Although Zimbabwe has adopted a policy framework for CSI, it would seem that few companies abide by this protocol. According to the available information, this has entrenched public perception that Zimbabwean companies are more interested in making profits than in giving back to society. According to Kivuitu et al (2005), this is in contrast to perspectives in Zambia where the justification for philanthropic activities appears to be closely tied to a sense that companies should 'give something back' to the nation and to the communities in which they operate. This is typified by one Zambian company's mission statement, which reads in part 'to recognise that we owe our success to the people of Zambia and that it is our responsibility to give back to the community in appreciation of their continued support'.

According to Trialogue (2009), CSI in South Africa has enjoyed steady growth over the past 12 years. Available estimates indicate that companies spent R5.1 billion on CSI initiatives in the 2008/09 financial year, up from R4.1 billion the previous year. The top industry sectors in terms of reported expenditure are: mining and quarrying (R789 million); financial services (R446 million); manufacturing (R235 million); state-owned and public enterprises (R222 million); retail and wholesale (R222 million); IT and telecommunications (R193 million).

Education enjoys the most widespread corporate support, with 94% of a sample of 105 top companies indicating that they devoted a proportion of their CSI spending to education-related spending. Three-quarters of the sample supported social and community development initiatives. Support for health and HIV/AIDS initiatives spanned 63% of CSI programmes in 2008/09 financial year, down from 76% the previous year. About 54% of the sample companies supported environmental interventions, while 48% and 38% supported training and capacity building and enterprise development respectively (a decline from the 62% and 65% respectively a year earlier). Support for food security and agriculture received support from 36% of the sample companies, an improvement from 31% a year earlier. Arts and culture, sports development, safety and security and housing and living conditions continued to attract support from less than 30% of the sample.

It appears that there has been a shift among South African companies towards using a formula-based approach to determine their CSI budgets, rather than having allocations based on board or CEO decisions. Since the introduction of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Codes of Good Practice in 2007, which stipulate that companies should spend 1% of the net profit after tax on socio-economic initiatives, most companies are now determining CSI budgets as a percentage of net profit after tax. Interestingly, on average, companies are allocating more than the regulatory 1% to their CSI budgets, despite the recessionary context.

From the perspective of non-profit organisations (NPOs), however, it would seem that even though the percentage of CSI spend has remained positive, the amount of funding flowing into the NPO sector has declined. NPOs that rely solely on donors and grants from profit-making entities have highlighted the cash crunch they are experiencing as the effects of the recession within the corporate sector become evident. According to Feed the Babies Fund, the majority of NPOs receiving up to 20% of their funding from the corporate sector and it thus stands to reason that the NPO sector is feeling the ripple effects of the recession. It appears that financial accountability within NPOs remains an area of contestation, which is likely to be aggravated by the difficult financial circumstances linked to the recession.

A review of private sector expenditure on youth development in 2007 (Trialogue, 2007) argued that while some BEE transactions claimed young people as partners and beneficiaries, this proved difficult to measure and verify. In addition, most companies that were interviewed claimed that their programmes targeted youth as part of their corporate social investment when in fact these programmes were mostly targeting support for school-going children. This raises the need to clarify the definition of 'youth'. Where interventions undertaken by the private sector could benefit youth, the interventions "are typically one-dimensional, dealing with isolated requirements for youth development" rather than taking a holistic approach. The study concludes that there is potential for the private sector to be more integrated in its approach to youth development, working in partnership with other players to achieve concrete outcomes.

Overall, given the level of corporate expenditure on socio-economic causes, there may be a case for CSI to come out of the backroom into the boardroom to ensure the closer alignment of social and strategic aspects of business, with the potential for greater corporate and community impact. South Africa may be making greater progress towards this end, compared to the rest of the SADC countries, but companies still need to confront the reality that this expenditure is often treated as expenditure on marketing rather than an investment in social change.

Manifestations of voluntary service in CSI

Employee volunteering as an entry to community engagement

One example of employee volunteering in the South African context is the FirstRand Employee Volunteering Programme with its relatively well developed policy and programmes. The group provides a "starter pack" to assist with the implementation of division/business unit and branch programmes. This includes clear procedures and guidelines. Unique aspects of the programme include matching FirstRand employees for both their time and money, emphasis on information sharing accompanied by an effective platform to facilitate the sharing of information, and the employee-driven nature of the programme where ultimate decisions about the nature of organisations and which programmes to support, resides with the employees behind the initiative. Recent examples of activities involving employees include building homes for impoverished communities in Tembisa and various social welfare activities such as feeding programmes and distribution of clothes and blankets during winter. The programme boasts a 22% participation rate with employees donating their time or portions of their salary completely voluntarily.

Corporate social investment in civil society organisations

Although companies do make grants to sectoral and community based organisations, they tend not to fund the management costs that it takes to make volunteering a productive experience for the volunteers. Once again, issues of financial accountability in civil society organisations seem to be an important factor influencing this trend in CSI spending.

Programme models for employee volunteering

What influences how employees decide whether and how to volunteer? According to VSO in the UK, employee volunteer involvement is shaped by the options companies present to employees for volunteering and whether or not they can draw on corporate resources. To an extent, this is true of the FirstRand Volunteers Programme within the South African context. Other factors to consider include the potential impact of the programme; issues of sustainability; the track-record of potential partners (where the involvement of external partners is necessary); potential for internal as well as external PR among others; opportunities for personal development; employer recognition and possibly the excitement and fun associated with volunteering.

Decentralised programmes focus on encouraging employees to take the initiative to start projects. The company may match the funds that the employees raise for the projects, but basically the locus of control is in the hands of the employees and projects are driven by individuals. While this provides scope for individual initiative, it may not necessarily ensure close alignment between employee volunteer activity and the core interests of the company. Without monitoring, it also becomes difficult to track how employees are carrying out their diverse volunteer activity and this in turn makes it difficult to assess whether employee project involvement is once-off or sustained for the longer term benefit in communities. This will affect the impact of the employee volunteer activity.

The FirstRand Employee Volunteer Programme approach appears to address the shortcomings of the decentralised approach highlighted above, through clear guidelines and procedures. The programme carters for core company approaches by attempting to align volunteer initiatives with focus areas of the FirstRand Foundation. A more intricate alignment involves linking volunteer initiatives to division/business unit business objectives,

e.g. home loans links with building shelters/homes. Additionally, an effective platform to facilitate information sharing has the effect of an in-built monitoring mechanism.

Centralised programmes are more tightly structured from the corporate centre. In this case employee volunteering is closely aligned with the company goals and interests (in respect of social development and possibly its core business). Its objectives and activities can be tightly defined, aligned with the company vision, resourced by the company (possibly over a longer period e.g. three years), and tied in with their management information systems, procurement systems, and other support systems that the company has to offer. This makes it possible for multiple business units to send teams to work on a single project, which might take place in a variety of locations. Tight monitoring can then facilitate impact assessment, and the chances of sustained corporate involvement seem to be higher in this model. The down-side here is that individual employees have to get involved in the corporate plan, whereas they may be more motivated to do work in their own communities where they see real need.

Emerging issues

Good practice in terms of volunteer management is critical to the success of volunteer programmes. The FirstRand Volunteer Programme stands out in this regard, especially through initiatives aimed at improving capacity and effectiveness of volunteers. The programme's 80-strong volunteer committee establishes what employees are willing and able to give – whether personal time or money – and offers ongoing support and ideas, ensuring that employees are comfortable with their involvement. Various forms of internal and external communication (including exhibitions, newsletters and newspaper articles, as well as closed-circuit television broadcasts and radio slots) are used to broaden the support. The FirstRand Volunteers Website was launched to give employees the opportunity to share experiences, ideas and challenges, and to motivate and encourage other employees to become volunteers.

Opportunities for reflection and mutual learning should be built into employee volunteer programmes. The literature on voluntary service shows that without reflection and the personal growth of volunteers, it becomes difficult to move from charitable acts to a deeper engagement with development, which in turn is required for personal and societal transformation.

5 Higher education community engagement

Across the 15 SADC member states, the higher education landscape comprises 70 public universities,[3] 114 publicly funded polytechnics/specialised colleges and 170 private universities or colleges serving a student population of more than 1.1 million (SARUA, 2008). Today the relationship between higher education and development in the African context has been unequivocally endorsed by national leadership across the African continent, supported by numerous protocols and plans. However, the growth of higher education in Africa has been complex over the last 50 years.

In many African countries universities were slowly established under the colonial powers, but following independence, the role of universities was soon reconceptualised as serving the development needs of society, in line with nationalist imperatives. Unfortunately,

[3] Of these, 51 public universities are members of the Southern Africa Regional Universities Association (SARUA).

according to Kotecha (SARUA, 2008:4), "the concept of the 'development university' did not serve Africa well: universities so defined came variously under pressure of state authoritarianism, fiscal crisis and the structural adjustment programmes of foreign donors." When the World Bank placed more emphasis on primary education as a driver of social and human development, public support for higher education waned and by the mid-1990s, many southern African higher education systems were in decline.

The establishment of SADC in 1992 and the adoption of its Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan in 2001 brought with it the endorsement that the revitalisation of higher education was necessary to boost its competitiveness. The African Union (formed in 2002) added weight to this approach: in 2006 its Plan of Action stated its vision for higher education development as being "the emergence of strong and vibrant institutions profoundly engaged in fundamental and development-oriented research, teaching, community outreach and enrichment services". International support for higher education followed (including from the World Bank) and a proliferation of north-south and south-south partnerships provided one source of support towards remedying the years of neglect of the higher education sector in the SADC region.

Trends in higher education community engagement

In general, higher education's role in development is understood to support economic growth, human capital formation and scientific and technological innovation. However, universities also have a significant role to play in strengthening democracy, fostering public debate and developing the critical discourse required for robust engagement between state and civil society.

Despite strong support for connecting teaching and scholarship with social responsiveness in SADC universities, the research conducted by the Southern African Regional Universities Association demonstrates that among its 51 members (all public universities), community engagement receives little attention: these universities place 65 % of their focus on teaching, 22% on research and only 11% on community engagement. There are many and varied notions of what form social responsiveness and community engagement take in the higher education sector, including engagement with government, industry as well as with poor communities in urban and rural areas. In South African universities, for example, a vigorous debate has ensued (CHE, 2010) about the relationship between higher education community engagement and the construction of knowledge within universities in an effort to establish the unique contribution that universities make to individuals and society, and to determine how exactly community engagement (the so-called third leg of academic enterprise) can be more closely integrated with teaching and scholarship.

According to research conducted by the Talloires Network[4] in 2005, universities face a number of constraints in implementing their community and civic engagement focus. These include the absence of supportive national policy for higher education institutions to engage in civic issues, the absence of financial support from universities for this stream, and the lack of a culture of civic engagement within the academic environment, which translates into a lack of recognition for academics involved in higher education community engagement.[5] In addition, students may face competing demands on their time, mainly because of the need

[4] The Talloires Network is an international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. http://www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork/.

[5] The University of Cape Town in South Africa has documented its social responsiveness policy development in this regard (see Favish, 2010).

to work to fund their studies, and this impacts negatively on their availability for civic engagement activities.

Little information is publicly available about the nature of community engagement in southern African universities. South Africa has a well-developed higher education policy framework, the foundations of which were laid in 1997 with the Department of Education's Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education: Education White Paper 3, which created the policy framework for universities to become more responsive to socio-economic needs through teaching, research and community engagement. That year also saw the passage of the Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Professions Amendment Act of 1997, which made a year's community service a requirement for the registration of health professionals as practitioners. The focus on community engagement in the higher education context deepened in 2001 when the Founding Document of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education identified knowledge-based community service (service-learning) as one of the three areas for the accreditation and quality assurance of higher education. In March 2003 the HEQC released criteria for the first round of higher education audits and these include criteria for service-learning (Perold et al, 2007). In 2009 two new organisations were established to spearhead higher education community engagement in South Africa: the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF), which has as its members all the public universities and four private universities in South Africa, and ACODLTI, a student-led organisation with the objective of promoting community development programmes in institutions of higher education and training in order to "achieve community upliftment and development", in the process 'grooming graduates with a difference'.

A number of southern African universities are members of the Talloires Network and in the absence of other information, this provides one window into the community engagement activities of universities in the region.[6] While all these institutions are likely to approach higher education community engagement in different ways, their activities mostly fall into the following categories: Civic engagement as part of the curriculum (accredited or non-accredited); civic engagement as a compulsory requirement for degree purposes (also known as service-learning); extramural or part-time activities organised by or for students; and community engagement as part of research.

The sectors in which these universities undertake community engagement activities span community development, poverty alleviation and specific socioeconomic issues such as health, education and training, environment, entrepreneurship, political issues, gender/women's studies, culture, family and social issues, and legal issues, among others.

In some instances it is clear that community engagement initiatives respond directly to regional issues. One such example is the National University of Lesotho's Institute of Labour Studies which runs training programmes for returning migrants, studies problems facing mine workers and their families, and suggests policy solutions. Other examples of regional collaboration around community engagement are evident in the work done by universities

[6] The Talloires Network member universities in SADC are the National University of Lesotho, Midlands State University in Zimbabwe, two universities in Tanzania: Mzumbe University and the University of Dar es Salaam, and 14 South African universities: Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Central University of Technology (Free State), Rhodes University, Stellenbosch University, Tshwane University of Technology, Vaal University of Technology, Walter Sisulu University and the Universities of Cape Town, Fort Hare, Pretoria, South African Free State, Western Cape and Venda.

under the SANTED programme[7]. For example, NEW is a co-operation project in Economics and Labour Studies, Engineering and Biological Sciences, run between the Universities of Namibia, Eduardo Mondlane (Angola) and the Witwatersrand (South Africa). The project has made a significant contribution towards the realisation of SADC Protocol on Education. Another example is the ZAWECA project run by the University of Zambia and the University of the Western Cape with a focus on HIV and AIDS peer education.

Student development through community engagement

Most university campuses feature ad hoc programmes run by student organisations or other groups through which students can get involved in community work on a voluntary basis. ACODLTI has started documenting this in South Africa, but information about student volunteering activity in higher education institutions elsewhere in the region is difficult to access. Nevertheless, it is likely that on campuses across the region, these activities vary from once-off or short-term volunteer activities to longer-term, more sustained engagements by students with community-based organisations.

Emerging evidence in South Africa shows that well-managed voluntary service programmes can provide young people with access to leadership development and foster team work, communication and conflict resolution skills whilst strengthening values such as an appreciation for diversity and gaining insight into the wealth, racial and gender disparities in society. In addition, youth service can make a material difference to young people's ability to get ahead. For example, as noted elsewhere in this report, VOSESA's assessment of the loveLife groundBREAKER programme 2001-2005 (see www.lovelife.org.za/research/studies.php) demonstrates that groundBREAKER graduates are more likely to obtain post-school qualifications and access employment than the national average for their peers.[8]

At its most recent meeting in 2010, the Talloires Network identified the following **skills essential for students to become active citizens and engaged leaders in the community**: The ability to listen well; a sense of humility and an awareness we don't have all the answers; imagination – the capacity to see the world differently from how it is today; the persuasiveness to market and sell ideas; the negotiation skills to build consensus; a passionate belief in personal responsibility to make a difference; communication skills and media literacy; global awareness; intercultural competence.

Clearly the Talloires Network members recognise the role that universities can play in developing these skills in their students in pursuit of producing active citizens. This links closely with the literature on civic engagement (e.g. Torney-Purta, Amadeo and Richardson, 2007; Gillette, 2003; Pitner 2007), which demonstrates that voluntary service can provide young people with significant opportunities for personal development and identity

[7] The South Africa-Norway Tertiary Education Development programme is a partnership between the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD), the South African Department of Education and higher education institutions. The project operated in the region from 2000 – 2010 with the purpose of assisting the Department of Education in the transformation of the higher education sector. Regional collaboration has been one of its key focus areas.

[8] 45% of groundBREAKER graduates pursued further studies, which is significant when compared with the national data (30%), and the respondents claim that the groundBREAKER programme contributed to their decision to study further. Approximately 60% of groundBREAKER graduates are currently employed (this figure does not include the 10% who are studying full-time). This compares favourably to the national data which shows that 36% of youth with matric are employed (Labour Force Survey, 2005). Unemployment among groundBREAKER graduates (38%) is also lower than the national average (46%).

formation *provided* the young volunteers are supported by opportunities for reflection, adult coaching and the 'scaffolding' of youth learning, and that their adult mentors respect youth identity formation and have an interest in fostering critical awareness among young people.

Significantly, two initiatives in the southern Africa context are moving in this direction: the University of Cape Town's Global Citizenship Programme and the University of Fort Hare's Grounding Programme have developed initiatives that provide student volunteers with opportunities for reflection that fuse their service experience with learning, and provide the students with opportunities to evaluate their volunteering in the light of deeper understanding of the contextual issues. The courses introduce students to issues of ethics and service, poverty and inequality, development and relationships, and help them articulate the values they develop in the process of serving others. The results to date indicate that students are excited by these programmes, whether or not they are accredited; they have found them immensely helpful in enlarging their understanding of themselves and have gained insight into the circumstances of poor communities in which many are seeking to make a difference.

Conclusion

Regional integration through social and human development is a key strategic imperative of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In its *Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan* (2001), SADC stresses the importance of participatory and inclusive development for meeting the region's most pressing development needs, namely poverty, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, youth development, and peace and stability. Against this backdrop, volunteering and civic service are emerging as key strategies for promoting people's participation in addressing the SADC regional development and integration priorities as well as the MDGs.

While many governments already invest in national youth service programmes in the region there is growing interest among governments and civil society in up-scaling opportunities to engage youth in nation-building and development efforts. Corporate and employee volunteering is burgeoning in the region and there is great potential to align this trend more closely with regional development needs. Lastly, despite strong support for connecting teaching and scholarship with social responsiveness in SADC universities, many prominent public universities place minimal attention on incorporating community engagement into their operations and curriculum. This presents a significant opportunity to involve communities and individuals of all social strata in catalysing future efforts to address the region's most pressing social and economic challenges.

Although volunteering and civic service is already making vital contributions to advancing the region's development agenda, it is largely an unrecognised and unsupported field. Far too often, volunteering is taken for granted as a manifestation of local culture and, with notable exceptions, most SADC countries do not have the necessary policies to support the voluntary service sector, nor do they allocate resources in this regard. Only by investing in the development of an enabling environment for volunteering and civic service, can its potential be realised for the development of individuals, communities and nations in the region.

The 10th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Volunteer (IVY+10) 2011 offers a unique platform for raising the profile of volunteering in the SADC region and strengthening the sector so that more volunteers can partake in the development and integration of SADC countries. Looking ahead to IYV+10 in 2011, VOSESA and its partners (UNV, Canada World Youth, VSO-RAISA, FirstRand Volunteer Programme, FK Norway, the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO), Cape Town Volunteer Centre and the South African National Youth Development Agency) propose that a *SADC Regional Conference on Volunteering and Civic Service* be held in Johannesburg in October 2011. It would have three main aims:

1 **To showcase the diverse forms of voluntary service in the region and to celebrate** its contributions to achieving development and peace objectives;
2 **To catalyse efforts to strengthen and expand the voluntary sector** in the region; and
3 **To explore the potential for establishing and up-scaling SADC regional voluntary service programmes** that promote inter-cultural exchange and support national, regional and international development efforts.

The conference theme of *voluntary service for development and regional integration* will be explored according to three priority areas for regional development – HIV/AIDS, youth development and employability, and peace and stability. In exploring the contribution of voluntary service to each of these regional priorities, the conference will examine five different forms of voluntary service in the region – youth volunteering, community-based

volunteering, corporate or employee volunteering, international volunteering, and higher education civic engagement. The conference will provide a learning space in which examples of good practice and programme innovation, impact assessment and volunteer infrastructure from across the region can be discussed. Furthermore, it will be a platform for advocating for the creation of an enabling environment for voluntary service through policy and the allocation of resources, particularly at the national and regional levels.

The conference is thus seeking to achieve the following objectives:

1 **Share up-to-date and quality information** on the nature, scope and impact of voluntary service in relation to promoting development and regional integration in SADC;
2 **Establish and strengthen networks and other platforms** for volunteer-involving and volunteer-promoting organisations in the region;
3 **Devise strategies to promote the role of voluntary service in national and regional development** and advocate for the adoption of supportive policy frameworks and volunteer-involving infrastructure;
4 Explore the potential for **establishing regional volunteer programmes** in the SADC region; and
5 **Celebrate the contribution of volunteering and civic service to development**, particularly those forms of voluntary activity that are taken for granted.

This background paper is work in progress, intended as a first contribution to that process.

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