

CSD Research Report

Study on the Effects of the National United Nation's Volunteer Program in Mongolia

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Center for Social Development

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Abstract

The current study sought to understand the specific benefits of the National UN Volunteers (NUNV) Program of Mongolia, the largest in Asia, on its participants, in particular, and Mongolian society, in general. It also aimed at determining the advantages and disadvantages of the present program design. We conducted face-to-face interviews with twenty-eight former volunteers and some community focus groups seeking to understand the effects of the program on volunteers and their communities. The study found that the program has affected both individual and societal levels. The most important benefits included the volunteers' own personal growth in terms of gaining work experience and skills, increasing their self-confidence and self-knowledge, earned reputation and respect in the community, widened career opportunities. In addition, some changes in volunteers' also benefited society such as developing more positive attitudes towards vulnerable groups, increased awareness on their social environment, and consequently participating more in volunteer, community and NGO activities.

Content of the Report

Executive Summary	1
Background	1
Rationale and description of civic service	4
Description of the National United Nations Volunteers (NUNV) Program in Mongolia.....	5
The History of Civic Service Programs and Their Effects on Individuals and Societies Around the World	7
Research Questions	10
Methodology	11
Research Design.....	11
Sampling Techniques	11
Data Collection Procedures.....	12
Sample Description	12
FINDINGS	19
A. Personal Benefits on volunteers	19
Reasons of volunteers for joining the program	19
Satisfaction from the service	20
Personal benefit 1. Gained valuable work experience in a new professional field.....	21
Personal benefit 2. Learned new skills that were vital at the beginning of the transition.....	21
Personal benefit 3. Improved interpersonal communication skills	22
Personal benefit 4. Enhanced personal growth and maturation through gaining self- confidence and understanding yourself and your life goals better.....	22
Personal benefit 5. Altering and expanding their career opportunities.....	24
Personal benefit 6. Increased awareness on their social environment, and	25
interest and involvement in community activities	25
Personal benefit 7. Increased initiatives and innovations in whatever they do.....	26
Personal benefit 8. Increased popularity in the community and earned respect and status	26
Personal benefit 9. Improved family relationship and life satisfaction.....	26
Discussions of the Program effects on volunteers	27
B. The Program Effects on Society.....	31
Societal benefit 1. Increased awareness and understanding of volunteerism	32
Societal benefit 2. Volunteer’s increased involvement in volunteer activities	32
Societal benefit 3. Show leadership and encourage others to participate	33
Societal benefit 4. Increased involvement of the volunteers in civil society groups and NGOs.....	33
Societal benefit 5. Heightened pro-social attitude and tolerance towards different population groups.....	34
Societal benefit 6. Increased altruistic behavior or habit of helping others	34
Societal benefit 7. The Program effect on the community volunteers served	35
Societal benefit 8. The program effect on implementation of the host programs.....	36
Societal benefit 9. Building the Capacity of Local Governments.....	37
Discussions of the Program effects on Society	37
C. The Program Design and Institutional aspects	41
Support and incentives provided by the UNV Program.....	41
Support provided from the Host Program.....	42
Advantageous nature of volunteer work	42
Difficulties encountered by volunteers	43

Discussions on the Program design and institutional support.....	44
Summary and conclusions	46
Summary of the main findings	46
Implications for policy and programs	48

References

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A wide range of literature on civic service suggests that volunteer programs can provide personal and professional benefits for their volunteers at the same time that they help solve societal problems and develop communities and nations. Additionally, strategies of using volunteers' services differ with time and place. The current study, therefore, was designed to gain a better understanding of the National UN Volunteers (NUNV) Program of Mongolia, which was the largest NUNV program in Asia at a time and which has been implemented in a democratic Mongolia under new social and economic conditions.

This cross sectional study attempts to identify and describe the positive and negative effects of the NUNV Program on those it has served and its specific roles in promoting the development of Mongolian society, including its contribution to the development of civil society, the reformulation of the concept of volunteerism in a new social and economic context, and the emergence of viable local communities. We also examined program strategies that aim to integrate service programs into broader social programs and to recruit volunteers locally.

We conducted one-time face-to-face interviews with twenty-eight former volunteers who were selected through snow-ball sampling methods. One long interview was conducted with each participant. A list of 113 volunteers served between 1997 and 2004 that provided by UNV office, Mongolia was used as core data about the UNV population in Mongolia.

Our volunteers' sample included 21 women (75%) and 7 men (25%), which was consistent with the gender ratio of the NUNV population which was 70.7% and 29.2%, respectively. The volunteers' age at the time of interview ranged between 29-55 and the mean age was 38. However, interview took place, on the average, 42.7 months after their contract term was over. That means the age of the volunteers in our sample at a time of joining the program ranged from 23-42 and the mean age was 32.2, and at the time when their contract ended ranged from 25-49 and the mean was 33.4. The latter age was compared to the age of the NUNV population at the time when their contract ended. The mean age for the NUNV population was almost same as a sample at 33.5, however, population age ranged between 22-53 years of age.

Volunteers in our sample served on the average for 30.7 months, specifically, 39.3% of them served between 2-3 years and 25% served for more than 3 years. The average duration for service was little higher compared to the population, which served on the average for 21.27 months and ranged between 2 to 60 months. This we relate to our snow-ball sampling method where volunteers who served for longer are more familiar to others, consequently sampled in more numbers.

In terms of educational levels, 82% of volunteers had higher education, 14% two to four years of vocation education in college and 3.6% secondary education. Although the program minimum requirement for volunteers was secondary education only, the majority of volunteers had higher education. When they joined the program, 9 volunteers (32,3%) were unemployed or had no work experience at all, 10.7 % worked for NGOs, 46.4% worked for state institutions such as schools and local government units, 7.1 % worked for private sector and 3.6% was self-employed. At the time of interview, which took place after 1-5 years after

their contract term was over, volunteers' educational and employment characteristics was changed in many ways.

Additional qualitative information was also collected through twenty four community focus groups which involved total of 148 community participants. Focus groups had different numbers of participants ranging from 4 people for minimum and 11 people for maximum and on the average, one focus group had 5.92 participants. The focus groups were organized with *bag* governors (4 groups), beneficiaries of NUNV service (8 groups), NUNV supervisors (5 groups), local NGO representatives (3 groups), representatives from partnering and collaborating agencies (3 groups) and NUNVs (1 group).

The result of this study supports previous research findings, and in some ways complements the literature by documenting country specific outcomes. The study found that NUNV program had effects on both personal development of volunteers and on societal development. Volunteers overwhelmingly (96.4 %) reported that the personal gain from their participation in the program far out weighted their contribution, therefore "volunteering is a shortcut to personal growth. "Volunteers said they grew personally through gained work experience and skills (71.4%), and increased self-confidence or "I can do this" belief and identity formation or understanding "who I am and where I'm going" better (50%). As a result of increased self confidence volunteers engage in new tasks and new activities, show more initiatives, set higher goals, emphasize their personal development and show less emotional stress and anxiety. Their increased identity development is characterized by understanding yourself better, knowing what will fit for you better in terms of identifying future career directions and life goals, etc. As a result of the above personal change, volunteers became innovative and showed more initiatives in whatever they do (21.4%), earned respect and popularity in the community (50%), expanded their career opportunities (39,4%), and improved their family relationships and life satisfaction.

Some changes at the personal level also had societal effects. For example, although volunteers mainly stated personal reasons for volunteering, they often developed pro-social attitudes such as helping others (43.2%), looking for possibilities to improve their social environment (57%), involvement in volunteer activities (100%) and civil society and NGO activities (60%), and developed leadership skills in encouraging others to participate (50%). If before the program only 18% of the volunteers had some kind of occupational experience in volunteering, they all (100%) became more involved in volunteer activities on a regular basis. Average time they spent on volunteering also increased up to 16 hours per month, which is much higher compared to other international studies on volunteering.

Advantages of integrating NUNV programs within the other social programs, especially at the time when the concept of volunteers were just emerging, were that the host programs provided the NUNVs with clear program responsibilities and goals, and other necessary supports such as supervision, training and encouragement. The NUNV program was a first attempt to involve local and national volunteers for solving local problems. Previously, the country had and experience with only international volunteers and even a word 'volunteer' were automatically understood as international or religious volunteers. New approach recruitment of national volunteers from the community itself helped to utilize local human capital and contributed to its further development and capacity building. If international volunteers were employed instead of national volunteers, it would cost 10 times more, that

means only around 10 international volunteers would have been worked within the fund allocated for all NUNVs. In terms of personal development, so many local people would not have improved their motivation, skills and attitudes as mentioned before in this report. Even some of them might have been unemployed for a longer time, which means that, from the perspective of the society, a great deal of human capital would have been wasted for a country which is already struggling to make ends meet.

BACKGROUND

Rationale and description of civic service

Civic service, or organized attempts by citizens to voluntarily make contributions to the society, is emerging globally as a new institution (McBride, Benitez, Sherraden et al, 2003). Today service programs of different kinds are being implemented in many countries around the world. Civic service programs are defined in different ways, such as by the communities they serve as national service, community service, or international service; or by their program purpose, such as service-learning (where students are involved in real life situations and connect their experiences with classroom activities) and non-military service where it provides opportunity for alternative military services). In addition, service programs are also named by those being served, such as youth service, elderly service and voluntary service and so on. Though defined in different ways, civic service programs have generally proved themselves to be cost-effective strategies in dealing with multiple problems simultaneously. They do this by achieving skills development, allowing work experience and personal growth, and creating employment and career opportunities for participating individuals, while at the same time building institutions, communities and nations (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990). Therefore, the concept of civic service is particularly important in developing or transitional countries, which are struggling to mobilize their human and financial resources to pursue their multiple developmental goals with limited resources.

Internationally, there are very few studies that examine civic service programs in transitional countries. Although Mongolia has had different volunteer programs at different times in its history, no studies have been conducted on the effects of these programs. This has resulted in a lack of awareness of this concept among policy makers and a consequent limiting of its application in social policy and programs. Even the impact of the very first and most significant service program in Mongolia, the National United Nations Volunteers Program (NUNV), which was implemented after this nation's turn towards democracy and market economy, has not yet been properly evaluated. This lack of awareness may well have contributed to the program's decline, from having more than fifty volunteers at its height between 2001 and 2002, to only five volunteers in 2004.

Studies about civic service show that their purposes and types tend to differ from country to country and period to period, depending on the particular social, economic and political situations and cultural backgrounds (Menon, Moore & Sherraden, 2002). Therefore, it is important to learn what would be the specific characteristics of service programs in Mongolia. It would be useful in the Mongolian context to avoid copying Western concepts that are not relevant to this country. On the other hand, it is expected that better understanding of the effects of volunteer service programs in a transitional country like Mongolia will contribute to a broader knowledge of civic service as a policy option for developing and transitional countries.

Documenting the effects of the NUNV Program on the personal and professional development of volunteers is vitally important for Mongolia, a country where 70% of the population is under the age of 35 and citizens between the ages of 16-32 make up one-third of the population. During the nation's communist period (1921-1990), youth were viewed as the future of the Communist Party, and thus the ruling Mongolian Peoples Revolutionary Party

put a high priority on youth development programs, such as service programs through which young people were sent to rural areas for certain periods of time to contribute to their development. Mongolia experienced a tremendous social, economic and political transformation in the early 1990s; and it is clear that youth development strategies of the past will not work today.

The Government of Mongolia has recognized the need to develop youth “civil society skills, critical thinking skills, healthy lifestyle skills ... and volunteer skills” (Government of Mongolia, 1998). Studying the benefits of volunteer programs on volunteers themselves will, hopefully, lead to the application of the concept in youth development policies and programs that aim to develop the youth, which are considered the country’s most valuable resource. The recent rise of interest in service programs in Mongolia, such as the Ministry of Environment’s Green Wall project to combat desertification by planting trees while also creating short-term employment and service opportunities for young people, proves that our research findings have potential implications.

We therefore designed our study to gain a better understanding of the NUNV Program in Mongolia. This study attempts to identify and describe the program’s effects on volunteers, its specific role in the development of Mongolian society, and its contribution to the growth of a civil society, the reformulation of volunteerism in a new social and economic context, and the development of local communities. The study will also examine some program design and strategy issues, such as for example, the process of integrating service programs into broader social programs and using locally-recruited volunteers.

Description of the National United Nations Volunteers (NUNV) Program in Mongolia

Mongolia is a landlocked country located in North Asia between China and Russia. It is one of the most sparsely populated nations in the world with 2.6 million people living in an area 1.6 million square kilometers in size. Demographically, Mongolia is a young country with approximately 70% of the population under the age of 35. Those between the ages of 16-32 make up one-third of the population.

Since the early 1990s, the transition from single party rule to a liberal political-economic system has been accompanied by severe financial difficulties for the nation. Serious social problems such as poverty, unemployment and school drop outs have emerged due to drastic cuts in the financing of social programs. In order to deal with these problems, the Government of Mongolia launched a multi-sector National Poverty Alleviation Program (NPAP) in 1996 with a World Bank loan. However, this and other social programs lacked the skilled professionals needed to work with rural or disadvantaged populations. With communist-era youth service programs criticized in this time for not paying enough attention to the servers, because the old programs focused too much on doing good for the society. As a result, there was little interest in initiating new volunteer programs.

The Mongolian NUNV Program began in these circumstances in 1996 as part of the UNDP Regional Poverty Alleviation Programme (RAS/95/001). The Program aimed to utilize talent from local communities. Mongolians who had received advanced training in the former Soviet Union or in Eastern Europe, and were unemployed, were an excellent source of volunteers. Secondly, NUNVs turned out to be more cost-effective than hiring international

staff with similar qualifications. The UN name also proved important in attracting interest in volunteerism in the new socio-economic environment. Thirty-one NUNVs including a NUNV coordinator and 3 NUNV specialists were recruited, twenty-seven of which were placed at *aimag*¹ and district levels to assist the NPAP implementation at the local level.

The NUNVs are directly contracted by the UNV headquarters, Bonn, which maintains contact with them by means of a person based either in the local NUNV office or within the host program. They are assigned to perform specific tasks within the host program and to report through their supervisors to the Host Program and UNV office. The NUNVs are paid monthly living allowances, determined by a National Steering Committee, are fully insured and have similar leave entitlement as do UN staffs. The NUNVs serve on a full-time basis and for a period of no more than four years with yearly renewals of their contract. Recruitment of volunteers is held on a competitive basis in the same way as job positions are filled. They are first announced through the local media and then applicants are interviewed by a panel consisting of UNV and Host Program representatives, first individually and then as a group. After recruitment, the NUNVs are given intensive orientation with regards to the program's general mission, expected outputs, and reporting and other administrative requirements. This is followed by a Participatory Rural Appraisal type of training that introduces volunteers to the participatory tools and methodologies. Training is conducted by a local NGO. Volunteers perform such duties as

- maintaining liaison and cooperation with local governmental and non-governmental organizations that deal with rural community development issues in the provinces;
- facilitating group formation processes for the poor people to apply for the income generation loans, which was funded from the Income Generation and Women's development fund;
- building capacity for local NGOs through training and program supports; and
- promoting community participation and gender sensitivity in project implementation that supports and monitors small-scale community development projects, such as micro-credit, health, education, public work and women's NGO support projects.

The second program, Youth Skills Development (GLO/96/VO5), was implemented initially in Laos and Mongolia with the support of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV). Under this program, four NUNV Trainers were recruited at the UN funded AIDS/HIV awareness raising program in Ulaanbaatar. The HIV/AIDS program was located within the Ministry of Health and operated at the national level. Two International UNVs were also recruited under the program to work cooperatively with NUNVs. This program aimed to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS/STD through information, education and communication activities focused on vulnerable and at-risk groups.

After the successful completion of the first year of these two NUNV pilot programs, a NUNV position was offered through other developmental programs. For example, six volunteers were placed in a UNESCO/DANIDA (Danish International Aid) jointly-funded project on

¹ At the time, Mongolia was divided into 18 territorial units, named *aimags*, and a capital city. The capital city was further divided into 9 districts.

Human Rights at the *bag*² level (MON/96/104), another six were placed in the Decentralization and Democracy Support Project (MON/97/111), and fifteen positions were created in the “Bio-diversity Conservation and Sustainable Livelihood Options in Eastern Mongolia” project (MON/97/G32) and the straw bale building project. These projects mainly involved community mobilization and awareness raising activities targeted at low-income households.

According to the UNV-Mongolia office, between 1997 and 2002, 113 volunteers have been placed in the above-mentioned projects. This data was used as a population data. According to this data, the age of the NUNV population at the time when they joined the program ranged from 22-53 and the mean was 33.5. In terms of gender, there were 80 women (70.7%) and 33 men (29.2%). On the average, population of volunteers served for 21.27 months ranging from 2 to 60 months.

The History of Civic Service Programs and Their Effects on Individuals and Societies around the World

The concept of *service* is not new. It has been practiced as part of religions or communal systems of care for a very long time (Menon, Moore & Sherraden, 2002). The contemporary concept of service emerged in Western nations through their struggle to build democratic and pluralistic societies. The history of service shows that each program is a product of its own time and place, and thus their purposes and types vary enormously (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990).

In the United States, for example, the concept of non-military service was first mentioned in William James’s work “The Moral Equivalent of War” (1910), where he identified a need to re channel the innate aggression of male human nature in a beneficial manner. This idea was rooted in a Freudian psychodynamic perspective, popular at the time in the social sciences that viewed human beings, especially males as having innate aggressive tendencies (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990).

James’ idea was first put into practice during the economic depression of the 1930s in the United States in the form of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which aimed to provide jobs for unemployed young men from poor families, to transfer welfare moneys to their families, and to preserve natural resources (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990). In the nine years of its existence (1933-1942), the CCC enrolled three million young men in specially constructed camps and produced an amount of conservation work greater in value than its cost, e.g. 90,000 acres of land were reforested, the value of which is in today’s standard even greater (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990).

After World War II, in the 1960s, the United States government launched an international service program known as the Peace Corps to promote international understanding and peace. To date, 150,000 people have served in this program, working in developing countries around the world, and it continues to influence the career choices of many American youth today (Campus compact: History of National Service, retrieved on 2005).

² *Bags* are the smallest units of local administration in Mongolia. *Aimags* are divided into *sums*, and *sums* are divided into *bags*.

Since the 1970s, service programs in the United States have emerged to address problems related to “culturally, socially and economically disengaged youth” as it became clear that youth non-participation can lead to such indications as increased crime, vandalism, drugs and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, unemployment, poor school performance, suicide, and so on (Coleman, 1976; Eberly & Sherraden, 1990). President Johnson created a number of programs in the 1960s as part of the “War on Poverty” campaign that aimed “to mobilize human and financial resources of the nation” to combat poverty. These programs included VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), National Teacher Corps, Job Corps-aimed to increase the employability of young people by providing education, training and job experiences, University Year of Action, and College Work-Study Program-aimed to promote part-time employment of students from low income families. These programs sought to develop human capital while also preventing many problems that might emerge in the long run. Because it was clear that youth who are not provided with opportunities for skills development, job training and personal development activities, experience more serious human capacity arousal problems in their later years.

In addition, since the 1970s, Americans have discussed the emergence of “education rich and action poor” youth, and as a result many policy advocates saw the need to reform educational institutions. Some saw that classrooms were disconnected from the real lives of the youth. To address this problem, service-learning programs were launched beginning in the 1980s at secondary and higher education institutions and integrated into the educational curriculum of these institutions. These programs provided youth with opportunities to take real life responsibilities, learn action skills and, consequently, be prepared to become productive citizens of the country.

Theoretical explanations about the problem of “disengaged youth” are influenced by Erik Erikson’s work *Youth: Identity and Crisis* (as cited in Yates & Youniss, 1999). “Erikson’s approach examines identity as a process in which youth struggle with questions of how they fit into the social world extending beyond the immediacy of friends and family” (Yates & Youniss, 1999, p.19). When they do not understand who they are within a society, they have an identity crisis, resulting in an increase in youth problems of all kind. On the contrary, an individual who works successfully through a period of crisis achieves identity achievement that is characterized by having a clearer sense of self and life directions (Marcia, 1966 as cited in Lemme, 2001, p.96). If youths develop socially a responsible identity, they will carry it on into adulthood (Yates & Youniss, 1996, 1999).

A large body of literature provides evidence on the effects of service programs on youth participants. Yates and Youniss (1996) confirm that service has a positive impact on participants by developing their skills, disciplines, identity and sense of civic responsibility. They used empirical data (Yates & Youniss, 1999) to present portraits of contemporary youth constructing their civic identities around the globe. Flanagan in the above book (1999) described a study that includes some “transitional societies” such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Russia, argued that engagement in the voluntary sector connects youth to the broader polity, and in that process, they develop an understanding of themselves as civic actors. In doing so, they thus develop social responsibility and become capable of addressing the problems of their polity. Flanagan’s study concluded that even compulsory volunteering during communism has also increased the participants’ pro-social

attitude (Flanagan, 1999). Other studies confirm that service can increase participants' behavior of "helping others or feeling responsibility for others" (Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003, p.13). Service programs also increase awareness of societal problems among youth, and provide them with the opportunity to try to alleviate these problems, which in turn could help them to form closer connections with community organizations and other individuals, particularly of their own generation (Yates & Youniss, 1999). Through these effects, service programs contribute to community development, civil society development and citizenship development

Research shows that participation in service programs increase the servers' sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem or "I can do this" belief, which is defined in Bandura's theory as "the core belief that one has the power to produce effects by one's action" (Bandura, 2001, p.12). A positive sense of self-efficacy motivates people to try new activities and engage in tasks with energy. Conversely, low self-efficacy may lead to self-doubt (Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003). Actually, the self-efficacy theory says that it has four sources: personal performance, vicarious observation of models, encouragement and persuasion from others, and emotional arousal. However, personal empowerment through mastery experiences is the best contributor to strong self-efficacy (Bandura, 1991 as cited in Lemme, p. 90). It is clear that service programs provide successful personal performance and vicarious observations of others, as well as encouragement and persuasion, and keep up emotions that would support one's self-efficacy or self-confidence.

A cross national comparative study on non-military service in nine different countries conducted by Sherraden and Eberly in the early 1990s shows that service programs, besides having personal, educational and employment benefits to servers, can have multiple effects on the societal level. They can, for example, produce economic outcomes, such as by planting trees or building houses, and social outcomes, such as by providing human services to different population groups, promoting peace by increasing international and inter-racial understanding, and also promoting citizenship by balancing citizens' rights and their obligations to the society.

Service programs also have the potential to unite people by "building bridges, fostering tolerance and respect" (p.166) towards people from different class, ethnicity, religion or geographical regions, etc. That is why, most of the service programs aim to bring people from different backgrounds together for a common goal or bring people from one place to another. In recent years, this effect of uniting people is explained by Putnam's social capital theory. He defined two types of social capital. Bonding capital connects people with similar background, while bridging capital connects people with diverse backgrounds. The latter explains the effect of cultural integration in service programs with heterogeneous groups of people (Putnam, 2000).

Some scholars believe that civic service is an emerging institution and that in the future "it will be taken for granted just as educational and labor market opportunities are today" (GSI Vision, 2002). This belief resulted in the establishment of the Global Service Institute (GSI), a service research institution based at Washington University in the city of St. Louis, USA, which aims to advance knowledge about service at the global level. The GSI distinguishes between organized civic service programs and occasional volunteering. It believes that the societal contribution to organized service programs should be higher than to occasional

volunteering. The GSI explains that civic service is different from occasional volunteering in the ways that it is organized; it is “substantial” both in terms of its “contribution to local, national, or world community“ and its “time period”; and it is “recognized and valued by society“ and provides “minimal monetary compensation to the participant“ (Sherraden, 2001, p. 2). Organized programs connect individuals to a structure that provides access, information, incentives and facilitation to their roles (Moore-McBride, Benitez, Sherraden, et al, 2003, p. 2).

Research Questions

This study of the NUNV Program will try to answer the following broad questions:

1. What are the main effects of such programs on their servers in terms of increasing their civic participation and skills development?
2. What are the roles of the NUNV program in the development of local communities and civil society in Mongolia?
3. What is the best way to implement this program that will help it achieve its intended goals? What are the advantages and disadvantages of integrating service components into other social development programs at the national level and to recruit local volunteers?

We suspect that NUNV Program in Mongolia had a positive impact on social development of local communities and civil society development through increased participation of the servers and increased awareness of the general public on the importance of volunteerism and civil society. Secondly, the current research will identify the main impacts of NUNV Program on their participants. Based on literature review, we believe that the participants developed skills and attitude to work with disadvantaged group of people, which in turn widened their career opportunities.

This research study also examines the advantages of integrating service components into social development programs, such as poverty reduction and community development, in order to improve the design and implementation of similar programs in Mongolia and other transitional countries. We believe that the host program would provide the most important institutional support for the volunteers by providing access, information, incentive and facilitation in their roles. Although some people consider this type of program design which recruited volunteers locally as a disadvantage, given that the volunteers would not be able to bring outside expertise to the community (UNV China Programme, 1998), we hypothesize that, in this case, the program prevented many volunteers from migrating to the capital city by developing in them a sense of purpose and bonding them with their local communities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is exploratory in nature and employs a grounded theory qualitative design for the following reasons. In grounded theory, qualitative data is collected and, through analysis, codes, categories and concepts are developed and integrated into larger components of theory. This strategy fits our study well, given that it is the first of its kind and thus requires a certain openness to discovering the different effects of the program that are not easily categorized in advance. We believe that surveys and in-depth interviews will allow for more grounded conceptual categories to emerge. It also helps to involve the communities, civil society representatives and local authorities in the assessment process.

For the purpose of this study, a research team was set up consisting of three researchers. Each spoke English and Mongolian. Researchers collected and analyzed all field data by themselves. The working language was Mongolian. However, during data analysis, each of the codes and categories were discussed in terms of their English meanings and if necessary, Mongolian terms were reformulated again. The final report was written both in English and Mongolian.

The data collection methods consisted of individual face-to-face interviews with former volunteers and focus groups and discussions with local community representatives, i.e. former supervisors, beneficiaries, local government officials and NGO personnel. Before starting the investigation, we organized focus groups with representatives of the former volunteers. A protocol for in depth interviews was developed based on the analysis of this focus group discussion. The interview guide did not include prescribed questions. We instead preferred open-ended questions that would allow other categories to emerge. However, the instrument also included some quantitative information, such as the number of hours a person volunteered and the level of his or her satisfaction rated on a five-point scale. The rest was primarily qualitative in nature.

All three investigators brought different experiences to this study in terms of their relationship with the program. One was a former volunteer, another had trained volunteers and the third had no previous knowledge of the program prior to her involvement in the study.

Sampling Techniques

Due to difficulties in tracking former volunteers, we used a “*snowball*” sampling method to select volunteers. We asked volunteers about their former colleagues. In selecting community focus groups, we used purposive sampling. Focus group sites were selected purposefully to have various programs and geographical representations of the communities. Participants of the focus groups were recruited in collaboration with volunteers and with their host program representatives and former supervisors.

Data Collection Procedures

Data from the volunteers were collected using semi-structured long face-to-face interviews. We thought that this would provide more in-depth information for our study. In addition, we conducted several community focus groups to cross-check the information we received. The individual interviews were conducted for around 8 month period from September 2003 to April 2004. This delay was related to, in some extent, high travel expenses in Mongolia due to its vast area, which led researchers to wait for volunteers came to the capital city until the sample size became enough. Interviews were conducted after 1-5 years or on the average, after 30.7 months since their contract term was over. Only one long interview was conducted with each volunteer using the protocol for depth interview. The place of interview was determined by volunteers by asking them in advance where they would feel comfortable to meet. Each interview began with a review of informed consent and the signing of a consent form.

Additional qualitative information was collected through twenty four community focus groups which involved total of 148 community participants. Focus group discussions were organized by stakeholders, separately, such as with bag governors, with beneficiaries, with local NGO representatives, with volunteers' supervisors, with representatives from collaborating or partner agencies and with NUNVs (Table 2). Two researchers facilitated each focus group discussions based on the guide questions developed in advance. Focus groups had 4-11 participants, and on the average, it had 5.92 participants.

All the interviews and focus group discussions were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. To proceed with analysis, each audio taped interview was transcribed into the original language. Then the important parts were selected from the transcripts and put into computers spreadsheet programs. From them, codes were developed and coded data were put into SPSS. In addition, we were working with original transcripts in order to understand the specific meanings of the phrases and sentences. We used manual coding because there is no software program for qualitative analysis in the Mongolian language. After marginal coding by each researcher, we developed code categories. And these categories were discussed and negotiated in terms of their meanings in English and Mongolian, and were continually refined. After the categories were developed, we compared them to other research findings from abroad. At this stage continual referral was made to research conducted abroad and a general literature review.

Sample Description

In total, twenty-eight volunteers were interviewed. They represent five different programs and fourteen different *aimags* or provinces. In addition, twenty four community focus groups were organized at twelve different locations with former supervisors of NUNVs, beneficiaries groups, NGO and local government representatives.

Table 1. Number of individual interviews and focus groups by region

	Regions of Mongolia	No. of NUNVs interviewed	No. of Focus groups
1.	Ulaanbaatar, the capital city	8	8
2.	Western region	6	6
3.	Eastern region	8	8
4.	Central region	0	2
5.	Khangai region	6	0
	Total	28	24

Table 2. Description of focus groups and their participants

CATEGORIES	f	%
Focus groups by participants' categories		
Bag governors	4	16.6%
Beneficiaries	8	33.3%
NGO representatives	3	12.5%
Supervisors	5	20.8%
Partners	3	12.5%
NUNV's group	1	4.1%
Total	148	100%
Participants of the focus groups by categories	20	13.5%
Bag governors	48	32.6%
Beneficiaries	23	15.2%
Supervisors	24	16.3%
NGO representatives	20	13.5%
Partners	13	8.6%
NUNVs	148	100%
Total		
Participants by Regions		
Ulaanbaatar, the capital city	53	35.8%
Western region	43	29%
Eastern region	37	25%
Central region	15	10.1%

In the Table 2, description of focus groups is given. According to it, focus groups had different numbers of participants ranging from 4 people for minimum and 11 people for maximum and on the average, one focus group had 5.92 participants. The focus groups were organized with *bag* governors (4 groups), beneficiaries of NUNV service (8 groups), NUNV supervisors (5 groups), local NGO representatives (3 groups), representatives from partnering and collaborating agencies (3 groups) and NUNVs (1 group).

In terms of composition among total number of participants, *bag* governors were 13.5%, beneficiaries of NUNV service were 32.6%, NUNV supervisors were 15.2%, local NGO representatives were 16.3%, representatives from partnering and collaborating agencies were 13.5% and NUNVs were 8.6%.

Table 3. Description of volunteers' sample

CATEGORIES	When they joined the program	At the time of the interview
Gender		
Male	-	25%
Female	-	75%
Age groups		
21-24	3.6%	0
25-30	42.9%	3.6%
31-35	39.3%	24.9%
36-40	7.2%	57.1%
41+	7.2%	14.4%
Mean	32.29	37.96
Median	31.00	37.00
Mode	28	39
Average duration of service, in months		
Up to 12 months		7.1%
12 -24 months		28.6%
24 -36 months		39.3%
36 months and more		25.0%
Max - 68 months, Min - 5 months		
Mean - 30.7; Median -28.5; Mode – 39		
Education level		
Higher education /Bachelor's degree and above	82.1%	89.3%
2-4 years of College level vocational education	14.3%	7.1%
Complete secondary education	3.6%	3.6%
Field of professional education		
Education & Teaching	32.1%	NOT Recorded
Economics and Finance	35.7%	
Engineering	21.4%	
Other	10.8%	
Sectors of employment		
Social/human services	57.1%	75%
Cooperatives	0	7.1%
Self employed	3.6%	3.6%
Private sector	7.1%	7.1%
Unemployed	25.0%	3.6%
Other	7.1%	3.6%
Employment status		
State organization	46.4%	17.8%
NGO	10.7%	25.0%
Host Program/project	0	35.7%
Unemployed or never worked	25 %	3.6%
Student	7.1%	0
Private sector	7.1%	3.6%
Self employed	3.6%	3.6%
Other organizations that changing their status	0	10.7%
Place of residency		
The capital city	28.6%	32.1%
Aimag (province)	71.4%	67.9%
By Host Program		
National Poverty Alleviation Program (NPAP)		16 (57.1%)
UNESCO/DANIDA Human rights at <i>bag</i> level project		3 (10.7%)
National Program Against HIV/AIDS/STD		4 (14.3%)
Provision of energy efficient social service		1 (3.6%)
Biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihood		4 (14.3%)

Table 3 describes our volunteers' sample and compares their description at two points, i.e. at the time when they joined the program and at the time of interview, which took place on the average 42.7 months after their contract term was ended. Our sample included 21 women (75%) and 7 men (25%). We compared this percentage against the volunteers' list obtained from UNV office. The gender ratio of the NUNV population was 80 women (70.7%) and 33 men (29.2%).

The volunteers' age at the time of interview ranged between 29-55 and the mean age was 38. Based on the age of volunteers at the time of interview and the date of their contract started, we have calculated the age of the volunteers at a time of joining the program and it ranged from 23-50 and the mean was 32.2. However, their age, at the time when their contract ended after serving for 12-48 months, ranged from 25-49 and the mean age was 33.4. This was consistent with the mean age of volunteer population at the time when their contract ended, which was 33.5 and ranged from 22-53.

The duration of service was calculated using the beginning and end-of-service dates of each volunteer. Volunteers in our sample served on the average for 30.7 months, specifically, 39.3% of them served between 2-3 years and 25% served for more than 3 years. However, population of volunteers, on the average, served for 21.27 months ranging between 2-60 months. This difference might be related to our snow-ball sampling method, where volunteers who served for longer might have been better known by others.

At the time of joining the program, 82% of volunteers in our sample had higher education, 14% two to four years of vocation education in college and 3.6% secondary education although the program minimum requirement for volunteers was secondary education only. The reason for majority of volunteers having higher education is related to the country's high level of education achievements. In terms of employment status, 9 volunteers (32.3%) were unemployed or had no work experience at all when they joined the program, 10.7% worked for NGOs, 46.4% worked for state institutions such as schools and local government units, 7.1% worked for private sector and 3.6% was self-employed.

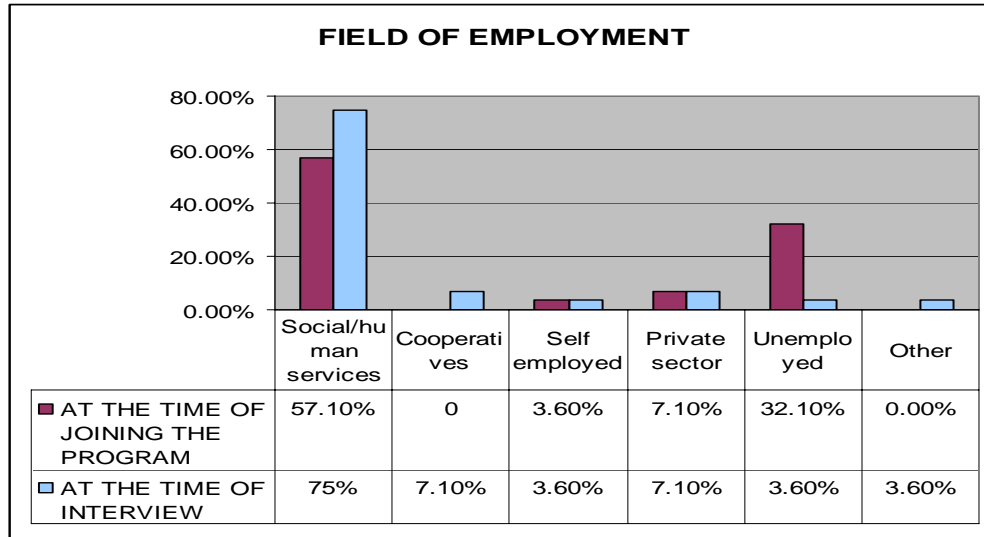
At the time of interview, which took place after 1-5 years after their contract term was over, volunteers' educational and employment characteristics was changed in many ways. Two people (7.2% of respondents) had advanced their education from a college vocational education level to a Bachelor's degree of education. In addition, many volunteers advanced their education level through Master's degree and Diploma courses. We did not, however, document the volunteers' education level higher than Bachelor's degree.

In terms of NUNVs' professional field of education, 32% of the volunteers had formal training in education and teaching, 35.7% in economics and finance, 21.4% in engineering and 10% in other professions. No change was reported in the professional field of education after the program. This is because, first, it takes more time to earn additional degrees in another field. Second, as mentioned earlier, we did not collect information on education courses above the Bachelor's degree.

Although the volunteers' formal professional field remained the same, many of them changed their field of employment within the social and human service sectors, as illustrated in the Figure 1. From here we can see that previously unemployed or never worked group moved to

social and humans service sectors. However, it should be noted that there is a difference within the human and social services. We have included education institutions as secondary schools in the social service category, which might have increased the number of volunteers worked for social service sector before their service experience.

Figure 1. Volunteers’ field of employment, before and after



A noticeable change has been observed in the volunteers’ place of employment (see Figure 2). While only 10.7% worked for NGOs before their service, this percentage became 25.0% at the time of interview. This trend might be related to the development of civil society organizations in Mongolia as compared to the period before the program. Another 35.7% volunteers were promoted within their host program and employed by their host projects and programs, although some of the projects changed their status and became permanent institutions, such as NGOs. In these cases, volunteers took the position of their former supervisors. However, the number of people employed by state-owned institutions, such as local government units or secondary schools, has decreased. If before, 46.4% of the volunteers were employed by state institutions, only 17.8% were after the service. The number of people unemployed has reduced from 9 (32.1%), including students that never worked, to one (3.6%) at the time of interview. Some organizations have changed their status or were in the process of changing their status at the time of interview. For example, social insurance office was in transition from a state-owned organization to a private sector organization. Another project on water supply was transferred to a state-owned institution. The organizations were included in the category of “other organizations” with no clear status.

In regards to volunteers’ place of residency, 71.4% worked in provincial level and 28.6% in the capital city. At the time of interview, only one volunteer has been moved to the capital city.

Figure 2. Volunteers' employment status, before and after

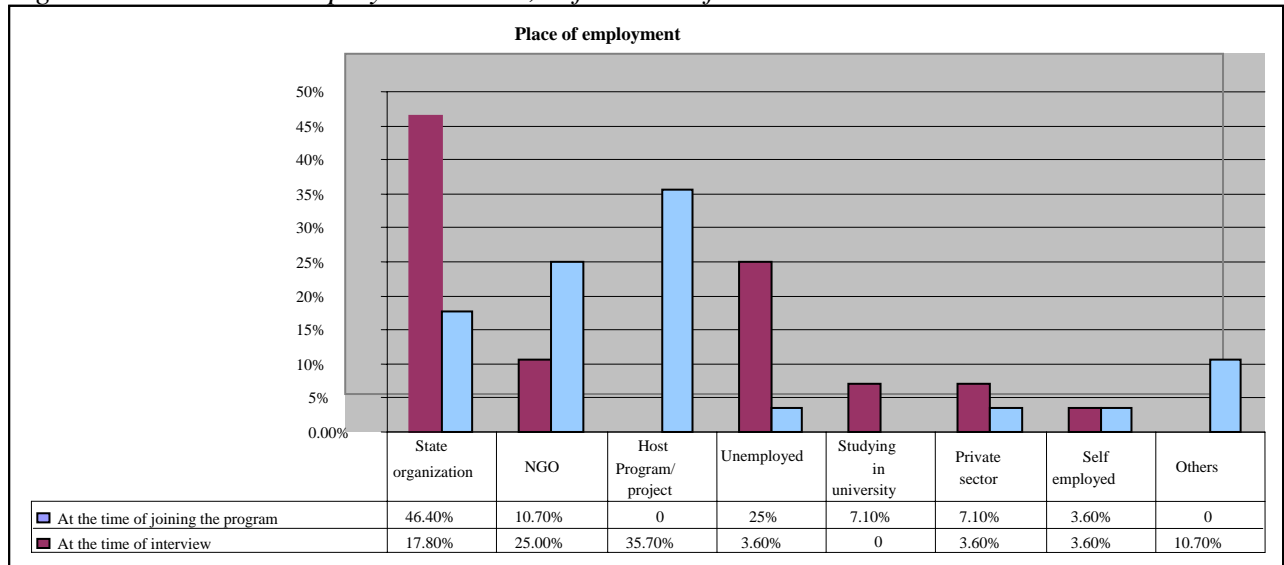
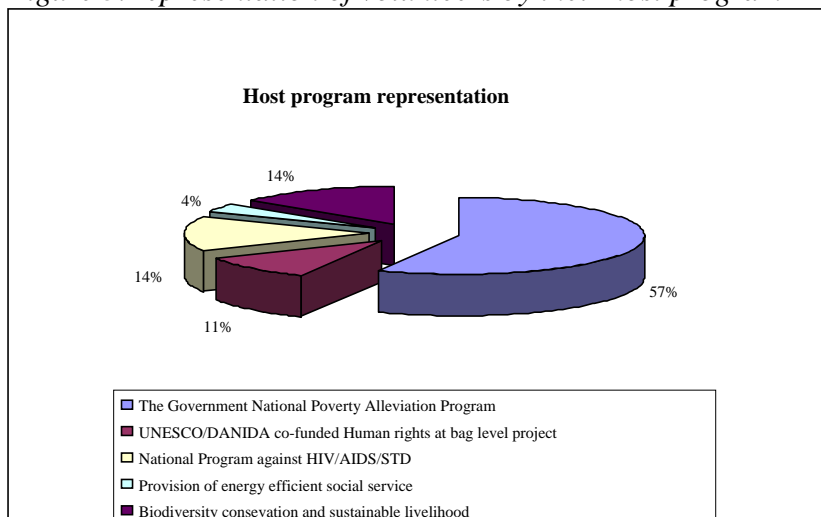


Figure 3. Representation of volunteers by their host program



In terms of the host program, more volunteers (57.1%) from the National Poverty Alleviation program were interviewed, followed by those from the Decentralization Program (10.7%), the HIV/AIDS Awareness Raising program (14.3%), and the Biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihood (14.3%) program. We attribute this unequal representation of the programs to our “snowball” sampling methodology. The number of volunteers sampled who were from the NPA program is high because the former program structure still remained, for example, former supervisors were still working in the same place, so they knew the contact information of their former volunteers. This made it easier to use this form of sampling. We also need to keep in mind that different programs hosted different number of volunteers (see Table 3).

Table 4. Percentage of volunteers interviewed from each program

	Name of the programs	Total number of NUNVs served so far	Number of NUNVs interviewed	Program representation percentage
1.	National Poverty Alleviation Program	43	16	37.2%
2.	UNESCO/DANIDA Human rights at <i>bag</i> level; & Decentralization and Democracy support project	12	3	25%
3.	National Program Against HIV/AIDS/STD	8	4	50%
4.	Provision of energy efficient social service or straw-bale building	5	1	20%
5.	Biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihood	10	4	40%
6.	Human rights strengthening in Mongolia	29	0	0
7.	Others	7	0	0
	Total	114	28	25.5%

From Table 3, we can also see that our sample includes 25.5% of the total volunteers and that program representation differs by program. This can be related to limitations in the snowball sampling method. At the beginning, we were not able to obtain a list of all volunteers from UNV office in Mongolia, so we used “snow ball” sampling to find former volunteers. Thus, we later discovered that no volunteer was interviewed from the Human Rights Strengthening project in Mongolia.

FINDINGS

The findings and discussions were integrated into one section because most of the data collected were qualitative in nature; therefore, we chose a qualitative research format for reporting. The findings were categorized into the following main themes in accordance with the research questions posed within the study, i.e. (1) the program impact on volunteers' personal and professional development; (2) the program benefits to the society; and (3) institutional aspects of program design and strategy.

A. PERSONAL BENEFITS ON VOLUNTEERS

We asked volunteers what they perceived to be the main benefit of the Program. Most of them (96.4 %) reported that the personal gain from their participation in the program far out weighted their contribution. Volunteers overwhelmingly believed that “when people volunteer, their skills and knowledge improve much quicker, so volunteering is a time saving activity in terms of personal growth.” They reported the following specific benefits of the program on themselves, each of which will be discussed separately below using direct quotations from volunteers and focus groups discussions. After each quote we indicate whether the quote is from a “volunteer” interview or a “focus group.” In each volunteer interview, the word “volunteer” is followed by the number assigned to each interview, gender and age. For example, “Volunteer 2, female, 37” means that the quote is from an interview with a volunteer, whose interview is assigned number 2, who is female aged 37 years old.

Before discussing the program benefits on volunteers, we will discuss the reasons that volunteers applied for the program and general satisfaction level of volunteers.

Reasons of volunteers for joining the program

It would be interesting to understand the reasons that volunteers applied for the program in the first place. Volunteers reported the following main reasons for joining the program (see Table 4).

Figure 4. Reasons for volunteers joining the program

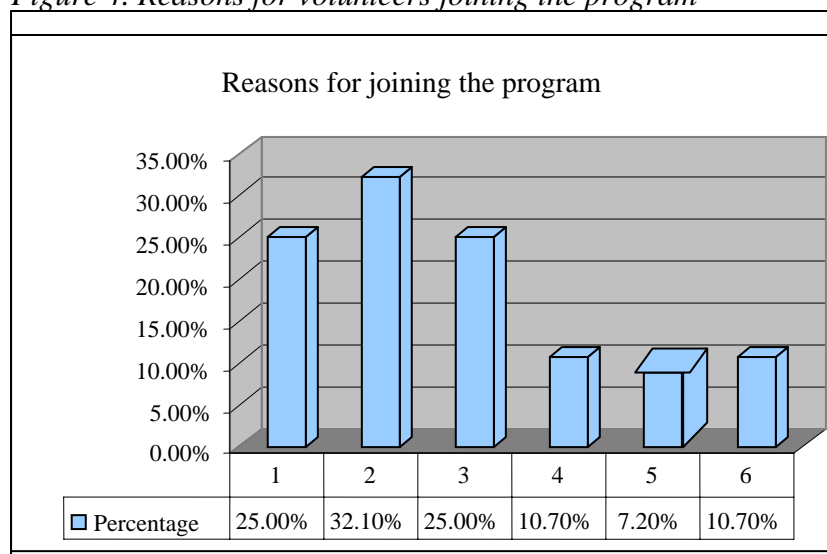


Table 5. Reasons for volunteers joining the program

	Reasons for joining the program	Percentage
1.	Finding a job for those nine who were unemployed	25.0%
2.	Liked the work that required volunteers	32.1%
3.	Previous training or knowledge matched the work they were being asked to do	25.0%
4.	Self-improvement or personal development	10.7%
5.	Previous experience working with international volunteers	7.2%
6.	Interest in being employed by international organizations (in other words, attracted to the name “UN”	10.7%

We asked volunteers to list all of the factors that motivated them to volunteer, and thus each respondent mentioned different reasons for joining the Program. For example, one respondent mentioned four different motives, while another mentioned only one.

I had some previous experience working with an international volunteer. This experience, first, and secondly, my interest in developing myself through working in an international organization helped me to become volunteer. Also, during that time it was difficult for young people to find a job and I was looking for a job
(Volunteer 1, male, 33)

Becoming a “national volunteer” sounded to me like it was very broad and interesting work. I saw the announcement in a newspaper. It stated that the volunteer will work with citizens at the bag level (the lowest administrative unit in Mongolia), organizing seminars and training sessions, conducting needs assessments, and so on,. I liked the work required to be a volunteer. That’s why I decided to apply for it.
(Volunteer 7, female, 35)

We can see from here that most of the volunteers had personal motivations to apply for the program. No one reported social motivations to help others.

Satisfaction from the service

We asked volunteers to rate their satisfaction level on a scale of 5, with “1” being “very low satisfaction level” and “5” being “very high satisfaction”. Twenty of them (71.4 %) rated their satisfaction level as “5”, and the rest (28.6%) rated it a “4.” None of them rated their satisfaction level at a lower level. Volunteers explained that the reasons for such high satisfaction level related to their gained personal benefits, which will be explained in the following section. Some said that their satisfaction level came from the nature of volunteer work and the fair selection process.

I am really satisfied with my service as a volunteer because it does not require me to fit into any political ideologies or preconceived political structures. I am also satisfied because it was my choice and I won this position by passing all the requirements [in a fair competition] ...
(Volunteer 10)

Personal benefit 1. Gained valuable work experience in a new professional field

More than 71% of the volunteers (20 out of 28) identified that the work experience they gained was the important benefit for them. Volunteers were doing quite new work at the time, because of the lack of experienced staff working with vulnerable groups and local communities. Although many volunteers (68.4%) said that the orientation training programs were a useful support to carry out their work, they also felt that “learning in action” was an important source for gaining the knowledge and skills.

We were enrolled in various skill development training programs. That’s why we could reach out the people effectively.
(Volunteer 7)

Nobody has taught me who a volunteer is. I learned this while I was working as a volunteer. Everyday experience provided me a great lesson. [That’s why] today I cannot exactly tell from where I learned these lessons. When my contract term was over, my Project Director gave me a certificate [saying that I had experienced] “on-the-job training.” At first, I did not realize [that while working I was being trained]
(Volunteer 4)

As mentioned earlier, none of the volunteers had previous experience in working with vulnerable groups or in community development work, nor were there people around them who could teach how to do the work except for a few of the international volunteers. However, Table 1 demonstrates that most of them are working successfully in social and human service organizations.

Personal benefit 2. Learned new skills that were vital at the beginning of the transition

Volunteers have reported that they learned many new skills, such as conducting awareness raising training programs with diverse groups of people (28.6%), fund-raising and proposal writing (28.6%), working in the small groups and teams (14.4%), computer skills (14.4%), English language skills (17.9%) and conducting community needs assessment, facilitating community groups and community discussions, facilitating community through utilizing participatory methods, linking the community to outside resources, small business planning skills, etc.

All of these skills were vital at the beginning of the country’s transition, when the old ways of doing things did not work and people were not yet used to a new market economy. Many ideas such as doing people’s participation, small business, group income generation activities, credit and loans, fund-raising, project development and implementation and so on were all new at that time. Even *Bag* Citizens Public Meeting was a quite new idea. People were not sure what roles they needed to play in the new social, economic and political environment.

Volunteers learned these new skills and knowledge from their everyday volunteer activities and taught these skills to community people, which, in turn, increased their future employability.

Our aimag (province) has 21 sums. I visited all of them and assessed their community needs by organizing open discussions with people.... I learned the participatory methods of engaging people“
(Volunteer 7)

A focus group discussion with beneficiaries also identified volunteers as “the most knowledgeable people in the community about proposal writing, project development and implementation.” The volunteers also reported that once they learned these skills, they could still utilize them even after their service term was over.

*I really think I gained a lot from being a volunteer. A simple example of this is that I still teach people how to prepare a project proposal. I helped people in one of the sums to prepare a proposal to set up a computer lab with 15 computers at the Sum School and they got funding and this lab is operational now. I also helped a local NGO [said the name of the NGO] to prepare a proposal for a grant and it was selected and from this project I am also benefiting (through a short-term contract).
(Volunteer 6)*

Personal benefit 3. Improved interpersonal communication skills

Most of the volunteers, except two from the straw-bale building project, performed duties as community mobilizers and therefore had to “work with the people from all different walks of life, particularly those close to citizens of vulnerable groups.” As a result of this interaction, half of the volunteers (50%) reported that their “skills in working with people” improved, these included their interpersonal communication skills, such as listening and finding a common language with people with different personalities, showing empathy, providing emotional support and encouragements, and so on.

*I learned a lot in terms of interpersonal communication. People we met were in different moods. Some were sad or angry. Other would shout at us or would cry. We had to talk to all of them.
(Volunteer 23)*

*Now I can understand others and as well as make myself understood ... In other words, I became closer to people.
(Volunteer16)*

In relation to this, the same percentage of volunteers (50%) reported that their skills in working with different groups, particularly the skills in working with poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups, had improved.

Personal benefit 4. Enhanced personal growth and maturation through gaining self-confidence and understanding yourself and your life goals better

Half of the volunteers (50%) reported that their participation in the program contributed to their personal development and maturation, through increasing their sense of self-confidence, the establishment of life goals and career directions, increased initiative and enthusiasm.

Improved self-confidence or “I can do this” belief

*[Volunteers] develop the belief that they can do this or do that ...it is one of the outcomes of service. ... I am really satisfied [with my volunteer experience]. I can do the work of any project officer, can work with people, and can reach the people ...and about that, I am very confident in myself
(Volunteer 10, female, 36)*

The development of this self-confident feeling could be explained by volunteers’ increased skill development as mentioned in the previous sections.

*[My capacity has improved].... In this regard, I feel that I can do the work of school social worker or school manager or something like this. I am graduated at that level now.
(Volunteer 8)*

What they are describing is labeled self-efficacy belief in psychology. According to the self-efficacy theory, successful personal experience increases one's self-efficacy or self confidence as in the case of volunteers. Actually, the self-efficacy theory is understood to have four sources, including personal performance, vicarious observation of models, encouragement and persuasion from others, and emotional arousal. One of the important sources for building self-efficacy is successful personal performance (Bandura, 1991 as cited in Lemme, 2001). In our case, we suspect that the service program provided opportunities for personal empowerment through successful performance and skills development, and as a result the volunteers' self-efficacy might have increased. Other factors, such as encouragement and persuasion of their roles from the host programs, might have also helped to increase this self-belief.

Self-confidence motivates people to try new activities and engage in tasks with energy and initiatives, set higher goals, exhibit greater commitment and persistence, emphasize personal development, and experience less emotional stress and anxiety (Bandura as cited in Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003 & Lemme, 2001). The results of the volunteers' interviews in our study indicated all these outcomes. For example, volunteers said that the rise in their self-esteem as a result of their volunteer work contributed to their life satisfaction and their sense of optimism.

*My life has changed as a result of being a volunteer. Before I was not satisfied with my life even though I was living quite well. When I interact with people as a volunteer. I started placing value on myself. I became more satisfied with my life ...
(Volunteer 15)*

*Now I believe if you try your best you can do anything.
(Volunteer 16)*

*I developed 'I can do this' belief. This is a result of my volunteer experience
(Volunteer 17)*

*I grew up personally [during my volunteer years], but I still always look for ways to improve myself.
(Volunteer 13)*

The increased self-confidence of volunteers might be related to their unique experience of pioneering a new professional field. Obviously, this new experience made them and their family proud of their achievements. Thus, because they were doing the work that nobody else was doing before and could see improvements in others lives as a result of their work, their "I can do this" attitude improved. This in turn motivates them to take on other tasks with more initiative and enthusiasm.

Increased understanding of yourself and "who I am and where I'm going"

Volunteers reported that volunteer service contributed to their identity or personality formation, which is known as *tuluvshult* in Mongolian, and is characterized by understanding yourself better and knowing what will fit for you better, such as in identifying future career directions, establishing life goals, or similar actions.

*Working as a volunteer helped me to rediscover myself.
(Volunteer 16)*

*[Serving as volunteer] helps you to understand yourself and your place better, that means which sector, which level, with whom and how you are supposed to be working. It will, in turn, help you to establish your life goals. By being a volunteer, I have identified my life goal.
(Volunteer 13)*

Marcia defined identity achievement as having a clearer sense of oneself, one's beliefs and life directions (Lemme, 2001). Identity development is usually discussed in relation to youth transition to adulthood. Although our volunteers were not that young in terms of age, they did mention outcomes such as establishing life goals, understanding themselves better, and so on, which relates to identity formation. This might be related to the transition period, during which drastic changes were made in the social, political, economic and cultural systems. Due to this change, previously expected roles of adults were no longer valid. This might have created role confusion for all age groups. People had to adapt to a new environment with their new roles. Participation in volunteer program helped volunteers to develop a clearer sense of themselves and their new roles in the new environment.

Personal benefit 5. Altering and expanding their career opportunities

Eleven volunteers (39.3%) reported that the program helped them to become familiar with a new professional field, which, consequently, influenced their career path after the Program. As mentioned above, many volunteer moved to social and human service sectors after their volunteer experience.

*My professional field is engineering and textile technology, that is about factories and engineering, that's why I never thought of doing the things I do now...
(Volunteer 15)*

*Volunteer experience provided me with the opportunity to show others who I am, which became a starting point for my career path.
(Volunteer 14)*

Some volunteers related this change to their gaining a better understanding of themselves and their place in society.

*I realized that I fit well into the social service sector... A person like me should be working in human service ...it helped me to understand myself better. Now I cannot imagine myself doing any other type of work than this, so I will be working in this field in the future
(Volunteer 3)*

Another explanation for changing career paths was when volunteers perceived that doing “people work” as being more significant than other types of business. For example, a volunteer who had formal education in economics and had previously worked in the business sector, reported that

*If I had not worked as a volunteer, I would have been trying to start my own business or something [unimportant] like that. By working as a volunteer, I realized the importance of the [people] work and my capacities to work with people. ... I am now more confident working in the social sector than in the business sector.
(Volunteer 4)*

In addition, 11 volunteers (39%) have been promoted either within their host program (9 volunteers), or in senior positions at state organizations. Volunteers say that after the service they had more opportunities to choose from. In other words, if before the service many of them had difficulty of finding job, many door opened to them after the service.

By working as a volunteer ...I saw many opportunities for myself. That's why I was promoted within the program where I was volunteering. I am very satisfied and proud of saying that I was a volunteer (Volunteer 13)

The reason that volunteers were promoted after their service was explained by a former supervisor of a volunteer as being a result of improved skills level and awareness,

He had all the required interpersonal communication skills working with citizens and at the same time, understood the principle of decentralization well. That's why he was elected as a chairman for the sum [an administrative unit within the province] citizens' khural [council]. (Focus groups 3 with former supervisors)

Personal benefit 6. Increased awareness on their social environment, and interest and involvement in community activities

Sixteen volunteers (57%) said that they became more aware of social problems and their causes and the social environments in which they were working, and began to look for ways to alleviate these problems. They consequently believe that they think much more broadly than before.

Before I could sit at home and think about what to have for dinner, or something like that. Now I am different. I think much more broadly (Volunteer 6)

I had the idea to change people's mentality. For instance, I understood that local people should start doing things by themselves, instead of waiting for someone to do things for them and they should openly discuss their ideas with local government. I hope that people will understand this. (Volunteer 10)

When volunteers come to understand the social environment and to think more broadly about their community, they look for opportunities to improve the situation and to become more involved in the community activities going on around them.

Before I did not want to watch TV or read newspapers. You know military people. I was just doing my own routines. Now I am changed and I want to know what is going on and where (Volunteer 1)

Before I worked in the business sector and when you are in business, you are not very interested or involved in social sector activities. Since I became volunteer, I have become very active in all kind of things that are being organized by the local government or local community. For example, whenever there are citizens' public meetings announced I go there, even without an invitation, and discuss with people the ways to improve their livelihood. (Volunteer 23)

If before only 5 volunteers (17.2%) reported that they were somehow involved in the volunteer work, at the interview all volunteers (100%) reported that they were somehow involved in the volunteer work. In addition, almost 60.7% of volunteers said that besides

having full time jobs, they were involved in different NGOs and civil society groups. (See details in section 3.2.)

Personal benefit 7. Increased initiatives and innovations in whatever they do

Six volunteers (21.4%) mentioned increased initiative and innovation as a benefit of the program to them. The voluntary nature of the work supported this personal change as illustrated in the following quote.

I became motivated in developing myself. Before I could do just whatever was required from me ...My volunteer work required from me to show initiative. So I learned to look for innovative ideas and became very active
(Volunteer 13)

If a new idea comes to my mind, I immediately write down it. I carry with me a small note book for these new ideas.
(Volunteer 16)

The reason for becoming innovative was reported in relation to volunteers increased sense of self-confidence, which is discussed in the section about self-efficacy. In addition, it can explain by volunteers' increased awareness on their social environment, which allowed them to feel more responsible for others.

Personal benefit 8. Increased popularity in the community and earned respect and status

Another half (50%) of the volunteers said that as a result of being a volunteer they have earned the respect and status of the people and their "reputation in the locality increased when community people recognized them by their work."

If I would not have worked as a volunteer, I might have instead worked as an accountant for some organization. In that case, nobody would have known who I was. Now almost everybody in the aimag center knows me. I think this is one of the positive outcomes of volunteering.
(Volunteer 14)

One volunteer explained the process of increased reputation as follows:

We used to put a lot of effort helping vulnerable group loan recipients. People even suggested that I am acting as if I am the one who is taking a loan. When you work with people, this kind of effort emerges naturally. The community recognizes it, people will surround you, and it is very nice thing for your reputation.
(Volunteer)

Personal benefit 9. Improved family relationship and life satisfaction

Volunteers reported that they became more satisfied with their lives and their family relationships improved after they joined the program. The majority of the previously unemployed volunteers mentioned this outcome. Some volunteers reported that their children became proud of them, which in turn also increased their own sense of life satisfaction.

One of the benefits of being a volunteer was in its monetary compensation, which was really served the basic needs of my family. My children started proudly saying at their school that my father worked as a

volunteer who helps other people. Before, when they were asked about me, they could only say that their father was unemployed.
(Volunteer 16)

I became more satisfied with my life and less upset with my husband or my children. Even my husband says that since I started work as a volunteer, I became calmer and less stressed and he contributes this change to my work.
(Volunteer 15)

Summary discussion of the Program effects on volunteers

In the current study we have raised three questions. The following discussion concerns the first one, regarding the effect of the program on volunteers. The result of this study mainly supports previous research findings on civic service, but it also extends them by documenting country specific outcomes.

Who were the volunteers?

Our sample included 21 women (75%) and 7 men (25%). The gender ratio of the total number of NUNVs was the same as in our sample. The age of the volunteers in our sample at a time of joining the program ranged from 23-42 and the mean was 32.2. On the average, these volunteers served for 30.7 months, of which 39.3% have served between 2-3 years and 25% served for more than 3 years. In terms of education levels, 82% of volunteers had higher education, 14% two to four years of vocation education in college and 3.6% secondary education. Although the program minimum requirement for volunteers was secondary education only, majority of volunteers had higher education. When they joined the program, 9 volunteers (32, 3%) were unemployed or had no work experience at all, 10.7 % worked for NGOs, 46.4% worked for state institutions such as schools and local government units, 7.1 % worked for private sector and 3.6% was self-employed.

Volunteers had personal motivations to volunteer.

Volunteers joined the program mainly due to personal motivations, such as for finding a job as nine were unemployed (32.3%), personal growth and development (10.7%), interest in being employed by international organizations, in other words, attracted to the name “UN” (10.7%), had a fair chance for getting selected because they had previous training on the work they were being asked to do (25.0%) or previous experience working with international volunteers who role modeled them (7.2%), and liked the work that required from volunteers (32.1%). No one has reported an obvious motivation to serve others, unless we would relate the latter response, i.e. “liked the work required”, to some extent, to willingness to serve communities.

Research studies conducted abroad show that people volunteer with different motivations and these vary country by country. For instance, comparison shows that volunteers from the US AmeriCorps and German FSJ programs were typically motivated to help others, while the leading motivations for volunteers from the European Volunteer Service program and Israeli’s national service included personal benefits rather than their own contributions to their society (Gal, 2003; Ichiliv, 2003 as cited in Gal). Gal, et al (2003) in their research on the motivations of servers from different national youth service programs in Israeli found that volunteer had different motivations, which he explained by gender factors, speculating that women possibly have stronger social motives than men. However, our research did not find confirming evidence in gender differences in motivation. Although the majority of subjects in

our sample were women who also reported personal motivations for volunteering, this study, due its small sample size, was not able to make conclusions about gender differences.

High satisfaction level for volunteers due to their personal growth.

Whatever was the motivation for volunteering, it is clear that during their service, volunteers often developed both personally and professionally, as a result their satisfaction from the service was very high. On a five scale measures of satisfaction, 71.4% of volunteers rated their satisfaction level as the highest, i.e. “5-very high”, the rest (28.6%) rated it a “4-high”. None of them rated at a lower level.

Although some volunteers said that their high satisfaction level came from the nature of volunteer work where they do not have to fit any political ideologies and the fair selection process, most of them (96.4%) explained this mainly with their gained personal benefits that far outweighed their contribution to the program. If only 10.7% of volunteers expected for personal growth when they joined the program, at the time of interview 96.4% of volunteers reported that the personal growth was the most important gain from their participation on the program. Their personal growth are characterized by gained work experience and skills, increased self-confidence and personality development, widened career opportunities, increased awareness on their social environment, increased initiative and enthusiasm, earned respect and popularity in the community, increased family relationships and life satisfactions.

Gained work experience and skills in previously unfamiliar fields.

More than 71% of the volunteers (20 out of 28) identified that the work experience they gained was the important benefit for them. Eleven volunteers (39.3%) reported that the program helped them to become familiar with a new professional field. Volunteers were doing quite new work at the time, because there were nobody who experienced working with vulnerable groups and local communities. Many ideas such as people’s participation, doing small businesses, working in groups, income generation activities, credit and loans, fund-raising, project development and implementation and so on were all new at that time. Even *Bag* Citizens Public Meeting was a quite new idea. People were not sure what roles they needed to play in the new social, economic and political environment.

In this kind of circumstances, volunteers who had formal education on engineering, finance and teaching started working in delivery of services and extension work at local district and provincial levels. Through their volunteer experience, they learned many new skills such as conducting awareness raising training programs with diverse groups of people (28.6%), fund-raising and proposal writing (28.6%), working in the small groups and teams (14.4%), computer skills (14.4%), English language skills (17.9%) and conducting community needs assessment, facilitating community groups and community discussions, facilitating community through utilizing participatory methods, linking the community to outside resources, small business planning skills, etc. In addition, 50% of volunteers reported that their interpersonal skills, such as listening, showing empathy, finding a common language with people with different personalities, providing support and encouragements, etc. are improved. All these skills were very important at the beginning of the country’s transition to a market economy and democracy when there were no professionals to work on social issues raised with the transition. Even today these are highly valued skills in newly developing social work profession. Volunteers reported that they still use these skills in their everyday work and in helping others. That’s why a focus group discussion with former supervisors of

the volunteers revealed that these volunteers were “the ones who pioneered this new professional field of social work and community work in Mongolia.”

Increased self-confidence and personality development, and enhanced understanding of self.

Half of the volunteers (50%) reported their volunteer experience positively influenced their personal development, known as *tuluvshilt* in Mongolian. First of all, it enhanced their self-confidence or “I can do this belief”. This concept is named as self-efficacy in psychology. According to the self-efficacy theory, successful personal experience increases one’s self-efficacy as in the case of volunteers. According to the self-efficacy theory, one of the important sources for building self-efficacy is successful personal performance (Bandura, 1991 as cited in Lemme, 2001). In our volunteers’ case, their successful experiences were facilitated by the program support, which will be discussed in the chapter 3. Self-confidence motivates people to try new activities, engage in tasks with energy and initiatives, set higher goals, exhibit greater commitment and persistence, emphasize personal development, and experience less emotional stress and anxiety (Bandura as cited in Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003 & Lemme, 2001). The results of the volunteers’ interviews in our study indicated all these outputs.

Secondly, volunteers also reported that volunteer service contributed to their identity or personality formation that is characterized by understanding yourself better and knowing what will fit for you better, such as in identifying future career directions, establishing life goals, or similar actions. The concept of identity development that described here is usually discussed in relation to youth transition to adulthood. But in our study, although most of the volunteers were between 23-42 years old, many volunteers reported this effect. It might be related to the country’s on-going transition to a market oriented and democratic society, which has created a degree of role confusion for everybody, given that the old ways of doing things and old social roles have changed and people are not sure what roles they needed to play in the new social, economic and political environment. Participation in volunteer program helped volunteers to develop a clearer sense of themselves and their new roles in the new environment.

Expanding career opportunities

Many volunteers (39.3%) have reported that they developed confidence and skills in their abilities to work with different groups of people and developed interests in working with social service organizations. The fact that at the time of interview, 75% of them worked for social and human service sector with their educational training background on education, finance and engineering supports this conclusion. Volunteers reported that they had more options for career opportunities after the program. Some (37.5%) of volunteers were promoted within the program they were serving as volunteers. Volunteers related this change to their gaining a better understanding of themselves and their place in society. In better understanding themselves and their social roles, volunteers made conscious choices in their future career paths.

Increased awareness on social environment and interest and involvement in community affairs

Fifty seven percent (57%) of volunteers said that they started thinking much broadly than before and became more aware of social issues and their social environment and began to look for ways to alleviate these problems. As a result, they became more interested in what is

going on around them, and consequently involved in community activities such as bag public meetings, volunteer work, local NGO and civil society groups, etc. If before only 5 volunteers (17.2%) reported that they were somehow involved in the volunteer work, at the interview all volunteers (100%) reported that they were somehow involved in the volunteer work. In addition, almost 60% of volunteers said that besides having full time jobs, they were involved in different NGOs and civil society groups. This change in the personal level has great impact on the society too, so it will be discussed again in the next chapter.

Increased initiatives and innovations in whatever they do

One fifth of the volunteers (21.4%) reported that they became more innovative and show more initiatives in whatever they do. The reason for becoming innovative was reported in relation to the voluntary nature of the work and increased sense of self-confidence of volunteers. In addition, it is also explained by volunteers' increased awareness on their social environment, which let them to look for ways to improve the situation for themselves and for others.

Increased popularity in the community and earned respect and status

Another half (50%) of the volunteers said that as a result of being a volunteer they have earned the respect and status of the people and their "reputation in the locality increased when community people recognized them by their work."

Improved family relationships and life satisfaction

In general, previously unemployed volunteers reported that they became more satisfied with their lives and their family relationships improved after they joined the program. Some volunteers reported that their children became proud of them or they are less stressed as they were unemployed.

These qualitative findings indicate that when people are unemployed they are more stressed and their self-confidence is lower. Even when people are unemployed, they are typically not interested in social and community issues, e.g., as reported in the findings, they were not reading newspapers or attending public meetings and so on, although they all had higher education prior to their volunteer experience. If they were unemployed for a longer period, a great deal of human capital would have been wasted for the country which is already struggling to pursue their multiple goals with limited resources.

Conclusion

Volunteers overwhelmingly (96.4 %) reported that the personal gain from their participation in the program far outweighed their contribution. Volunteers believed that "volunteering is a time saving activity in terms of personal growth. "Most of the volunteers (71.4%) said they grew personally through work experience and learning new skills, and 50% volunteers said that they benefited from increasing their self-confidence, which resulted in engaging in new tasks and new activities, showing more initiatives, setting higher goals, emphasizing their personal development and less emotional stress and anxiety; and identity formation that is characterized by understanding yourself better, knowing what will fit for you better in terms of identifying future career directions and life goals, etc. Another 57% of volunteers said that they started thinking much broadly than before and became aware of their social environment, and consequently increased their involvement and interest in community, volunteers and NGO activities. It is interesting that although volunteers mainly stated

personal reasons for volunteering, at the time of interview their involvement in community activities, the volunteer and NGO work have increased drastically.

As a result of the above personal change, volunteers became more involved in volunteer activities (100% involvement on regular basis compared to 18% had some previous experiences in being involved in volunteering) and NGO activities (60% compared to none), became innovative and show more initiatives in whatever they do (21.4%), earned respect and popularity in the community (50%), expanded their career opportunities (39,4%), and improved their family relationships and life satisfactions.

According to the theory of empowerment (Zimmerman, 2001 as cited in Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, p.18), those with a sense of empowerment, i.e., a sense of personal competence and a desire or willingness to take action, and a critical understanding of the social environment, can become participants in the lives of their communities. In other words, understanding the social problems and causes is a precondition for participating in community affairs. Authors Watts, Williams and Jagers (2003 as cited in Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson) viewed this as a social-political development and according to them, the people who are aware of social inequalities and their sources are more likely to be empowered. We can make conclusion from here that volunteers became more empowered by participating in the programs, showing increased personal competence and critical understanding of social environment.

Our findings also support the assumption that volunteer programs have successfully addressed the issues of unemployment, created after the dismantling of factories and processes of privatization, by helping volunteers pursue new career opportunities in the most needed sectors in Mongolia. Participation in the program was more important for those volunteers who were unemployed before they joined the program. This is because, first of all, they earned some income while at the same time learning new skills and self-confidence. This in turn increased their employability and opened more career opportunities for them after the program. It is interesting that higher education diploma along could not guarantee employment. There are certain experience and skills required for being employed, especially interpersonal communication skills.

Opportunities to be involved in new activities and to learn new skills and knowledge while helping others, has also improved the volunteers' belief in themselves and in their abilities. This, in turn, has motivated them to increase their involvement in all kind of community, NGO and volunteer activities and encourages them to take on additional tasks with initiative and enthusiasm. That will lead us to our next section on the societal benefits of the NUNV program.

B. THE PROGRAM EFFECTS ON SOCIETY

In this section, we will discuss the findings related to our second research question on the program effects on society. Although volunteers and community focus groups both mentioned that the societal effects of the NUNV Program is difficult to measure, given the difficulty of separating NUNVs contribution from the effects of other developmental programs, the following general outcomes were reported across all of the discussions with

NUNVs and community focus groups. Some of the findings under these headings are from focus groups discussions, and thus are, in most cases, not quantifiable.

Societal benefit 1. Increased awareness and understanding of volunteerism

Volunteers and community focus groups both reported that the public understanding of volunteerism had been weak when the program began. Volunteers were understood as “voluntary performers,” “political party activists,” or “one who can do anything for anybody.” Therefore, in some cases, volunteers were required to do things outside of their realm of responsibilities, which was hindering their performance at the beginning of the program implementation.

However, after some time, volunteers themselves and other people in the community began to understand the roles of the volunteers and volunteerism became a common understanding. We asked both volunteers and community groups about their understanding of volunteerism. Volunteers reported a significant difference in the types of work volunteers undertook before and after their services. Five volunteers (18% of volunteers) identified themselves as being involved in volunteer work before they joined the program. They reported that they were involved in such activities as distributing humanitarian aid from international organizations or volunteering for the Red Cross, but the scope of this work was not significant. However, after the service, volunteers reported the following activities as a volunteer work:

- Being active in one or more NGOs while maintaining full-time work (39%);
- Organizing free training programs, especially for an NGO;
- Voluntarily sharing and disseminating information to others;
- Initiating or running new citizens groups or saving and credit cooperatives, especially in the early stages when these institutions were not financially sound;
- Helping community groups or local NGOs to prepare project proposals;
- Participating in fund-raising campaigns or clothing drives to help herders in difficult circumstances;
- Helping others without discriminating against them;
- Working additional hours in the workplace on activities that go beyond their work responsibilities.

The program raised awareness about the work of volunteers and their responsibilities at all levels, starting from the volunteers themselves and extending to the people who worked with them and to the general public and community members.

(Community focus groups)

Societal benefit 2. Volunteer’s increased involvement in volunteer activities

The most significant impact of the program on the volunteers in terms of societal effect was their increased involvement in volunteer activities. If 23 volunteers (82%) reported that they had never been involved in any volunteer work before the program, but at the time of interview, everybody (100%) said that they were somehow involved in volunteer work.

In terms of time they spent on volunteering, eight volunteers (28.5%) said that on the average they spent more than 16 hours per month volunteering. Others could not say the exact amount of time they spent doing this because it depended on a variety of factors and did not have a regular pattern. If we compare this number with other studies conducted before, it is much

higher than the average hours that ordinary people volunteer. According to the Toronto study on humanitarian aid (1996), people on average volunteered 2.2 hours per a month in the USA, 1.8 hours in Britain, and 5.2 hours in Canada. In this regard, our findings support other literature on volunteerism which provides evidence that volunteer experience reinforces volunteer behavior.

Societal benefit 3. Show leadership and encourage others to participate

Half of the volunteers reported that besides being active themselves in volunteering, they are learning to motivate others to participate in community and volunteer work. In other words, the volunteers leverage their volunteering behavior.

I am still actively involved in the children and youth groups. For example, the “Friendship” newspaper [for which I am an editor] is for adolescents and requires their participation. Thus, an adolescent volunteer group was established to help with the journal issues. Some of these kids have already entered college, but continue to help us voluntarily. That means I produce more and more volunteers ... I always look for possibilities to use volunteers.
(Volunteer 14)

Societal benefit 4. Increased involvement of the volunteers in civil society groups and NGOs

As you can see from the definition of volunteer work above, involvement in NGOs is considered volunteer work. Almost 60% of volunteers said that besides having full time jobs, they were involved in different NGO activities. Many of them have initiated an NGO or have worked on the boards of local NGOs in addition to their job responsibilities. Some of them were active members of other interest groups, such as saving and credit cooperatives, because until recently in Mongolia these were considered to be interest groups and not business entities.

I developed an interest to work for local NGOs. If before I had not belonged to an NGO, now I am an active member for two local NGOs.
(Volunteer 23)

Besides my full time job, I am a member of one NGO and a board member for 2-3 other local NGOs. These all are not paid positions. I was active in all of these NGOs for 3-4 years until I moved here.
(Volunteer 13)

Volunteers said that their involvement in NGO activities came about as they saw more potential for NGOs to make contribution towards development and change in their society.

I came to understand that if they have the right ideas, NGOs can mobilize more people than the government organizations can do, and they can make a greater contribution to the state and the nation.
(Volunteer 10)

In addition, volunteers worked with local and grassroots NGOs to build their capacity in caring of the community needs and promoting an atmosphere of trust and solidarity. In the beginning of the country’s transition, NGOs were just emerging in Mongolia and had not yet become built in terms of their financial and human resources. With volunteer support, these emerging NGOs have built their human capacity by involving their staff in activities that

volunteers organized within their host programs. These included organizing “visits to the income generation projects for a study tour,” “sharing information on different opportunities for involvement,” conducting training programs on community mobilization and group facilitation, and involving them in the actual facilitation of income generation projects for vulnerable groups, etc. Volunteer reported that they were more willing to work with local NGOs.

We tried to involve local NGOs in our project implementation in all possible ways. They always provided information on different opportunities to get involved ... during that time, NGOs were just emerging, but now the NGOs (we worked with) have become more stable.

(Volunteer 21)

In my aimag, NGOs were just emerging and so their activities were not regular. They did not know what they should be doing. We worked with them to put them in right directions.

(Volunteer)

It is also possible that volunteers became role models for NGO personnel through providing them hands-on experiences and observations of what volunteers were doing.

Societal benefit 5. Heightened pro-social attitude and tolerance towards different population groups

As mentioned above, volunteers worked with a diverse population, which changed their attitudes towards different vulnerable and disadvantaged people. However, their exposure to different populations varied according to their program responsibilities. Volunteers who worked for the Poverty Alleviation Program had more responsibilities to work with poor and vulnerable groups of people than did the volunteers who worked in the straw-bale building project. Forty percent (40%) of volunteers said that their interactions with different groups have changed their attitude towards the disadvantaged groups.

I think that I changed my attitude towards vulnerable, disadvantaged and at-risk people. It was before very negative ... Now I communicate with people without discriminating against them.

(Volunteer 3)

Societal benefit 6. Increased altruistic behavior or habit of helping others

Volunteers (43.2%) said that they have more willingness to help others and to become more involved in activities that help others. They explained this behavior change as a result of volunteer experience.

Being a volunteer stimulates motivation to serve others. Working for people's well-being without expecting any profit from it will bring satisfaction, a sense of achievement, and personal fulfillment. It really motivates and activates people.

(Volunteer 9)

I became specialized in the work I am doing now, that is, straw-bale building, for myself and as well as for other people.

(Volunteer 18)

Societal benefit 7. Effect on the community that volunteers served

Volunteers and community groups both mentioned that as communities consist of individual members, the benefit of the individual members of the community should benefit the community.

When an individual member of the community changes, it contributes to that community's development. If a family improves its livelihood as a result of my work, actually it is a good achievement for me ... more importantly, I believe, it will help the society to improve.
(Volunteer)

Therefore, skills learned by volunteers were seen as the most important contribution to the development of human capital of the community.

Indeed, the National UN Volunteers Program has made a great contribution to the community by preparing skilled professionals. I believe that the program has played an important role in developing human capital.

(Focus group with former supervisors)

Eighteen volunteers (64.3%) reported that the community benefited from the activities of volunteers through increased knowledge about and skills needed for democracy and market economy such as project and proposal development, working in groups, applying for loans, participating in community projects, etc. Focus groups also confirm these effects.

Those four years after the transition were the most difficult years, both in terms of the economic and social environment. Now it is a completely different situation. At that time, when the transition to a market economy was just beginning, both government and citizens had not yet become adapted to the new environment ... in this kind of circumstance, they helped people to approach the NPAP & local government, and enlightened them on how they should act in a democratic society and how to fulfill the needs of the citizens of the society. It was timely program.
(Focus groups consisting of former supervisors)

Our people were not yet accustomed to working in groups or cooperatives ... Volunteers helped them to realize the advantage of working in groups and to practice this in their lives.
(Community focus groups discussion)

Local citizens also learned about project implementation methodology and proposal development
(Community focus groups discussion)

We had a willingness to do things. But we had no economic resources and nothing to put forwards as [collateral] if we wanted a high interest loan. There is a saying that says, "Do not give fish, but teach how to catch fish." Volunteers helped us by teaching us how to catch fish. We are very grateful for that.
(Focus groups with beneficiaries)

From getting information through our training program, people became aware of where to go and whom to meet in the future, and also became knowledgeable about the different organizations that existed in the locality and what assistance or training opportunities they offered.
(Volunteer)

The following illustrates increased knowledge about democracy principles in the community.

[As a result of the program,] local citizen's involvement in local decision making has improved.
(Volunteer 20)

We worked on bringing the local issues and initiatives up to the top level and helped to solve them.
(Volunteer)

We identified community needs with the active involvement of the community and implemented projects to solve these problems.
(Volunteer)

Project beneficiaries were selected openly at the public meetings. It helped to further increase active participation of citizens.
(Volunteer)

Because local citizens had opportunities to discuss their situation with authorities, attendance at the bag meetings has increased. Thus, the bag development plan became more realistic.
(Volunteer from Decentralization project)

From here, we can conclude that volunteers have successfully leveraged their skills and knowledge to their communities through their work. It can be also linked to the broader political, social and economic environment where ordinary citizens were provided political right and freedom to participate in a political process. These opportunities “have profound effects upon national development performance by unleashing people’s skills and energies and by providing them with more opportunities for the individual to be productive” (Clayton, 1994 as cited in Oakley, 1995).

Societal benefit 8. The program effect on implementation of the host programs

Another impact of the Program on the community was the volunteers’ contribution to their host programs. Volunteers and community groups both reported that host project implementation improved after volunteers began to work on a full-time basis. Advantages of being volunteers, such as being free from political ideology and acceptability to the people, helped them to fulfill their program responsibilities more effectively. Also volunteers could typically reach the target groups better than officials from the local government.

People communicated with us more freely because we were volunteers and also because we were from the same level as they were.
(Volunteer 21)

In the case of National Poverty Alleviation Program, volunteers worked on community awareness raising and providing on-going support to vulnerable groups of poor citizens. They did an initial assessment of needs, facilitated group formation, assisted them through the loan application process, and once they got a loan, provided on-going support and advice and monitored their utilization of the loans. Because volunteers had the advantage of being “near to the people” ” and worked very closely with the community and disadvantaged people, “the loan repayment rate for the NPAP has improved drastically.”

It is difficult to measure the volunteers’ contribution to society by tangible outcomes like erecting a new building. Because it has more important outcomes, such as reaching out to the poor and marginalized people and encouraging them to develop an active lifestyle.
(Focus groups consisting of former supervisors)

For other projects, volunteers mentioned the following outcomes.

Our goal was to bring the citizens' public khural closer to the people. The public khural is the organization that is meant to do this. As a result of our project, citizens became a more integral part of their local khural.

(Volunteer from Decentralization Project)

Our project contributed to the dissemination of real and systematic information about AIDS/HIV to the people. It was the very first attempt at the time and only volunteers worked on this job. Now looking back after 5 or 6 years, I feel that the program had an impact on its beneficiaries.

(Volunteer from HIV/AIDS project)

Human right is not something that is written in a book or newspaper, it is about people's right to explain their needs to their local government. People now understand this.

(Volunteer from Human Rights at Bag level project)

From the above excerpts from volunteers, we can conclude that volunteers can work on awareness raising and community mobilization activities more effectively than government officials or project staff.

Societal benefit 9. Building the Capacity of Local Governments

In most of the host programs, local governments were responsible for the implementation of the program. At the beginning of the transition, local governments had limited knowledge of democratic principles and a real lack of skills and funds. They were not able to reach out vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In these difficult years of the country's transition, volunteers helped the local government to carry out their tasks effectively. In addition, they were working as a liaison between community people and local government.

Due to the transition to a market economy, local governments seriously lacked funds. In these kinds of circumstances, volunteers came here and taught us about fund-raising and proposal writing. At that time, we had no idea what it was. For a certain period after that, we were the only ones who wrote proposals. We still use this skill and it is one of the things that remained from volunteers.

(Focus groups with bag level administrators)

During that time, nobody would go to the people and listen to their ideas. ... But we listened to them and reported their ideas and needs to the local government.

(Volunteer 21)

Our host project was the very first nationwide project that was implemented at the grassroots or bag level. Thus it was a very effective project in helping local communities and local citizens to explore their capacity.

(Volunteer 28)

Discussions of the Program effects on Society

Increased awareness on volunteerism in a new social, economic and political environment

Volunteers and community focus groups discussions both reported that the public understanding of volunteerism had been weak when the program began, therefore, they believed that *"the program raised awareness about the work of volunteers and their responsibilities at all levels, starting from the volunteers themselves and extending to the people who worked with them and to the general public and community members."* If at the beginning of the program, volunteers were understood as "voluntary performers," "political party activists," or "one who can do anything for anybody", after the program definition of volunteer work expanded. Volunteers expanded their role, while maintaining full-time work,

by organizing free training programs, especially for an NGO; voluntarily sharing and disseminating information to others; initiating or running new citizens groups or saving and credit cooperatives, especially in the early stages when these institutions were not financially sound; helping community groups or local NGOs to prepare project proposals; participating in fund-raising campaigns or clothing drives to help herders or others in difficult circumstances; helping others without discriminating against them; working additional hours in the workplace on activities that go beyond their work responsibilities; and so on. If before, there was little interest in establishing new service programs, Mongolian Association for Volunteers was established in 2001 as a result of increased awareness and need for volunteer work in the society. Therefore, we can conclude that the NUNV program contributed to the development of a positive image of volunteers in the public, and consequently, helped to bring about a resurgence of interest in volunteerism with the goal of helping to shape a new social-economic environment for the nation.

Increased involvement of volunteers in volunteer activities

The most important effect of the program on volunteers in terms of societal benefit was the volunteers' increased involvement in volunteering. If most of the volunteers (83%) reported that they have never been involved in any volunteer work before they joined the program, during our interview, all of them (100%) reported that they regularly participate in volunteer activities. In addition, the time they spent on volunteering has increased up to 16 hours per month. This number is much higher than the average hours people volunteer in developed countries, such as the USA, Britain and Canada.

This finding supports international literature on volunteerism that provides evidence that volunteer experience reinforces volunteer behavior, consequently increasing the volunteer's community participation and civic responsibility as well.

Show leadership and encourage other to participate in community and volunteer activities

Besides being active themselves in volunteering and community activities, half of the volunteers (50%) reported that they encourage others, especially younger people, to participate in volunteer and community activities.

Increased involvement of the volunteers in civil society groups and NGOs

Almost 60% of volunteers said that besides having full time jobs, they were involved in different NGO activities. Many of them have initiated an NGO or have worked on the boards of local NGOs in addition to their job responsibilities. Volunteers said that their involvement in NGO activities came about as they saw more potential for NGOs to make contribution towards development and change in their society.

On the other hand, volunteers have contributed to development of local and grassroots NGOs by building their capacity in caring of the community needs and promoting an atmosphere of trust and solidarity. In the beginning of the country's transition, NGOs were just emerging in Mongolia and had not yet become built in terms of their financial and human resources. With volunteer support, these emerging NGOs have built their human capacity by involving their staff in activities that volunteers organized within their host programs. It is also possible that the volunteers' role modeled for NGO personnel through providing them hands-on experiences and observations of what volunteers were doing.

Heightened tolerance towards different population groups

Forty percent of volunteers (40%) reported that their interaction with different groups of people have changed their attitude towards the disadvantaged groups. This finding is also supported by literature on the civic service that when bringing together different groups of people, service can promote peace and tolerance.

Increased altruistic behavior or habit of helping others

Forty three percent of volunteers (43.2 %) reported that they have more willingness to help others and to become involved in activities that help others. They believed that “*being a volunteer stimulates motivation to serve others.*”

Program effect on the community

Volunteers and community focus groups both stated that the community benefit can be seen from two different perspectives. On one hand, community focus groups concluded that “the program has played an important role in developing human capital of the community through preparing skilled and committed citizens as volunteers. On the other hand, 64.3% of volunteers also reported that the community benefited from their activities through increased knowledge and skills needed for democracy and market economy. Therefore, we can conclude that volunteers have successfully leveraged their skills and knowledge to their communities through their work. This is also related to the broader political, social and economic environment where ordinary citizens were provided political right and freedom to participate in a political process. In that case, these opportunities “have a profound effect upon national development performance by unleashing people’s skills and energies and by providing them with more opportunities for the individual to be productive” (Clayton, 1994 as cited in Oakley, 1995).

Benefits to the host programs

Volunteers and community groups both reported that host program has benefited from the NUNV program through their improved effectiveness as a result of volunteers working on a full-time basis. Advantages of being volunteers, such as being free from political ideology and acceptability to the people, helped them to fulfill their program responsibilities more effectively. Also volunteers could typically reach the target groups better than officials from the local government. Volunteers have proved that they can work on awareness raising and community mobilization activities more effectively than government officials or project staff.

Conclusion

It is clear that the NUNV program has effected on both personal development of volunteers and society as a whole. Some changes at the personal level also had societal contributions. For example, volunteers often developed pro-social attitudes such as helping others (43.2%), looking for possibilities to improve their social environment and situation (57%), and involvement in volunteer activities (100%) and civil society and NGO activities (60%), and developed leadership skills in encouraging others to participate (50%). This findings supports the theory of empowerment (Zimmerman, 2001 as cited in Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, p.18), in a way that those with a sense of empowerment, i.e., a sense of personal competence and a desire or willingness to take action, and a critical understanding of the social environment, can become participants in the lives of their communities. Other studies also found that individuals who participate in service programs typically develop a civic consciousness, which manifests itself in creating more active citizens (Perry and Thompson

as cited in Yadama, 2004). Active citizens are typically more interested in what is going on in their communities. They attend community meetings and become more actively involved in community groups and local non-governmental organizations.

The NUNV Program helped to build “bonding social capital” in the local community by building relationships with similar groups, such as by setting up local NGOs or establishing saving and credit cooperatives. It also might have contributed to building “bridging capital” between the poor and non-poor by changing attitudes for 40% of volunteers towards vulnerable groups, thereby increasing their altruistic behavior (43.2%).

Using the UN name in the very first volunteer program after the transition has helped to develop a more positive view of volunteers in Mongolia, which has helped to bring about a resurgence of interest in volunteerism with the goal of helping to shape a new social-economic environment for the nation. After their service, volunteers, in addition to being active themselves, look for ways to promote volunteerism, encourage other to participate in volunteer and community activities, and care about volunteers’ reputation. Thus, the program contributed to the development of a core group of people who were committed to promoting volunteerism with the aim of improving social, economic and political conditions of their communities.

The NUNV program also has contributed to the host program implementation and effectiveness through increased outreach and awareness raising activities conducted by volunteers. The program also showed that volunteers can be more effective in reaching out for marginalized groups of people, and on awareness raising and community mobilization activities compared to government officials or project paid staff.

The program also contributed to local community mainly through preparing volunteers as skilled professionals who are committed and will remain working in the community. Because the most tangible benefit of the program was on volunteers’ personal and professional development, community viewed that the program has contributed to the human development of the community. On the other hand, volunteers successfully leveraged their skills to the community and these were vital at the beginning of transition.

C. THE PROGRAM DESIGN AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

In this section, we will discuss incentives, supervision, training, and other supports that were provided to volunteers from different institutional structures, such as from the UNV Program, the Host Programs, and the local governments in which they were placed. According to the program requirements, volunteers had to report to three different organizations: first to UNV program, second to the Host Program, and lastly to their immediate supervisors or agencies they were placed within. We asked volunteers about the support and collaboration provided to them at these three levels and through which we will try to explain advantages and disadvantages of the institutional structure of the program.

Support and incentives provided by the UNV Program

The NUNV program was a first attempt to involve local and national volunteers for tackling the country's social and economic challenges. Previously, the UNV program supported only international UN volunteers coming to work in Mongolia, which were 10 times more expensive than National volunteers. At that time, national volunteers were so new to the country and even a word 'volunteer' were automatically understood as international or religious volunteers or national volunteer performers.

The new NUNV program focused on human development by providing national experts with opportunities to utilize their energies and talents for enhancing wellbeing of their communities. The program also provided to volunteers monthly living allowances and social insurance payments, which was mentioned by volunteers as one of the advantages of the Program. Because as the situation of that time was described by a volunteer "at that time, the country's economic situation was still difficult, the salaries of local officials were typically not paid on time. Many would receive their salaries once in three month or something like this. "But the UNV Program paid its volunteers on a monthly basis without any delay.

We were also covered by international insurance. This international insurance plan included family members, too. Although, there was no case to apply for insurance claim, it was very nice ...mentally... Also if your kid would get sick, we could visit a [UN] doctor
(Volunteer 2)

The encouragement volunteers received from the top officials of the UN was mentioned as an incentive.

UNV Program not only provided monetary support but also other types of support. For example, UN Resident Representative supported us with his heart. Whenever we encountered obstacles he would support us. He was a well-known and famous person in Mongolia and internationally. He showed interest in our work by showing up at the inauguration of our training program.
(Volunteer 4)

A UN name card provided to volunteers was mentioned by volunteers as an important form of identification. For example, one reported that

Later [when I was no longer a volunteer], a UN Resident Representative was here in our province. I went to him with my ID ... it was very nice to have such an ID ... and I briefed him about the work I was doing. I showed him my ID when I was there.
(Volunteer 17)

Support provided from the Host Program

Placing volunteers in the host program helped volunteers to have clear roles and responsibilities within the program, in addition to having training and supervision support through the program, which was particularly important at the time when the roles of volunteers were not clear. The clear role to perform was said by volunteers as a starting point for their personal and professional development.

Volunteers mentioned that the travel allowance and supply of stationary also helped them to carry out their tasks more effectively. Actually, this kind of supports was viewed by 50% of volunteers as one of the advantages of volunteers.

When you work for the government, at that time, even if you work from morning to the evening you will never get payment for extra hours worked or a travel allowance. But for us, you just have to apply for your travel expenses. In addition, stationary was provided and the supply was very good...
(Volunteer 2)

Training and supervision provided from the host program was mentioned as an important form of support for volunteers in carrying out their responsibilities more effectively. Nineteen volunteers (68.4%) mentioned the training program in a positive way and none of them mentioned it negatively. They said that the training program has provided them very good orientation to their work and who they were.

We were enrolled in many training programs about knowledge and skills building. That's why we could reach people and why we [did our work well]
(Volunteer 7)

Mongolian NUNVs have received more training than those in the Chinese pilot group (James Carlson, 1998). The training programs for volunteers were systematic and they provided the volunteers with basic starting points that covered a wide range of issues, including project development and management, human rights, principles of democracy, technology of straw bale building, awareness raising strategy on HIV/AIDS, and so on.

Advantageous nature of volunteer work

Volunteers perceived that the following nature of volunteer work as advantage. These advantageous natures of their work were mentioned as a pre-condition to the volunteers' personal and professional development:

- being free from political ideology and political burdens (21.4%)
- the opportunities were provided for them to learn and upgrade their skills (25%)
- the community accepted and respected volunteers (32%)
- volunteers become more motivated and more innovative (21.4)
- the program provided all necessary material supports on carrying out their tasks (50%)

Six volunteers (21%) reported that there is no particular advantage for being a volunteer. However, almost 80% of them mentioned there are advantages of being volunteer such as being free from political ideology and political burdens which enabled the volunteers to be

innovative and to learn more (21.4%); opportunities to upgrade their skills compared to other full-time positions (25%); program support and supply of resources which helped them to carry out their tasks effectively (50%); and getting personally more motivated and innovative (21.4%) community respect and recognition (32%).

*We had to provide the people with the information they needed, and therefore, we ourselves needed to be up-to-date in this regard. So we had more opportunities to improve our education and knowledge compared to government officials,
(Volunteer 7)*

Difficulties encountered by volunteers

Out of total 28 volunteers interviewed, 11 volunteers (39%) said that there were no difficulties. The remaining 60% of them mentioned some difficulties that outlined below.

Table 6. Difficulties encountered by volunteers

	Difficulties encountered by volunteers	No. of UNVs	% out of total
1.	Lack of understanding of volunteer positions at the beginning	12	42,9%
2.	Local government was not able to provide office space, tables, chairs, etc. at the beginning	5	17,9%
3.	Responsibilities were too broad	4	14,3%
4.	Responsibilities are not clear	4	14,3%
5.	Monetary incentive was fixed, so it did not increase when working additional hours or accomplishing more tasks	6	21,4%
6.	Not belonging to any organizations	3	10,7%
7.	No family benefits like civil servants	5	17,9%
8.	No employment guarantee after the service	2	7,2%
9.	Opportunities for self-development were low	1	3,6%

Volunteers mentioned some difficulties they faced at the beginning such as general lack of understanding of volunteers (42.9%) and lack of local government support in terms of office space, tables and chairs (17.9%). Although volunteers were placed in local government offices, they were independently working from the government. While this is an advantage, it also became a disadvantage when the government staff did not recognize the volunteers as a part of them, and thus not inviting them to their celebrations or not providing support for volunteers in a case of their loss of family members. Consequently, volunteers felt left out and not belonging to any organization at the local level (10.7%). However, all volunteers said that they have overcome these difficulties as they gaining experience and communication skills.

*There was no guarantee for a job after the program. In addition, we did not have any particular organization to belong to. That made us to feel left out from an official celebration or party.
(Volunteer 8)*

*We did not belong to any organization ...I made my little corner, but I was never there because my duties involved a lot of out-of-office work. This was difficult for other people to understand. For them it was not clear what I was doing
(Volunteer 14)*

The work responsibilities of the volunteers were often too broad in terms of coverage (14.7%) and were unclear (14.7%). Consequently, some volunteers felt overloaded and were unable to complete their tasks on time.

*[One volunteer] worked with the whole district. It had a population of around 160,000 people and one third of them were poor, meaning that they are our target groups. ...in addition all of the children and disabled people ...needed basic services and infrastructure ...Our work was too wide. [We had to work with] almost all of the population groups and all organizations in the community...
(Volunteer 02)*

Our Program was multi-sectoral and covered a wide range of issues. One person was stretched out. The community initiated many things and we had to follow-up on all of them...

Discussions on the Program design and institutional support

Our last question within this research study was about the organizational aspects of the NUNV Program in Mongolia. In addition to examining supports provided to volunteers from the UNV Program, the Host Programs, and the local governments, we examined advantages of integrating service programs into a broader social programs and recruiting local volunteers.

Support from UNV program

The UNV program was the main coordinating agency for NUNVs from distance. Although the funding came from different sources such as host programs and UN projects, a standard rate for monthly living allowances, health insurance scheme and social insurance payments were established across the program. These payments except the health insurance payment were transferred by UNV office directly to volunteers' personal account upon the receipt of their monthly timesheets. This method of transferring money was seen as the most effective because at the time, due to fiscal deficit, wages and salaries were not paid on time. Volunteers were also satisfied with their health insurance coverage although most of them never used these privileges.

In addition, a NUNV cost 10 times less than international volunteer. If international volunteers were employed instead of national volunteers, only around ten international volunteers would have been worked within the fund allocated for all NUNVs.

Otherwise, there were little monitoring and supervision of volunteers from UNV office. However, the UNV identification card, UN top leaders' recognition and other such benefits were viewed by volunteers as an additional support and incentive because they helped the volunteers to maintain a sense of connection with the UN organization, while working at the local level.

Support from the host program

The host program has facilitated volunteers in taking their roles and responsibilities effectively through providing them training, supervision and travel- and work-related expenses. The latter support was mentioned by 50% of volunteers as one of the advantages of

being a volunteer. Facilitating into their roles and responsibilities can be seen as one of the important pre-condition for the program success because as a result of taking these roles, the volunteers developed both personally and professionally. In addition, training and supervision provided through the host program was seen as an important support. Volunteers said that the training program has provided them very good orientation to their work and who they were. However, in some cases, volunteers mentioned that local government office could not provide office spaces and furniture as promised to the host program.

Advantageous nature of volunteer work

Six volunteers (21%) reported that there is no particular advantage for being a volunteer. However, almost 80% of them mentioned there are advantages of being volunteer such as being free from political ideology and political burdens which enabled the volunteers to be innovative and to learn more (21.4%), opportunities to upgrade their skills compared to other full-time positions (25%), program support and supply of resources which helped them to carry out their tasks effectively (50%), getting personally more motivated and innovative (21.4%) and earned community respect and recognition (32%). Here again volunteers mentioned the program support as advantages such as supply of needed resources and training and skills upgrading opportunities, in addition to voluntary nature of the assignment where it operates free from political burdens and provide opportunities to be innovative. But community respect and recognition can be linked to a positive image of volunteers and it can be said that building acceptance and understanding of volunteers is needed to be a step to take into account in the program design.

Difficulties encountered by volunteers

Out of total 28 volunteers interviewed, 11 volunteers (39%) said that there were no difficulties. The remaining 60% of them mentioned some difficulties such as general lack of understanding of volunteers (42.9%) and lack of government support in terms of office space, tables and chairs (17.9%), unclear (14.7%) and too wide (14.7%) work responsibilities at the beginning. Some volunteers (10.7%) felt along and not belonging to any organization at the local level. However, all volunteers said that they have overcome these difficulties as they gaining experience and communication skills.

Advantages of integrating service programs into broader social programs

Our findings show that the integration of the National UN Volunteers into broader host programs provided vital institutional support for volunteers by giving to them specific roles and responsibilities, as well as providing the information, training, supervision and facilities necessary to carry out their duties. The volunteers' gained personal and professional growth and skills development were all related to their specific roles and responsibilities they played within the program. Sixty eight percent of volunteers mentioned that training and supervision provided by the host program as an important input for carrying out volunteers' tasks effectively. This finding also supports the view that organized service program facilitates volunteers to their roles and provide them needed support and supervision.

Advantages of recruiting volunteers locally

Some argue that by utilizing locally recruited volunteers, the NUNV Program would not be able to bring outside expertise to their community (UNV China, 1998). Based on our findings from previous sections, we can conclude that new approach recruiting volunteers from the community itself helped to utilize local human capital and contributed to its further

development and capacity building. In this regard, the program fulfilled its goal for “human capital development through ... increasing volunteers employment opportunities and creating of positive attitude to work and life ... while treating them not as passive beneficiaries of outside assistance, but encouraging them to be active partners ... for enhancing well-being of their communities”. Because the most tangible benefit of the program was on volunteers personal and professional development, their enhanced capacity and human capital which remained in and used for local development. If they were not provided opportunities to work for their community, some of them might have been unemployed for a longer time, which means that, from the perspective of the society, a great deal of human capital would have been wasted for a country which is already struggling to make ends meet.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we will summarize the main findings discussed before and provide some ideas on the implication of the research in Mongolia. In addition we will also discuss limitations of the study.

Summary of the main findings

The NUNV Program has dramatically effected both on volunteers and on society. For volunteers, the program provided valuable work experience and new skills, which subsequently increased their employability and career opportunities after the program. Although most of volunteers had higher education, 32.1% of them were unemployed before they joined the program, compared to one person unemployed (3.6%) at the time of the interview. These findings show that there are more than higher education diploma required for wider career and employment opportunities.

Although the volunteers’ motivation to volunteer was personal rather than social, they all developed pro-social attitudes after leaving the program. The program has increased the volunteers’ pro-social attitudes and sense of civic involvement by increasing their sense of self-confidence and understanding of themselves and their roles in society, and also by increasing their awareness on social issues and ways of alleviating problems. After the program, they talk more about working for the benefit of others and reported increased helping behavior. As a result, volunteers became active in volunteering, community and NGO activities, thus becoming more empowered. In addition, they supported the development of NGOs that were infant organizations at that time.

It is interesting that when people are unemployed they are more stressed and have lower self-confidence, and are often not interested in social and community issues. From the societal perspective, a great deal of human capital would have been wasted if the program would not have been in place.

Using the UN name in the program, especially in the times when old strategies were not accepted (as, for example, when youth services were criticized as only giving a “paper hat” to servers), has contributed to the re-emergence of the volunteer sector with new meanings in the new social, economic and political environment. The program also increased

effectiveness of the host programs by successfully reaching out the target groups and increased awareness raising and community mobilization activities by volunteers.

By developing human capital of volunteers and their attitude change towards different groups, the program has contributed to local community development by leveraging their skills to the community members and by building social capitals between different and similar groups of people.

The unique design of the NUNV Program, which recruits volunteers locally has contributed to the development of the local communities and has led to the rise of a pool of skilled and committed professionals who will remain in and work for their community. Host programs, in these cases, provide vital institutional support for volunteers by providing access, information, facilitation and supervision.

The NUNV program was a first attempt to involve local and national volunteers for solving local problems. This new approach helped to utilize local human capital and contributed to its further development and capacity building by providing national experts with opportunities to utilize their energies and talents for enhancing wellbeing of their communities. If international volunteers were employed instead of national volunteers, it would cost 10 times more, that means only around 10 international volunteers would have been worked within the fund allocated for all NUNVs.

From here we can see once again that civic service is an effective strategy to reach multiple goals simultaneously. And thus it is an important strategy to consider for countries, like Mongolia that are struggling to develop their limited resources. Therefore, we can conclude that civic service is an important strategy to consider for youth policy in countries like Mongolia where young people make up such a large portion of the nation's population. It has the potential to develop the country's most valuable resource, its youth, at the same time as helping to prevent many of the problems that could emerge in the future as a result of today's disengagement.

Limitations

Current study was exploratory in nature. Therefore, it seriously lacks base-line data to compare with. If, in the future, more longitudinal research studies will be conducted in order to document the effects of the programs, it would increase the policy integration of service programs.

As any other qualitative research, the main limitation of this study is its small sample size and lack of control groups. Due to its small sample size, it was not possible to do any comparison between volunteers by their age, gender, roles they played and other program characteristics. Therefore, future research should be focused on comparison between groups with different program characteristics.

Implications for policy, programs and future research

Service can be used as a strategy to support employment policy

Government of Mongolia has adopted several documents on employment to support policy since 1995. The main strategies for implementing these policies were to enroll those who have been unemployed for longer time, youth after secondary schools, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in short-term vocational training courses. Our study found that even higher education does not guarantee employment in a market economy. There are no opportunities for the unemployed people to test a glimpse of the work environment. Therefore, service should be a strategy for those who have never worked before or have limited skills. Service is particularly important strategy for employment policy which aims to support both economic development and poverty reduction policies (Government of Mongolia, 2001, National Program on Employment Support). One of the facets of poverty, human capital deprivation, could successfully be addressed with service programs while contributing to economic and social development of the country.

In fact, employment service agencies can pilot small scale service program for people who have no previous work experience or limited work experience. For instance, this program impact could be that the employers will realize the people with disabilities can work effectively if they will focus on their strengths and skills, rather than on their disabilities. It will also help the participants to gain confidence in the work, develop interest in the field, and establish relationship and network in the work place, consequently, increase their employment and career opportunities. This can also reduce their dependency on welfare or unemployment benefits and increase their life satisfaction. In addition, it will also prevent the degradation of the country's human capital.

Statistics show that unemployment rate among youth aged between 15-24 years old is higher than other groups mainly due to their limited skills level. Therefore, government policy on employment often focus on those youth who have graduated from the incomplete (8th grade) and complete secondary (10th grade or from 2005 and on 11th grade) educational institutions. Service opportunities can be established at the secondary schools as a community service requirement to make youth familiar with the work environment and different professions.

Youth policy should promote youth civic attitude and personal development by providing them with opportunities to serve

There is an increasing need to incorporate the interests of young people into the social development efforts in our country. The Mongolian Government has adopted a National Youth Development Policy (1998-2005), which outlines government actions in a variety of areas, including youth education, employment, leisure activities, family and health, social and cultural integration of youth in rural areas, youth and the environment, and youth and international youth movements. The international literature on youth policy emphasizes that when youth policies are integrated with youth service policies; they have a much greater effect and possibility of affecting real change (Angel, 2003). If youth service and service learning programs are implemented in Mongolia, it could go a long way towards reaching many objectives that were outlined in the national youth development policy, particularly, in development of youth "civil society skills, critical thinking skills, healthy lifestyle skills ...

and volunteer skills” (Government of Mongolia, 1998). It could be a cost effective strategy to develop youth as the country’s most valuable resources.

Civic service opportunities can be used as action-learning tools in higher education

Higher education is highly valued among youth in Mongolia. However, because academia rarely utilizes on-the-ground practice, the universities typically produce graduates who are not able to carry out real-life tasks, thus adding to the overall problem of unemployment. In other words, as Coleman observed in America in the 1970s (as cited in Eberly & Sherraden, 1990), today’s Mongolian youth are “education rich and action poor”. It is also clear that higher education diploma alone can not guarantee employment in a competitive labor market. According to a survey conducted by the Technical University of Mongolia among their graduates, the main reason for graduates for not finding jobs was their lack of basic interpersonal communication skills (SOURCE) The current educational system is not able to prepare young people to be active citizens. Service opportunities as an effective skills-building strategy could become a key strategy for improving students’ action skills and communication skills.

Every year, hundreds of students are placed for field practicum. Because higher education institutions are mostly located in the capital city, they go around the city looking for practicum settings. The practicum is particularly important for social work students to learn practice. In reality, too many students are placed within one agency and consequently their learning opportunities are very limited in some circumstances. However, there is almost no opportunity to do their practicum in local provinces where 70% of the population lives. If these opportunities will be made available through service programs, it will have profound effect on the students’ skills and attitude development. It will also benefit local community because students bring with them new perspectives, fresh information and networking. “Learning in action” has an important implication in this case because it is known to contribute to the building of life skills and the development of the “right” attitude towards different groups. Education, if combined with the generation of right attitudes towards work and life, can be the most important factor in youth engagement in our society (GLO/96/VO5 project document, 1996, p.4). It might even increase the number of students who go to rural provinces to work after their graduation because they will develop connections with the community and most importantly their attitude and prejudice against rural community will change. In this case, it will contribute to reduction of the problem, where rural communities lack skilled and educated professionals.

International experiences shows that service programs can be an effective strategy to prevent a variety of youth problems that are rooted in youth disengagement by connecting them to a broader polity and encouraging them to develop a sense of civic responsibility.

Service can be a strategy for reducing rural-to-urban migration by providing opportunities for local people to be active participants in the development of their home communities.

Civic service can be used as a labor force placement policy that aims to reduce the migration of people from rural to urban areas by creating opportunities for rural people to earn income and build their capacity while working in their local communities. In Mongolia, the gap between the urban and rural populations has drastically increased during the period of

transition. The lack and poor quality of communal services are some of the reasons for the high level of internal migration to the capital city Ulaanbaatar. The capital city has the highest concentration of administrative, commercial and industrial activities and it tends to swallow most of the resources necessary for domestic development. According to the UNDP's *2001 Statistical Yearbook*, 82% of the nation's money circulates in the capital city, where more than 33% of the Mongolian population is concentrated. According to the latest Living Standard Measurement Survey (1998), the population of *aimag* (province) centers has decreased due to a variety of factors such as poor job opportunities, lack of electricity, underdevelopment of local markets, and so on. In rural areas, the problem of unemployment is high given the lack of professionals who are interested and capable in working in rural areas. Moreover, young people also often move to urban areas in search of employment and education opportunities. If service programs could provide opportunity for local citizens who are committed to their communities to serve and learn, it would most likely help slow this migration to the capital city and, consequently, also reduce the urban-rural disparities.

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