

GAPS AND ISSUES IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT EVIDENCES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

ABSTRACT

The research was focused on gaps and issues in volunteer management, in concepts and practices, by the volunteer involving organizations (VIOs) housed in Islamabad and Multan. The main hypothesis of the study revolved around the assumption that lack of experience by the VIOs would negatively affect volunteer management. The objectives of the research included: exploring conceptual understanding of volunteerism, evaluation of management practices and identification of gaps in volunteer management. The field data collection was carried out by applying qualitative research methods, whereas, the conclusions were arrived at through content analysis method.

The main findings of the study revealed that volunteerism in Pakistan is a 'land of opportunity' but the inefficiency and inexperience of VIOs coupled with managerial issues has made it 'no mans' land'. The potential of volunteering is enormous and omnipresent but needs to be regulated by adopting more formal practices. The diversity in conceptual understanding by various VIOs needs to be focused and streamlined according to international standards. The non existence and/or inefficient linkages amongst the civil society organizations was causing a loss of knowledge and best practices which, if utilized properly, can help to save lot of resources, time and energy. A great majority of the organizations lack fundamental processes for identification, assessment, retention, sustainability and even database of volunteers. The capacity of VIOs was limited to cater for the volunteers, therefore, hampering overall potential and scope of volunteerism in Pakistan.

Key words: Volunteerism, management, civil society organizations, volunteer involvement, community development

Introduction

The study, based on empirical data collected from civil society organizations (CSOs) based in Islamabad and southern Punjab of Pakistan, deals with the prevailing contingencies which may help to understand volunteer management practices in Pakistan. The main aim of the study was to identify and document prevailing practices by various CSOs in its historical and evolutionary perspective. During empirical research, several

influencing as well as determining factors captured central attention due to their vital importance in shaping volunteering in Pakistan. In this connection, the conceptual, institutional and managerial factors were considered to be the basic influence within the context of 'serving the others' which determine the structure and efficiency of volunteering.

The basic hypothesis of research assumed that volunteerism in Pakistan is a 'land of opportunity' but surrounded by a series of management issues. The potential of volunteering is enormous but needs to be regulated by adopting more formal practices. The diversity in conceptual understanding by various volunteer involving organizations (VIOs) need to be focused and streamlined according to international standards. The non existence and/or inefficient linkages amongst the CSOs is causing a loss of knowledge and best practices which, if utilized properly, can help to save lot of resources, time and energy. A great majority of the organizations lack fundamental processes for identification, assessment, retention, sustainability and even database of volunteers. All this has caused a change in the concept and practices of volunteerism which in fact can be phrased as a transitory phase of volunteer management.

Explaining Volunteerism

The rationale of the study lied in the fact that volunteerism is a centuries old cultural tradition of our society and plays a vital role in integrating and coordinating various people and groups. It has been a source of social capital (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) to be invested at the hours of need without expectations of an incentive or reward. Volunteerism has been part and parcel of Pakistani culture with its many manifestations and shades. It is a centuries old practice in rural and urban areas with vivid points of focus (Gaskin, 1998). The urban areas volunteerism has been revolving around politics and the provision of basic amenities of life, whereas, the focus of volunteerism in rural areas has been more on livelihood management activities. The volunteerism in rural settings has been usually observed in various sectors like farming (sowing, plowing, weeding, threshing, etc.) construction (mosques, watercourses, sewerages, farm and residential houses), births & deaths and many other cultural and religious activities (Benjamin, 2008). The urban life witnessed various assemblies of people to voice for or against certain basic human rights, grouping of people for voting in elections, helping the administration for managing community initiatives, supporting the poor and disadvantaged in distress, etc. Therefore, this way the efforts of volunteers were not only made visible and recognized, but a larger understanding and support used to be intact (Lautenschlager, 1991).

The mainstay of volunteers' activities was to provide services to others without the expectation of any reward (Cnaan, Handy & Wadsworth 1996; IAVM, 2007; Jedlicka, 1990; UN Volunteers, 2001; Weiner 2007). This spirit was regarded as an important value in any community. Over the time, there happened some structural changes in the society which have also affected the very concept and practices of volunteerism (Beck &

Beck-Gernsheim, 1996). We have seen a general demise of values in our communities over the past few years. This is evident in the braking-up of the family structure, the young onset age of substance and drug abuse as well as the increased incidences of promiscuous behavior amongst the youth. The overall decline in a service ethic amongst communities can also be attributed to an increased emphasis on individualism, which in fact is in contradiction to the core values of volunteerism (Gaskin, 1998).

It is believed that as Pakistani society is in a phase of transition from agricultural to industrial and/or service oriented economy, so is the case with volunteerism. With new types of collective efforts, community needs and environmental determinants, the nature of voluntary actions has changed (Merill, 2006; Mistry, 2007; Myers-Lipton, 2006). The technology has replaced muscle power and machines are doing work of many, even in lesser time. The social, economic and cultural activities (Barker, 1993) have become more diverse and complicated and that has affected the requirements of volunteerism. The capacity, skill and knowledge of a volunteer are as important as his/her commitment and willingness (Grimm, 2005). In short, not only the endogenous factors of volunteerism have changed but the exogenous dynamics of the social world have also altered.

Volunteerism or service to others can be a most progressive of values: giving and getting nothing in return beyond knowing that you've made a difference. It's giving and knowing that the cumulative volunteer effort can make a noticeable difference. Generally, people volunteer to help others, to promote causes they believe in, and/or to accomplish what they consider to be worthwhile goals. However, volunteers also can be the beneficiaries of their otherwise self-giving work: through learning new skills which enhance their personal growth.

The phenomenon of volunteering in Pakistan visibly surfaced during the relief and rehabilitation activities rendered by all segments of the civil society during the unprecedented devastating earth quake of 8th October 2005. The spontaneous and full of commitment response given by all walks of life reconfirmed the existence of a large potential of volunteerism in the country. Although, the spirit of volunteerism has always been demonstrated by the Pakistani community during natural and man-made calamities, but there emerged a common notion about the lack or disinterest of civil society for volunteerism. The mass level involvement of volunteers to undertake a broad based non-, semi-, and skilled activities in a difficult hilly train, in a harsh weather, proved that the spirit of volunteerism is omnipresent.

Rationale of the study

The study aimed at investigating dynamics of volunteer management in Pakistan which may have changed functional and structural parameters of volunteerism. It is believed that volunteerism has witnessed a certain level of transition which has caused changes in

conceptual as well as empirical applications. The extent and depth of this change was systematically studied to ascertain the reality of this very important cultural phenomenon. To search out the myths and ambiguities related with volunteerism is extremely essential to present a transparent picture of concepts and practices. This is a scarcely researched area in Pakistan and very few exploratory researches have been conducted. It, therefore, becomes imperative to explore the dynamics of volunteer management and associated conceptual and thematic understandings by various VIOs in Pakistan.

Hypothesis

Being an integral part of the development paradigm, volunteer management is expected to have been affected by several models and management styles to benefit from the services of volunteers. It is also expected that due to mushroom growth of CSOs in last few decades, the volunteers' management could have not been adequately addressed. Keeping these assumptions in view, following hypothesis was laid down for this study.

- § As the VIOs themselves are in a phase of learning, therefore, volunteer management is negatively affected by their lack of experience and limited organizational capacity.

Objectives

As there is always a direct link between hypothesis and objectives of a study, so is the case here. Following objectives were set for this study.

1. To explore the conceptual understanding of volunteerism across various civil society organizations.
2. To evaluate management practices applied by different VIOs
3. To identify gaps in volunteer management standards and procedures

Methodology

Considering empirical research as a process, the study was completed in three phases. Phase 1 was focused on collection and review of relevant literature. In this phase an overall understanding of volunteerism was strengthened which helped in identification of relevant research tools. In the light of literature review, research tools were structured in the form of questionnaire, interview guide and FGDs. During this phase, the research tools were pre-tested for usage in the field.

The second phase was dedicated for field data collection. The researcher collected data from a wide range of respondents working for selected VIOs. All possible levels of managerial and frontline staff of these VIOs were given equal probability to be a part of this research.

In phase three, the data collected from the field was synthesized and analyzed. During analysis, the issues of subjectivity, ethno-centricism, positioning and translation were reduced to the extent possible. The information finalized for the research report was triangulated at all levels so that the high quality of the data is ensured. Qualitative and quantitative information was incorporated in the report. Additional help was sought from tables and graphs to make the information easily understandable.

For inclusion of related respondents in the research, representative sample of twelve (12) VIOs was drawn. Four and eight VIOs were included in the sample from Islamabad and Multan, respectively. Owing to a limited and uneven number of VIOs in public and private sector, a proportionate sample was included in the study. In-depth interviews were conducted with institutional heads/managers and field staff of the selected VIOs. Group discussions were conducted on specific topics related to conceptual, structural and functional aspects of volunteerism. A comparison of emic and etic perspectives (Barker, 1993) was done both in conceptual perceptible and practical happenings. The collected information was triangulated by applying anthropological research methods where participant observation was the mainstay to differentiate between “*what people say and what they do*”.

Key Findings of Empirical Research

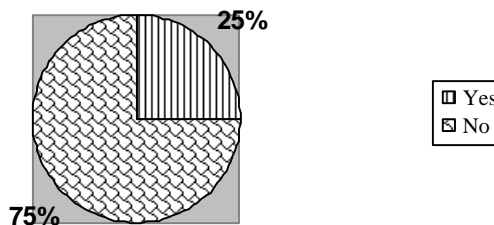
The phenomenon of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emerged in Pakistan in late 70's through 90's and has progressed overtime. A great number of NGOs are providing services to the local communities by following different development models and involving volunteers in program activities is one of them. At present, volunteerism has been adopted by several Pakistani NGOs to achieve their program objectives. It is general notion that VIO's conceptual and managerial aspects do not coincide with the requirements of volunteer management, as this process has been more formalized over the time. To assess the capacity of VIOs, a number of aspects were explored which have been discussed hereunder.

Definition and Conceptual Understanding of Volunteerism

In the presence of a variety of definitions of volunteerism, it becomes imperative to follow a standard explanation given by some international organization like UN, World Bank or a similar representative entity. Majority of the development organizations have a consensus about adoption of the definitions given by United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Keeping in view the same, the conceptual understanding of the VIOs was assessed on the basis of UNDP definition of volunteerism. The empirical findings reflected that three public sector VIOs had adopted the definition of volunteerism from UNDP, whereas, other nine organizations were not following any standard definition.

They have developed and adopted various shades of the standard UNDP definition¹. The focus of their definitions remained on “working selflessly for the benefit of others”. Working without monetary reward or any other personal gains has been central to their understanding of the concept. The diagram given below presents results regarding conceptual understanding of VIOs.

Adherence to the UNDP definition



It is important to mention that this understanding reflects how volunteerism was interpreted in Pakistan, but certainly not by global definitions which emphasized that different forms of personal gain were a motivating factor. Contributions in terms of time, cash, goods, services or even knowledge was found integral to the concept. To the query why they have not followed a standard definition, they replied that either they were not aware of any such definition or during the emerging process they focused more on the essence than the contents. The two of the three organizations following UNDP definition are public sector organizations, whereas, one itself is part of the UN system.

The VIOs consulted for this research shared their understanding of the concept of volunteering in a variety of ways. The contents adopted to define this concept and range of activities to be included also varied. The various ways assumed to explain the concept of volunteerism were reflected hereunder:

- § Volunteerism is to work for the benefit of others without any personal interest
- § Provide services to the community in hours of need without any payment
- § Volunteerism is working for the common cause without personal financial gain

¹ The UNDP definition states, “Volunteering is defined as a s form of social behavior undertaken freely, which benefits the community and society at large as well as the volunteer, and which is not driven by financial considerations”. The article “Developing a Volunteer Infrastructure” by UNDP (2005) also states four principles of volunteering: 1) Choice, 2) Reciprocity, 3) Recognition and 4) Diversity.

§ Volunteerism is a self initiative of a person which is focused on social and financial well being of the community and is done without any personal greed, financial gain or interest.

§ Reciprocity is the main stay of volunteerism

It was observed and admitted by the respondents that there did not exist a harmony in conceptual understanding of volunteerism amongst them. Several definitions were translated into actions which were not consistent with each other and, therefore, were causing confusion amongst the practitioners.

A focused group discussion was carried out to gauge and account for the Urdu words and phrases used to explain the concept of a ‘Volunteer’. Following four types of descriptions were spelled out by the participants:

1. RAZAKAR: those who want to work for change with their own consent and will. The supportive explanations to enhance understanding included the following:
 - a. MARZI (own will)
 - b. KHUSHI (with happiness)
 - c. MIL KAR (jointly / together)
 - d. BAZO BANANA (be a support / to extend an arm)
 - e. MADADGAR (helper / supporter)
 - f. APNI TARAQI / ILAQEY KI BEHTARI (own development / for the well being of the area)
2. MADADGAR (helper / supporter)
3. ALLH WASTE / FI SABEEL LILAH (for the blessings of God)
4. MAN PASAND / KHUSHI SEY (willingness / with happiness)

The conceptual understanding about volunteering was extremely incompatible and oblique. To some it did not exist, to others it was pastime for those who have nothing to do, for another school of thought it was a religious, moral and ethical obligation towards the others. The plurality of conceptual understanding was witnessed in variance of its exercise. It was like the concept of participation that “here you see it, there you don’t”.

Thematic Focus

The thematic areas focused by these organization included disaster management & prevention, community development, self awareness & empowerment, advocacy & awareness, education & health, justice & peace, emergency & relief services and workers rights. All the organizations claim them as ‘rights based’. The objective of volunteers’ involvement is promoting participation, creating ownership, assuring sustainability, self help, mutual aid and self defense.

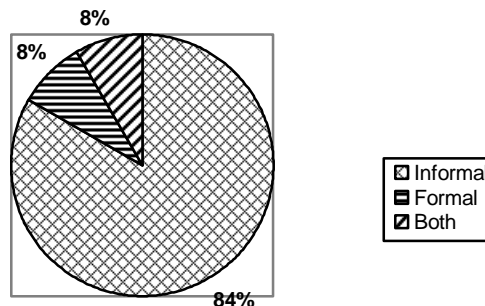
As all the organizations in this sample were ‘rights based’, therefore, focused on empowerment of the communities through participation, ownership, handing over the

stick, etc. The institutional infrastructure created in operational areas by these organizations supported their claims and working through the groups of local people indicates that the organizations had been successful in initiating the process of community empowerment. The reflection of the thematic focus was observed by visiting operational area of one of the sample VIOs. The physical verification of its performance in the form of health dispensary, efforts for land rights, access to irrigation water, and establishment of seed bank proved factual.

Formal and Informal Volunteering

Formal volunteering involves structured processes in the form of specifically designed formats and detailed interactions / dialogues for the identification, skills assessment as well as need based assignments for the volunteers. Formal volunteering is practiced by following a well elaborated phenomenon of volunteer management which also demands for a broad based data bank, reflecting all personal and professional information about a volunteer. Informal volunteering, on the other hand, relies on a loose arrangement, mostly ruled by personal judgments about the volunteers. Lack of documentation or incomplete information about the person, skills and availability of a volunteer can be singled out as most prominent features of informal volunteering. The difference of formal and informal volunteering is clearly acknowledged by the organizations involved in this research.

Formal and Informal Volunteering

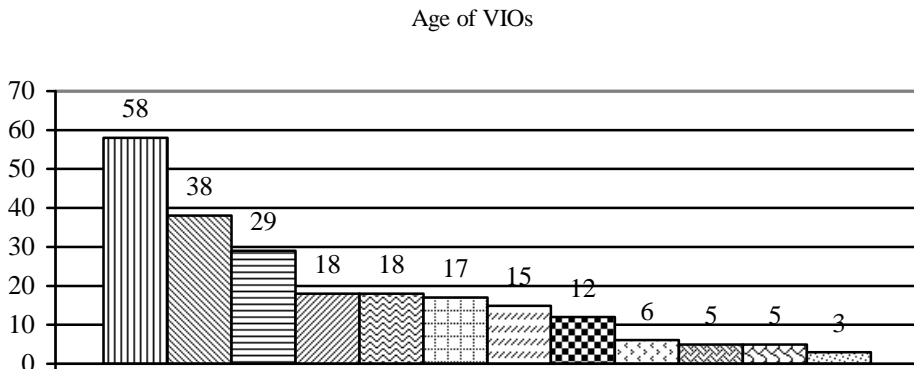


Ten out of twelve organizations are practicing 'informal' volunteering, whereas only one organization claimed that they are following structured and systematic parameters for involvement of volunteers. Another one declared that they are practicing both formal and informal volunteerism. The ten organizations practicing informal volunteering can be further subdivided. Six of them have developed rudimentary structures for volunteer management which include basic assessment of the volunteers, capacity building through trainings on leadership management, social mobilization techniques, advocacy and awareness of basic rights, etc. The remaining four can be categorized as highly informal

in management and utilization of volunteers. None of them has training programs for volunteers or any mechanism for identification, selection and assessment. Matching of volunteers’ capacities with needs of the communities is the most neglected area.

Age of the VIOs

The experience of involving volunteers ranged from just three years to over fifty-eight years.



As is obvious from the above figure, the experience of the VIOs varied to larger extent in terms of time period. The oldest organization in the sample was from public sector which started its activities in the area in 1952. The long standing organization started as an organization to render its services to mitigate the effects of war related emergencies by involving local volunteers, and overtime has extended its services to peace-time disasters and other natural and manmade emergencies. The structure of volunteer management in this organization was highly informal and unstructured in all respects ranging from volunteers identification, selection, assessment and placement. The services of the volunteers were limited to a smaller number of activities like facilitation in management of religious processions, arrangements for national days, traffic management and rescue activities.

On the other hand, another organization of public sector started its volunteer based activities three years back and had involved volunteers in its primary education, adult literacy and basic health programs. Some of the activities have been structured in all three program areas by clearly specifying the role of volunteers. The volunteers had been provided basic trainings of fire fighting, etc. to perform their assigned tasks. But the quality of work and regular involvement of volunteers is a constant issue in this organization. The claims about numbers of volunteers and their involvement at different levels and in different activities do not reflect the reality. The role and expectations from

the volunteers appear to be too ambitious and also reflect a gap of capacity on the part of volunteers. The expertise expected from the volunteer, the time required carrying out assigned tasks and the regularity of activities over extended periods of time makes their efforts equivalent to a professional manager which does not match with the reality.

The point needed to be considered is that the age of an organization should not be confused with the level of expertise and skills in the field of volunteering. Some other VIOs are much younger to the one mentioned above but had fairly good structures to manage spirit and skills of volunteers. It is pertinent to mention here that one can find a clear demarcation with reference to quality and quantity in so called public and private sector organizations. Private sector organizations are more conscious about quality of the work whereas the public sector organizations are more concerned about geographical spread and numerology.

Advocacy and awareness for volunteering

Specific activities to raise the profile of and awareness about the concept and practices of volunteering were not focused by the respondent organizations. All of them claimed that during their program activities, the importance and need for voluntary work was highlighted. Activities focused on above mentioned objective have only been carried out by five organizations. The nature of these activities revolved around celebrations of International Volunteers Day to some community level awareness sessions.

This appeared to be the most neglected area in volunteering as only five out of twelve organizations are holding 'some activity' on regularly irregular basis. However, the majority of them claimed that this component was an integral part of their day-to-day activities and they do raise awareness of the people on the subject of volunteering. It was also reported that special activities just focused on raising the level of awareness on importance, benefits and merits of volunteering were not done as a regular exercise. The discussions with the staff and volunteers also revealed that they had a limited knowledge of the concept. The mobilization and motivation of the masses is not adequately stressed. On further probing, it was reported by the respondents that as volunteers are available in abundance; therefore, specific advocacy and awareness campaigns are not designed.

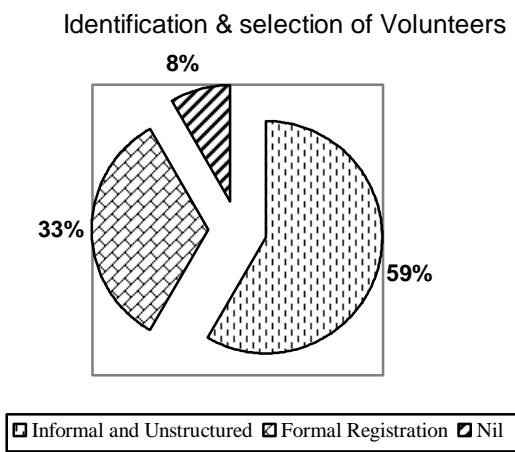
Networking and linkages

The volunteer network of one VIO was informal and event based, i.e. around disasters, focusing on logistics and rehabilitation. Another was making use of Development Committees to mobilize entire communities around the concept of model village. They claimed that they had some informal link or networking with other VIOs and academic institutions but still facing challenges over how to institutionalize and maintain momentum of their actions. The nature of this relationship was reported as of unstructured and activity to activity based. No formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed and a supportive nature of link existed, which mainly revolved around

arranging some rallies, walks and joint actions, more of demonstrating a certain point of view on a collective issue.

Identification and selection of Volunteers

The identification and selection of volunteers was practiced in informal and unstructured way by seven organizations. One VIO was not involved in this process; a sit was done by Headquarter located in a European country. Other four organizations were utilizing formal forms for registration of volunteers. The forms utilized for this purpose were extremely different from each other in contents and extent of information asked for.



The staff and management involved in the process of volunteers’ identification and selection belonged to different hierarchical levels in the organizations. Organizations working on more informal basis stated that all staff members are involved in this practice. Only two of them involved senior level management in this procedure. It is important to mention that almost everyone who contacts is welcomed and is registered as a volunteer, sometimes without any face to face interaction. Two VIOs from public sector had trained staff for identification and selection of volunteers. The junior frontline staff was carrying out this activity for which they had received a few days training.

Majority of the volunteers were relatives, friends or belonged to the same residential area. All this was channelized on the basis of already existing relationships. In majority of the cases, the organizations remained successful in getting the required number of volunteers; therefore, they need not to use other methods. Only one organization was approaching the masses by making appeals to join as volunteer through its website, print and electronic media.

It is important to mention that almost all VIOs have been unable to integrate volunteers into their programs; only traditional forms of volunteering are being transformed into development discourses. The volunteers are rendering services for their own communities and not for the operational areas of the supporting organizations. The association of a volunteer is more with one’s own areas of interest than that of the VIO’s operational area. One can find hardly an example where a volunteer is available for any activity in any area. The forms are just limited to traditional roles of men and women, focused on rural and urban areas, supply from definite class and strata, specific issues of specific interest groups, etc. Even after using the volunteers for various activities, they have not been made an integral part of the process of development.

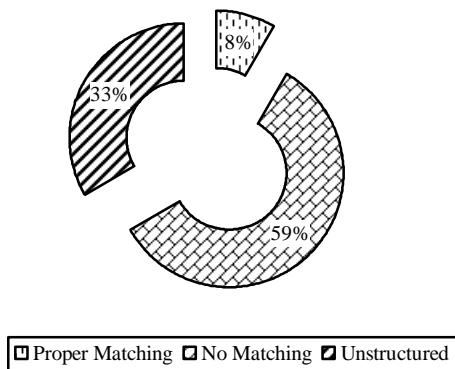
Assessment of Capacities of Volunteers

Almost all organizations, except two, reported about assessment of the capacities and skills of the volunteers. This assessment was done on informal basis by conducting an informal interview or discussion with the potential volunteer. As majority of the volunteers are known to the officials or were recommended by someone already in contact with the organization, therefore, their profile was already known. The volunteers were either from the closest circles of the organization or recommended by friends of the staff, hence, were not formally evaluated on the basis of any structured method.

Matching Capacities with the needs

Seven of the sample organizations were not matching capacities of the volunteers with their need. Only one claimed to have a proper matching mechanism. The remaining five organizations are using informal and unstructured discussions for this purpose. One organization was utilizing its registration forms for this purpose. During the discussion it was shared that most of the activities carried out by the organizations do not require specific skills or expertise, so this exercise was not part of the volunteer management process.

Matching Capacity with Needs



As majority of the organizations were not utilizing services of the volunteers for special tasks which require special skills and this appeared to be the reason for not assessing the capacities. Volunteers were usually involved in activities where head count matters like rallies, protests, processions, etc; therefore, assessment was not required.

Database sharing

The information about various aspects of volunteers in the form of structured database was not maintained by three organizations. Seven organizations had maintained this information including some rudimentary details in the form of names, addresses and telephone contact numbers. This database was mainly in the form of lists or registers and very few of them had electronic versions. Only two VIOs were properly maintaining database of the volunteers, whereas, one of them has established database very recently and IT section was in the process of upgrading the information.

Database of the volunteers was either non-existent or contained only very basic information which did not reflect upon ones qualities, skills, availability, etc. Updating of data was not a regular practice. Follow up or contacting the volunteers by pursuing a time schedule was not exercised. Sharing of data was not a norm of the day.

None of the organizations consulted for this research were sharing their database of volunteers with one another or any other volunteer involving organization. The reasons for non-sharing had a variety: as we do not have complete information, it is not worth sharing; due to geographical distances, others cannot involve our volunteers in their activities; we have never thought of sharing and nobody has ever asked for this. This situation also reflects to a better supply line or availability of volunteers.

Trained Staff for Volunteer Management

None of the organizations had trained staff for volunteer management. In majority cases, the volunteers themselves were helping other volunteers for various activities. Even big VIOs in public and private sector were utilizing services of volunteers for managing other volunteers. It was sometimes reasoned like “volunteer’s management should be on voluntary basis”.

Capacity Building Programs for Volunteers

Except two organizations, all other organizations were building capacity of their volunteers by involving them in ongoing program activities. Some special courses for volunteers focused mainly on interpersonal skills, disaster and emergency management had been part of volunteers’ capacity building programs. The nature of capacity building programs was usually to facilitate the development activities of the concerned organization. None of the organizations had devised capacity building activities for volunteers outside one’s own mandate.

Working through Partners

The CBOs and CCBs established by the VIOs were utilized to extend their program agenda. Three VIOs from private sector were holding a strong possession of their CBOs following the saying: “created by themselves, for themselves”. Two organizations are working with several CSOs and government agencies, whereas, three of them are not working with the partners. Another organization from Multan has initiated its partnership with several universities of South Punjab by offering internship facility to the students and involving them in their program activities as volunteers. The internship program is a way to career path as those who showed better performance have been offered regular jobs in the said organization. Two more organizations have evolved some mechanism for partners’ identification and other organizations are not doing partners’ identification and selection.

Nine of the twelve consulted organizations did not had specified and structured procedures for the identification and selection of partners. Rest of the three organizations was following their own designed processes which were not similar to each other. The mainstay of their criterion included verification of physical existence and practical work in the field.

Retention and Sustainability of Volunteers

None of the organizations claimed that they were successfully retaining and sustaining their volunteers over the time. Only two VIOs claimed that some of their volunteers have been retained by involving them into program activities and also through incentives like payments, etc. A representative of a VIO stated that although the turnover of volunteers is quite frequent, but they have retained some of the volunteers under the feeling that their rights have been protected by the organization, so they are obliged to reciprocate. Majority of the volunteers joined certain activity of their interest and after the completion of the activity they vanished from the scene. None of the VIOs claimed that the volunteers have become a part of cyclic or repetitive acts of the organization. They worked more like recipients of the program and showed interest in certain part of an activity.

During the discussions it was reported that at the initial phase of any activity, the number of ‘interested people’ is always larger. The fact was associated with a relatively higher pace of community mobilization process and curiosity of the community about the activity and ‘outsiders’ who are there to help them. With the passage of time, the voluntary spirit dies down especially after the completion of first major project in the community. In communities where the hardware interventions have been followed by software initiatives (focused on social change, human rights and capacity building), the voluntary structures have strengthened and also deepened the commitment of existing volunteers. One can assume that continuity of the activities has a direct relationship with the retention and sustainability of volunteers. It was the activity which kept volunteer

groups alive. There also appeared a relationship between the types of needs and the level of participation by the volunteers. Usually there was a diminishing relationship between the fulfillment of basic, secondary, tertiary needs and the involvement of volunteers. In other words, needs fulfillment and voluntary participation were inversely proportional. Majority of the respondents reported that volunteers were easily available for infrastructure development than for report writing or documentation of their own CBOs.

Payments to Volunteers

Only one organization was paying to volunteers neither in cash nor in kind. One VIO was paying in cash, whereas all other organizations in the sample were paying their volunteers both in kind and cash. The cash was not a preferred form of payment, in majority of the cases allied costs like transportation and refreshments were arranged by the concerned organizations. It was stressed upon by the respondents that it was justifiable to provide food and transport to the volunteers.

The availability of volunteers was more from rural settings than the urban areas. The organization working in the cities got more volunteers from middle class and slum areas of the cities. The number and nature of volunteers depended on the issue and the location of services.

Awareness about legal Framework

Out of twelve, only two organizations had awareness about existing legal framework of volunteers in Pakistan. It appeared that other organizations are not concerned with legal framework and some of them also expressed that this is not required as everyone has the basic right for volunteering.

Discussion and Conclusion

Pakistan can be fairly labeled as a land of opportunities in regards of volunteerism. Not only are the cultural norms support the concept and practices of volunteering but religious believes also in line with spirit and philosophy of volunteering. The rural areas, particularly, have huge reservoirs of volunteerism which must be tapped consciously. The family ties, kinship system, brotherhood (both Islamic and cultural) and cultural institutions of reciprocity and cooperation, all favor volunteerism.

The organizations covered in this research claimed to be rights based organizations and were overwhelmingly involving volunteers in advocacy and awareness activities. With the passage of time, some of these organizations have started service delivery programs with the involvement of volunteers. The non existence of models or structures for involvement of volunteers in development activities was the major problem for volunteer management. The means for tapping potential of volunteerism were relatively weaker both in terms of conceptual understanding and practices.

In the light of findings of this research, the hypothesis has fairly been confirmed because the lack of experience and limited organizational capacity of the VIOs has negatively affected volunteer management. This lack of capacity is quite evident right from conceptual understanding to translating it into meaningful actions. As a result, the VIOs were harming the spirit of volunteerism by exploiting the people for their limited objectives, instead of mainstreaming this potential for broader program of community development. At the time of research, NGOs were utilizing services of volunteers for short term activities in semi or non planned programs. Although, response from the public was positive, even if of an impulsive nature, but sustainability of the phenomenon and more specifically of the volunteers was a big issue.

As reported earlier, the VIOs were following a variety of definition and conceptual understanding of volunteerism causing difficulty of harmony during discussions and practices. The issues like formal and informal volunteering, payments to the volunteers, philanthropy and charity are confused amongst the managers and practitioners. There was a dire need to develop a same page regarding basic parameters and constituents of volunteerism.

Non existence of linkages and partnerships was causing a loss of knowledge and best practices. The organizational capacity of VIOs and other stakeholders was extremely limited to manage various aspects of volunteerism. The capacity building of these organizations with the help of experienced and skilled professionals of this field can help to materialize the enormous potential force of volunteers. The general information and awareness level about volunteering was low. None of the organizations covered in this research has adopted regular systems for spreading information on various aspects of volunteerism.

There is no denial to the fact that Pakistan has entered into a new era of volunteerism and the main hallmark of this era is the interest and involvement of several public and private sector organizations for the promotion, management and strengthening of volunteerism. The changing environment demands for more formal efforts to capitalize the potential of volunteerism in Pakistan. The influences of social, economic, political and religious influences have caused structural and functional changes in the field of volunteerism. Therefore, a serious effort supported by pragmatic programs is need of the hour.

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