



Center for Social Development

GEORGE WARREN BROWN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# The Elderly in Uruguay

## Volunteer Work and Civic Service Actors

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## Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	1
2. Justification and Importance of the Subject .....	9
3. Conceptual Framework .....	10
4. Methodological Design.....	23
5. Objectives of the Study and Main Hypothesis .....	29
6. Main Findings.....	30
7. A Survey of the Elderly.....	55
8. The Elderly versus the Young .....	68
9. Conclusions .....	73
10. Scope of the Study and Future Lines of Research.....	81
References.....	83
Appendix.....	86

# The Elderly in Uruguay: Volunteer Work and Civic Service Actors

## 1. Executive Summary

The central hypothesis of this study is that civic service in its different expressions can become a contributor to positive development for the elderly, both at the individual and collective levels. In addition, we hypothesize that civic service will also benefit the organization in which the service takes place as well as society as a whole. Finally, we argue that intergenerational interaction can benefit both the elderly and young adults and adolescents.

Within this framework and based on that hypothesis, this study attempts to answer two key questions: *Which are the best and most appropriate forms of service?* and *What are the most suitable programs to recruit and retain elderly volunteers for voluntary action?*

It is widely recognized that the arrival of old age introduces changes in people's lives. These changes take place at physic, psychological and affective levels. One of the main transitions is retirement from work, which has usually constituted—in the adult stage—the structuring element of daily life.

This time is theoretically conceived as a time in which people, after completing their active working life, acquire the right to rest and engage in activities that in the past, due to their obligations and daily commitments, were closed to them. But in our society, this period of transition has become a difficult one. The social stigma of being older and the image of the elderly as obsolete and passive individuals have condemned older adults to the isolation and seclusion of domestic life. Their lives are constrained by a paradox: they live longer due to advances in science and technology, but the quality of their extended lives is compromised. The current society's productivity paradigm values individuals in terms of their ability to provide financial value. Moreover, the culture's addiction to youth and novelty does not allow many of the elderly to find new significance for their lives. They are generally unable to assign themselves new roles in order to remain socially integrated and to use their abilities and experience to contribute to the common good.

In this context, the organizations addressing the promotion of volunteer work with an elderly population play a crucial role in reversing older adults' typical retreat to the private sphere. Their proposals and initiatives offer opportunities to interact with peers. Also, the organizations provide a place for the elderly to play a leading role in providing services to others, which gives them satisfactions as individuals and as citizens. In addition, their collaboration to provide care for others creates a comfortable and safe place where collective identity ties may be strengthened. In this way, the elderly re-enter the social world.

Another objective of this study is to review current proposals in Uruguay that aim to promote and develop volunteer work and civic service opportunities for older adults. By

reviewing the various proposals' characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, and diversity, we will capture the impact and differential features of each, and evaluate—daringly perhaps, but supported by an important empirical review—which programs are most appropriate for promoting volunteer work and sustained civic service for an elderly population.

This research, carried out in the period between March 2005 and April 2006, counted on the technical and financial support of the Center for Social Development's Civic Service Fellows Program, Washington University in St. Louis, United States.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework concentrates on two key aspects that constitute the core interest of this research. The first is a thorough diagnosis of the main features of old age in Latin America, presenting the trends that are observed in this age segment in order to subsequently concentrate on the situation of the elderly in Uruguay. The second involves an examination of the trends, and historical and social characteristics of volunteer work and civic service in the region so that we might identify the type of activities in which the elderly in Uruguay engage.

Finally, in order to achieve a more comprehensive analysis with regard to volunteer work and its impact on the community, we completed a comparative analysis of the volunteer work and civic service carried out by older adults with that carried out by youth. The aim of this was to capture the strengths and the learning associated with youth voluntary service—which has a significant impact in Latin America—and to analyze the similarities and differences between youth voluntarism and elderly voluntarism. We hoped to discover strategies and proactive modalities with potentially transportable features practiced by young volunteers that could be used to enhance the development of elder voluntarism.

### **Universe of Subjects**

In order to delimit the universe subject matter of this research, a mapping of the organizations that carry out and promote activities of volunteer work and civic service with the elderly in Uruguay was elaborated.

The organizational selection criteria for the mapping were mainly two: a) permanence and sustainability of the projects and b) protagonism of the elderly in the activities or programs developed by the organizations.

To include organizational diversity, a series of categories was assessed that made it possible to detect the existing modal variety. The categorization was based on three pillars:

1. position of the elderly in the programming, design and execution of the programs;
2. institutional order—for example, if the organization is union-like, religious, social and/or cultural nature—; and
3. type and nature of organization (government, civil society, etc.)

In order to conduct the comparative study, a selection of volunteer work organizations for young people with greater quantitative and qualitative impact of Uruguay was made.

### **Methodological Framework**

Three main tools of data collection were selected: two of qualitative order and one of quantitative type.

In-depth interviews were the first method used to collect empirical data. By means of a triple entry table, topological frequencies of the organization's subject matter of study were established. A weighted sample of the same was prepared, developing interviews until reaching the theoretical saturation point. Theoretical saturation is achieved when no new issues or themes arise in subsequent interviews.

In order to reach the objectives of this work, the initial purpose was to know what elderly-oriented volunteer work and civic service proposals exist in Uruguay, with a view to grasping their main features, their institutional framework, their quantitative and qualitative impact, their means of action, and their origin. The study was delimited to the organizations located in Montevideo, capital of the country. The first step was to reconstruct the universe of organizations that foster and/or carry out volunteer activities and whose main actors are the elderly. The goal of this organizational mapping was to capture the broadest possible institutional range, with the intention of encompassing the multiplicity of methodological proposals, programs, and origins that would make it possible to build a clear and precise picture of the diversity existing in Montevideo.

A total of 162 institutions surveyed through registries, documents, and other materials were ordered in a double-entry table. In order to establish the group of organizations that would be subject of review through interviews, the next step was to prepare a sample respecting the importance of each institutional subgroup. First of all, 50 organizations were selected to be interviewed. These organizations were taken as the absolute N for the survey considering that this percentage (30% of the total) was sufficiently representative of the total universe. The criteria for concluding the data collection through this technique, however, was based on the theoretical saturation criterion. This stage was reached before expected and to this end a total of 32 interviews were carried out; these interviews encompassed all of the following typologies and detected modalities:

#### Secondary data analysis

The analysis of different documents provided by the interviewed institutions themselves was also used, contributing secondary and complementary data to the information gathered through the interviews.

#### Direct observation

Direct observation of organization activities was another technique used, especially in the meetings with the people interviewed, as well as on the occasions when we were allowed to observe the development of their activities.

### Survey of elderly

A telephone survey was also conducted using a stratified random sampling in Montevideo neighborhoods. The presence of elderly in different areas of the city was assessed, for which it was necessary to survey a sample of 250 cases. The sampling error was +/- 6%, which means that the reliability of the survey reached 99%. The percentage of rejections reached 18%, which is considered a relatively small number.

The survey form, made up of 36 questions, was designed with a view to assessing the impact of volunteer work on this population, the characteristics of the work, and the availability and diversity of modalities and existing proposals in Montevideo.

Surveys were distributed for three weeks, alternating between the morning and the afternoon in order to reach the broadest possible range of elderly at home.

### Focus groups

The last implemented method was a guided discussion group or focus group, a technique that was applied to a group of skilled informants, technical personnel, and administrators of the organizations that were identified as the most representative. The criteria on which this selection was based were quantitative terms, those Quantitative methods were used to identify the greatest number of elderly who currently volunteer while qualitative methods were used to select only elderly whose volunteer work could be characterized as civic service or committed voluntarism—volunteer work, in other words, that was long-term and of greater scope than other surveyed voluntarism.

Therefore, four analytical macro-units, each of them subdivided in several sub-dimensions, were delimited.

#### Analytical unit 1: General characteristics of the institutional organization

- Origins
- Composition
- Population to which voluntary activities are directed
- Economic resources
- Volunteer work and volume (presence of AM)
- National and international connections

#### Analytical unit 2: Key aspects of volunteer work and its methodology

- Activities carried out
- Methodology of work with the volunteers
- Role of the elderly in process, design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation
- Recruitment of volunteers
- Entrance requirements
- Formal relationship (contract, agreements of permanence, guarantees for the organizations and the volunteer).

Analytical unit 3: Mission, objectives, and impact of the organization

- Institutional objectives
- Preferred areas
- Design of the programs they develop
- Needs of the elderly themselves which are pondered in the programs
- Benefits provided by the elderly to these programs
- Degree of elderly permanence in the organizational proposal
- Impact

Analytical unit 4: Volunteers' profile

- Key features of the volunteer elderly
- Obstacles to the social participation of the elderly
- Components that would enhance the civic service development of the elderly

For data processing a computer program for qualitative data processing known as *Atlas.ti* was used. Data obtained from the survey were encoded and entered in the SPSS (*Statistic Package for Social Science*) program, a computer processor of quantitative data.

### **Preliminary Findings**

This section will deal with the main features found in the universe of subjects, in order to subsequently state some particular observations derived from the initial processing of the data collected in the field work

#### *Volunteers*

The survey found that, in Montevideo, 25% of the elderly carry out or have performed activities of a voluntary nature. This fact—a very high index which surpassed initial expectations—indicates the importance of this work.

Although each volunteer has unique and differential features, the groups of volunteers shared common characteristics and features. Most of the elderly who take part in voluntarism report feelings of loneliness, and awareness of absences and gaps in their lives.

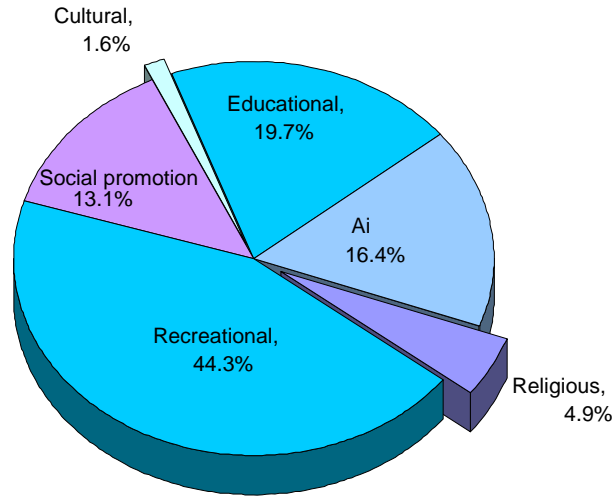
At the same time, volunteers appear to be dynamic people with a thirst for participation, people who resist the passivity into which the society forces them with its stigma of non productivity.

Another aspect emphasized as a characteristic feature of this population is the experience of the challenge of changing roles and adapting to a new situation, which is exacerbated by the process of readjustment and repositioning which the individual faces both in his private and social life.

At first glance, this population prefers recreational activities to cultural ones. However, the inclusion of cultural promotion and strictly cultural activities suggests that these cultural activities are more popular, representing 15%, or the third most important.



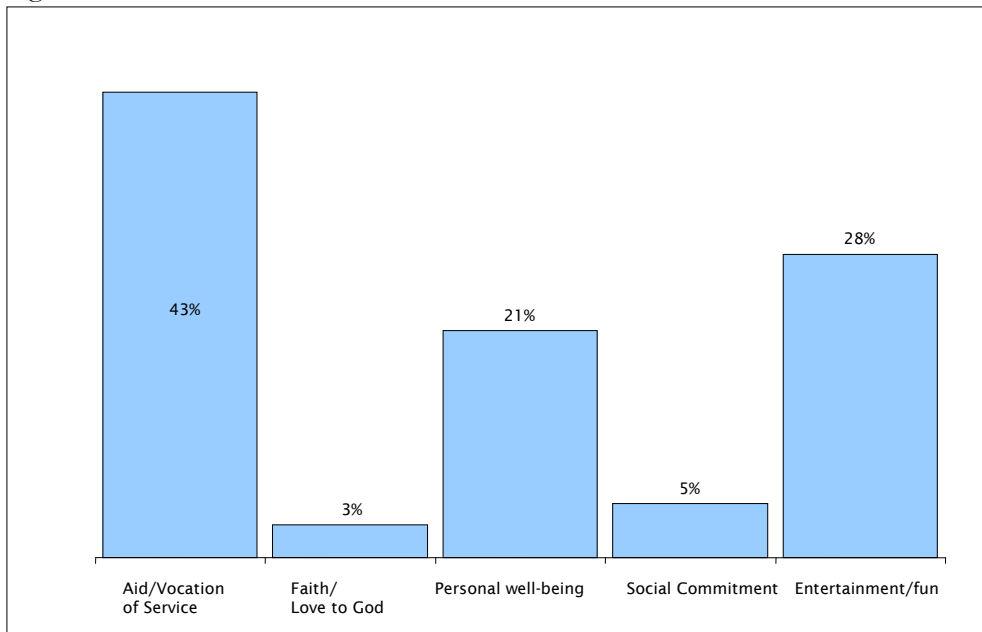
Figure 1: Weekly participation in volunteer activities



Weekly participation in volunteer activities described 65.6% of the respondents while monthly participation described only 15%, and daily participation described only 11.5% corresponding to the development of daily activities. Only 8.2% carries out fortnightly/biweekly activities. Although participation frequency varied, a strong and steady commitment to volunteer work was observed among all participants.

Although the desire to remain active and socially connected clearly attracted volunteers to service, other motivations to serve emerged as well. Altruistic motives were the most common (43%), followed by “fun” (28%), personal well-being (21%), social commitment (5%), and religious faith (3%).

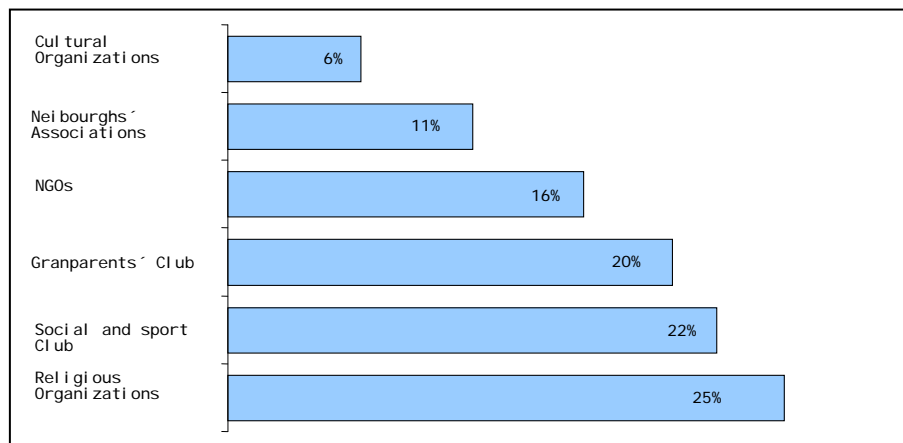
Figure 2. Motivation to serve



*The organizations*

The respondents choose religious organizations, followed by grandparents' clubs and social and sports clubs, to carry out their volunteer work.

Figure 3: Types of organizations



The sponsoring organizations were distinguished by their diversity, including organizations as varied as union groups, educational organizations, faith-based organizations, the church

organizations, cultural and sports associations, lobbying organizations, and governmental entities.

In general, the initiatives arise within mother institutions, from which they become emancipated upon consolidating their identity and specific profile. They have an important structural soundness; that is, they are organizations with clear hierarchical structures and clear organizational charts that are publicly formalized and hold legal status.

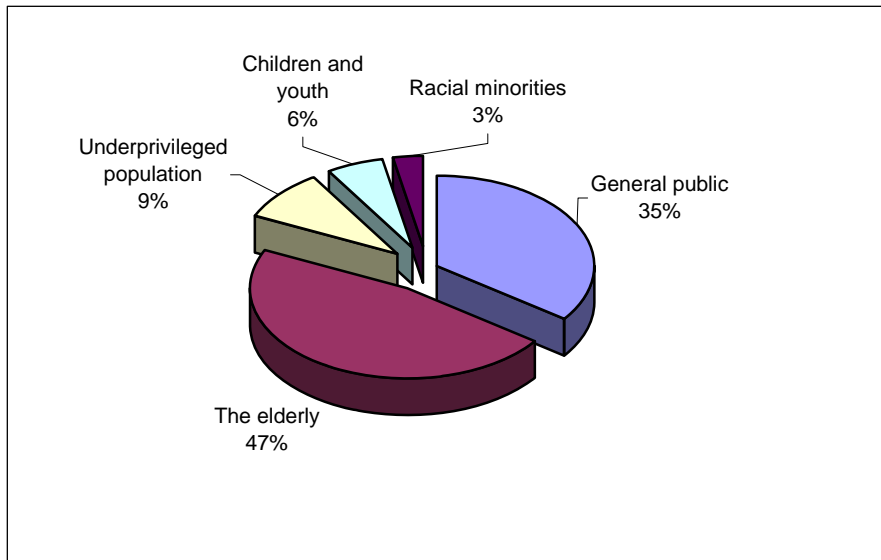
These organizations are primarily managed by the elderly, although some have active technical personnel or professionals on their managing board.

The staff of these organizations generally consists of volunteers. Within each organization, the elderly age range has more substantial presence, with a small group of active professionals.

In general, voluntary initiatives rely on agreements, grants, and contracts derived from state entities. (Municipal Government of Montevideo and Bank of Social Welfare).

With regard to the beneficiary population, it is observed that most of the organizations are integrated by the elderly and direct their attention to this same population. The organizations understand that treatment of the elderly is a differential attribute that places them in a privileged position within the institutional scenario.

Figure 4: Beneficiaries



In the majority of cases there is a clear connection among the objectives laid out by the organizations and the activities by which they are implemented. Two levels of objectives were found: a) direct goals that are addressed directly with activity development; b) symbolic and long-term objectives, including social and personal changes that are accomplished over a

long period through an accumulation of small changes created by each initiative. These objectives include: 1. Eliminate the stigma associated with the elderly; 2. Promote an active and integrated old age; 3. Generate a society for all by means of intergenerational integration.

## 2. Justification and Importance of the Subject

The stigma and social marginalization suffered by the elderly often prevents them from taking new roles in society to give their lives a new meaning in order to keep socially integrated while conveying their skills and experiences for the common good. In different countries of Latin America, demographic projections show that population aging is a phenomenon that will experience a sustained increase. By way of example, in 2000 the total population of Argentina consisted of 13.3% of adults over 60 years of age but projections for 2025 estimate that this percentage will grow to 16.6%. A similar pattern is predicted for Chile, which had 10.1% of elderly in 2000—a number that is expected to reach 18.2% in 2025. At present, the elderly population of Uruguay is 13.4% and for 2025 the estimations show that this figure will reach 19.6%, which makes it the second country, after Cuba, with the highest rate of population aging in Latin America (CEPAL 2000).

In this respect, the elderly's knowledge, and expertise are not being exploited, because all the knowledge that these people have acquired throughout their lives is not considered valid or useful by new generations.

Moreover, a process of social disintegration of solid social networks characteristic of the 1950s has been observed in Uruguay in recent decades. This process, which has become acute in recent years and which contributed to a strong economic crisis from which the country is still recovering, has contributed to the decline in social participation and social division. Those more affected by impact of these two phenomena are the most vulnerable and less protected sectors of the society, among them the elderly.

Weakening of networks increases interurban violence and feelings of insecurity, and it's true that the elderly are easy targets for criminals. The elderly's sense of physical disadvantage increases the feeling of vulnerability the elderly already have, which catalyzes the process of seclusion. In addition, due to the economic deterioration that Uruguay has undergone for decades, the elderly's access to goods and services is seriously limited, especially in comparison to the access they had when they were active wage-earners.

In short, at retirement, social vulnerability and urban insecurity increase, and access to goods and services decreases. Just when the elderly should have time to invest in recreational and community activities, insecurity and economic hardship curtail any initiative they might have.

In view of the above, it is imperative to reverse the process of social isolation suffered by this population, by reassessing their assets and specific characteristics as experienced people and promoting their empowerment as active citizens capable of undertaking action and playing useful, valid roles in the society.

In this context, the organizations that promote volunteer work among the elderly can play a critical role: that of reversing this retreat into the private sphere. Their proposals and initiatives open the doors of participation to a space shared by peers. Organizations provide access to interpersonal interaction, a place where the elderly see themselves as playing leading roles that grant them satisfaction as people and as citizens. Upon cooperating and providing care to *others*, the elderly create a comfortable and safe place whereby their collective identity ties are strengthened. This makes the elderly reconsolidate their collective identity by strengthening their ties to the community. In this way, the elderly re-enter a social world from which they should never have felt excluded.

### 3. Conceptual Framework

#### What does it mean to be Elderly?

As a general definition, an elderly person is any person of 65 years or older. However, the establishment of a person's entrance age to a given stage—young, adult or elderly—is a social construct, an assigned condition accepted by its recipients. The limit that separates the different life stages has varied in each historical context and it still does in our societies today. To further complicate the matter, people live their aging process in relation to their personal experience, in particular their specific history and personal images of old age.

As “elderly” is a socially constructed role, it does not describe a subject’s “condition” so much as it assigns certain roles and social functions. These roles and functions, according to the elderly definition taken as a starting point, must be performed to achieve the necessary “social approval”. This process is developed in such a way that *being* and *having to be* mutually nourish and provide feedback to one another. That is, what an elderly person *is*, relates to what he or she *should be* socially, since it is in relation to this category that people construct their identity and profile. In this way, what is assigned as part of the role is acquired.

#### Social Stigma and Marginalization Suffered by the Elderly

The image of the elderly as wise, developed in tribal and eastern societies and still in effect in some societies, has been giving way to an image of the elderly as passive and obsolete subjects, a burden on the domestic sphere and the national economy. This shift in image is due, to a great extent, to the values associated with post-industrial societies.

Societal values influence this situation given the fact that the ideas about old age are [rooted in a paradigm of productivity], with dizzying technological progress, where the dominant archetypes are young people and productive powerful adults. Another important factor is the culture of the appearance: beauty, strength, vigor as attributes of an endless youth constitute overestimated features that displace any other type of aspiration. (CEPAL, 2003: 25)

The cult of youth, the obsession with productivity, and the assessment of what is useful in terms of the ability to earn money, has caused the wisdom and experience gained throughout

life to lose its worth. At the same time, this process of withdrawal from the roles and social functions is sharpened by the fact that this age is usually characterized by the abandonment of the job market, which does not mean the loss of abilities or desire to continue with work, but which nevertheless implies the abandonment of a socialization and interaction space basic for adult life development.

This withdrawal from the formal labor world has important implications in elderly social relationships, generating, in most of the cases, a confinement within the private sphere. The elderly see how their daily life is altered, which creates the need for redesigning their lives, for providing them with new meanings, new habits, and new activities. What usually happens is that they restrict their relations to personal and family ties, which in turn are reduced because of the fact that on many occasions several of the personal ties they have established throughout their lives are no longer living. In these kinds of societies, a man or a woman, when faced with the reality of his or her own aging process, tends to experience this period as a loss of self-worth and confidence, as an abandonment and as a handicap. These perceptions generate depression, low self-esteem, and confinement.

This cycle of stigma and social marginalization—a consequence of how elderly identity is constructed—can only be broken by redesigning the role of the elderly, reassessing their position and roles they perform in the community.

The issue is then to redefine old age, introducing a higher level of expectation, **promoting** participation, recognizing the aspiration of the elderly—who feel part of the society—to **play a leading role, shifting from the role of beneficiaries to the attitude of** citizens as part of the society. (Pszemiarower, 2003:1)

The elderly have potential, resources, the ability to create and express, life paths that give accounts of history and events—all assets that should be integrated in favor of their identity and social development.

### **Do the Elderly Make up a Social Group?**

Belonging to the same generation implies sharing the main features of history as well as living together in the same social and political context that, to a certain extent, delimits some social interpretations and visions which make them "part of" sharing a series of values and conceptualizations of society and its phenomena. Even though there are differences among the individuals who share a single cohort age, a series of shaping elements can be found, at least in terms of a trend.

The elderly share a series of common features that qualify them as a specific social group with a series of distinctive features. People belonging to such groups share characteristics that can be innate or acquired (for example, interests, values, a behavior or a common history) and identified as such.

## Socio-demographic Profile of the Elderly in Latin America

Latin American societies are going through a process that demographers call “population aging”, meaning that in the population pyramid the last age ranges—those of 60 years of age and older—are increasing their importance in the demographic structure. The result is the occurrence of a phenomenon commonly referred to as the “inverted pyramid”, meaning that the predominant ranges are those which should normally be in the apex and carry less relative weight in the population profile. Estimations predict that in 50 years the elderly population of Southern Cone countries will reach an average of 24% of the total. (CEPAL 2000).

Scientific and technological breakthroughs, especially in the field of medicine, plus the changes in the demographic patterns characteristic of the last half of the 20th century, have had a series of effects on our societies. One the most significant changes is the extension of human life. Today, enjoying a long life is no longer a privilege of a few but the destination of the majority. Figures concerning life expectancy have increased systematically and rapidly in Latin America. This phenomenon, together with the reduction in birth rates (the annual birth rate in Uruguay has been around 1.7% since 1985 through a sustained process over time), are the factors that explain to a great extent the population aging process, or as Riesman (1981) puts it, the “last stage of demographic transition.”

Some key features define the elderly population in Latin America and the Caribbean:

### *Old age feminization*

One of the features shared by the countries of the region is the existence of a strong feminine prevalence within the age range beyond 65 years old. This phenomenon is explained by the difference in the mortality rate that yields a greater life expectancy in women. The greatest longevity is more clearly observed at the ends of this age range. This pronounced difference in the potential life expectancy can be observed through the masculinity ratio that in 2000 yielded an average of 86 men for every 100 women for individuals of 60 to 74 years of age.

### *Old age radicalization*

In addition, an “aging of the old age” process has recently been taking place in our societies, meaning that the relative weight of extremely old people is increasing among the elderly.

### *Old age urbanization*

Although this characteristic is more pronounced in the Southern Cone countries with respect to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, several demographic studies show that even in the regions and societies with a greater rural index, a clear trend towards the concentration of the highest age ranges appears in the urban areas. A higher percentage of older people live in the urban environment than the rest of the population. These studies show that by the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, the proportion of elderly people living in urban areas will have increased considerably.

## Uruguayan Reality

Within the Latin American context, Uruguay is an extremely aged country whose data resemble more the figures of developed countries such as Japan and the United States. Almost 12% of the Uruguayans are 65 years of age and older (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas) and the greatest percentage is concentrated in the south of the country, especially in Montevideo, the metropolitan capital. The Latin American phenomena described above which characterize the elderly population of the region are consistent with the elderly in Uruguay.

Table 1. Old age urbanization in Uruguay

Population over 65 years of age (%)	1996	2004
Urban	<b>92.35 %</b>	<b>92.97%</b>
Rural	7.65 %	7.03 %

Source: 2004 National Census Phase 1

In Uruguay, the process of urbanization of the elderly is almost absolute, where less than one elderly individual out of ten lives in rural areas, a trend that has been reinforced over the years, as shown in Table 1.

Table 2. Old age feminization in Uruguay

Age	Men (%)	Women (%)
65-69	12,52	15,74

Research on asset effects for women and children will build knowledge for progressive asset-building initiatives that will provide impetus for policies that enhance household well-being. Large-scale longitudinal and random assignment of women and children to asset building programs and controls will be central to building this knowledge on asset effects for women and children and their well-being.

70-74	11,53	15,87
75-79	8,07	12,22
80-84	4,91	8,69
85 and older	3,06	7,39

Source: 2004 National Census Phase 1

In all age ranges of 65 years old and over, figures corresponding to women surpass those of men by more than 3 percentage points. This difference is more clearly observed in the extreme strata (80 and over).

Another process usually unleashed concomitant with retirement is the loss of purchasing power suffered by the elderly. On the average, retirement funds in Uruguay are low, even more so if they are compared with what these people have received throughout their active



working life and which determined and established their status and quality of life. For this reason, when people retire, their enjoyment of goods and services is spoiled.

### **Public Policies for Elderly Care in Uruguay**

One of the aspects that causes more concern with regard to the situation of the elderly—and which actually confirms this social group’s invisibility—is the limited attention that public policies in Uruguay pay to the elderly. Even more serious is the nearly absent existing legislation.

Fortunately, in recent years, the issue has caused some concern in the authorities and in the whole of civil society. In August 2004, Law No. 17,796 for the comprehensive promotion of the elderly was approved. This initiative promotes the active integration of the elderly into the family and the community, without discrimination. The objective is to encourage the achievement of a worthy old age in which physical, psychological, and socioeconomic well-being prevails.

Thus, the first law devoted to addressing the problems of the elderly is only a first step forward, but a very relevant one. It models how elderly-related policies could fight marginalization in several social spheres. Moreover, this initiative promotes opportunities for intergenerational interaction in which the older generations convey to the new ones the experience gained throughout their lives. This valuable first legislative stimulus could pioneer the construction of a new social image of the elderly in Uruguay. Its importance also lies in the fact that it shows that the topic has made its way into the public agenda as a problem that should be addressed within the political-public scenario.

In addition to this law, some public initiatives at national and departmental levels promote the elderly to a leading social role. These are discussed below.

#### *Social Welfare Bank programs*

The Social Welfare Bank (BPS) is the national agency in charge of planning, coordinating, and administering social security for a broad group of workers, *inter alia*, those belonging to the industry, trade, agricultural and construction sectors, and servants. The coverage includes economic benefits for retirement, compensation for periods of unemployment or physical disability, medical coverage and family allowances.

In particular, the BPS has a series of programs and services for the elderly whose purpose is to “plan and carry out Social Services in charge of the Social Welfare Bank, seeking the promotion and individual and social development of the beneficiaries. To provide a supplementary protection of Social welfare, through the supply of goods and services to their members.”<sup>1</sup> The proposals put forward by this unit are the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Official Site: [www.bps.gub.uy](http://www.bps.gub.uy)

- A national network of non-profit institutions that receive permanent technical assistance and support, as well as training services. Such institutions are previously surveyed and entered in a National Registry as a voluntary assignment. Actions are carried out through regular technical planning, aiming to achieve the optimum use of the available resources in Uruguay by emphasizing local and regional coordination.
- Training program: non-formal education addressed to elderly, volunteer leaders, staff members of adhering institutions, and the general public, with the purpose of guiding, informing, training, and alerting on the topic of the elderly, adapting each activity to the needs of each institution or target population. The offers are the following: training courses for staff members of adhering institutions; courses for leaders; sensitization conferences; courses for volunteers; retirement training courses; intergenerational relations workshops; educational talks; health promotion; expression workshops.
- Social tourism program: holidays for retired people
- Program for people with disabilities: the objective of the program, of national scope, is to promote the greatest possible participation of the organizations linked to this population, fostering the social integration of people with disabilities. In substance, these people are provided with technical and economic assistance in accordance with their needs, interests, and linked to projects, on the basis of the characteristics of the population they serve and the socioeconomic reality in which they act.
- Housing program for retired people and pension beneficiaries: in accordance with the current legal rules and regulations in force in this matter, the BPS is responsible for granting and managing dwellings for retired people and pension beneficiaries who are protected by such provisions.
- Regular activities: these include technical assistance for volunteer leaders of adhering institutions, assistance for project formulation, and economic support of publications, seminars, congresses and meetings.
- Special projects: comprehensive assistance for homeless elderly; non formal education for the Department of Montevideo; BPS-INJU(Youth National Institute) intergenerational relations.

*University of the Republic: Elderly Subprogram, Apex Programs*

The Elderly Subprogram, belonging to the Apex-Cerro Program dependent on the University of the Republic, performs its activities in the western geographical area of Montevideo, which is characterized by having the lowest socioeconomic figures of all the city.

The target population of the Subprogram is defined as people over 60 years of age in a poverty condition who reside within the Project area of influence. Here, poverty is measured with an integrated method that assesses the services for Basic Needs and income with regard to the basic basket of goods. The project's purpose is "to improve the elderly quality of life."

Clinics belonging to three institutions—Retired People and Pension Beneficiaries Association of Cerro, Municipal Clinic of Casabó, and the clinic of the Nuevo Amanecer Neighborhood funded by the Ministry of Public Health—have also developed different modalities of interdisciplinary intervention for elderly populations.

*Municipal Government of Montevideo (IMM): Commission for the elderly<sup>4</sup>*

In order to favor the integration of the elderly, the Municipal Government of Montevideo (IMM) implements a broad range of policies that promote the social integration of the elderly, through grouping and socialization. IMM includes the following:

- A program that is contributing to the strengthening of elderly participation in the decentralization process by supporting the creation of grouping opportunities and promoting training.
- An agreement with the School of Psychology for conducting research about elderly in Montevideo and their living conditions in Montevideo.
- Promotion of Day Homes Program, walks and excursions
- The Golden Passport Program which provides discounted access to adults over 60 years of age living in the Department of Montevideo to tourist and teaching walks throughout the country, recreation spaces, leisure and cultural programs, health, food, sports and others.
- “Volunteers' Movement for Montevideo and its people” grants assistance and support to elderly persons with health problems or who live in a socially isolated condition. The participants of this movement are 60 graduates of the first course in Volunteer work run by the Institute of Municipal Studies of the Municipal Government of Montevideo.
- Free access to physical and recreational activities in more than 20 areas of Montevideo.
- Free tickets for people over 70 and discount tickets for retired people.
- Educational talks on specific subjects in connection with old age given by geriatricians and social workers.
- Conferences for Elderly Rights.

The initiatives described above constitute important actions aimed at addressing the problems the elderly confront in Uruguay. Strengthening and reproducing these experiences should be encouraged.

### **Civil Society and Citizen Participation**

Organized civil society has played an active role in the history of Latin American countries. Since the colonial period there have been civil initiatives aimed at addressing a diversity of community problems. Uruguay does not constitute an exception, where early citizen participation has been consolidated and strengthened in the final decades of the 20th century.

Voluntary actions have accompanied the processes of institutional consolidation in all Latin American countries. However, this presence gained greater importance during the 1960s. The retraction of state functions, that is, the loss of *state solidarity*, encouraged and permitted the emancipation of civil society, and the resulting *societal solidarity*.

When the fundamental pillars of state solidarity—social redistribution of wealth, protectionism and state guardianship, citizen participation and a feeling of social hyperintegration—began to tremble, the systemic balance that used to be characteristic of Uruguay collapsed. The result was the fall of the old Welfare State (comptroller and buffer of inequalities) which constituted “a series of defensive strategies against the destructive power of the market over community life” (Filgueira, 1990:147).

The newly implemented model consisted of a project where self-regulation of the market, a reduction in the intervention of the State, and socio-economic openness become underpinnings of change in Uruguay. This model generated a domino effect in the Uruguayan social system: the economic crisis, generated by the absence of state protectionism, resulted in a serious social crisis.

State action decreased not only in the economic field but also in the social sphere, causing the erosion of social stability mechanisms and fostering a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty in the society.

When, at the same time, democratic institutions began to be eroded, a process that resulted in the establishment of a dictatorship in Uruguay for 12 years (1973-1985), civil society was forced to replace the spaces and actions previously legalized and taken care of by MEC dynamics. Upon finding more problems needing redress, it felt compelled to expand its range of action and consolidate spaces that had been undermined by the de facto regime.

It was during the process of democratic reconsolidation when these civil initiatives were strengthened, carrying out actions and tasks in spaces previously taken care of by the State. It is here where the mechanism known as societal solidarity acquires its value:

That is the expression chosen to refer to actions and civil society initiatives—heterogeneous in origin and interests—that intervene in the provision of some social service intended to benefit some given group, replacing the absence of actions and responses from the State (Salas, 2002:6)

In short, a series of structural and moment-related conditions gave rise to the existence of potential opportunities for the emergence of these specific civil initiatives: the combination of empty spaces neglected by the State, and a civil society with room to act and the strength necessary to put forward interventions and private actions independent of the state catalyzed this change.

The last fifteen years have posed important challenges to the civil society organizations. The crisis of identity in the democratic transition period was

followed by the occurrence of new groups, the strengthening of voluntary participation, the need for interacting with the State as a leading social actor, and demands for participation in decision-making spaces, both at national and regional levels (MERCOSUR). CSOs have been evolving and continue to do so but their empowerment is a sine qua non condition for democracy strengthening in Uruguay and within the MERCOSUR region.” (Bettoni, Cruz 2001:6)

The leading role played by organized civil society activity in the past—and even at present—in Uruguay’s history is of high importance. Still today, in all places and social spheres an association, foundation or NGOs can be found. These address specific problems that are underestimated or simply neglected by the State.

### **Volunteer Work: Definition, Modalities, and Impact**

According to Aguñín and Sapriza, volunteer work is characterized by the following aspects:

A non-paid job or at least with a symbolic reward (for example one that covers transportation or food costs of the volunteer during working days) which is carried out with the intention of benefiting other people and without there being any responsibilities or family ties or friendship. The job is carried out by the participant's own free will without there being another obligation or imposition of any kind. (Aguñín and Sapriza, 1997:6).

Although volunteer work can be undertaken within an organization, it can be occasional and exclusively individual. Even so, the volunteer is a social actor, an agent of transformation who provides unpaid services for the community’s benefit.

Democratic reconsolidation renewed the strength of civil action in Uruguay and hand in hand with this there came volunteer work.

Traditionally, volunteer work was an almost invisible activity for society in general, as well as for government agencies, the academic world and with a nearly null impact in the media. In recent years this perception has been reversed. There appear many references to this topic in the media and in opinion polls, the subject has been incorporated to the agendas of government agencies and is discussed by the population in general. (Bettoni, Cruz, 2001:8)

The successive crises that Uruguay has gone through in recent years consolidated this trend, reaching a peak with the crisis of 2002 when the fragile balance of the economic system broke. This resulted in a collapse of the financial market that caused many banks to go bankrupt, and thus worsened the country’s socioeconomic crisis.

At present, various trends and approaches coexist with regard to the role that volunteer work should play in the social scenario.

Volunteer work as a social resource counters the crisis of the welfare state. Recognizing the growing deterioration of the state in its duty to reduce social inequalities, various institutions encourage the development of volunteer work as a replacement for state obligations and claim their greater efficiency and effectiveness in addressing these social problems. Thus, the mobilization of civil society's human resources compensates for state deficiencies. In this regard it has been pointed out, contrasting the Latin American case with that of the United States, that the great basis of support and survival of the poor of the region is achieved through mutual assistance. If it were not for this type of volunteer work devoted to babies' and children's upbringing, to elderly care, to environmental protection or safety, deterioration and poverty would be much greater indeed.

Volunteer work as the crux of democracy development and support. This thesis, basically supported by the American literature, considers volunteer work mainly as a school of democratic practice, whose organizations are carriers of values for collective life, such as solidarity, justice, respect for life, and altruism. In this respect, it could be stated that practice is appraised in itself by its intrinsic contents, beyond its context and directionality.

Volunteer associations as subjects of strengthening and training strategies. This approach is basically framed within the spectrum of analysis and organizational development of volunteer associations with a view to improving their efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services and to increase their coordination abilities, protagonism, and interaction with other types of organizations and sectors.

In Uruguay, a study conducted by ICD (2001) states that volunteer work in Uruguay had undergone significant quantitative growth; the number of people devoting hours to carry out tasks for the common good had doubled in three years. The increase has significant connotations within Uruguayan context, because the percentage of volunteers has gone from 7% of the population (160,000 people) to 14% of the population (330,000 people). The most outstanding characteristics of volunteers are identified as:

- More volunteers are drawn to issues of infancy and health than any other topic.
- The so-called "traditional" volunteers (adults, from economic resourceful sectors, high educational level) live in harmony with those with a more "transformer" profile.
- In general, women carry out more volunteer activities than men within social and collective organizational frameworks, while men participate more in the political, labor, and trade unions fields.
- Volunteers' engagement in CSOs is handled with an important degree of informality and flexibility, without practically existing *a priori* established agreements, requirements or criteria of any kind on the part of the institutions. (Bettoni, Cruz, 2000:28)

With regard to the volunteer profile, another study shows that:

Uruguayan social volunteers are people between 40 and 60, housewives, clerks, professionals and students, belonging from medium to high social classes, with some prevalence of women over men. (Doyenart, 2004:6)

The impact produced by volunteers' engagement on the organizations is of great magnitude. Volunteers' participation in the organizations takes on great importance. Those volunteers help the organization to better fulfill its tasks, improve the quality of services, increase accessibility to beneficiaries, and make it possible to optimize financial resources. Volunteers, in turn, feel like participants and accomplish their objectives of participation and social commitment.

But volunteers' impact is not only felt in social spheres but also, and considerably, in the economic field:

If the economic impact of volunteer work on Uruguay were be quantified, it would exceed the amount of several million dollars, bearing in mind the fact that between 90 and 100 million hours are donated per year. (Bettoni, Cruz, 2000:28)

However, although volunteer work is a long-standing activity, attempts at assessing or measuring this phenomenon are just commencing. There are no comprehensive studies of this reality in Uruguay; only partial studies based on research conducted by CSOs or on opinion polls which in recent years have become common, given the increasing significance of this phenomenon. Strictly speaking, the incorporation of volunteer work as a subject of academic research at the university is very recent and incipient.

New attempts at regulating the relationships between volunteers and the places where they perform their work have recently emerged. On August 9, 2005, Law No. 17,885 was published. This law "recognizes, defines, promotes and facilitates the participation of the individuals in volunteer actions within public institutions", whose article 5 *et seq* regulate and provide a framework for the relations between the official spaces and volunteers, establishing rights and duties for both.

Law No. 17,885 defines volunteers as:

every individual who by their own free will offers their time, their work and abilities, either occasionally or periodically, for the common good, either individually or within the framework of nonprofit nongovernmental organizations, officially recognized or not, or in public national or international entities, without any remuneration whatsoever

Volunteers' rights, duties, and limits of action are also established in the law. Likewise, the obligations of the State towards volunteers and the advertising mechanisms implemented by the government in order to increase social volunteer work are set forth.

The law represents an initiative of promotion, control, and recognition of volunteer work in Uruguay, but its impact still cannot be observed since it is of a very recent implementation. However, some of its effects in the public sphere of volunteer work promotion will be appreciated in the chapter where the main findings of this research are discussed.

### **Civic Service: A Little Emerging Category**

Civic service is defined as:

An organized period of substantial commitment and contribution to the world, national, and local community, recognized and valued by society, with a minimum monetary compensation for the participant (Sherraden, 2001:1).

It is worth emphasizing the difference among the expressions “volunteer work” (or “occasional volunteer work”) and “civic service”, since the categories are not identical. There are organized programs in different countries that attract volunteers of various ages to provide services. However, such programs rely entirely on the participant's will or wish. These programs would be classified as volunteer programs. There are also compulsory programs such as university programs—developed in the United States, Mexico and some European Union countries—which require high school graduates to provide some kind of service in order to obtain their university degree. The service work required by these programs is considered “civic service.”

Civic service and volunteer work are coexisting parallel social action categories involving a diversity of modalities, but both have the same purpose: from a personal point of view, such purpose is to contribute through a broad range of actions to community development local, national, regional, or worldwide.

However, and without detriment to the volunteer actions that have played a key role in the democratic consolidation of Uruguay, civic service is thought—in comparative terms—to have more potentiality and cause more impact in that it constitutes a modality requiring more structured programs, with a commitment more prolonged in time, whereas volunteer work can be occasional and/or sporadic.

In Uruguay, there is a diversity of activities which, in view of their characteristics more closely resemble civic service than volunteer work. An example of this are the neighborhood “merenderos”, community centers where people of low economic resources are fed everyday. These centers are run by a group of neighbors and are funded purely by donations. Why is it then that these actions are not called civic service? The problem is that in Latin America and the Caribbean, the concept of **social volunteer work** is the more frequently used term and carries more cultural currency when used to describe social and community actions.

One of the results of this is the absence of studies and systematizations having civic service as subject of study.



It is important then to begin to distinguish and to incorporate these two concepts to the social arena in order to name and discriminate between—in view of their characteristics—volunteer and civic service activities.

Furthermore, this discussion takes on a greater importance bearing in mind the fact that one of the objectives pursued by this research is to assess how much volunteer work and civic service exists in Uruguay.

### **In Order not to Retire from Life**

In many Latin American countries, increasing numbers of elderly have free time, and, because they don't suffer the usual health problems of the past, have an average of 10 or 15 years of service and productive life ahead of them. These same elderly, however, are socially marginalized and displaced.

This process can be reversed by promoting new forms of integration and participation in the daily social life of this population. Therefore the promotion of volunteer and civic service activities among this population can contribute to eradicating marginalization, helping elderly people to remain active, to find a productive and cooperative role in life, as well as a way to contribute to a healthy and independent lifestyle.

A report of the Spanish Red Cross (1990) suggests that the incorporation of elderly as volunteers involves important advantages for all sectors, organizations, society, and elderly as well.

- **Social advantages**, upon raising the population's awareness as to the importance of the elderly, improving their social role and image, disseminating at the same time solidarity and volunteer work values.
- **Advantages for the organizations**, upon increasing the number of volunteers with great experience and devotion, being able to carry out more and better programs of intervention.
- **Advantages for volunteers**, upon favoring the generational exchange and being in contact with highly experienced volunteers.
- **Advantages for elderly volunteers**, since their participation in volunteer humanitarian and social tasks will break with the image of inactivity often associated with the elderly. By carrying out volunteer work, they feel useful and integrated into their environment, and their social marginalization and physiological deterioration is prevented. Their integration into active roles is particularly important as, according to recent research, participatory leisure is more appropriate for mental health than passive. The improvements introduced by medicine and other sciences in the elderly quality of life could be even greater if the quantity and quality of social relations were also improved. (Red Cross: 1990)

Other research suggests that volunteer service benefits both the volunteer and the society:

Various studies seem to demonstrate that an appropriate use of leisure time by the elderly influences more their perception of satisfaction with life than any other factor (health, income, education, previous works. etc.). Other research seems to demonstrate a strong relationship between volunteer work and satisfaction with life. This relationship remains the same even considering factors such as age, health perception, and socioeconomic level (Maizel, 1987).

#### **4. Methodological Design**

The objective of this research is to approach a model of volunteer action that makes it possible to effectively recruit a significant number of elderly volunteers and to design sustainable programs where commitment to the activity is reaffirmed by people involved.

Initially, we identified volunteer work and civic service initiatives targeted to this population in Montevideo, with the goal of summarizing their main characteristics, their institutional frameworks, their quantitative and qualitative impacts, their various methods of action, and the different locations. The study was limited to organizations located in Montevideo, capital of the country. The first step was to make a reconstruction of the universe of organizations that foster and/or carry out volunteer activities whose main actors are the elderly. With this organizational mapping the goal was to include the broadest possible range of institutions, with a view to encompassing the multiplicity of proposals, methodologies, programs and origins in order to have a clear and precise idea of the existing proposals in Montevideo.

However, in order to achieve a more comprehensive analysis regarding volunteer work within Uruguayan society and more information when developing final reflections, the field work was not restricted exclusively to the actions carried out by the elderly but also to those carried out by young people. Youth voluntarism has a significant impact in Latin America and it was hoped that the successes with this population might inform practice with an elderly population. The comparison proved useful in capturing the strengths and learning acquired by youth through volunteer action, and in comparing the nature of volunteer work undertaken by youth and by the elderly, both with regard to the motives and objectives of this work, and to the more successful modalities and proposals within each age range. At the same time, it was possible to observe that there are certain strategies and proactive modalities within volunteer work carried out by young people whose features are potentially translatable to elderly-targeted proposals.

#### **Theoretical Perspective of the Methodological Design**

In addition to noting the characteristics and most outstanding aspects of institutions, this study also aimed to capture institutions' conceptualizations of volunteer work, the essential elements present in their action strategies, their opinion of volunteer work—specifically that carried out by the elderly—and their sense of how the elderly are viewed in our society. The

main feature of the qualitative research is its express proposal to look on these events, actions, standards, values, etc. from the perspective of the subject that is being studied. This strategy is usually expressed in terms of seeing through the eyes of the people who are subject of study. This approach has guided the field work, in the utilization of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. That is, *empathy* lay at the core of the whole research process.

Data collection techniques used in this research were the following:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Secondary data analysis
- Direct observation
- Telephone survey of the elderly in Montevideo
- Focus groups

### **Instruments: Data Collection Techniques**

#### *Semi-structured interviews*

The objective of comprehensive exploration pursued by this work implies that one of the most appropriate data collection techniques is the qualitative interviews. Why carry out interviews? It is stated (Mella, 1998) that:

We cannot observe anything. We cannot observe feelings, ideas and intentions. We cannot observe the conduct adopted some time ago either. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attribute to what is happening in daily life. (...) The qualitative interview assumes that other people's perspectives are significant, cognizable and can be made explicit. The researcher's task is to be taken to the interviewee's own world and thus make a correct interpretation.

The main motive has been to encompass the institutional perspective from its main actors and to explore its conceptualizations and views with regard to a specific issue. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were carried out on the basis of a clear and detailed guideline of questions framed within the topics of interest. Nevertheless, the questions were flexible enough so as to grasp ideas that do not always come up directly from pre-designed questions.

The concepts and perspectives of Symbolic Interaction are useful to the appreciation of the essential ideas of institutional proposals. The Symbolic Interaction approach holds that, in order to understand how and why people lead this kind of initiative, it is vital to bear in mind where they place themselves. This tendency assigns a key importance to the social meanings people give to the world surrounding them and it is based on three initial premises: The first premise states that "the person acts with regard to things or even with regard to other people, on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them". The second premise states that "the meaning that something has for somebody is developed based on the ways

other people act with respect to that somebody regarding the thing in question. A person learns to see the world from other people.” The third premise affirms the idea that “social actors assign meanings to situations, to other people, to things, and to themselves through an interpretation process. (Taylor and Bodgan, 1986: 24 et seq.)

Premises one and three will be useful when exploring the ways in which an actor—in this case an executor—interprets events and even other actors by developing strategies rooted in religious and civil beliefs. If we can understand the meaning of many things for the people we interviewed, then we will be able to project other subjective elements, such as the reasons for volunteering. These are key aspects if the aim is to develop an exploratory analysis *encompassing* different perspectives and therefore their various ways of action and essential motives as well as the reason for carrying out volunteer work, their views concerning the elderly, and how the diversity of images of people of this age are built up etc. The second premise will make it possible for us to observe the ways in which subjects undergo changes as a result of their integration into a specific space, facilitating the search for strategies *to learn to see things* from other perspectives, especially with regard to their self-image, attempting to theoretically construct the best modalities and the most appropriate undertakings where this premise is present, the latter being one of the key objectives of this study. In view of the above, the aspect that has been taken into account when conducting the interviews is if through these organizations the image of the elderly undergoes changes not only in the elderly themselves but also in the society as a whole.

In order to approach the institutional universe, a mapping of the organizations engaging in elderly volunteer and civic service activities in Uruguay was prepared. To this end a diversity of resources (detailed in Annex 1a) were used. Annex 1b shows a listing of 162 identified institutions carrying on this type of work.

For the purpose of facilitating, ordering, and properly representing the presence of the various institutional modalities, a process of delimitation and organization of the universe comprised by 162 identified institutions was developed in the approach to the field. Thus a series of typologies were established in relation to three pillars:

Position held by the Elderly within the organizational management. Here the aim was to assess whether the elderly played a key role in the programming, design, and execution of the programs or not: in other words, if they held managing positions or played leading roles within the organization, if they were responsible for the administration of resources, delimitation, and design of activities. Ultimately, the determination considered whether the organization was carried on by the elderly, or whether they held managing positions but more as participants or direct actors rather than as elderly directors. Two categories were established: organizations managed by elderly and those of mixed management—those having elderly in their management boards but with young professionals holding design and execution positions.

Order of the organization: This variable assessed if the entities belonged to the public sphere, that is, if they were part of the state or government structure or if, on the other hand, they were undertakings, nongovernmental or nonprofit organizations belonging to the civil society sphere.

Origin and profile: Through the combination of the previous point with the spheres where different initiatives emerge and depending on—for the CSOs—the connection stated by the organizations to different spheres of civil society, a sub-categorization was elaborated in order to put an end to the process of delimitation of the universe.

In this way a table of double entry was made with 162 previously selected institutions (see Annex 2, table a). Subsequently and in order to establish the group of organizations to be reviewed by means of the interviews, a sample respecting the weight of each institutional subgroup was drawn. Fifty organizations were initially selected to be interviewed (*N* absolute) (see Annex 2, table b), considering that such number was sufficiently representative of the total universe. But the criterion for ending data collection by means of this technique was established according to the criterion of theoretical saturation, that is, when the inputs or data provided by the interviewed organizations were not relevant or repeated. This stage was reached before expected and to this end, a total of 32 interviews were carried out. In this way, all typologies and modalities were encompassed, namely:

- Civil society organizations: Unions; organizations linked to state agencies; training associations; service and promotion organizations; organizations linked to churches; cultural and sports associations; lobby organizations.
- Government institutions: institutions and agencies belonging to the central or local governments.

Through different probes and studies of available sources, a total of **162 institutions** (4 belonging to the state public sphere and 158 to the private or civil society sphere; 25 managed by elderly and 137 of mixed management) which in some way or other promote volunteer work among the elderly were identified in Uruguay. **Thirty-two institutions** encompassing all types of organizations were interviewed.

Other techniques used for the organizational analysis were secondary data analysis and direct observation. The analysis of documents provided by the institutions themselves contributed with secondary and additional data to the information gathered by the interviews. In meetings celebrated with the selected organizations the purpose was to obtain material and written documents related to their work development and to the characteristics of the target population.

Direct observation was another technique used in the interviews as well as on the occasions where it was possible to observe the development of their activities. In each interview, special attention was paid to two aspects: a) the individual features of each person interviewed including their expressivity, their enthusiasm when delivering their speech, their language and metalanguage; b) the features of each institution's building not only in respect to its structural solidity but also to its infrastructure and material resources.

*Surveys*

For survey work, a **sampling** criterion was established. It consists of a procedure by which true values of a population are inferred through the experience gained with a group containing a lower number of cases than the population. The sampling has a series of advantages that facilitate the approach to the universe object of study without affecting the reliability and representativeness of the findings. In general it can be stated that the sampling allows for a considerable reduction in the material study costs, a higher speed in information gathering, and the achievement of more understandable data. A sampling plan sometimes offers better estimates of a population's features than the population census itself. This fact has often been pointed out by the statisticians who prepare the national censuses since a project of such magnitude produces a bigger number of non-sampling errors of major importance than the sampling errors generated from the estimation of population parameters.

Furthermore, the **random stratified sampling** criterion was selected to survey the target population. The random sampling criterion involves a method of selection in which each element of the total population has equal opportunity to be selected. The selection of the sample is objective and the sampling error can be measured in terms of probability under the normal curve. In order to obtain a stratified random sample, the population is divided in groups also called strata (clusters) that are more uniform than the population as a whole. The elements of the sample are selected at random. The estimates of the population based on stratified samples are usually more precise (smaller sampling error) than those obtained by simple random sampling criterion.

In short, by means of this specific sampling modality, representative data for the entire population can be inferred respecting the presence of elderly in different areas of the city. This modality also favors the development of sampling since the available time and resources would not have made it possible to carry out a comprehensive assessment.

The survey was conducted on the phone. Given the fact that there were no face-to-face meetings which sometimes hinder honest responses, this modality favored the frankness and sincerity of respondents' responses since total anonymity was granted. Survey rejection by the elderly population is often explained by the prevailing insecurity in our societies, which means that they are afraid to open the door to strangers. The telephone implementation of the survey avoided this situation, which does not guarantee a reduction in rejections but eliminates one of their causes. Finally, costs involved in door-to-door work were reduced compared to the face-to-face survey, but the same results were achieved.

To enable assessment of the sample, Montevideo was divided into 24 neighborhoods or areas whose elderly population was taken into account in order to assess the weight each neighborhood should have in the sample. The need for a 250-case sample was assessed for a representative sample of the elderly population of Montevideo (population 1,325,968 million). See Annex 4 b for the detailed formula and calculations carried out for the generation of the sample.

The form, which comprised 36 questions, was designed for assessing the quantitative impact of volunteer work within this population, its key features, as well as the general assessment concerning the level of offer and diversity of current modalities in Montevideo. (See Annex 4 a)

A **representative survey** of Montevideo's elderly population was conducted, during which **250 people** were surveyed by employing a form of 36 open-ended and closed questions.

*Focus groups*

The discussion group, a technique widely used at present, is essentially a non structured interview with several people at the same time. The discussion group is planned around certain key issues. According to its promoters, it would have the advantage of bringing to the surface differences among the participants and contradictions involving their replies which constitutes a way of grasping the meanings behind the opinions actually given in the group.

This technique was used by skilled informants and volunteer actors with great background in the field, to seek some reasons and grounds for the main characteristics found in elderly volunteers. Furthermore, the purpose was to collect input that would serve to nourish and complement, by means of selected actors' opinions, the general view regarding what the best programs and modalities involving the elderly would be.

As a starting point for the discussion, a debate of the main findings obtained with the implemented techniques described above (interviews and survey) was held on these occasions. Two focus groups were carried out. One of them was carried out with skilled informants, technical personnel, and managers of the organizations considered to be the most representative on the basis of two main criteria: a) in quantitative terms, because they include the greatest number of elderly volunteers b) in qualitative terms because they have been performing the tasks for a longer period of time with a civic service or a committed volunteer profile and with a long-term projection and/or planning and objectives of greater scope than the rest. The second focus group was developed with the actors of volunteer actions, that is, the elderly who carry out volunteer or civic service activities (see Annex 5).

Two **focus groups** were carried out with the participation of leaders of the organizations working with the elderly or with volunteer elderly.

## 5. Objectives of the Study and Main Hypothesis

### Main Hypothesis

The main hypothesis this study aims to evaluate is that **the community work and civic service carried out by the elderly can become a factor of positive development both at the individual and the group level.** It is hoped that the benefit can go beyond the borders of the individual with regard to self-accomplishment, can provide benefits for their health and abilities in order to benefit the organization within whose framework they develop as well, and to benefit the country and society as a whole.

While comparisons are made between civic service carried out by young people and that carried out by the elderly, the hypothesis that generational interaction can benefit the elderly and young adults and adolescents as well is also assessed. The purpose is to confirm that the elderly who had been previously isolated by the challenges of the post work period can be repositioned and challenge these stigmas by finding mechanisms by which to recover their sense of belonging and relevance in the social sphere. Volunteer work and civic service exercise is one of the ways to build new scenarios involving the relationship between society and the elderly.

### Objectives

#### *General objective*

To detect through the analysis of the various institutional offers and through the analysis of volunteers' main features, the best and most appropriate ways and the best programs for generating elderly volunteer work that is both sustained and of high quantitative impact.

#### *Specific objectives:*

- To rebuild the institutional scenario made up of these organizations by carrying out an exhaustive analysis of their main features.
- Based on an analytical and comparative perspective, to reflect on the main strengths and weaknesses of the various institutional proposals.
- To obtain the institutional objectives of each offer, as well as the paradigms and key concepts that explicitly or implicitly guide their operation.
- To observe offers and results of elderly-oriented proposals.
- To identify basic features, profiles, preferred areas and main obstacles that the elderly are confronted with in the development of volunteer work and civic service.
- To apprehend the reasons why these participation activities make so reduced an impact in Uruguay.



- To develop a comparative analysis of the divergences and main strengths of the volunteer work performed by young people versus that performed by the elderly.
- To rescue the main assets and learning of the aspects referred to above in order to assess the main requirements for elaborating appropriate programs aimed at strengthening the elderly's civic and social participation and involvement.

## 6. Main Findings

### Governmental Initiatives of Volunteer Work among the Elderly

Three public entities have been identified as playing a role in the promotion of volunteer work among the elderly in Uruguay: (i) At a national level the Social Welfare Bank (BPS); (ii) at a local level, the Secretary of the Elderly of the Municipal Government of Montevideo (IMM) (iii); the APEX Program of the University of the Republic, academic institution of the public sector. Each one of these entities has a mission or specific institutional mandate since it depends on the role it plays within the state structure. The analysis made in this section only includes the BPS and the IMM, while the University is included in the following section.

BPS is the public entity in charge of the administration and fulfillment of social security rights in Uruguay. Its main function is to safeguard the well-being of all the country workers, both active and passive, to whom it provides a series of benefits and social services. Its key objective is to promote the social and individual development of its beneficiaries so as to complement, by supplying goods and services, the basic protection granted by social security. At the same times, it centralizes the public system of social welfare of the country. The BPS constitutes the only state entity conceived to see to the retired and the pensioners; it is a space specifically devoted to providing services for the elderly, and has an area of "social services" that centralizes these initiatives. This area promotes various activities and actions aimed at serving the elderly from a comprehensive perspective that considers the biological, psychological, social, and cultural aspects of the individual.

The main duty of the IMM is the provision of services to the entire population of Montevideo. The town council has an elderly secretariat which launches and develops all initiatives designed to promote and support this target population. Within the secretariat, the figure of the President or Director-General occupies the highest role. He/she is the head of a management body and a technical body basically composed of social workers, psychologists and geriatricians.

In both agencies, the promotion and development of volunteer work for the elderly is one among a variety of areas and tasks. The difference lies in the support modality. In the BPS, the promotion is developed indirectly, by financing, supporting, and training the institutions that carry out volunteer work with the elderly and also some actors that play a managerial role within the same.

At the IMM, however, volunteer work holds a more central position within the activities carried out by this agency. There, promotion is carried out in a more specific and direct way: a volunteer is promoted and trained regardless of the fact that he/she holds a managerial position in some organization or if belongs to an institution. Volunteer activities are specific and focus on the so-called “home escort.”

As far as the educational area is concerned, the BPS targets its training to the elderly leaders who manage the various institutional initiatives.

The training that IMM provides is addressed to all the elderly who perform volunteer work, regardless of whether they do it within an organization linked to this public agency or not. The volunteer training course aims at embracing the most relevant aspects of the elderly population and at providing essential tools for the future intervention.

Both institutions have requirements for the support provided to elderly-targeted institutions (BPS) as well as for volunteers who develop their activities within the entity framework (IMM).

In the case of the IMM, the selection process of volunteers is carried out according to a psychosocial profile prepared by the technical staff of the elderly secretariat. In view of its results, they select the best place for volunteers to carry out their activities, since “harmonizing the user’s and volunteer’s profiles” is considered essential (Elderly Secretariat, IMM).

Both entities state that both the elderly beneficiaries and the participants in the various institutional proposals share a number of common features: “...loneliness is the key issue involving the elderly from all socioeconomic levels, which is linked to the lack of protagonism and citizen participation” (Elderly Secretariat, IMM).

However, a series of virtues or assets have been found in the elderly who come to these entities to carry out volunteer activities: “A great deal of energy, strong desire to provide a service, to communicate, to give what they can give and take from others what others can give, they are thirsty for learning. The image of the elderly as vacillating and timid people is a stigma” (Elderly Secretariat, IMM). These volunteers show a significant sustainability in the development of volunteer work. According to the data provided by the technician interviewed at the IMM, the drop-out rate does not exceed 20%, a significantly low number. The IMM has put a particular process in place that promotes the successful sustainability of volunteer work: “When some problem involving lack of volunteer’s response or abandonment comes up, all volunteers gather in an assembly and talk to the person involved. The assembly is important because it generates cohesion and incentive; experiences, problems, concerns are shared and resolved; it is like a space of sustainment for them” (Elderly Secretariat, IMM).

Even though BPS and IMM are public organizations belonging to the state, they have not established a modality of a written formal contract. During volunteer training, the elderly are

informed about their rights, duties, and limits of their activities, regardless of where they perform them. But there is no contract, commitment of permanence, or even a document that guarantees the sustainability of the work initiated by volunteers, or one that guarantees their rights and explicitly indicates their obligations.

No organizational or coordination process aimed at strengthening the initiatives and/or improving the impact and scope of the BPS and IMM have been implemented. No joint efforts have been made either to elaborate a registry of the organizations developing initiatives addressed to the target population.

### **Civil Society Organizations**

Social organizations developing volunteer work opportunities for the elderly constitute a varied and relatively heterogeneous group. Within the framework of this study, 158 programs and institutions were identified and 30 civil society institutions were interviewed, inquiring about their characteristics, history, and capacities. Given the confidentiality agreement signed with the interviewed institutions, opinions are not attributed directly to any of the organizations and quotations are identified with a code referring to the type of organization. The list of the 32 institutions questioned appears in Annex 3a and the corresponding codes can be consulted in Annex 3b.

#### *The origin of the entities*

In general, these initiatives begin within other organizations, then develop as their own particular entities as they consolidate their identity and specific profile: “This association originates from the courses given by the fund, at a time when we are forced to retire, taking position at sixty years old; therefore it is a massive retirement. (...) We met, we began to share, and we felt the wish to continue with the group until, well, until we decided to form an association with legal status” (S 1).<sup>2</sup>

In some cases, the impulse for organizing an institution is generated outside its members, generally by the managers and technical staff of the mother institution, and is driven by the detection of problems among that population and the need for creating opportunities aimed at overcoming them, as the following quote expresses: “That early retirement brought a very major problem, because we were very comfortable at work, because we were fit to continue. Then as the Bank Fund has a group of technicians they said: “we are going to help all these people to get ready to make such a sudden decision, so fast, to make it more tolerable” (S 1).

Beyond the emancipation from the mother institution, all of these organizations maintain the original organizational profile, pursuing the objectives and institutional mission of the organizations that went before them. “We were born from a union and continue with the union struggle until now” (S 2).

However, the independence they show is solid and sustained. This is reflected in the fact that authorities, managing boards, and the structure of mother organizations does not affect nor

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<sup>2</sup> Codes refer to the type of institution. Code listing is attached as Annex 3b.

interfere in the dynamics of these institutions. The emerging organizations have independent hierarchies and *modus operandi*, and render accounts of their activities and methods to the organizations from which they come.

Religious organizations are an exception, due to their close association with church hierarchy. Although the design, coordination, execution, and evaluation of the mission and activities they carry out rely on laymen leading the group or association, the ultimate organizational responsibility for supervising the activities falls on the priests. “The ultimate responsible is the Educational Association of the Younger Conventual Friars. Below that, those who provide the options are an equipment of laymen, with its director, the teaching staff, the psychologist, the social worker, and service staff” (VAI 1).

With regard to the **connections and associations** of these institutions, some were found to have international connections to similar associations or entities but of a more solid structure. In some cases, this is because they come from an international organization; in others, the ties established with foreign organizations strengthen after their consolidation.

There are also many ties and connections among institutions. Several entities have important ties among themselves, whereby some support and accompany the work performed by others and on some occasions even share activities. As they are in fluid and continuous communication, an inter-institutional network promoting the coordination and organization within this universe is established without seeking it directly. “We have excellent communication with three organizations that make elderly volunteer work. We get along very well and keep in touch almost all the time. Sometimes, when we can, we pay ourselves a visit and do joint activities” (OSP 1).

#### *Permanence, sustainability, and soundness of the organizations*

The assessed institutions have a **history** in the institutional scenario with an average of 11 years of life. However, an important deviation within this universe is observed as some entities have been in existence for 30 years and others less than 5.

With regard to their **structural soundness**, the organizations show a high degree of strength. Most of them have a clear and formal structure, and except for some cases, all have legal status, having been registered at the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) as nonprofit civil associations. This status provides them with a series of rights and duties. Only 5 out of the 32 institutions interviewed do not have legal status.

Legal status grants a series of benefits and tax exemptions to the organizations that are required to be governed by by-laws that regulate and formalize their operations, their structure, and their organizational hierarchies. Furthermore, legal status provides the entities with the necessary symbolic legitimacy for establishing an image of reliability and sustainability, which facilitates the exchange with other public and private organizations, legalizing their field of action and improving their access to contacts and national and international ties, agreements, and subsidies. In addition, legal status can also be interpreted as a way to generate sustainability and continuity of service. It means then that these

initiatives transcend the individual interests of managers; they are instead a response to some detected need.

The registration of the organizations at the national registries is catalyzed, since BPS and IMM require legal status as an essential prerequisite for support.

As far as their **organization chart** is concerned, the analyzed institutions share a series of distinctive features as social entities. Hierarchical structure is defined by the existence of a managing committee, composed in its entirety of elderly individuals, made up of eight members elected biannually by means of the secret vote of their partners. “There is a managing committee ... We have our own by-laws and everything is registered. In accordance with our by-laws we hold elections every two years, we elect people by secret vote, a total of seven, we are all unpaid, in a total of eight positions: president, vice president, secretary, pro-secretary, secretary of records, member 1, member 2 and treasurer and their deputies. There is also a fiscal commission, with their respective deputies” (**OSP 2**).

The organizations hold that this procedure, in addition to guaranteeing the freedom of choice and fulfillment of the requirements pre-established by the MEC, legitimizes the managing committee and provides them with transparency since they are direct representatives of the full members and users of the various organizations.

#### *Human resources*

With regard to **human resources**, there is great heterogeneity. In some cases they are composed almost exclusively by volunteers and in others by an important number of contract-based personnel.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the existence of volunteers in the organizational core is a feature shared by all the assessed organizations.

Several entities have technicians and professionals who carry out volunteer activities. They carry on the activities, either educational or recreational, developed within the organization, and thus constitute the core of the organization.

In other cases, these professionals offer services directly linked to their field of knowledge. That is, they do not carry out recreational or educational activities but practice their profession, knowledge, and experience directly: for example, physicians or psychologists who provide free services.

In several entities, volunteer work is a common practice among professionals after retirement, because many of them cannot practice their profession any longer even if it was the center of their lives. In these entities, the elderly see that their experience is highly valued, and this role confers upon them a new position as important and necessary actors.

The technicians and professionals who serve as volunteers or contract-based staff are psychologists, social workers, physicians (especially gerontologists), teachers, and trainers.

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<sup>3</sup> On the whole technicians or professionals are hired to carry out specific activities requiring expertise or special skill. In those cases technicians are hired with the organizations own resources or means of agreements with state entities or international agencies.

The professionals associated with medicine and social development are those with more presence in these organizations.

They also have many non technical volunteers who give training courses or workshops on several subjects. In some cases, these people belong to the organization without any specific qualification but with knowledge and experience and with the ability to convey it. “Those who know something teach it, that is the slogan, and all of them are unpaid” (OSP 4).

In these cases, the organizations recognize the volunteers by dignifying their work, as the following expression reflects: “The one who teaches song is not a teacher, but a boy with a marvelous voice, who we call the professor, and we appreciate his commitment.” As it can be observed, calling him teacher means appreciating his task, as some interviewed states “as we cannot give him monetary gratifications, we do it symbolically” (PASBS 2), revealing the importance of his work. This in turn stimulates the continuity in the development of volunteer work by promoting permanence, but especially promoting the elderly’s self-esteem which, as it was previously stated, is deeply affected during transition to old age.

The **age of volunteers** is very heterogeneous and although they belong to the oldest age range, there are many practicing professionals who convey their knowledge through training and by engaging in activities.

Many differences associated with **organizational consolidation** were also found in this category. The most solid organizations with clearer prospects convene a greater number of both volunteers and paid technicians and professionals. These organizations also have greater capacity and more economic and relational resources; as these factors are measurements of the organizational soundness and management capacity, it can be asserted that the most solid organizations are the ones with more professionals.

With regard to their **structure**, the organizations rely upon a nucleus of partners or members who perform daily activities, who are augmented by an oscillating group who carry out volunteer work or are just service users or participants of a specific activity. The **number of members** is very heterogeneous given the different institutional dimensions and levels of convocation, that in this universe are very dissimilar. There are organizations with as few as 15 to those with more than 250 members.

#### *Connections and contacts*

Several institutions have signed **agreements** with, or have been granted **subsidies** or specific **supports** by other entities, either for human or financial resources. Most of the connections are established with the already analyzed public institutions, BPS, and IMM. It can be concluded, then, that public policies and corresponding agencies for the promotion of this population perform their task efficiently—that is, they provide continence and promote volunteer work among the elderly. Twenty-seven out of 32 assessed organizations count on this kind of support and consider it essential for institutional sustainability.

Furthermore, according to the organizations interviewed, the **connection to public entities** facilitates the communication with other institutions of similar orientation and promotes

networking. “We are connected with the BPS and are supported by the Municipal Government through the Elderly Commission, and through this commission we are in touch with CICAM, with the Catholic University, with Vida Ascendente (Rising Life). This is very important because in this way we coordinate work and join forces which makes us stronger (...) to a certain extent we achieved this thanks to the IMM because it was there where we met” **(OSP 6)**.

In some cases the organizations have signed **agreements with international organizations**, usually institutional networks undertaking the same tasks, such as the “Red Time” network, a regional network of Latin America and the Caribbean (**CICAM**). Many institutions of similar origin and national perspective perform networking **(OSP 1)**.

#### *Financial resources*

With regard to **economic resources**, most come from the **dues** that members pay monthly. In general, social dues are very low, in view of the fact that one of the usual problems confronted by the elderly is economic. However, an alternative undertaken by some organizations is the establishment of various levels of contributions depending on each member’s capacity and on the position held in the hierarchical structure of the organization: “We have three member categories: a special category, the Managing Board, pays sixty pesos, full members pay forty pesos. And the majority are collaborating members and they pay twenty pesos. Sometimes we organize a raffle or receive a donation” **(AF 1)**.

In the case of organizations with a solid structure, this contribution grants the users the right to access all the activities carried out by the institution. But given the low income that the monthly dues represent, most of the time it is not enough to cover all the initiatives and activities of small institutions. These organizations resort to a series of strategies in order to increase the available economic resources. Among other activities, raffles and drawings, dances or parties, bingo or other recreational activities are organized in order to generate more income.

When these resources are still not enough to cover all the organization’s expenses, another collection mechanism is developed within organizations that offer courses. In these cases, each member who participates in a specific activity pays **private dues** which are used to pay the teachers of the courses. There are some institutions that raise funds through **agreements or grants** by means of specific programs or that are supported by their mother organization, the latter being more frequent within religious organizations.

### **A Broad Range of Activities**

Organizations develop a huge diversity of institutional proposals, indicating that there is a broad range of options for the elderly to choose among depending on their own personal interests. Institutional offers are shaped according to users’ profiles and demands and are adjusted to the objectives each one of these entities pursues.

All the assessed institutions have their headquarters in Montevideo and concentrate their activities in this city and its surroundings. However, five institutions also carry out activities in the country. These activities range from those of a recreational nature to those which provide education, support, or continuity.

*Social-recreational activities*

Through the organization of shared lunches, parties, celebrations, gatherings, and meetings, games, walks, and other activities, the institutions offer the elderly opportunities for amusement and entertainment within the company of peers, where they do not need special abilities or skills. These institutional proposals collaborate with breaking the social seclusion process suffered by the elderly.

**Recreation as a work technique** is a work modality that softens, enlivens and therefore **facilitates the approach** of a multiplicity of **complex topics** for this population. Through games or recreational activities, aspects of daily life can be worked on, social problems of our community or the problems typical of the process that the elderly go through are approached, creating opportunities for reflection and interpersonal communication. By way of example, a grandparents' club watches and discusses films referring to current problems or to the elderly. In this way, they have at their disposal a space where to express their opinions and reflections. These workshops are developed by gerontologists and professionals belonging to the social and health sector, specializing in elderly care. In this way, recreational activities are mixed with reflection, instances coordinated and guided by experts in elderly care. This space is by all means important since the elderly do not have many opportunities to engage in these kind of reflexive activities in view of the fact that their social relationship circle is often restricted to their household sphere.

In other cases **intergenerational integration** activities are promoted: "To celebrate grandfather's day, we went to the theater with a school and we saw a play that showed how important and valuable grandparents are and that we have to enjoy the time we spend with them because they have experience and wisdom for the great deal of life they have lived" (AC 2).

*Activities of dissemination or social communication*

Several entities develop initiatives aimed at promoting their activities, providing services, or simply communicating with their users, for example the elaboration and distribution of newspapers, tabloids, and magazines that present information targeted to the elderly and promote activities developed within the organization.

At the same time, they create an **inter-institutional communication** opportunity, among the users and with the rest of the community. "There is a section for reporting who is sick or if something happened to a grandfather or family member. If we need to collect money or something of the sort, we also write it there. We also have a space where members can publish poems or stories of their own and we also have a space to report if there are problems in the neighborhood, a power cut, or anything of the sort" (VOE 2).



In other cases, these spaces become training and learning opportunities that, in turn, establish levels of **social communication** not only with members or users of the organizations, but also with the elderly community, especially those who are not linked to any organization and who are, as an interviewee puts it, those who are more in need of these communication tools in order to come and not be confined to their private spheres: “There is a journalism course and a radio program in SODRE (Official service of radio and television broadcasters). That program provides education, and the students of that journalism course are the ones who organize the program and look for guests in accordance with the subjects that are being dealt with” (**OSP 1**).

The **lines of care** for the elderly have the purpose of responding to concerns, providing companionship, or providing care in case of an emergency. They are answered by elderly who have been trained for the task, whose role is to provide guidance and emotional continuity, or simply attentive ears when an elderly individual is in need of help.

*Graphic arts and theater courses and activities*

The organizations carry out **courses or workshops** on a diversity of activities and handcrafts: “Handicrafts ... Knitting, crochet, tapestry, painting courses and theater groups ... flute and drawing classes... Spanish cards, textured paintings, jewelry, a wide range of options among which the elderly can choose according to their own personal taste and abilities.” (**OSP 9**). In some cases, the organizations also offer **cultural spaces and activities**, such as reading rooms, literary workshops, narrative and poetry readings.

Specific training on topics related to the vital stage of the elderly offer initiatives that support and accompany the process the elderly are going through and complement the handicrafts. “Every week we organize workshops and choir sessions, theater and also “murga” (popular music developed during carnival) lessons. If the elderly want to express their body or voice they can do it, not only with their hands.” The purpose of these activities is to create spaces where the elderly can use physical expression: “to move our bodies and keep fit in order not to age and deteriorate.” (**AC 2**). These are spaces of artistic and cultural expression, where the elderly can channel and convey their emotions through several ways of expression, not only the oral, which usually is the most difficult. They represent in turn the opportunity to explore and learn things that had been postponed during their active working life.. These proposals encourage people to continue developing aspects of their life that had been subdued so far and in this way acquire new abilities and skills; in short, they are encouraged to go on learning.

*Intellectual training activities*

Organizations also carry out activities whose purpose is to develop the elderly’s **intellectual abilities**, helping them to keep mentally fit and active.

Each organization offers a wide variety of proposals ranging from talks or workshops on general topics such as the environment to courses on art or history.

Collateral problems such as smoking and drugs are addressed to introduce “grandparents” to the main problems involving the young and young adult populations. Thus, they are

provided with tools that enable them to better understand the processes their grandchildren go through, strengthening intergenerational interaction and communication.

But the subjects directly related to the process the elderly go through have a stronger **presence** in the organizational universe. Class subjects range from the physical aging process to the intellectual, psychological and emotional aspects involving old age: “We have a course entitled ‘What is happening to us?’ that deals with issues like what is to be an elderly person, the risk of depression, feelings of uselessness. We work on that because we are not useless; we can be very active but sometimes we feel this way and we have to be together and understand ourselves in order to lead a better life” (**PASBS 4**).

The elderly are guided into the understanding of the process they are experiencing, and how to prevent several problems, which are in general linked to their health. This constitutes a way of reducing the uncertainties of that new stage of life where fear of death is always present and death appears to be closer.

Furthermore, there are some initiatives aimed at seeking **sustainable solutions** to one of the most important problems detected in this age group in Uruguay: **economic hardship** and the reduced income: “A project where a governmental and a nongovernmental organization of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Peru participated, whose purpose was to train elderly who were living below the poverty line in the implementation of productive project (**OSP 1**). The design of small undertakings and training in business management are alternatives seeking to reintegrate the elderly to the market by generating proposals that can help elderly with fewer resources to become financially self-sustainable individuals.

Other specific training proposals involve high impact **civic service-oriented** undertakings. One of the initiatives is presented as an example of a good combination of the assets and strengths detected in this population and service, planned as long-term sustainable initiatives. Since 2002, a service and promotion organization has been developing a training course known as “Urban ecoguides.” This course, aimed at training tourist guides with an emphasis placed on environmental problems, is exclusively targeted at elderly, which in the view of the managing institution is an added value: “The fact of being elderly makes them act on the basis of their own memories, their links with the area, the neighborhood. In addition to the training, which by the way is very intense as they are given notions of architecture, music, botany, history, they have to have basic notions of foreign languages, they are thought to represent live history. Then, it is thought that some kind of thematic tourism can be done. That is, if someone had relation to architecture then he/she can carry out guided visits. But, basically, they are preserving their personal memory, and their personal relation with spaces.” (**OSP 1**).

This case is much more than a specific training course, since its aim is to promote civic service by the elderly using one of their assets: their memories of a specific historical time, knowledge, and experience that only those generations have for having been actors of that history, capitalizing in addition on the expertise they have accumulated during their active working lives. The past, along with their experiences, learning, and memory, will die with the

elderly if it is not conveyed to others. History is enlightened by the lives of each member of the community.

In addition to being a past-time, this proposal represents the important task of proving that the elderly continue to be useful and valid as individuals and as citizens with their own unique assets. With their characteristics and life stage, they can offer and provide services and benefits that others cannot.

#### *Sports activities*

The organizations interviewed also carry out sports activities. According to some statements, these initiatives seek to accommodate the whole person: “Actually the elderly are bio-psychosocial beings. If we pay attention only to the social and psychic area we leave another unattended. For that reason we organize activities focused on the physical area, something that easily deteriorates and which limits the activity of the elderly” (AC 1).

Several entities carry out activities aimed at **physical training and keeping fit** through exercise, activities that are guided and adapted specifically to this population.

Organizations seek to approach **all the elderly’s spheres** as a **bio-psycho-social subject**, implementing activities for entertainment and also for exercising at all levels as social, physical, and cultural beings. Even handicrafts, which might appear to be only a hobby, have a higher purpose and a greater scope: “If they stop using their hands they lose exactitude and ability; for this reason these activities are good, because they require concentration and precision” (OSP 7). In this way, elderly acquire new skills and abilities and at the same time, they keep their motor functions active and in shape. Intellectual activities enable the elderly to go on training and learning, acquiring knowledge and building their capacities; they can be tourist guides, they can initiate new economic undertakings, they can convey their experience, expertise, and knowledge, they can be teachers; in short, they can be the leaders of their own life and that of others.

#### *Volunteer activities in their own right*

The development of a sustained and honorary service addressed to the elderly exactly matches the definition of volunteer work. Therefore, what elderly do within various organizations is essentially committed volunteer work. This generates a great deal of concealed volunteer work which is therefore not assessed as such. In this research, such modalities of volunteer work development have been called concealed **volunteer work** while a number of other activities also developed by these organizations have been characterized by this study as **volunteer activities in their own right**.

In this universe a greater inter-institutional diversity was found with regard to the perspective, modality, and proactive orientation of the organizations. Proposals addressed to a diversity of social sectors, where the scope and conceptual directionality of actions differ greatly among themselves.

There are **assistant-like initiatives** which are developed to meet specific requirements: “We visited a group of dwellings and they explained to us their difficult situation, to which we

responded by providing them with a basket of goods, we requested the collaboration of our mates, we took clothes”, or those which are systematically developed to meet some detected specific need: “We visited an elderly nursing home and we have obtained wheelchairs, crutches, etc. for whoever is in need of them. We collect money when necessary” (VAI 4).

There are also other **not so assistance-like activities** with clear trends toward the development of a more committed volunteer work, activities ranging from curriculum supports and tutorials to the development of non formal educational activities within a formal education environment undertaken by elderly with a specific field of expertise where they share their knowledge: “We collaborate with the school, we are 15 or 16 grandparents and some of us teach carpentry, electricity, sanitary and grandmothers teach painting, handicrafts, candles, sewing, theater. We conduct workshops in groups for each grade. We go once a week, an hour and a half; we have been doing this for three years.” (OSP 7). This latter case involves volunteer work framed within a very strong institution, in a sustained, committed and long-term manner, which clearly comes closer to what is called civic service.

Another modality develops **civic service initiatives**. The intervention, by means of providing support and care to the most vulnerable groups of Uruguayan society—women and needy children at social risk—is one of the most illustrative examples of this: “A group supports a settlement and a “merendero” has been organized, helping the children with their homework, working with the interested mothers, they have been purchased cloths, obtained a sewing machine. In this way they began to sell and they grew and the improvements in their huts began to be visible” (VAI 2).

If we take into account that civic service is “an organized period of substantial commitment and contribution to the world, national, and local community, recognized and valued by society, with a minimum monetary compensation for the participant”, these initiatives comply with the definition of this idea except for the fact that a monetary compensation is received. These initiatives constitute a true contribution to the local community that in turn aims at achieving its self-sustainability whose continuity and commitments are worthy of imitation. “There are parishes in Malvín which have been trained to work with AIDS victims. There is a house to accommodate relatives of people with AIDS or people from the provinces with HIV who have to commute to Montevideo in order to receive treatment. That group works with them in that house” (VAI 3).

Among these modalities and organizational initiatives, those which have a stronger presence and more quantitative impact are those activities of volunteer work and civic service between peers, that is from elderly to elderly: “There is a health commission that supports those who are sick and keeps them company. And once a week the rest of the members are informed of the situation of the others, if anyone is ill, they ask the others to go and visit him/her, etc.” This activity has important implications, causes and consequences, both for the family and society (VAI 5).

Elderly care provided by others who are not their relatives represents an alternative for those family groups with too many obligations and tasks. Therefore, peers play a key social role as supports for patients’ families. In addition, patients are accompanied by peers who are

willing to do so and who may have more empathy and better understanding of the process given their proximity in the aging process. In this way, just as people interviewed suggest: “The patient who is being cared feels important and the friend looking after him/her also feels important... Two hours is very little, but the family is grateful because they can rest assured that during that time their family member is cared for and they can fulfill their ever increasing obligations” **(OSP 8)**.

Along the same lines, but focused on the emotional care provided by peers, there are some places where elderly are given emotional care and support: “And when they find out, or when they know that someone has died or that they are going through a very painful crisis, another continence group has been created in order to provide relief and from their pain help them feel they are not alone and that they have to go on.” Although the care and stability given by the family are very important, those who have already gone through similar circumstances, such as the loss of the spouse, can offer better relief. Mainly for this reason, these support strategies take on considerable importance for the elderly.

There are also some initiatives as health care centers, where elderly retired professionals work together with young active professionals and join forces in order to provide free care for those who do not have access to health services. This constitutes a paradigmatic case of volunteer work since it offers an essential, basic, and accessible service to people giving the retired professionals in turn the opportunity to practice their profession for the group’s benefit.

#### *Services and benefits*

The **institution offers a wide range of services**, from health to aesthetics services. In general, these services are designed to facilitate the access of the lower resource population. The services are not free but the required amount is minimal in comparison to the market price. “A qualified podiatrist comes once a week and takes care of the elderly’s feet for a voluntary sum... feet, especially those of the old women, should be handled with care” **(S 3)**.

Many of the surveyed organizations provide a **battery of resources** which embrace users’ various profiles. Members can choose those resources which better fit their specific interests.

Others offer activities devoted to a specific purpose. Such is the case of an organization whose key purpose is to train “gerontological entertainers”, which involves the training of volunteers for the development of educational activities whose main tool is recreation, but adjusted and adapted to the elderly population according to their features and general characteristics: “The entertainer uses recreation as a tool, but he/she is not only an entertainer as his/her task is to guide, stimulate, motivate people to have a positive and active attitude towards the ups and downs of daily life” **(AF 2)**. In this case, the institution organizes, manages and plans all the activities around the training and practice of gerontological entertainers; this is their key purpose and all their undertakings revolve around this.

Another similar case is implemented in a training institution whose central purpose is to train volunteers to take care of orphaned children or those who live in state homes devoted to the

care and treatment of this population. The training provides the elderly with a better understanding of the process they are going through, minimizing the uncertainties and facilitating its acceptance with all what is involved. Likewise, the objective of the program is the insertion of the elderly volunteers trained for the task in various orphanages where children going through a complex situation reside, so that they sustainably and successfully fulfill their task as “grandparents by choice.”

In these two cases there is a conceptual framework and a specific objective that guides all institutional efforts and resources. But these cases are exceptional since most of the organizations focus on several parallel issues, developing a wide variety of activities for elderly of various profiles.

An overall analysis shows that **recreational, social, or cultural activities** are those with a **stronger presence** and higher impact on the assessed organizational universe. The 32 assessed organizations have an average of 3 to 5 proposals of this kind. In some extreme cases, the number of recreational activities amounts to 10. At the same time, these activities aim at providing the users with a pleasant place, surrounded by peers, where they can be in company and can “have fun, spend a nice time and leave their hole in the ground, so as not to remain confined, all by their own in their places” (**OSP 9**).

With regard to **frequency**, organizational proposals were observed to greatly differ. Some are developed daily while others are carried out every two weeks. In general, organizations are open every day for their users but few have daily activities: these are the most important and resourceful institutions. Most of them have three weekly activities.

A common feature shared by the majority of these organizations is that their activities show a **clear directionality**, that is “from retired individual to retired individual.”

It is clear from this study that a wide variety of volunteer profiles among the elderly require a review of the classical concepts that typically define these activities. But this does not make the initiatives themselves less important. Even those activities carried out by and for elderly in Uruguay play the role of company providers, creating new spaces without which these people would be confined to their private sphere and remain within their homes.

The few organizations that address their initiatives to **other population groups** focus their activities on some specific communities, in general formulating proposals within the community itself, as in some religious communities, or else to vulnerable populations and/or communities. The main issues affecting sectors primarily served by both modalities involve social problems such as poverty and social marginalization, especially in childhood. These are usually due to their reduced local area. In turn, such organizations appear to be the most open to the community and the ones with a bigger number of positive results, both in terms of the elderly permanence in volunteer work and in the commitment to the activities and their sustainability.

In short, there are **few organizations** devoted to promote volunteer or **civic service** actions aimed at addressing social problems, locally, regionally, or nationally. Furthermore,

civic service promotion is very rare. This is not surprising since volunteer work as a committed and responsible modality of citizen participation that is not necessarily linked to subsidization or charity is of recent development.

### Volunteer Work Objectives

Why do these institutions develop initiatives aimed at promoting volunteer work among the elderly? What are the motives and objectives of the various organizations?

The objectives of all **organizations match the problems detected** in the Uruguayan elderly. Moreover, in most of the cases there is a clear **parallel between the objectives** defined by the organization **and the activities** that implement these objectives.

Organizational objectives fell into two categories. The first presents immediate goals that are directly accomplished by activity development. The identified direct objectives pertain to unions, religion, companionship, social and cultural recreational purposes, service purposes and symbolic objectives. The second defines goals in more symbolic terms, and are more wide-sweeping and long-term in focus. These goals generally center on attaining social and personal changes by means of an accumulation of small changes associated with volunteer initiatives.

#### *Objectives pertaining to unions*

Some organizations, specifically trade unions, pursue the defense of the rights of the retired people, that is: “More than anything, we have the union problem and [advocate for] the increase in remunerations of retired people and pension beneficiaries.” (**S 1**). The leitmotiv of this organization is to achieve equity and social justice for all the retired people in the country. In turn, these actions are framed within union agencies of greater impact, which strengthens the movement.

#### *Religious objectives*

Consistent with their origin, all religious organizations have as a fundamental purpose the promotion of **spiritual values** and creation of spaces where these can be promulgated without leaving aside one of the main commandments of all spiritual beliefs: give help to other people, especially the needy.

Values such as solidarity, support for the most needy individuals, and protection of the weakest (especially the most vulnerable layers of society in Uruguay: children and women, and the elderly) are some of the main motives of these volunteers as well as of the institutions. “What we actually want to promote within society are the evangelical values. We want to disseminate knowledge on Christ, and we look for our place in the world in order to be ourselves and in order to reach the Lord and so that others also feel that their life is useful, valuable. And life is useful and valuable if it becomes an instrument of God for achieving a better world. To help those in need, to give them our two hands is a central objective for us” (**VAI 3**).

*Escort*

To become a resource for companionship and support for the elderly appears to be **one of the objectives most frequently pursued** by the organizations that have been assessed in this research.

To put an end to solitude, both real and subjective, as an endemic problem of this population is one of the major goals in the analyzed universe: “We think that there were people who said they didn’t have a voice because they didn’t have anyone to talk to. That is the main objective ... to overcome solitude with friendship.” **(OSP 5)**.

Often, when social networks are very eroded and the elderly are truly isolated, they attempt to build new alternatives for pursuing social relationships, which are facilitated and implemented by these entities, giving these people their *voice* back.

The role of support and replacement or complementation of family roles played by institutions come into play once again: “Here we are a great family, if someone is sick, or needs support, if someone dear to us died we are concerned. Sometimes the family is also suffering at this time and they leave their grandmother or grandfather out, just the one who is more in need of support. This is the main role of the club” **(OSP 3)**.

*Recreational purposes of cultural and of social nature*

“The objective of the association is of a recreational and social nature: we meet, we gather to talk, we organize walks and dinners, dances, and the like” **(OSP 1)**. The social recreation objectives refer to interaction opportunities to spend time with peers by engaging in pleasant activities without any requirements or demands involving physical and mental efforts.

Cultural activities, although they are presented as recreational, also aim to cultivate the participants’ intellectual capabilities: “In this regard we offer them something amusing but also formative: reading books, poetry, history, participating in narrated stories, talks with authors, actors, men-of-letters, etc., entertains but at the same time keep the elderly active and awake” **(AC 1)**.

*Service, intervention, and support to vulnerable populations*

The organizations engaged in addressing elderly volunteer work to other population sectors, especially the more vulnerable, share **two parallel motives** that mutually nourish. On the one hand, volunteer work contributes to the goal of achieving intergenerational integration and reevaluation of the older adult as a social resource; on the other hand, taking care of a disadvantaged population with limited family ties and social networks is beneficial to the caretakers themselves, as is expressed clearly the following: “The central objective is to achieve a stable affective link between the elderly and children in a situation of social vulnerability who have been admitted in INAU. Thus children establish a relationship with significant adults, who can provide them with social and historical roots, who can transmit a history they did not have due to a lack of family continuity. They can also be shown other models of life, different from the environment where they are, to break away from the radicalized stratification. Elderly provide them with incentive, care, support, respect, all the emotional and affective nourishment they might need. For the elderly this is an opportunity



to put their resources at stake, to feel valued, to be able to convey their experience of life to children in need. It is an opportunity of valuation, of importance at the last stage of their life cycle which allows them to leave something to someone” (AF 1).

*Symbolic objectives aimed at producing long-term changes*

Image change: Image change and the promotion of an active old age are considered to be symbolic and long-term objectives. Naturally, each life stage is associated with certain specific roles and social functions, most of them characteristic and exclusive of that age group. These roles and functions involve the establishment of a prototype of codes and behaviors that delimits what is and what is not socially expected from them, or the so-called “having to be” (Parsons, 1996).

Thus, the elderly are by definition grandfathers or grandmothers, an image associates with passivity, low energy, inactivity. This image suggests that parents can depend to look after their children whenever they need to fulfill their daily obligations. Interestingly, this is the key social role that the elderly have played throughout history.

The problem arises when the grandparent role is the only role the person plays. In this context of **restriction of elderly spheres of action**, combined with stigma and complicated by illness. Many organizations work to **counteract the role that has been imposed on them**, attempting to generate a new point of view, one adjusted to the potential capacities and abilities of modern grandparents: “We have to teach society because all of us will become old, and if we do not make of this a healthy saleable stage-in the good sense of the word - no one will want to become old. There is the prejudice that: “I am going to be a worn out old person” but that is an erroneous concept. Because diseases can come when one is a child, young, adolescent, adult and elderly. Then, our mission is to socialize this concept, so that everyone understands that all ages can be lived. And it is beautiful to arrive in the old age where we have our time for our own and we can carry out the activities otherwise, and not only be grandparents, which even though is a marvelous task to which we devote all our love, it is just one of the areas of life. If it becomes the only one, it can become a prison (OSP 6).

*“Make of the old age a saleable stage... be willing to become old.”* This desire to challenge society, break away from stigma, and subvert the established values seems to be an enormous and complex enterprise which these organizations have made their principle goal. Ideally, though, this struggle should begin with the elderly themselves.

The demographic impact of the scientific breakthroughs of the last decades led to an important extension of life expectancy and quality of life. This led to the need for redefining the social space, the roles and functions played by the elderly in the new situation, which inevitably, because of their quality of life and active capability, brings about a major change in the elderly’ s image that enables them to break with the models of the past. “We do not have models, because our adults died young, compared to the present. They died when they were fifty or sixty years old and already very deteriorated. And now, people die in good health when they are over eighty.” (Focus group 1) “In the past one was an old lady who sat knitting and telling stories one’s grandchildren and nothing else. And now one lives much

longer, there are many more possibilities of going out, of traveling. The elderly are more dynamic, they are concerned with how to fill their lives” (VAI 4).

Promote an active old age. The promotion of an active old age as the key objective of the organizations aims to rehabilitate and mobilize the elderly as active citizens with rights, obligations, and useful and enriching potentialities. This end is also related to the previously stated concern: the process of erosion and breaking away from social networks and links. “Old people are very lonely nowadays, there is a great deal of depression, they begin to remain in their homes, they go out less and less and confine themselves at home which affects their health” (VAI 2).

The International Conference of the United Nations on Old age held in 2002 emphasizes the concept of an active old age promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO) stating that it is “a concept hoping to promote policies for keeping people active most of their lives (...) When the environment is appropriate, the elderly have more opportunities to enjoy a more productive life. Active aging is the process of optimization of the opportunities to obtain physical, social and mental well-being throughout life, for the purpose of extending the healthy life expectancy, the productivity, and the good quality of life in old age” (United Nations, 2002: 2).

In agreement with this declaration, the surveyed organizations promote an **active and integrated old age**, a stage in which the elderly develop interests that work kept them from: “And for this reason we thought of doing this, a space where people can make things related to their age, as well as, developing their potentialities for which they did not have time when they were young and now that they do they devoted it to this” (OSP 2). Two goals are achieved through active integration. Elderly remain active as self-accomplished people who fulfill their postponed wishes. At the same time, the elderly contribute to society by conveying, via volunteer work, their life experiences, knowledge, and expertise for the improvement, through volunteer work, the conditions and major problems of the society they live in, becoming thus leading citizens.

Intergenerational integration. A society for all ages is a fair and integrated society, where all vital stages enjoy the same rights. A society with intergenerational integration makes it possible for children and young people to establish close ties with the elderly. In this way, they lose fear of old age which they see as a stage of suffering and boredom, a ghostly image that society has introduced into their minds since childhood: “That children become aware ... that we not only go for a walk and lose time but only but also convey useful things. And in addition that children see that grandparents can also move” (VAI 2). “The situation now is very different and we have to set the example to young people. In the same way as we learn from young people their ideals, we have to show them that is nice to share some of their time with us, that we are not only cross or bad tempered but reaching old age is very pleasant” (OSP 4).

Current societies have imposed a separation between elderly and young people: separating the productive from the useless, the beginning from the end. These two divergent and

antithetical age groups, from a life stage and social position perspective, must interact with one another in society. The elderly commonly have difficulties interacting with rebellious youth and young people have difficulty interacting with the elderly since they link old age to diseases, passivity, and quietness. “I see that young people look at us in a very strange way... but it is not only their fault because many elderly have fear of young people and that is shown.” (VAI 1).

Despite their apparent differences, however, each group has something to offer the other. Youth experience many problems when they enter the labor world because they often lack experience and the opportunities to gain it. Thus, young people become the so-called “useless without experience.” Conversely, elderly have a great deal of experience but they cannot make use of it as they are not sought for the development of productive activities. Because old age is rejected in favor of what is new, young, and vigorous, the elderly become what could be called “useless with experience.” Both share the burden of heavy stigma and stereotypes imposed by the group, which leads them to be two socially marginalized populations with integration difficulties.

Therefore, intergenerational communication is crucial. The elderly can share their experience by training and teaching young people, accompanying them and supervising their first approaches to the labor world and guiding their work. In return, the elderly can become engaged in life and gain energy from the youth, strengthening the assets of every vital stage and building a true society for all.

### Practices and Methodologies of Work

The objective implementation mechanisms of the various organizations are modified. Institutions devise different dynamic strategies and methodologies of work.

#### *Recruitment of volunteers*

The recruitment modality of organizations is usually carried out through invitation and **interpersonal stimulation**, or *word of mouth*; word of mouth is the simplest and most effective way for organizations to expand their staff of elderly volunteers: “It is contagious, because a friend tells another about the organization, which gets enthusiastic, and then she comes, and so on. It is the best form, we made leaflets, we spent money and it was useless because those who come do it because a friend has recommended them. The mouth to mouth is easiest and better way” (OSP 7).

Another tool is the **promotion of activities**, either specific or general, through material and journals published by the organizations, as it has already been mentioned in the activities section.

Regarding religious organizations, the information and dissemination centers are the various parishes anchored within the community which serve as reproducers par excellence.

Volunteer activities, on the other hand, are **excellent reproducers** and an efficient way to disseminate the various activities undertaken by the organizations, as one woman interviewed points it: “On Saturday we visited Piñeiro Del Campo(nursing home for elderly), there were some visitors as well who would ask us, where are you? What is your way of action? Some people want to know our way of action, which has already got beyond the zone where the Foundation is located” (VAI 2).

*Methodology of work with volunteers*

Making the elderly feel that they play a leading role, both in the activities and in the entity in general is the most effective methodology to achieve a sustained commitment to volunteer work within this population: “We try to make elderly feel as leading actors, not only of the specific activities where they take part or manage but also of the whole organization. They play leading role, they participate in all decisions and in all changes within our institution” (AC 2). The participation of the elderly in decision-making as well as in the design and execution of the activities undertaken by the institutions is one of the points most emphasized by the assessed organizations. By means of assemblies or systematized meetings, the elderly are involved and commit themselves. They feel linked not only to the specific activity they develop but also to the organization in general.

In any case, activities are always **supervised and approved by the management body** of each entity, which encourages and values volunteer work, in many cases with clear relationship guidelines. “We believe that with rules and guidelines, we do not undermine autonomy, quite the contrary. It represents a guarantee for the work and space that frames volunteer work, it provides continence to the elderly and behind them is the institution and the technical team that supervises it. And they are willing to receive these guidelines because they also feel protected, framed in something that provides them with continence and protects them” (AF 1).

One of the aspects most taken care of by the organizations is the **monitoring, guiding and retaining** of volunteers. Although the leading role played in these activities is one of the keys for success regarding the systematization and sustainability of any volunteer work, the sustainability and reference of the undertaken work is also essential. Feeling that their activities are framed and supported and that in the event of any problem that may arise they can count on the organization support is essential, both for the beneficiary and volunteer. “We hold monthly meetings with the referents of each program, and we make sure the network works. Then, [we provide] support: What do you need? What happened? What did not happen? What problems did you have?” (VAI 4).

**Teamwork** as a work methodology is considered an important tool when working with volunteers, since it promotes institutional commitment and group cohesion. The sense of belonging to a group whose members share motives and activities has a double effect: on the one hand it breaks down the feeling of isolation and loneliness suffered by the elderly, and on the other hand, it strengthens the systematization and commitment to the task. The commitment of elderly volunteers to the organization, to the beneficiaries of their work, but above all, to their volunteer peers and companions. “They develop a group community intervention, they are a working team, and this adds a special feature to the program as even

though volunteers are always framed within an institution, in general they perform individually. This, in addition to being a requirement is one of the keys of the program success, their motivation towards the task and the elderly's permanence in the activity. When that begins to make noise, motivation immediately declines" (AF 1).

**Emphasizing the experiences and knowledge** the elderly gained during their life is another method organizations pursue to promote and keep elderly volunteers. This is not detrimental to the necessary training that they should receive in order to carry out serious social actions but, on the contrary, it means appraising the assets characteristic of this age group, including their experience and background: "We believe that all of us have a background; I may not be good for intellectual activities, or another may not have a creative side, or recreational, or spiritual. It does not matter, because all of us have a background which we should share so as not to lose it (OSP 2).

In general, when organizations are questioned with respect to the role played by the elderly within the organization, responses coincide: **volunteers play a leading role** in decision-making. They participate in the design, planning, and decision of the work areas and the activities to undertake. They are also leading actors in the resolution of specific problems that arise in the development of activities. "That work is our mission, not only to give them material to handle but let them play a leading role. In other words, there is not a difference among those who make and those who receive: we are all one" (OSP 7).

However, that leading role is circumscribed to specific areas, essentially to activity design and proposals where they play a leading role, either as volunteers or users. The modalities of intervention, techniques, and work tactics are prepared and carried out by **subject matter specialists** or, in the event that the organization does not have professionals, the institution's managing body. "Suggestions for activities are received from different groups, but everything is supervised by the Board of Directors, groups do not make their own decisions. We delimit the action boundaries. Proposals that come from the parish are then evaluated, we see if they are in consonance with organization capacities and bearing that in mind they are accepted or not. In other words, each group directs but is monitored, supervised by us" (VAI 4). In some cases, their leading role is restricted and delimited; that is, not all volunteers participate in decision-making but only certain key actors.

#### *Training offered by the institution*

Training refers to how and with what intensity organizations train their volunteers, including the commitment and seriousness with which they address the volunteer work they promote. This also shows how valued volunteers are within institutions, in the assumption that providing them with inputs and tools strengthens volunteer work, trains them to confront the various situations and problems that arise in the field work, and prevents them from facing violent or frustrating situations. Training also produces better performance, which is reflected in the better care provided to volunteer beneficiaries.

In some cases **previous training** is mandatory joining a group and developing volunteer activities. In these cases, training is specific and aims at preparing the elderly for future activities, providing them with tools and specific knowledge that make it easier for them to

carry out volunteer activities to work effectively with the beneficiary population. “Training guides... In basic notions, on volunteer work, on rights, duties, limits, involvement, it is an introduction to volunteer work and how to work with people” **(OLC 2)**.

These introductory trainings are carried out after the beginning of activities, and become systematized instances for the updating and dispelling of doubts or problems that arise during the development of a task.

However, these cases were an exception among the analyzed universe; in general, talks and training workshops are designed in accordance with the demands stated by the members of the institution, and the elderly have the freedom to choose whether or not to participate.

Some training occurs as **specific and isolated instances**, without systematization. In these cases, training is just one more activity among many that organizations offer to their members. “We try to see that people do a course on volunteer work whenever there is one. Because in those courses on volunteer work the importance of permanence is explained” **(OSP 7)**.

#### *Formal relationship*

The relationships within institutions are not formal. Out of the 32 public and private organizations interviewed, only one has signed a formal contract with volunteers.

Several organizations have **regulations** or operation **by-laws** but these specifically address the managing hierarchies and operation modalities as a civil association, which derives from its legal status. There is a gap, however, with regard to regulations establishing rights, duties, and limits of volunteers: a framework that delimits their activities and provides them with guarantees in the development of their undertakings. The agreements of permanence and the boundaries of intervention are expressed verbally but **there are no written contracts or regulations** that ensure and delimit the rights and duties of both parties.

The majority of the entities explain this practice and in relation to a generational feature: the importance of **the engaged word**, of the verbal commitment, of the moral duty towards the cause to which they expressed commitment: “We are a generation in which the word is much more important than a paper. We were raised on that principle, on the word of honor” **(OSP 7)**. According to the opinion of people interviewed, this verbal commitment is as or more effective in this population than a commitment in writing. Practice also suggests that it is successful, in that the elderly remain in activities.

When organizations are consulted with regard to the sustainability of elderly volunteer work, their reply has been unanimous about the permanence and commitment to the task: “We have not had any problems of permanence, in ten years we never have had such a problem. On the contrary, people themselves want to continue. There is a great deal of commitment” **(S 1)**. The “moral contract, that of the word” is successful, since as people state, there is strong permanence and sustainability. There are certain generational features, the word of honor in this case, shared by the elderly, which is a characteristic asset of this population

sector. It is highly valued indeed if we bear in mind that commitment does not require anything more than the one established with the undertaken task.

#### *Evaluation instances*

Evaluations, both of the activities carried out and of volunteers' performance within the organizations, can be regarded as an indicator of learning and evolution of abilities. But there are not many instances of formal evaluations. **Evaluation** usually appears as a **spontaneously** developed process from and among volunteers, but not formally promoted nor established formally by the entity's management: "We make a totally informal evaluation that is how students respond to how they are treated, or satisfaction of the courses. Because at the end of the year all groups inevitably make a party for the teacher and give him or her a present. They respond with satisfaction. It is an important indicator, non-rigorous but it speaks by itself. In general it is and has been present in all courses" (**OSP 1**).

#### **Action Leading Actors and Beneficiaries**

##### *Main features of the elderly*

When the assessed organizations were questioned about their members' profile, they responded that although each volunteer has unique and differential features, a number of common **characteristics and features** can be observed.

One of the most common features shared by most of them is **loneliness**. "People who are alone need or wish to communicate with other people, because they have energy and will as well." Volunteers want to actively participate and are characterized by their dynamism, refusing to lead the passive life society imposes on them.

Another feature is the difficulty in adapting to a new role. The process of retirement leads to abrupt changes both in the performance of roles and the life pace they were used to, which unleashes a process of readjustment and repositioning both at private and social levels. The process of separation from the labor world means a loss of social prestige and a separation from relationship networks generated during active life, including friendships built on work. Based on these changes and breaks, the passage of an active working life to a situation of inactivity is lived by people in a traumatic way, with difficulties in adjusting to the new reality. "All of them believe that retirement is a passage to uselessness" (**VAI 2**).

Volunteer organizations reverse the usual process of isolation by providing spaces devoted to accompany the difficult process the elderly go through, discovering as one interviewed woman puts it "one retires from work and not from life. We have to live the path, the stages". For this reason, the existence of spaces for the promotion of an active integrated old age is very important, where the elderly can carry out activities where they feel useful and can process their social readjustment more easily. "Almost all of us in this organization are retired. As a result, the encouragement of volunteer work helps these people feel that at least for a while they do something that makes them feel useful, feel once more that they are worthy and can contribute a great deal" (**OSP 10**).

According to the assessed organizations, volunteers **share a series of values** that encourage them to develop these tasks. In addition to their need for companionship and social repositioning, they share a desire to carry out activities that benefits others; service and solidarity are characteristic aspects of elderly volunteers. In religious organizations, these values are linked to the spiritual which the elderly highly emphasize and share: “the precept is to carry out action, not only to study, not only to be in communication with God, but also to be part of your community” (VAI 5). In many cases, this religious aspect is the one that drives volunteers to join that specific group and not another, where they can find proposals that fit their interests but which do not embrace the spiritual side they are most willing to cultivate. “I became a widow when I was fifty-two, I have male children. I have taken classes on kitchen, ceramics, painting, but that was not enough. I was looking for something spiritual that made feel comfortable with myself and come to terms with my life and I found it here, when I turned to God and thus with my brothers” (VAI 2).

According to the organizations interviewed, the elderly share, as a generation, a very important **solidarity in vocation** and a great capacity for commitment. These people are very punctual and attend all activities, unlike those of other ages. In short, organizations state that “there is a trend toward altruism and prosocial behavior in volunteer profiles” (AF 2). Most of the volunteers are female, married, and family integrated women. Professionals of the social or educational sector have, by vocation, the desire to carry out volunteer activities. “We have many retired teachers, teachers who cannot live without children” (S 3).

#### *Preferred issues and activities*

When organizations were asked about the areas or activities that produce greater impacts both in volunteers and beneficiaries, they responded that **recreational and cultural areas** appear to play a key role. “The most successful activities are social ones. Based on my experience through all these years within BPS and IMM workshops, I can say that elderly seek a great deal of amusement” (VOE 4).

The elderly see these events as offering the company of peers, activities that provide amusement and entertainment, a space designed to meet their needs, where they do not need any abilities or special skills: a safe and accessible place. “It is an activity where they feel free. They can move, they can sing, they can dance, and especially they can be with others like them ...” (VAI 2).

#### *Degree of permanence*

The various interviews confirm that elderly show **great commitment** and steadiness to the volunteer tasks they undertake. Volunteers themselves state the importance of commitment and the need for it to be sustained: “You make a moral commitment; that is something I highly value.” (S 2). **Sustainability** in the development of activities is only affected by disorders, diseases, and health problems, characteristic of this age group. From the perspective of the organizations, the systematization and commitment of elderly to the tasks they develop is emphasized in all the assessed cases: “Elderly commitment is sustained and we care for them a lot” (VAI 4).



## Work Beneficiaries

**Organizations are integrated by the elderly** and in turn their **activities are addressed to this population**. Organizations consider this a differential attribute that places them in a privileged space within the institutional scenario. “This is the only institution of elderly for elderly. Because the majority of the organizations have hired young people, as technical staff, as teachers or managers. Here we are all elderly.” (**OSP 1**). This kind of organization focuses their attention on the entity members or users, exclusively providing service to the elderly who approach and join the institution: “All activities are addressed to members ... they are from retired to retired ... they are addressed to people over 65” (**VOE 3**).

However, regardless of that explicit directionality, 24 out of the 32 interviewed organizations were found to develop at present or in the past, some kind of recreational or cultural activity addressed to another population sector, such as arts exhibitions in education centers, theater plays, projects in orphanages, etc. In other words, even though providing care to other population sectors is not expressly stated as an objective, a contribution to intergenerational integration and an open attitude toward interaction with other age groups can be observed, although it is somewhat isolated and sporadic.

Furthermore, in those cases where entities focus their interests on other population sectors, which are mostly linked to the development of a sustained civic service or volunteer work, their activities are targeted at children and adolescents. “Beneficiaries are not only elderly. Beneficiaries can be multiple, but we work especially with children” (**VAI 2**). These entities manage to extend and enhance the importance of their work by combining care and work with two generational ranges, with the elderly as leading actors and children as beneficiaries. “There is an intergenerational integration. Children and grandparents can be taken care of at the same time, grandparents carry out activities that please them and make them grow, feel useful, etc. and children have grandparents who they often yearn for” (**OSP 4**). At the same time, these initiatives promote intercommunication between two extreme population ranges, contributing in this way to the attainment of a fair and integrated society, a society for all ages.

In these last cases, there is a direct correlation between objectives and the beneficiary population when organizations address their activities toward other population sectors, especially youth and children. In all cases, the key objective is to shift the elderly’s image and facilitate intergenerational integration.

In short, volunteer actions carried out by the elderly and addressed to other populations or age groups or population profiles are very rare. When they take place, most of them are specific and time-limited, and do not involve any commitment with regional or local problems. By way of example, organizations that develop choir lessons go to local schools at specific dates or celebrations and offer shows at the education centers, but this choir functions primarily for the elderly, who see this entity as another recreational activity that sometimes is carried out in other centers.

## Admission Requirements

All entities have either implicit or explicit **strong admission criteria**. Among the entities having **explicit admission requirements**, many explain the reason for this selection: “Sometimes a friend said to another: “how nice is that what you are doing!”, and she invited her to participate, which actually complicated work. How do you tell someone that he or she has to leave? For that very reason, we make an interview, which serves as a filter, and then he or she signs a sort of preliminary contract” (AC 2).

Elderly **selection** for volunteer work is a key issue in order to have success in the undertaken initiatives. There are a number of personal features that can facilitate the development of activities by the elderly, but organizations need to be able to count on their volunteers possessing some basic skills they can use in the performance of volunteer activities. The ability to assimilate this learning and reproduce it successfully together with personal features, are two of the aspects more frequently taken into account by the organizations when carrying out the selection: “Not all those who want to be volunteers can do it, at least not specifically in this program, and we believe that is another one of the keys for the program permanence and for it to have good products. At present, the selection is made by means of an interview with one psychologist. Based on this and on the rest of the inputs we are prepared to decide if that person tallies with the task we develop” (AF 1).

Furthermore, **selection is not only carried out for volunteer** members of the organizations but also for participants. Organizations state that this is important since the “climate” within the institution is one of the factors that ensure members’ and volunteers’ permanence in the organizations. For this reason, requirements are strict and rigorously met: “The requirement is that each new member has to be presented by another member. If he or she does not know anyone, the person is analyzed in the first interview during which his admission is evaluated and then he or she is admitted for 3 months on probation.” (OSP 7).

In other cases, requirements **exclusively involve the organization’s authorities** without there being selection criteria for participants or volunteers. “For members we have not established any requirements. For the Managing Board we have. All of them have to be evangelist” (VAI 2). Religious organizations share the same requirement, no matter what activities and work modalities they carry out.

## 7. A Survey of the Elderly

In order to understand what the elderly think about themselves and about volunteer activities and civic service, a survey was conducted in the city of Montevideo. The survey analyzed the alternatives offered by different organizations and the main obstacles for their development, preferred areas and opportunities, motives, and the impact volunteer work has in their lives.

### Technical Data of the Survey

The survey was conducted over the telephone, on the basis of a stratified randomized sample (taking the neighborhoods of the city of Montevideo as conglomerates), in which the presence of the elderly was weighed in the different areas of the city. Two hundred and fifty surveys were conducted in the city of Montevideo. The results can be extrapolated to the total of the elderly population with a confidence level of 99% and a sampling error of +/- 6%. Consequently, the survey represents the elderly population of the capital city.

The survey form, containing 36 questions, sought to understand the quantitative impact of volunteer work in this population, its main features, as well as the general assessment concerning the level of alternatives offered and diversity of the existing modalities in Montevideo.

This survey was collected on a daily basis over three weeks, with visits in the morning and afternoon to capture the widest possible spectrum of people in relation to their presence at home.

### General Characteristics of the Respondents

In the total respondents, the amount of women was triple that of men. Taking into account that, based on the data of the last population census conducted in Uruguay<sup>4</sup>, the proportion of women aged 65 or older is 65.5%, the sample is adjusted with precision to this feature.

Table 1. Distribution by sex in the survey

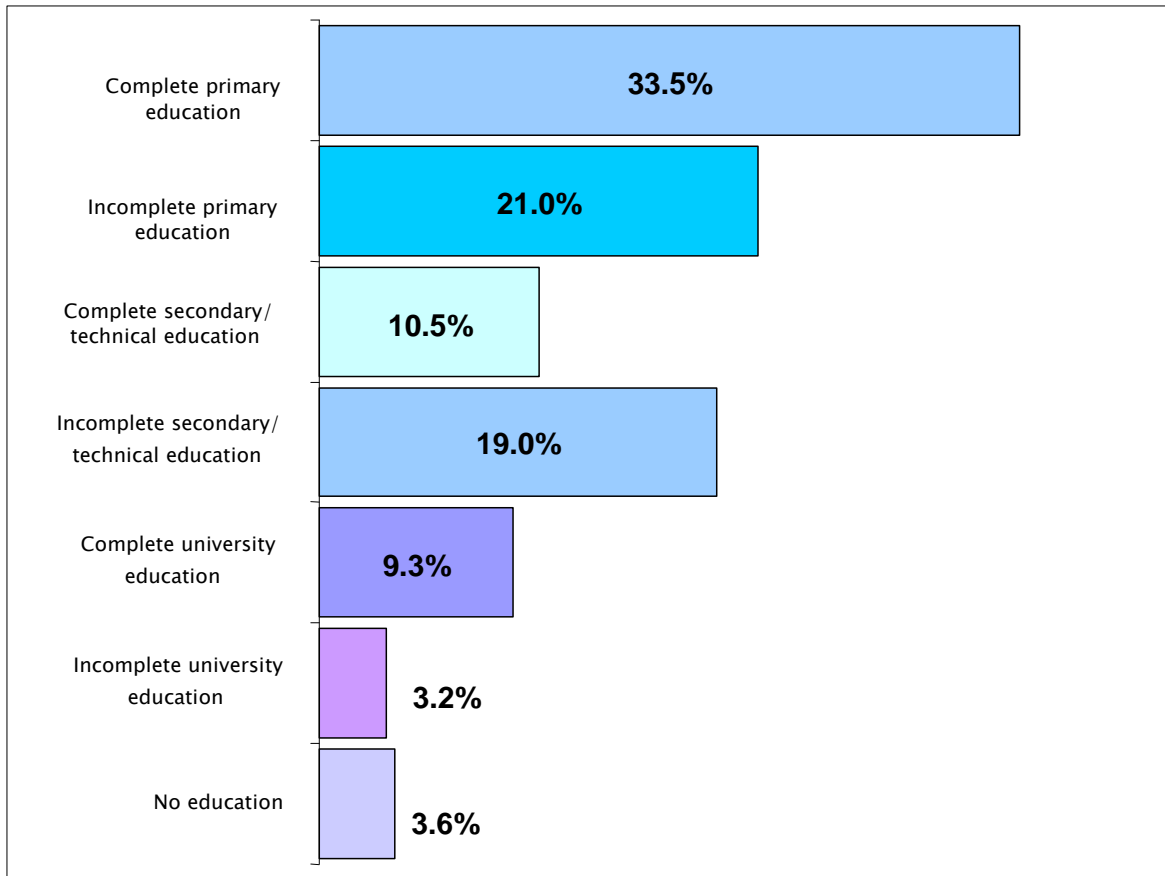
Sex	Relative Frequency	Percentage
Male	77	30.9%
Female	172	69.1%

**63.1%** of the total surveyed **were aged 65 to 75**. In the population data of reference (2004 Census - Phase I), this age group had the greatest quantitative importance. Also in this case, the information collected by the survey matches that of Montevideo.

Only a small percentage had completed university education. The majority completed primary education, as shown in the diagram.

<sup>4</sup> 2004 Census - Phase 1. National Institute of Statistics. [www.ine.gub.uy](http://www.ine.gub.uy)

Figure 5. Level of studies attained by the surveyed population

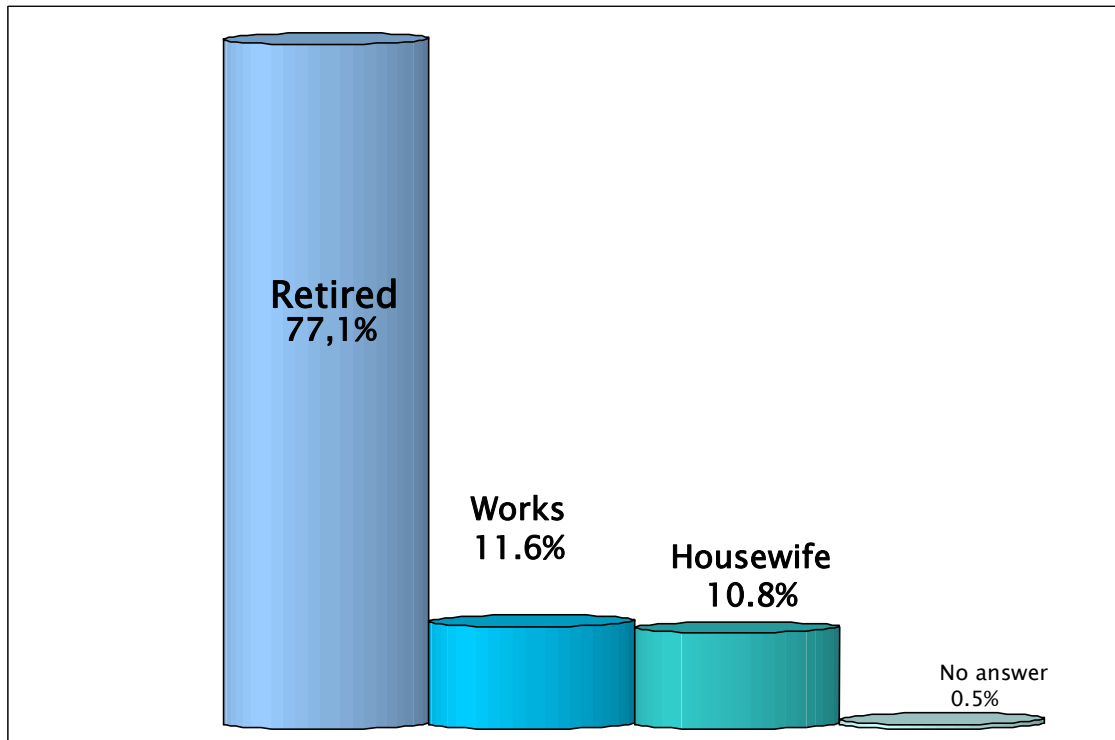


The level of education of the respondents was also close to that shown by the census, and it is directly related to the educational conditions that characterized Uruguay in the 1900's. In that context, the universalization of primary education was consolidated for all citizens as a fundamental aspect for social, democratic and economic development of the country. However, secondary education was restricted to some social classes, while university education was focused on the elite, which explains the small number of people reporting a university education.

Concerning marital status, almost half of the respondents were widowed (45%); this was the most frequent status within the surveyed universe. Married respondents represented 35% of the total, and these two categories practically comprised the total surveyed, since once accumulated, they represented 80% of the cases. The remaining 20% was composed by 11% of separated or divorced individuals, while a minority, 9%, remained single. This single status appeared almost exclusively in women.

The absolute majority of the respondents (77.1%) were retired, as shown by the following diagram.

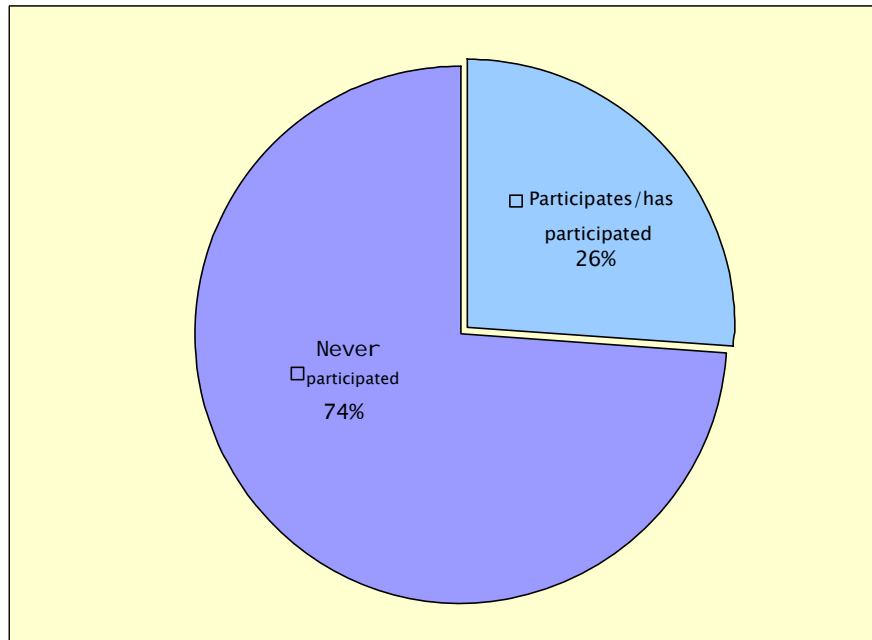
Figure 6. Current activity



### Elderly Volunteers

In this survey, respondents were asked whether they carried out or had carried out at any time, some kind of volunteer work. Volunteer work was explicitly defined as “an unpaid activity aimed at the benefit, enjoyment and/or support of others.” Only a fourth of the surveyed population said they participate or had participated as an elderly person in some volunteer activity.

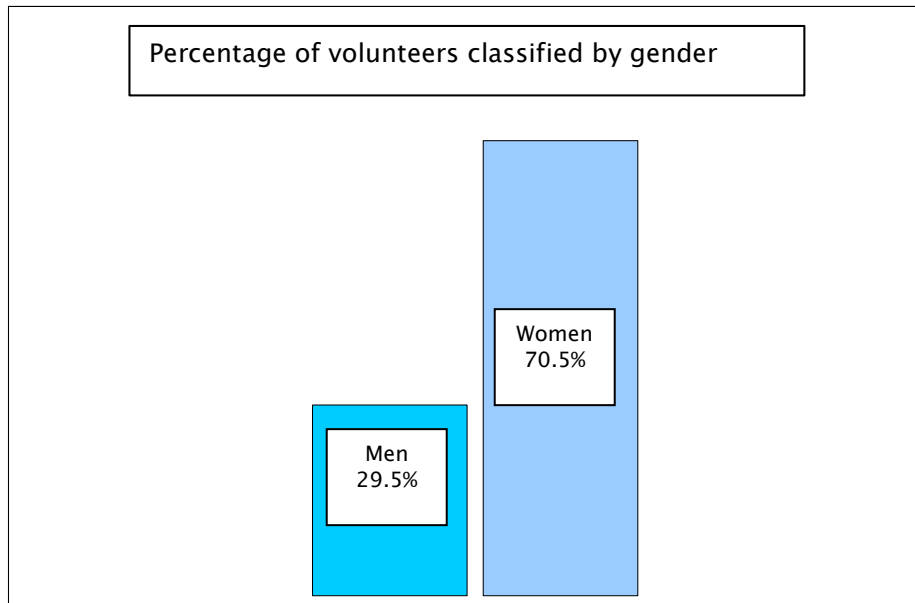
Figure 7. Participation in volunteer activities



The elderly have a relative level of participation in social and civic activities, which could be higher, given the large elderly population in Uruguay. However, **the number** of elderly volunteers **should not be underrated**, since it means that out of four elderly persons, one is carrying out this type of activity, and the remaining 74% is available, potentially integratable and potentially willing.

If the level of participation is **broken down by sex**, initially there is a clear preeminence of women in this type of activities, since they represent 70.5% of the cases who indicated they participate or had participated in some kind of volunteer activity as protagonists.

Figure 8. Distribution by sex

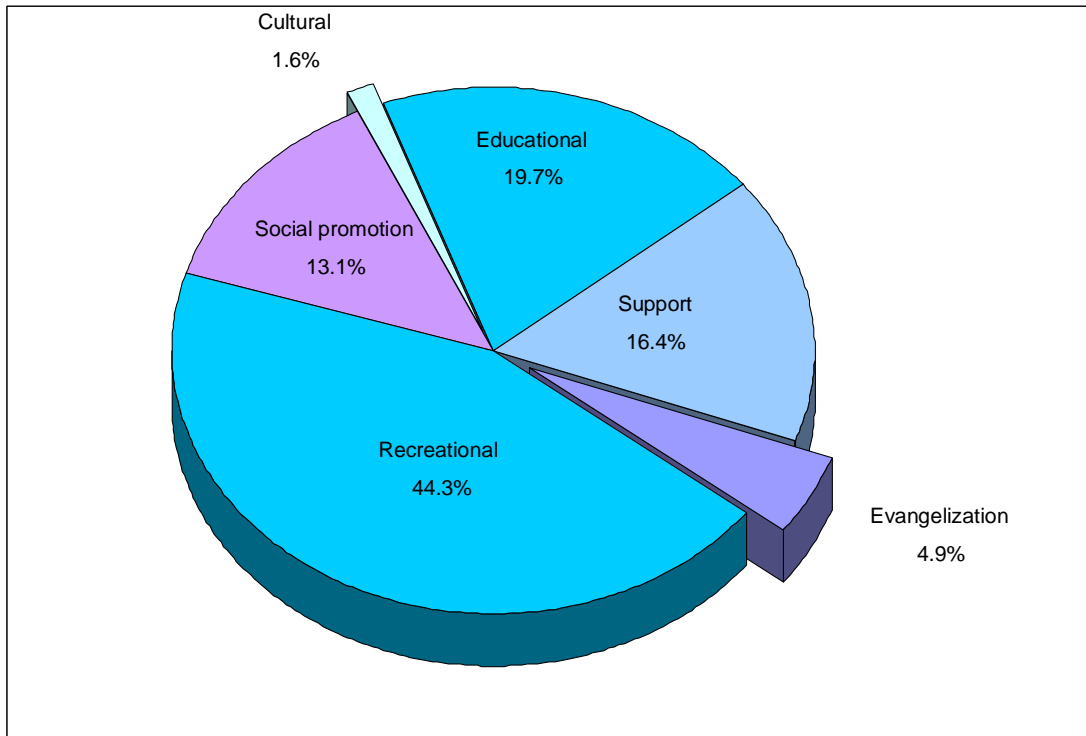


If the participation by gender is weighed in relation to the real quantitative presence in the survey (almost identical to that of the population, as indicated above), 25% of the surveyed women and 23.4% of the surveyed men answered “yes” to the question: Have you ever participated in some kind of volunteer activity directed to third parties? Although there is a slight preeminence of women over men, this difference is not significant. The widespread notion that volunteer work is essentially a female activity may, in fact, be based on the greater number of women in the population. However, if the participation is “weighed”, the data is consistent with this notion.

### Characteristics of Volunteer Action

With reference to the places in which greater impact is achieved, the respondents were asked about the **type of organization** in which they developed the above mentioned activities. There were three places with the greatest representation: parishes, social and sports clubs, and grandparents’ clubs, which together amounted to 67.3% of the total participation.

Figure 9. Distribution of organizations where the elderly do volunteer work

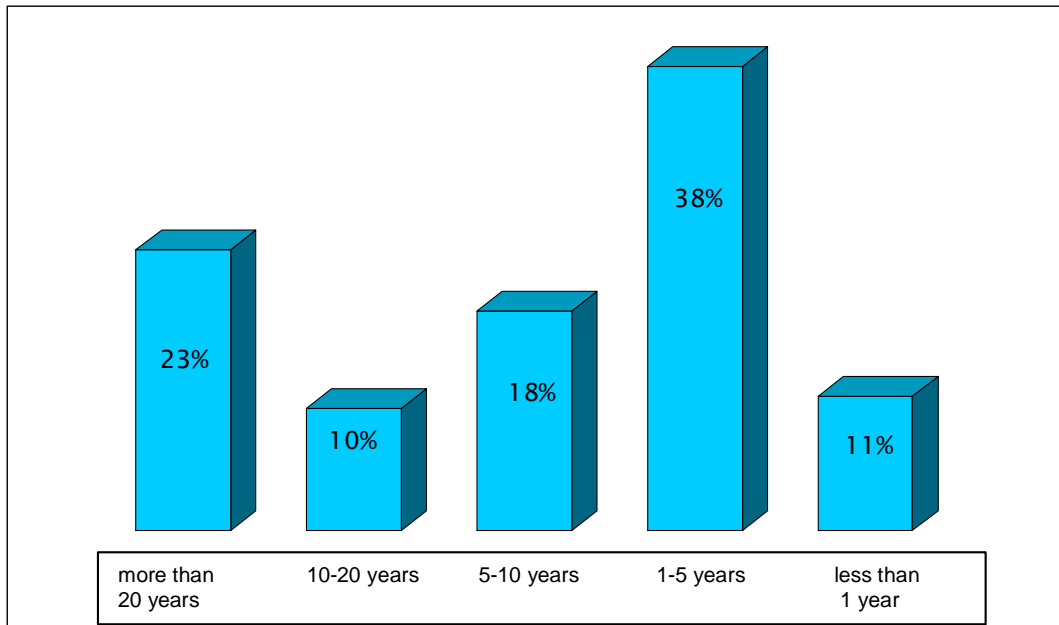


With reference to the **type of activity** developed by volunteers, the interviews showed that recreational activities had the greatest impact (44.3%), followed by educational activities (19.7%). The initiatives aimed at helping others were in third place (16.4%), followed by social and cultural promotion activities, and evangelization activities, with the two lowest percentages.

A generational feature of the elderly is the **important commitment to the undertaken tasks**. They tend to have a constant, sustainable volunteer intervention. The data shown by the survey verifies this trend: only 11% has done volunteer work for less than a year, as shown in the following diagram.



Figure 10. Years of activity



The above diagram shows **the relationship between the continuance of the activities and the organization**. The NGOs show a greater correlation: 33% of the respondents who have been carrying out activities for more than 20 years has a NGO as reference. Only 7% of those who have been carrying out volunteer activities for more than 20 years have done so in neighborhood committees and commissions.

Fifty percent of those who have been carrying out these activities for 10-20 years belong to social and sports associations. The rest is distributed among neighborhood committees (15%) grandparents' clubs (18%), cultural associations (17%), and NGOs (17%). Grandparents' clubs show the shortest permanence in the activities (43%), followed by NGOs and neighborhood committees, both showing 29%.

With reference to the **frequency** in performing the activities, 65.6% of the respondents declared to carry them out weekly.

Table 2. Frequency of activity development

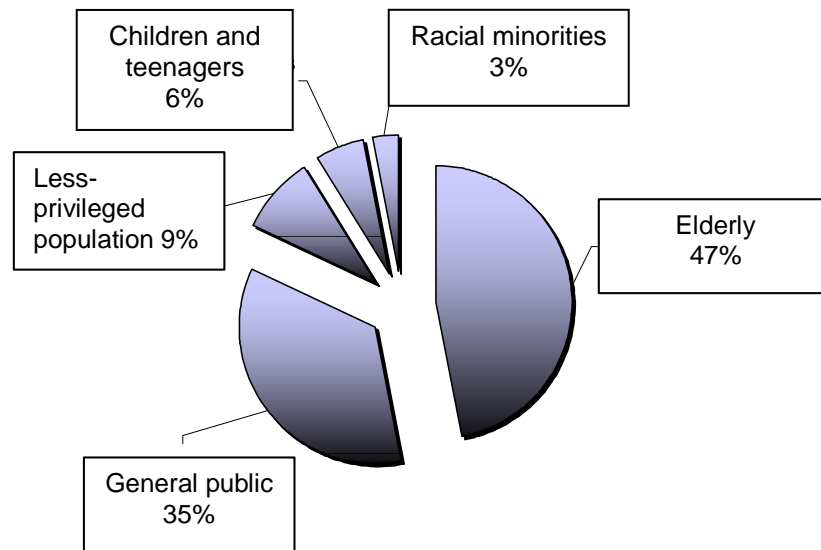
Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Daily	11.4%
Weekly	65.6%
Biweekly	8.2%
Monthly	14.8%
Total	100%

When asked about the **motivations** that encouraged them to develop volunteer activities aimed at helping others, 43% of the respondents declared to have an aptitude for service or

desire to help others. Another 5% declared to do it based on social commitment. Consequently, if these two categories are added up, almost half of the respondents (48%) showed solidarity towards the community. 28% of the respondents declared to develop activities as a hobby and entertainment. In this kind of responses, keeping company was a secondary motive. “Individual well-being” represented 21% of the responses. In the first instance, it can be related both to the need for company, entertainment, and solidarity.

With reference to the **target population of volunteer activities** carried out by the elderly, the following diagram shows that half of the responses explicitly indicated that these were focused on people of the same age range, that is, peers. The following category is “general public”, which amounted to 35% of the total.

Figure 11. Beneficiary population of volunteer activities performed by the elderly



One of the explanations for this phenomenon confirmed in two opportunities during the field study and analyzed in the discussion groups is related to intergenerational integration, where the elderly desire to work and be integrated into inter-generational spaces, they find it very difficult to accomplish this integration. Perhaps, feeling insecure or having low self-esteem, the elderly do not know how to interact with other generations that have different relationship codes and guidelines. Thus, once they consider the advantages and disadvantages, the elderly choose to interact with peers. Although their desire to integrate is not fulfilled, they enter into secure, familiar spaces.

When asked about the **level of participation** of the elderly in the activities they developed, 89% of the respondents declared that there was an important presence of this age group in the organizations. This shows again the trend that the elderly are drawn to one other, and less to inter-generational integration. It may be presumed that a significant number of the 89% of organizations with important presence of the elderly are focused on, and managed by them.

With reference to the **connection** that the respondents had with the organization where they developed volunteer work, the table below shows a clear preeminence of the category “Attendee to activities.” Almost half (47.5%) of the respondents belong to this category. On the contrary, the smallest category is “honorary member”, which amounted to 8.2%.

Table 3. Connection

Connection	Percentage
Member of the board of directors	14.8 %
Honorary member	8.2%
Member (with membership fee)	29.5%
Attendee to activities	47.5%
Total	100%

If this variable is broken down by sex (crossed variables), there is an **important differentiation by gender as regards the connection and the position held** by the respondents in the organizations.

Table 4. Connection crossed with sex of the respondent

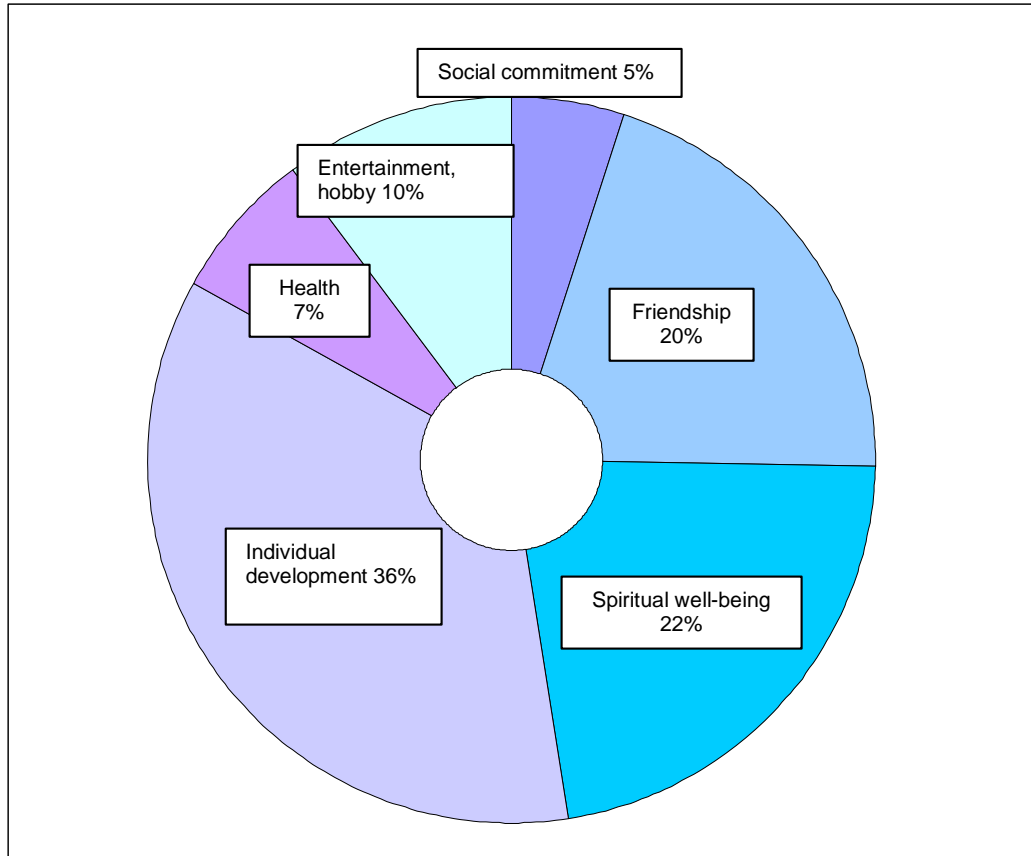
Role in the organization		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Member of the Board of Directors	% of this category	66.7%	33.3%	100%
	% of total	33.3%	7%	14.8%
Honorary member	% of this category	40%	60%	100%
	% of total	11.1%	7.1%	8.2%
Member (with Membership fee)	% of this category	33.3%	66.7%	100%
	% of total	33.9%	27.9%	29.5%
Attendee to activities	% of this category	13.8%	86.2%	100%
	% of total	22.2%	58.1%	47.5%

In the category “Member of the board of directors”, male volunteers are over-represented, since nearly 70% of the total cases appear in this category. The presence of men in management bodies duplicates clearly that of women. As a confirmation of the above findings, 86.2% of the respondents in the category “Attendee to activities” are women.

Also, men are more distributed in the different activities, while women are more concentrated (more than half of the cases, 58.1%) in the last category “Attendees to activities.”

With reference to the **contributions** that the respondents declared to obtain from volunteer activities, individual development shows the greatest proportion, while “spiritual well-being” is less than one fourth, as shown in diagram 8.

Figure 12. Personal contributions obtained from volunteer activities



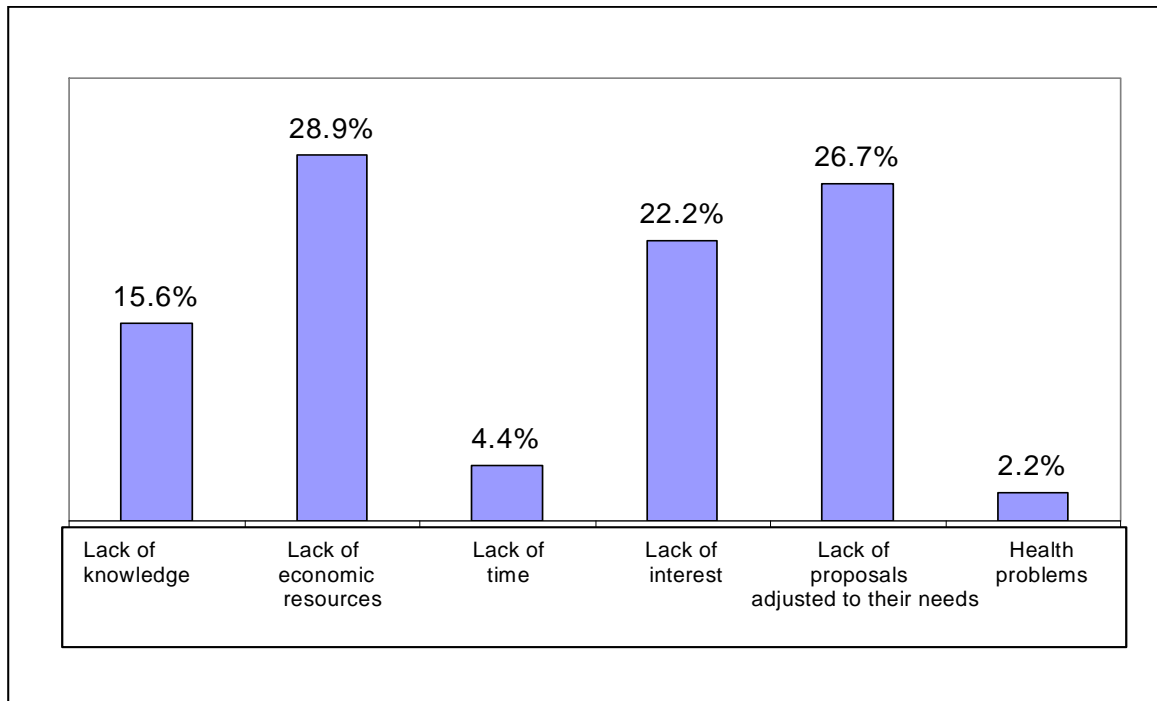
### Motivations and Obstacles for Volunteer Work

Among the respondents who indicated they had **never carried out** volunteer activities, 28.2% said that it was due to lack of time, 22.9% due to lack of interest, 18.6% because of health problems, and 17% due to lack of economic resources. A smaller percentage, 3.2% of the respondents, answered that they did not know about these activities, and only 1.6% attributed nonparticipation to the insecurity of the streets. Respondents who answered that they did not carry out volunteer activities due to the lack of proposals adjusted to their needs, amounted to 1.6%, an insignificant figure within the total. However, when asked whether they knew places to develop this kind of activity, 74% of the respondents declared **that they did not know any.**

When asked whether there were places available for the elderly to volunteer, 61% of the respondents said “yes,” while 38.8% said “no.”

With reference to **possible obstacles**, 28.9% of the respondents mentioned the lack of economic resources as the most important obstacle for their participation. A similar percentage said that there were no proposals for the elderly, and 15.6% did not have information or did not know any place to carry out volunteer activities.

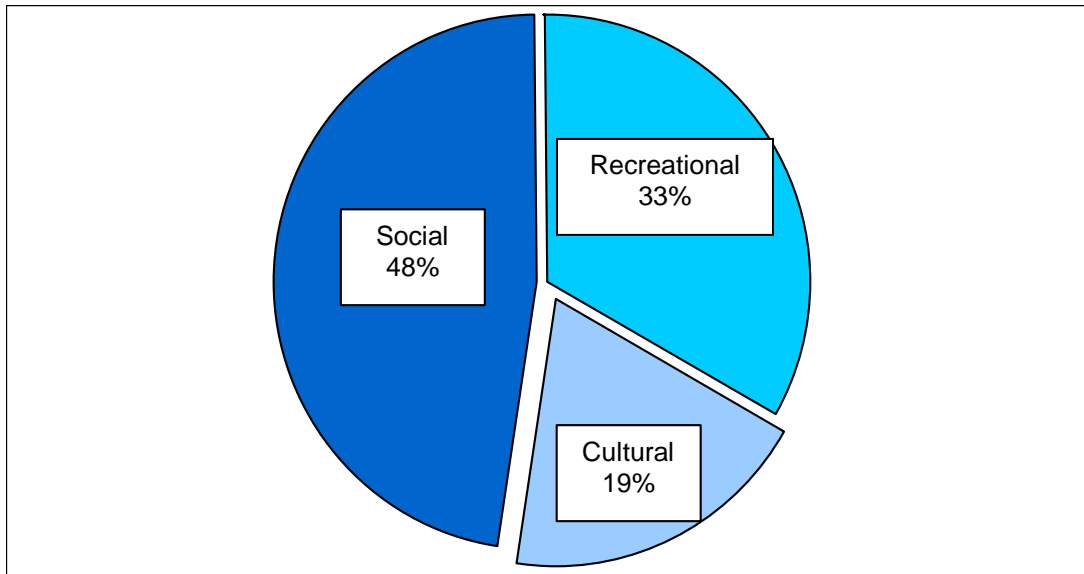
Figure 13. Obstacles for the development of volunteer work



Respondents, who had answered that they have never carried out volunteer activities, were asked whether they would **be interested** in starting. Responses were not very encouraging: less than a fourth said “yes”, 69.3% said they were not interested in carrying out volunteer activities directed to third parties, and 12% expressed uncertainty as to whether they would be interested in developing an activity. Respondents who expressed interest in starting a volunteer activity (18.7%) were asked about the places where they would be attracted to start one.

The **most preferred environments** were those that carry out social activities, as shown in the following diagram.

Figure 14. Preferred organizations



**Other Community Service or Support Activities**

All the respondents (including those who were currently developing volunteer activities, those who were not, and those who have never done it) were asked whether they developed any specific activity to assist the members of the nearby community, other than family members.

This question intended to detect if the respondents had **intra-community solidarity connections and offered support to others**. Based on the situation detected throughout the interviews, and other signs, such as the importance of the “solidarity” motivation among the elderly volunteers, it was presumed that in Uruguay these values (solidarity and assistance to others) are still in effect. The question aimed at discovering whether the behavior and attitude to assist others existed, and to what extent, whenever others were found to have problems or be vulnerable.

Table 5. Support to the local community

Support	Percentage
Yes	30.1%
No	69.9%
Total	100%

Based on the above data, in this age range, direct assistance to others, without intermediaries, does not have a high quantitative impact. Only 30% of the respondents said to have this kind of attitude. The remaining 70% does not support or has not supported others at all.

The most frequent **modality to assist others** is giving food, prepared or not, clothes or money (or all three things) to specific families or to people who go from door to door asking for assistance. The interviews showed that it often happens that some vulnerable members of the neighborhood are “adopted” by the rest, thus developing systematic and specific assistance.

Table 6. Type of support offered

Type of support	Percentage
Assists the neighbors (material or other support)	6.4%
Assists a less-privileged neighborhood	12.33%
Offers food, clothes, money, to the less-privileged	70.67%
Teaches handcrafts to children	10.67%
Total	100%

When asked whether they made **donations** to charity, community assistance, or work organizations, 55% of the respondents answered “yes.”

### 8. The Elderly versus the Young

One of the main objectives of this report is to point out the similarities and differences between the modality and topology of volunteer work developed by the young *versus* the one developed by the elderly.

As mentioned above, social activities developed by the older group have a reduced impact compared to the civic actions undertaken by young people around the world. The fact that this social group is implicitly exempted, rather than “excluded” from leading positions in social programs and activities may be attributed to several reasons, such as the following:

- The elderly continue to be subject to prejudices, and are considered disabled from the psychological and cognitive point of view, to perform and keep important jobs or jobs that require great and permanent challenges. This prejudice continues to be present in the society, despite evidence to the contrary, and despite the fact that the elderly continually challenge this stereotype. The concept of disabled, passive persons is more in effect than that of capable persons able to make contributions to the society.
- The low impact of volunteer work performed by the elderly can be also explained by the social burden given to the retirement period. People associate retirement with a lack of roles, and it is not clear what people should do with their time. Outside the labor world, the production structure does not offer other alternatives to re-enter or start a useful activity from the social point of view.

The concepts and stereotypes generated in our societies and the structures elaborated around retirement result in the fact that nothing is expected from the elderly, and thus their involvement in socially useful roles is not promoted. What are the distinct assets of these two groups? What are their motives and objectives that guide these two age groups? What are the results?

### Motives and Objectives

A series of similarities was detected between the interviews with experts who had thorough knowledge and experience of volunteer work developed by the young, and the books used for the theoretical framework of this research.

**According to the people interviewed, young people have vitality and energy**, mixed with the need to play leading roles in changes and programs aimed at improving social justice. “One of the main characteristics of young people is that they want to do something for others, to take off the mask. It is the idiosyncrasy of young people: a motivation to do things that, as the years go by, tends to decline and is part of the crisis of involvement we are suffering today. Perhaps, being young is like having a leading role to change the society, and that is a very strong feature” (Omar Sellanes YMCA - ACJ).

The development of these activities is based on the **need to make changes, and the belief that a better, fairer society is possible**. For this reason, young people tend to participate in the most vulnerable social spaces. These have a greater need for action, involvement and intervention. In these spaces, it may be felt that change actually happens. All the people interviewed mentioned altruism, and a strong conviction in the social and civic action as distinct features.

The elderly share that same altruism and philanthropy with young people. Often, in this stage of their lives, the elderly reevaluate their contribution to society in general. Hence, they often feel a need to contribute to a better society in this stage of their lives. Therefore, this is the first similarity between the analyzed age groups. Although they are in different life stages, they find their motivation and impulses in the same values.

A study published by Sherraden et al. (1990) concludes that the expectations and motivations that move young people to perform social actions are related to the following elements: promotion of political and cultural integration and tolerance; expression of citizenship; increasing social development and strengthening economic growth; individual development; establishment of contacts aimed at adulthood; education and training for job opportunities. Volunteer work may have different meanings for the young; in some cases it becomes a rite of passage, training for adult life, an educational practice, a source of work, etc.

The substantial difference between the two groups lies in the time in which they carry out these volunteer actions. Young people are building their future, and this implies that they are also directly building the world they live in. On the other hand, the elderly feel they are living a moment of evaluation, and synthesis, and should render accounts, but mostly, give back



what they have obtained. “I believe philanthropy is more common in adults in the Rotary Club. The rotary member comes to the Club to give back to society what society has given him, and often, he makes it directly through economic or similar contributions” (Marcel Jubín, Rotary Club).

The above mentioned research says that it seems that the main difference lies on the object: volunteer work carried out by the young focuses on the young. Social action activities are impulses to make more sensitive human beings, and create social capital, to make them better citizens, more tolerant, and better prepared for the labor world. The real difference between volunteer work carried out by the young and the one carried out by the elderly may be that the first is visualized as an investment for the future while the second implies giving back all the contributions received from the community.

Studies of this matter propose that the programs aimed at the elderly seem to require different kinds of commitments (McBride et al., 2003). They are required to work a few hours a week, but over an extended period of time, for example, tutorship programs that imply working once a week for a whole school year. This kind of commitment has a different service modality, generally directed to specific people; it could be characterized as individualized assistance.

The **initiatives undertaken by young people are usually aimed at obtaining high-impact results**, involving an entire community, such as local community development programs, general campaigns related to social problems including AIDS information campaigns, single-mothers support programs, etc. As stated above, these activities have an impact, meaning that they require large amounts of time during a short period.

While providing support in specific, difficult personal, academic, or transitional situations, interpersonal relationships are built. This process cannot be developed in a small, intensive period of time. Instead, a long-term commitment is required. Given their long life experience, the elderly have more success in these activities, which generally imply more wisdom and patience.

Throughout this research, a reduced promotion of the integration of the elderly as volunteers in the organizations was observed. Experts were asked about this phenomenon. They believed that one of the main difficulties in integrating this age group into different institutions is that their age implies having developed an entire career, and having obtained experience and expertise that makes them more appropriate for a role of expert, with the possibility of teaching, instead of learning.

The above, together with the elderly’s difficulty admitting that it is possible to continue learning and that they can do so from younger people, is one of the factors pointed out as an obstacle in the development of integrated volunteer work, thus making insertion of the elderly in a specific organization more difficult: “The risk with the elderly is that they bring their knowledge, and usually only want to impose it. They refuse to participate in the process of the team, project, initiative or organization where they intend to work. Then, even with the best intentions, work may be hindered, or an on-going process with the beneficiaries may

be stopped, thus implying a complex exchange of learning and teaching. For example, we had the case of an elderly person who was assisting two children with their homework. He noticed they did not have any shoes, so the following day he bought them a pair of shoes (...) In this sense, the most difficult part is to make him understand concepts and ideas he is not normally used to. For instance, the fact that volunteer work is not only about the will to contribute, but also an educational process” (Omar Sellanes, YMCA - ACJ).

However, one of the participants of a focus group said that, when the elderly do assimilate, recognizing and understanding the need and satisfaction to continue learning from others, **their work becomes invaluable**: *“Once that barrier is overcome, working with them becomes very rewarding; the commitment, steadiness, and love they offer is a very important, valuable element.”*

This phenomenon is not present in **young people** who are **beginning to acquire experience**. They need knowledge, and are eager to learn. The above mentioned person believed that young people “are eager to learn, to know; they are aware of the need for reference, knowledge and tools to develop volunteer work.” This aspect makes it easier to introduce basic, referring concepts to develop volunteer work, and not *the will to contribute*, in such a way that good working groups are formed quickly and effectively, whose work is more adjusted to the philosophy of the organizations. All these elements are associated with an opposite and important phenomenon between these two age groups, which is clearly indicated by one of the experts: **“One is beginning and the other is finishing**. That is the difference between the elderly and the young, and the reason for their different positions.”

However, apart from these important differences, there is a series of apparently **coincidental similarities** between young volunteers and elderly volunteers, specifically with reference to the aspects that ensure sustainability and permanence in the initiatives. The organizations become areas to share not only activities, but also emotions, thoughts, and experiences with peers, which eventually create a commitment to the institution and to the group. “The factors that create the unity are integration, team spirit, friendship, which ends up binding the group. Sometimes, they start attending because they like to share time with friends, and afterwards, they establish a more important commitment to the organization. But it is a gradual process. The person relates to the organization on the emotional level, then they have the sense of belonging, and finally a much deeper commitment is created with oneself, because the person adopts the values of the institution as his own” (Marcel Jubín, Rotary Club).

Another difference between volunteer work carried out by the young and that carried out by the elderly, as pointed out by the experts, is related to the **permanence and sustainability, which is greater in the elderly** than in the younger groups. This could be due to the fact that young people are living in a stage of transition between childhood and adulthood. They are testing, practicing, and experiencing several spheres of action in order to discover which one adjusts better to their interests, potential, and knowledge. As young people try and experience several activities and proposals, they start looking for their identity, from the social and labor point of view, in the world they are going to enter: the world of adults, the introduction to the labor and professional world.

On the other hand, the **elderly are finishing the process** that the young are initiating. They have already consolidated their labor experience, defined their profile, and acquired experience in a specific area. Their introduction to volunteer work does not imply an exploration of the labor world and the areas of action. It is, rather, a means to be included, to remain involved in social life, sharing their acquired experience by giving back what the world has offered them. It is also an opportunity to develop initiatives and undertakings that were postponed because of the daily obligations. In part, these are the elements which would explain the sustainability that the interviewees find in elderly volunteers.

The interviewed experts declared that a characteristic feature of **volunteer work carried out by the young is heterogeneity** in its orientation. Unlike volunteer work carried out by the elderly, volunteer work carried out by the young does not show a priority orientation towards a specific sector of the population. According to the interviewed experts, however, young people do tend to focus their attention on a *similar kind* of population: situations and/or population sectors with the greatest vulnerability, which have a restricted access to services and benefits, and greater social risk. “Young people react to injustice and inequity: Why a child can have love, shelter, enjoyment, and another has to be asking for coins in the bus? Based on that, they define the spaces where they want to work, to fight against injustice, and to strengthen the population with greater disadvantages.” (Omar Sellanes, YMCA - ACJ).

On the other hand, **the elderly** focus their actions mainly **on their same age group**. Some of the interviewed experts believed that this was due to the fact that “the elderly feel more comfortable and safer working among themselves, to their own benefit. There is no place for the stigma and low self-esteem is not questioned. Identity, insecurity and unreliability may be the cause” (Omar Sellanes, YMCA - ACJ).

The interviewed experts clearly agreed that the impact of volunteer work carried out by the young outweighed the impact of volunteer work carried out by the elderly. One of the reasons proposed by the interviewees was the weight of the social stigma in the development of spaces offered to the elderly by the organizations. “Young people are protected, have more time, because they are studying and still do not work, so they want to fill their free time. They have motivations to try to apply what they know. While some, with a more pushy spirit, begin their own small company, others work voluntarily. But with adults, it is more complex. In Uruguay, there is a contemptuous attitude towards the elderly” (Marcel Jubín, Rotary Club).

### Effects and Impacts

An extensive literature has demonstrated that **there is a direct, positive relationship between the development of volunteer work carried out by the elderly and the sense of well-being** in the last stage of life. Oman, Thoresen, & McMahon (1999) point out the reduction of mortality associated with the development of volunteer work. This element is also related to physical exercise and attendance at religious services.

Families are relieved and satisfied when the elderly get involved and commit to social activities, establish new relationships, contacts, and networks; the elderly family member's involvement in social activities improves family relationships.

In addition, the favorable effects on mental and physical health of the elderly, as a result of working, have a very positive impact on the families and the community in general, since there is a smaller need for care and treatment to the elderly, and costs and related investments are reduced.

## 9. Conclusions

### Organizations

There are several organizations that devote effort to promoting volunteer work with the elderly, both civil society organizations and state agencies. Religious and non-religious organizations, international agencies, trade unions, educational organizations, cultural and sports associations, and lobby associations all work from the civil society with the same objective. This research identified at least 162 public and private organizations in Uruguay with the same objective.

In general, organizations are created within parent institutions that promote their creation. Subsequently, they become emancipated when their identity and specific profile is consolidated. Also, in general they maintain the original institutional profile, continuing to adhere to the objectives and the mission of the parent organization.

Another aspect, related to structural soundness, that the organizations share is the composition of their members. The board of directors is wholly composed of the elderly, elected by secret vote of the members, thus strengthening their legitimacy and accountability. Most of the organizations have a clear, formal structure. Except for some cases, they all have legal status, that is, they are registered in the Ministry of Education and Culture as social organizations. This status provides them with a rights and obligations, such as the requirement to have by-laws in order to regulate and formalize their operations.

This external structural formality is concurrent with intra-institutional irregularity and informality, particularly in the nonexistence of contracts, agreements, or terms and conditions in writing that establish the permanence of volunteers or their rights and obligations. The establishment of rules, rights and obligations would imply recognizing the importance of the volunteer as an actor, and the need for guaranteeing an ethical and safe intervention to the beneficiary, providing care and protection to both. This aspect, shared by all the surveyed organizations, may show the relatively small recognition that volunteer action has in Uruguay.

The lack of contracts and commitments in writing is justified by the strength of oral commitment. There seems to be a specific generational feature whereby an honor commitment, a pledge, is enough to guarantee the sustainability in the volunteer work. This

is an unusual, valuable asset, especially in these times, as the interviewees themselves believe: “We belong to a generation where words are much more important than a piece of paper” **(OSP 2)**.

There are a significant number of institutional interconnections, as well as agreements with, and grants from, several national and international agencies and institutions. Agreements between civil society organizations and state entities of reference (IMM and BPS) are the most frequent and important ones. These agreements and grants are essential for the majority of the organizations, without which the minimum required expenses would not be covered to develop their initiatives. Likewise, institutional interconnections allow the coordination and strengthening of the proposals. By increasing effort and providing support to each other, the organizations achieve a greater quantitative and qualitative impact of the activities.

With reference to human resources, several entities have technical staff and professionals who carry out volunteer activities. Furthermore, skilled staff is hired to develop specific training courses for activities that require expert, certified knowledge. However, all the organizations are sustained by the volunteer work of the members. Their economic resources come from membership fees, specific activities, as well as agreements or grants that provide additional resources.

Several organizations are making efforts to establish a series of inter-institutional lines of communication that create small networks, facilitating mutual support. This phenomenon is catalyzed by the presence of common coordination spaces and proposals undertaken by the governmental entities of reference: IMM and BPS. There is much to be done in this area, since the scope of these micro-networks is still limited. They do not comprise small organizations with limited resources and less impact, which would be the most benefited in order to achieve solvency and sustainability.

With reference to the main motives that promote the different initiatives, there are clear differences among the organizations. Some intend to reach specific objectives through specific activities, such as providing companionship and offering recreation, while others hope to have other goals, such as changing the image of the elderly and promoting an active, integrated, responsible, and socially committed image.

Within the surveyed universe, there is a strong predominance of promotion and service organizations, both in the number of institutions and the number of elderly volunteers.

Social policies and governmental programs for the promotion of volunteer work carried out by the elderly show the importance the government puts on keeping this sector of the population active, integrated, and participating. In Uruguay, there are two public spaces devoted to the comprehensive promotion of the elderly, and the development of volunteer work in this population group. Although this is not their main objective, they both have the same concern, and address the issue: “And their leitmotif or fundamental principle is related to the social promotion of the elderly” **(IMM)**. The promotion carried out by the BPS is indirect, by maintaining, supporting training and accompanying the institutions that perform

volunteer work with the elderly, and some actors who hold managerial positions within the same. On the other hand, the IMM promotes volunteer work in a more particular, direct manner: volunteers are encouraged and trained, regardless of whether they are related to an institution or they hold a managerial position in one.

These entities offer training courses aimed at organizations and volunteers. The courses are frequently used as the initial training. Once the trainees have achieved a certain level, the institutions develop their own courses. These entities are starting points that promote the creation of spaces and actors who will be devoted to the development of volunteer work in the elderly.

According to the opinion of the surveyed organizations, state undertakings generally aim to assist the elderly whose social relationships have already disintegrated; they attempt to minimize the effects of the process of social retraction rather than establishing policies to prevent isolation. “All the government measures related to the elderly apply when the person is already sick, or disabled. They do not offer the alternative to prevent and support” (**OSP 2**). It is important to develop activities aimed at providing companionship to the elderly from the beginning of the process. These programs should be connected to the workplace, thus making the separation from the labor world an internal process with continuity. They should be gradually prepared and receive technical support that would allow the best assimilation and solution possible, promoting and encouraging life prospects for the elderly after retirement.

However, certain governmental initiatives, devoted to the promotion of an active old age and volunteer work in the elderly, are focused on people who are integrated into society, and experiencing the reification of the habits and roles that guided their daily lives to date. In the same way, those spaces would prevent the process of isolation. Nevertheless, the elements and effects of these proposals have not been thoroughly evaluated; therefore, both opinions should be proposed and this question should be investigated in the future.

Public organizations also lack the modality of written, formal contracts. However, the national government has started to regulate the relationships between its entities and volunteer organizations. Currently, these regulations are restricted to public entities, and emphasize the importance of contractual relationships that would guarantee the bases of this particular relationship for both parties. On August 9, 2005, the Volunteer Work Law (Law No. 17,885) was published. This law “recognizes, defines, promotes and facilitates the participation of individuals in volunteer actions in public institutions.” Articles 5 to 8 regulate the relationship of the official entities with volunteers, establishing rights and obligations for both parties.

But the good intentions of the above mentioned law have become, in part, an important obstacle in the development of volunteer work. One of the rights volunteers acquire, according to Law No. 17,885, is accident insurance, which implies that public entities must make a disbursement, and the great majority does not have the necessary financial resources. This fact is preventing the Volunteer Work Law from being successfully applied. For example, the program called “Home escort”, developed by the IMM, has stopped operating,

because the funds assigned by the municipality were not enough to cover insurance for all the volunteers.

Despite the difficulties, obstacles, limitations, and setbacks experienced by these organizations, their presence has an important effect on the surveyed universe. The opportunity that organizations have to meet and coordinate is worth pointing out. The networks established within the BPS and the annual evaluation and prospect meetings of the IMM facilitate inter-institutional communication, strengthen the organizations and their members, and promote a vision of the initiatives as a whole, focused on the same goal and operating interdependently.

None of the state agencies has a systematized, updated registry of the different civil initiatives. It is clear that these organizations are the only state entities dedicated to the promotion, but a specialized area needs to be created, so as to implement other activities within the regulated framework and lay down the rules. There is a legal loophole regarding execution of work supervision, and evaluation of performance and impact of the programs on the elderly.

Likewise, another weakness of the State is the lack of a national registry of organizations devoted to developing and promoting volunteer work for the elderly. Although the BPS has a registry of the institutions to which it relates, it does not comprise the complete universe formed by all the entities that work with the elderly. The registry is limited and biased in relation to the contact of each one with the governmental agencies. Also, there is no coordination between the registry of the IMM and that of the BPS.

### **Different Intervention Modalities**

The universe of organizations that implement programs focused on the elderly is relatively small. Within this limited universe, there are a few organizations that propose volunteer actions or civic service aimed at social problems, whether local, regional or national. In general, actions are promoted by the elderly towards the elderly. The activities are carried out once a week, but their mission is not to intervene in the social context or environment, but to entertain or share a moment.

This does not mean that the activities are not important since they fulfill a social need that is not always satisfied: to prevent this population from suffering loneliness.

Volunteer work carried out by the elderly is mainly focused on the elderly. There were a few cases of volunteer work aimed at other sectors of the population.

When these organizations take actions focused on other age groups, most of the activities are specific, limited in time, and do not involve a commitment to local or regional problems.

The very few initiatives focused on rendering civic service are aimed at social problems, such as poverty and social exclusion, especially in children. These activities are directed to their reduced local area. These organizations seem to be more open to the community, and

seem to achieve more positive results, both in the permanence of the elderly in volunteer work, and in the commitment to the activities.

There is a wide variety of volunteer activities that would require a review of the classical concepts they were assigned. Initially, no proposal or modality should be discarded, since even the most closed activities carried out by and focused on the elderly offer companionship and open new spaces to this population in Uruguay, without which the elderly would be secluded in their homes.

### **Some Innovative Proposals**

All the difficulties that people face when acquiring the status of “elderly”, together with the importance of promoting and making the process towards retirement less painful by keeping people active and integrated, point out the need to create spaces in institutions, whether public or private, to implement programs that would facilitate this transition. These programs should prepare them for the elderly for this new stage and accompany them during the retirement process. Please refer to Appendix 7 for detailed information about these programs.

Three proposals were identified for their value and strength. These undertakings, on account of their originality, creativity, and scope, teach and make other contributions that should be taken into account when designing programs for the elderly.

- Elderly doctors
- Urban ecoguides
- Grandparents by choice

### **Elderly Volunteers**

There follow the main findings of the survey representing the population aged 65 or older of the city of Montevideo:

- 25.7% carry out or to have carried out at some time volunteer activities. The remaining 74.3% has never carried out this type of activity.
- 63.1% were aged 65 to 75.
- Only 9.5% of the respondents had a university education, while 3.2% of the respondents had not completed higher education.
- There is a clear preeminence of women in this type of activity, since they represent 70.5% of the individuals who participate or to have participated in some volunteer activity as a protagonist.
- The elderly carry out volunteer activities in parishes, social and sports clubs, and grandparents’ clubs. In these three categories 67.3% of the total participation is accumulated.



- The motivations of the elderly to carry out volunteer activities focused on third parties are mostly the aptitude for service or the desire to help others. Another 5% do it based on social commitment, and almost half of the respondents (46%) showed solidarity towards the community.
- The most frequent activities developed by the volunteers are recreational ones, followed by educational activities.

### **Some Reflections Generated by the Focus Groups**

When asked their opinions about the figures representing level of participation, the participants of the focus groups agreed that the elderly are facing the reality of living a new stage, the increase in life expectancy, and the improvement of health. Consequently, developing undertakings and alternatives to stay active and integrated as citizens is a new field for them, in which a new kind of institution that sees the elderly from a more proactive perspective is emerging. However, many of them feel that these changes also create serious difficulties for them.

Within the surveyed universe, the group aged 65 to 75 has the greatest impact on the development of volunteer work. First, this age group has the greatest presence in the selected universe. Second, the youngest group of this population sector may be presumed to have the best physical condition, and accordingly, the greatest potential to develop activities outside of the home. Furthermore, the youngest group is also the one that is starting to detach from the labor world and, therefore, in greater need of alternative opportunities for social inclusion and establishing new roles in their lives. Performing new roles and occupying time that has remained free after retirement are elements of the process towards the inactive stage. As a comparison, 75% of the volunteers were aged 65 to 75; almost 20% was in the age range from 76 to 86 years old, and the remaining 5% consisted of people aged 87 or older.

After weighing the sex of the elderly volunteers, the participants of the focus group composed of experts was also surprised by the phenomenon of gender difference. One of the reasons given by the members of the discussion group was that, in general, the volunteer activities primarily visualized are those of direct service, including social action in hospitals, nursing homes, less-privileged areas, etc. As men usually perform activities that are not related to direct action, but rather involve contributions in management, leadership, design, and administration, volunteer work performed by men often remains concealed.

A new review and additional empirical research should be carried out to confirm the assertion that women are over-represented in volunteer work, or as shown by this study, whether there is an equal proportion of both sexes. This may be the case of the analyzed age group, or the same phenomenon may affect all the population sectors. This question may be one of the future lines of research.

## Impact of the Actions

Volunteer actions carried out by the elderly, in many cases, result in a **change in the assessment and perception of the elderly** within the family. Seeing the elderly as integrated, active, carrying out activities outside the home, changes their position in their primary circles. As they become autonomous and active citizens, developing activities with enthusiasm, willing to do things, and making contributions to the community, they reject the preconception of the gray, passive, routine life of the elderly.

Volunteer work allows the elderly to continue walking, and remain active, integrated, and committed. Volunteer work prevents them from being isolated from society, and offers them a means to satisfy their need to do things which were postponed during their active life. As they keep on learning, and acquiring new skills and knowledge on aging, **the elderly promote an active, integrated stage.**

These spaces, where the elderly feel well cared for and protected, show a **restoration of the social networks**. New emotional bonds are established, with people they would have never related to if they were still working, people from different backgrounds, with different careers, and life experiences. These people share experiences and knowledge with each other.

These spaces also promote the assumption of **new roles** by the elderly. As these roles have never been performed, they are challenged to successfully execute them. Bankers becoming actors, carpenters turning into teachers, employees into singing teachers: these are radical, significant changes when building their own image.

However, apart from the important results these proposals create in their lives, there is a series of **difficulties or obstacles** that prevent these activities from extending and increasing their impact, both qualitative and quantitative. For example, the lack of economic resources is a disadvantage for the organizations and for the elderly. Entities do not have enough supplies to expand and increase their field of intervention, whether by increasing the number of activities and promotion, or by creating new headquarters to make participation more accessible. Likewise, the elderly often do not have enough resources to pay the fees required by organizations, or cannot afford transportation to the organization.

Family obligations resulting from economic difficulties, including caring for grandchildren, are other obstacles that prevent participation. Due to financial difficulties, many parents cannot hire a nanny, meaning that grandparents assume the role of caregiver, and are left without time for other activities. Another element that prevents them from participating is the fact that they are unfamiliar with the parts of the city where appropriate activities are available. The increase of violence in the streets, and a corresponding increase in insecurity and fear promote the seclusion of the elderly in their homes. This is another obstacle that limits the participation of the elderly in volunteer organizations.

In short, the economic problems, the inexistence of spaces to inform, disseminate and promote these activities, together with the increase of city insecurity, reduce the capacity and

effectiveness of these proposals. If these organizations had specific, comprehensive promotion and support policies, the impact would be much greater.

In Uruguay, there are organizations with significant experience that have been working on these issues for more than three decades. Consequently, a good starting point would be the knowledge acquired from their successes and failures. From there, sector-oriented policies could be laid down to support this passive period of living and social repositioning.

However, a relatively significant number of the elderly is carrying out civic actions, which, in a certain sense, challenges the hypothesis that these people are not protagonists and civil society actors. There are actions and modalities that have not been assessed as volunteer ones, either by their protagonists or by the rest of society. This may be called “concealed volunteer work.” Although these activities are sustained and honorary, they are not valued as such or deemed as civic actions, because they are developed in limited-impact organizations, and focused on the same age group, where the elderly hold managerial and organizational positions.

### **Volunteer Work Promotion Programs for the Elderly**

In order to design a suitable program, adjusted to the elderly, that would guarantee sustainability and a great quantitative impact, the main elements should be:

- Establishment of one single, coordinated, national directory or registry that would systematize existing initiatives, modalities of action, proposals, and geographical location. This would be very useful when designing public policies to support volunteer work in the elderly or specific, localized proposals, providing a clear map of initiatives and assets to the decision-makers, and developing proposals of localized strengthening. It would be equally useful for the elderly who want to start participating in volunteer work.
- Civil initiatives with freedom to act, propose, and define, but, at the same time, coordinated, promoted and supported by the State, since the object of intervention is an important social problem which the State cannot overlook.
- Preparatory courses for the retirement process within the labor space in which the elderly acquired their experience. These courses could be carried out by retired people of the same sector, who would share their experiences of detaching from the labor world.
- Respect for the diversity of interests and areas of preference, as well as for the levels of commitment that the elderly would be willing to make. For this reason, initiatives that have a wide variety of proposals, with higher and lower levels of involvement, and a connecting theme of reference, are deemed to be positive.
- Expansion of existing organizations’ areas of influence, to promote the creation of alternatives rooted in elderly communities.

- Identification of objectives that have local impact, which would give greater satisfaction to the elderly participating and offer a greater opportunity for them to use their skills.
- A training course for the elderly, prior to the exercise of volunteer actions, including a space focused on the elderly, meant to reevaluate themselves, and later introduce them to social action, the implications of participating in volunteer work, the commitment to the beneficiaries, as well as the scope and limitations of the work.
- Promotion of the concept that volunteer work in the elderly may be something enjoyable, a non-mandatory option, a right, and a duty of all active, valuable citizens, who each possess strengths with which they can contribute to the collective well-being.

### **10. Scope of the Study and Future Lines of Research**

This research is the first experience of empirical study and theoretical analysis in Uruguay concerning the proposals aimed at promoting volunteer work and civic service in the elderly. This study achieved the reconstruction of the existing universe of public and private institutions with this goal in Montevideo.

Therefore, the multiplicity of findings and results obtained through this study have been satisfactory, especially the successful field study which allowed the implementation of several techniques and methodological orientations. The findings can be useful not only for the organizations focused on strengthening volunteer work and civic service of the elderly, but also for the public entities focused on assisting this population, and as an input when designing integration and promotion policies for the elderly.

The field study has been very productive, yielding the main features of the surveyed entities, which allowed the analyzed universe to be faithfully constructed. The research was focused on the capital city and its results led to the conclusion that the initiatives developed outside Montevideo may present significant differences, mainly due to the diversity and divergences between the metropolis and the rest of the cities. One of the future lines of research could be to extend this study to the national level.

Based on the first mapping of organizations, a second stage should be conducted. It should study the impact of the offers, analyze the results on the actors and protagonists, and the effects of the actions on the beneficiary populations.

Moreover, civic service is a very weak concept in the spheres of social action in Uruguay. Searching for initiatives that may strengthen this modality could be another future line of research.

There is a significant existence of “concealed” volunteer work in the elderly community, comprising volunteer actions that are not assessed as such, either by the protagonists or by the surrounding community. Measuring the qualitative and quantitative impact of this concealed volunteer work in Uruguay would be an important task.

Finally, it would be interesting to develop comparative studies and analyses. In particular, the comparison could provide evidence on strengths and weaknesses that the development of volunteer work in this age group has had in other countries, for example Brazil and Chile (Latin American countries with numerous initiatives of great sustainability and impact, especially focused on strengthening the elderly as social actors).

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### Appendix 1A

Systematization of the search for organizations for the selection of the research universe

#### 1- Internet

Web pages:	File/ information accessed:
<a href="http://www.lasociedadcivil.org">www.lasociedadcivil.org</a> .	Directory of organizations, classified by type of activity and target population
<a href="http://www.uruguaysolidario.org.uy">www.uruguaysolidario.org.uy</a>	Directory of organizations, classified by department and target population
<a href="http://www.anong.org.uy">www.anong.org.uy</a>	Directory of nongovernmental organizations associated to Anong
<a href="http://www.gerontologia.com">www.gerontologia.com</a>	List of programs, workshops, and activities proposed by the organizations associated to the network of gerontology in Uruguay
<a href="http://www.redtiempos.org">www.redtiempos.org</a>	List of some organizations devoted to develop volunteer with the elderly as protagonists

#### 2- Documents

“Guía Uruguaya de la Solidaridad Ciudadana” (1998 - 1999)	(IMM-MTSS-ICD, with the support of Fundación W. K. Kellogg). Directory of services for the elderly. Classified by areas.
“Guía de Servicios y Recursos para Personas de Edad”	(IMM). Services and resources classified by zone.
“Registro BPS”	List provided by the BPS containing volunteer organizations of the elderly that have an agreement with this state agency (grandparents’ clubs and support organizations).

**Appendix 1B**

List of 162 institutions that promote volunteer work of the elderly in Uruguay

<b>Name/acronym of the institution</b>
Agrupación de Jubilados de la Federación OSE
Alborada
Alegría
Alelí
Aleluya Grupo Tercera Edad Parroquia Sta. Trinidad
Amigos Grupo de Tercera Edad
Añoranzas de Belvedere
APEX, Programa de la Universidad de la República
Armonía Parroquia San Carlos Borromeo
Asociación Adultos Mayores Camacúa de AEBU
Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes, ACJ-IDHU
Asociación Cristiana Femenina
Asociación Cultural Social y Recreativa de Jubilados y Pensionistas Bancarios
Asociación de Afiliados a la Caja de Jubilaciones de Profesionales Universitarios.
Asociación de Jubilados de ANCAP
Asociación de Jubilados del BPS
Asociación de Jubilados y Pensionistas del Puerto
Asociación de Jubilados y Pensionistas Escolares
Asociación Mario Cassinoni
Asociación Uruguaya de Animadores Gerontológicos, AUDAAG
Asociación Uruguaya de Alzheimer y Similares, AUDAS
Auroras de Paso Molino
Cambalache
Caminando
Camyl Club de Adultos
Cantares de todos
Capilla San Vicente
Cáritas Uruguay
Centro Amigos Canillitas de la Tercera Edad
Centro Interinstitucional de Colaboración con el Adulto Mayor, CICAM
Centro Maimonides (JAI)
Clavel de Aire Club de abuelos Alegría
Club Alelí
Club Aleluya (Salón Parroquial M <sup>a</sup> Auxiliadora)
Club Amigos Ariel Grupo de Adultos mayores
Club Amigos de Gardel
Club Amistad Parroquia Nta Sra. de Lourdes
Club Comunitario
Club de Abuelos América
Club de Abuelos Andorra
Club de Abuelos Caminando. Parroquia los Vascos

<b>Name/acronym of the institution</b>
Club de Abuelos Clemente Estable
Club de Abuelos Complejo José Pedro Varela, COVISUNCA
Club de Abuelos de FUCVAM
Club de Abuelos de la Parroquia del Perpetuo Socorro y San Alfonso
Club de Abuelos de La Teja
Club de Abuelos del Parque Posadas
Club de Abuelos Eduardo Fabini
Club de Abuelos Euskal Erría 70 (salón comunal)
Club de Abuelos Reencuentro
Club de Abuelos Unidos de Colón
Club de Adultos Mayores L'Avenir
Club de Jubilados y pensionistas de Sayago Don Minas
Club de Leones
Club de la Tercera Edad Toto Fernández
Club del Buceo
Club Eduardo Fabini
Club Lavalleja
Club Madre Ana
Club Plenitud
Club Rodolfo Talice
Club Villa Dolores
Comisión Arquidiocesana de Pastoral de la Salud.
Comisión de Jubilados y Pensionistas de ADEOM
Comunidad Israelita del Uruguay. Meilí y Labriut y Mazal
Congregación de la Misión de San Vicente de Paul
Grupo Adultos Mayores Asociación Cultural y Social Uruguay Negro
Cuenca de Pocitos
Cunas Uruguayas
Desafío Agrupación de Adultos Mayores
Ejército de Salvación
Fundación Gerontológica Evangélica del Uruguay
Fundación psiquiátrica Mater-Dei
Grupo de Educación Ambiental, GEA, Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo
Grupo El Ceibo
Grupo Entre Amigos
Grupo Oro Nueva Esperanza
Grupo Alba
Grupo Armonía
Grupo Buceo de Adultos Mayores
Grupo de Adultos Amado Nervo
Grupo de Adultos Mayores Plaza de Deportes N° 5
Grupo de Adultos Mayores Cuenca de Pocitos
Grupo de Adultos Mayores de Buceo
Grupo de Adultos Mayores Flores de Abril

<b>Name/acronym of the institution</b>
Grupo de Adultos Mayores Medalla Milagrosa y San Agustín.
Grupo de Apoyo a la Comisión Honoraria de Lucha Contra el Cáncer.
Grupo de Atletas Veteranos de Montevideo, CAVEMONT
Grupo de Crochet de AM de la Biblioteca de Morosoli
Grupo de Jubilados de la Universidad de la República
Grupo de Jubilados y Pensionistas de Malvín
Grupo de Personas de Edad Jueves Alegres Salón Parroquial
Grupo de Tercera Edad CSC Bella Italia
Grupo de Tercera Edad de la Alianza Francesa Reorganizándose
Grupo de Tercera Edad Rincón del Parque
Grupo del Centro Diurno Municipal Los Charrúas del Lago
Grupo Dulce Atardecer
Grupo Energía Otoñal
Grupo Floreciendo
Grupo Ganas de Vivir
Grupo Ibirapitá
Grupo Inmaculada
Grupo Kruger
Grupo Lealtad de Punta Gorda
Grupo Modelo La Palma
Grupo Montevideo
Grupo Mujer Hoy
Grupo Oro Patria
Grupo Otoñal
Grupo Renacer Sayago
Grupo Solidaria
Grupo Superación
Grupo Tercera Edad Las tejedoras
Grupo Tercera Edad Años de oro (Salón comunal plaza 12)
Grupo Tercera Edad Centro
Grupo Tercera Edad Nilda
Grupo Tercera Edad San Francisco de Asís
Grupo Tercera Edad San Juan Evangelista
Grupo UCOVI
Grupo Virgen de los 33
Grupo Volver a Vivir
Hermandad
ILMI Club de Tercera edad
Jardín Otoñal
La Tierrita
La Virgen
Las tejanitas
Lealtad
Los Chocolates

<b>Name/acronym of the institution</b>
Los ruseñores
Ma-Pa
Mesa 2
Mi rincón
Millán y Lecoq
Movimiento Nacional por el Bienestar del Anciano
Movimientos Humanidad Nueva (Ecuménico)
Núcleo de Amigos de la 3 <sup>o</sup> edad NATE
Nuevo Amanecer
Nuevos rumbos
Old Fellows
Organización Nacional de Jubilados y Pensionistas, ONAJPU
Parroquia Anunciación
Parroquia Los Capuchinos
Parroquia Ntra. Sra. del Sagrado Corazón y Sta. Rita.
Plenario de Mujeres del Uruguay, PLEMMU
Policlínica San Antonio Taller Inmaculada
Primer Club de abuelos
Programa Abuelos por Elección, de la UCUDAL
Red de Organizaciones del Adulto Mayor, RODAM
Reencuentro de la Teja
Serenidad
Sonrisas Club 11 estrellas
Tejedoras de Sayago
Unión de Jubilados, Pensionistas y Abuelos de la zona 6
Unión Nacional de Afiliados
Universidad de la Tercera Edad, UNI 3
Vida Ascendente
Vida Parroquia Sagrada Familia
Voluntariado de la Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo, IMM

**Appendix 2A**

General mapping of the universe of institutions devoted to promote volunteer work of the elderly in Uruguay.

Origin (private or state)	Type	Managed by the elderly	Mixed	Subtotal
Civil society associations	Related to unions		13	13
	Related to state agencies	1	24	25
	Educational associations	2	2	4
	Service and promotion organizations	10	72	82
	Religious and church- related organizations	8	16	24
	Cultural and sports associations	2	1	3
	Lobby associations		7	7
Total of civil society organizations		23	135	158
Public agencies	Governmental institutions	2	2	4
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>162</b>

**Appendix 2B**

Universe selected for the field study (interviews)

Origin	Type	Sampling frequencies		
		Managed by the elderly	Mixed	Subtotal
Civil Society	Related to unions	0	4	4
	Related to state agencies	1	6	7
	Educational associations	1	1	2
	Service and promotion organizations	4	19	23
	Religious and church- related organizations	3	5	8
	Cultural and sports associations	1	1	2
	Lobby associations	0	2	2
	Subtotals	10	38	48
Public entities	Governmental institutions	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>50</b>

### Appendix 3A

#### List of the interviewed institutions

Origin	Type	Managed by the elderly	Mixed management
Civil Society	Related to unions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asociación de jubilados bancarios</li> <li>Asociación de jubilados del Cerro</li> </ul>
	Related to state agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policlínica “Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Club de Abuelos Euskal Erría 70</li> <li>Grupo de Adultos Mayores “Plaza de Deportes N° 5”</li> <li>Club de abuelos de la R.O.U.</li> </ul>
	Educational associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Abuelos por elección” Universidad Católica del Uruguay (UCUDAL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universidad de la Tercera Edad, UNI3</li> </ul>
	Service and promotion organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centro Interinstitucional de Colaboración con el Adulto Mayor (CICAM)</li> <li>Asociación Uruguaya de Animadores y Auxiliares Gerontológicos (AUDAAG)</li> <li>Rotary Club</li> <li>Club de leones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Club de Abuelos del Parque Posadas</li> <li>Reencuentro de la Teja</li> <li>Club de abuelos del Cerro</li> <li>Energía Otoñal</li> <li>Club de abuelos del Complejo América</li> <li>Jardín Otoñal</li> <li>Club de abuelos Morosoli</li> <li>Club de abuelos Euskal Erría</li> <li>Grupo de Tercera edad ACJ</li> </ul>
	Religious and church-related organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Club de la Parroquia Inmaculada</li> <li>Club de la Medalla milagrosa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vida Ascendente</li> <li>Fundación Gerontológica Evangélica</li> <li>Comunidad Israelita del Uruguay</li> </ul>
	Cultural and sports associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes (ACJ)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centro de deportes Energía Otoñal</li> </ul>
	Lobby associations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centro FUCVAM</li> <li>Centro CECОВI</li> </ul>
Public entities	Governmental institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banco de Previsión Social, BPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo (IMM)</li> </ul>

**Appendix 3B**

References used in the analysis of the interviewed organizations

S	Organizations related to unions
VOE	Entities related to state agencies
AF	Educational associations
OSP	Service and promotion organizations
VAI	Church-related organizations
AC	Cultural and sports associations
OLC	Lobby organizations
IG	Governmental institutions



**Appendix 4A**  
Survey form

**Appendix 4B**

Formula to find the stratified randomized sample

$$\bar{X} = \sum_{i=1}^k W_i \bar{X}_i \quad \text{where } W_i = \frac{n_i}{N} \text{ and } \bar{X}_i = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n_i} X_{ij}}{n_i}$$

All 24 neighborhoods of Montevideo were studied. Actual presence of the elderly was weighed in relation to the total inhabitants aged 65 years or older in Montevideo.

$$\bar{X}_{pop} = (5) + (13) + (17) + (2) + (4) + (6) + (20) + (9) + (20) + (10) + (16) + (16) + (11) + (22) + (18) + (6) + (2) + (9) + (8) + (15) + (10) + (5) + (4) + (2) = 250$$

The sum of necessary cases in the 24 neighborhoods of Montevideo yielded a sample of 250 people.

Sample = 250 cases

Sampling error: +/- 6

Reliability of the survey: 99%

The percentage of rejections was 18%, which is considered an insignificant figure.

**Appendix 5**  
Focus groups

Objectives:

- Submit the findings of the survey to discussion.
- Analyze the initial findings of the interviews.
- Emphasize the participation and its obstacles.
- Obtain opinions from the participants with regard to which the key aspects would generate a civic service proposal for the elderly.

Two discussion groups were formed. The first had a managerial profile. This included the leaders of organizations with a significant impact and experts. The second was a “base” group, formed by volunteers chosen from the previously selected organizations.

Focus Group 1 (organization leaders)

Comisión de Derechos Humanos del MEC  
Vida Ascendente  
Abuelos por Elección  
CICAM  
BPS

Focus Group 2 (volunteers)

Volunteer(s) from:  
Abuelos por elección  
Vida Ascendente  
IMM  
President of Club de Abuelos de la Teja  
President of Club de Abuelos C. América

## Appendix 6

### Guidelines for semi-structured qualitative interviews

#### 1 - Guidelines for organizations developing volunteer work with the elderly

##### Organization:

1. How is the organization organized?
2. What is the job you carry out, with whom you do it, and to whom is it targeted?
3. How is this funded?
4. Are there many volunteers working?
5. How many?
6. How many of them are elderly?

##### Training:

1. What are the characteristics of the volunteer work course?
2. What is the applied methodology?
3. How are these volunteers recruited?
4. What are the admission requirements?

##### Work:

1. Do you establish a contract -in writing- detailing the rights and duties of the organization and the volunteer? (if yes, skip to questions 5)
2. Are these contracts renewable?
3. Does the organization offer some kind of training?
4. What are the guarantees for volunteers and organizations?
5. How would you describe the volunteers?
6. Is the volunteer evaluated by the organization? Does the volunteer evaluate the activities performed?

##### Activities carried out by the organization:

1. What objectives do you plan to achieve with volunteer work?
2. Which are the areas or services where volunteer work is mostly developed?
3. Do you give priority to any area in particular?
4. How are the programs designed?
5. How have they made an impact?

##### The elderly participating in these programs:

- 0- How would you describe the elderly who approach this organization/institution?
- 1- Which needs of the elderly can these programs satisfy?
- 2- Which benefits can the elderly contribute to these programs?
- 3- What role do they play in the whole process, including origin, design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation?
- 4- Do the elderly volunteers prefer any specific areas and activities?
- 5- How long do the elderly stay within the organization?
- 6- What barriers can hinder social participation of the elderly?

- 7- Which components need to be developed in order to increase the potential of civic service carried out by the elderly?

2. Guidelines for state entities

IMM

Organization

1. How is the “Comisión del Adulto Mayor” composed?
2. What are the organization’s main objectives?
3. What job you carry out, with whom you do it, and to whom is it targeted?
4. Do you receive contributions from, or have you entered into any agreement with, other entities or organizations to carry out the tasks? (economic and human resources, and infrastructure)
5. Do volunteers work in this organization? How many? How many of them are elderly?

Training for volunteer work:

1. What are the characteristics of the volunteer work course?
2. Which is the applied methodology?
3. How are these volunteers recruited?
4. What are the admission requirements?

Activities carried out by the organization:

1. What objectives do you plan to achieve with volunteer work?
2. Which areas or services have well developed volunteer work?
3. Do you give priority to any area in particular?
4. How are the programs designed?
5. How have they made an impact?

Work:

1. Do you establish a contract -in writing- detailing the rights and duties of the organization and the volunteer? (if yes, skip questions 5 and 7)
2. Are these contracts renewable?
3. Does the organization offer some kind of training?
4. What are the guarantees for volunteers and organizations?
5. How would you describe the volunteers?
6. Is the volunteer evaluated by the organization? Does the volunteer evaluate the activities performed?

The elderly participating in these programs:

1. How would you describe the elderly who approach this organization/institution?
2. Which needs of the elderly can these programs satisfy?
3. Which benefits can the elderly contribute to these programs?
4. Which role do they play in the whole process, including origin, design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation?
5. Do the elderly volunteers prefer any specific areas and activities?

6. How long do the elderly stay within the organization?
7. What barriers can hinder social participation of the elderly?
8. Which components need to be developed in order to increase the potential of civic service carried out by the elderly?

Other organizations.

1. Please name international connections or relationships with other countries.
2. Please name organizations that work with you regarding the elderly.
3. Please name other institutions that work with the elderly, and in particular with the social aspects related to them.

BPS

Organization:

1. What are the main objectives of the Social Services Division of the BPS?
2. What are the various activities and programs developed by the agency?
3. With whom are they developed, and to whom are they targeted?
4. Do you receive contributions from, or have you entered into any agreement with, other entities or organizations to carry out the tasks? (economic and human resources, and infrastructure)
5. Do volunteers work in the programs? How many? How many of them are elderly?

Training:

1. What does the training program consist of?
2. Which is the applied methodology?
3. How are the participants recruited?
4. Which are the admission requirements?

Activities carried out by the organization:

1. Does the Social Services Division promote volunteer work?
2. What objectives do you plan to achieve with volunteer work?
3. Which are the areas or services where volunteer work is mostly developed?
4. Do you give priority to any area in particular?
5. How are the programs designed?
6. How have they made an impact?

Work:

1. Do you establish a contract -in writing- detailing the rights and duties of the organization and the volunteer? (if yes, skip questions 5 and 7)
2. Are these contracts renewable?
3. Does the organization offer some kind of training?
4. What are the guarantees for volunteers and organizations?
5. How would you describe the volunteers?
6. Is the volunteer evaluated by the organization? Does the volunteer evaluate the activities performed?

The elderly participating in these programs:

1. How would you describe the elderly who approach this organization/institution?
2. Which needs of the elderly can these programs satisfy?
3. Which benefits can the elderly contribute to these programs?
4. What role do they play in the whole process, including origin, design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation?
5. Do the elderly volunteers prefer any specific areas and activities?
6. How long do the elderly stay within the organization?
7. What barriers can hinder social participation of the elderly?
8. Which components need to be developed in order to increase the potential of civic service carried out by the elderly?

Other organizations.

1. Please name international connections or relationships with other countries.
2. Please name organizations that work with you regarding the elderly.
3. Please name other institutions that work with the elderly, and in particular with the social aspects related to them.

6. Guidelines for experts in volunteer work carried out by the young

- Experience of the respondent.
- Main characteristics of young volunteers in Uruguay (mainly permanence and sustainability in the programs).
- Areas or services where the young carry out most of the volunteer work.
- Motives and objectives of young people to carry out volunteer activities and civic service.
- Possible causes of their scope.
- Needs of young people satisfied by volunteer work and civic service.
- Benefits obtained from the participation of the young in the programs and institutions.

## Appendix 7

### Current Initiatives

There are a series of proposals and initiatives that become paradigmatic cases for their soundness, but especially by their trend to consolidate modalities of civic service.

There follow some examples:

**Elderly Doctors:** In 2003, an initiative framed in a parish of Montevideo that had limited resources and infrastructure. Retired physicians and active professionals, together with the parish priest, conceived an unusual day care center. In this center, retired physicians check, diagnose, and care for the patients attending the center, while active physicians prescribe based on the diagnosis elaborated by the retired physicians. This undertaking demonstrates intergenerational integration at its best; here, based on a process of learning and feedback between young people who are initiating their professional careers and the elderly who convey their experience and knowledge not only to the common good but also to enrich the medical heritage of new physicians, the program contributes to a profession where the practice—and experience that this grants—is one of the key factors for technical growth in the field. Moreover, this initiative constitutes an efficient and creative response to several problems plaguing Uruguayan society: the program addresses the lack of access to health care suffered by the most disadvantaged while also providing elderly professionals—for whom professional practice was the central to their active lives—see a new opportunity to share and use their heritage and expertise in other people's care and well-being.

**Urban ecoguides:** This undertaking is an action clearly aimed at the promotion of civic service by the elderly, while at the same time it emphasizes and promotes one of the most outstanding assets of this population: memory. These elderly subjects are living history, people who have played a leading role in a specific historical time of which there are written records but of which they keep affective and sensory. They hold affective and leading memory that will die with them if it is not capitalized and transmitted to other generations.

**Grandparents by choice:** In this program, elderly volunteers are trained to work with children who live in state homes for abandoned minors. The purpose of this initiative is to achieve a stable emotional bond between older adults and children in a state of social vulnerability. Therefore, in addition to providing comprehensive attention to the elderly that eases their transition, this proposal achieves intergenerational integration, while providing care for one of the most vulnerable populations in Uruguay. In this way, “grandparents by choice” find an opportunity to put their gained social capital to work and feel valued. Thus, they acquire a sense of importance as they bequeath something in the last stage of their life cycle to a child. Likewise, the children are given opportunities to establish a relationship with significant adults who can transmit social and historical roots absent in their lives due to a lack of family continuity. The elderly volunteers offer them life models different from their daily environment, with the final intention of breaking away from the fragmentation and segregation that have been present in our society in recent decades.



#### 4-Young and elderly volunteers

Concerning the differential characteristics and learning to be highlighted—in a comparative analysis—of volunteer work among the youth versus the initiatives carried out by the elderly, the following aspects can be pointed out:

- a) Young people, according to the respondents, have vitality and energy, and feel a fundamental need to be leading actors of programs oriented to the improvement of social justice in the belief that a better society can be established. Older adults express the same altruistic beliefs and interest in philanthropy expressed by youth. Often, in this stage of their lives, the elderly reassess their contribution to their citizenship in general. Among the youth, initiatives tend to center around the promotion of racial integration and political and cultural tolerance, expression of citizenship, contribution to social development, enhancement of economic and personal development. Meanwhile, youth also construct a network of contacts who will support them in adulthood, gain education and training critical to future success in the job market.. Perhaps the real difference between volunteer work performed by young people and that performed by elderly has to do with the fact that the former is looked on as an investment for the future, whereas the latter returns all investments made by the social community.
- b) There are differences in the time commitments of youth volunteers and elderly volunteers (McBride et al., 2003). For example, the programs that have been adjusted to older adults include initiatives that require a few hours per week over an extensive period of time; tutorial programs, for instance, involve a once-a-week commitment but for a whole school year. However, programs oriented toward young people usually aim at achieving high impact results over a circumscribed period of time. These programs usually involve an entire population or community, such as a local community development.
- c) Generally speaking, the elderly choose organizations based on their professional backgrounds, which may make difficult for them to accept the guidelines implemented by the organization's managing board. After an adaptation period of the elderly to their various activities, however, organizations express that their work is of an inestimable value. Resistance to organizational requirements is not observed among youth, because their life stage provides them with a need and anxiety for learning. Since they readily adjust to the needs and special features of each initiative, their inclusion in a variety of programs is easily facilitated.
- d) In turn, the organizations are looked on by the elderly as spaces where not only activities but also sensations, emotions, ideas and experiences can be shared with their peers, which in the long run affirms a commitment with the task and with the permanence of the institution. The sustainability of the elderly is much greater than that of the young people once they become involved in the activities.
- e) The differential feature that characterizes volunteer work among the youth is the heterogeneity in its directionality, an aspect that distinguishes it clearly from the one performed by the elderly, who usually address their actions only to their own age group.

5-Some reflections regarding the most suitable programs for elderly

Now that we have presented a general analysis of the data collected during the field work, we are in a position to reflect on the elements required for the construction of suitable programs that meet the needs of the elderly.

It is indispensable to construct a directory systematizing the existing initiatives, their methods of action, the proposals undertaken and their geographical position. This would be very useful when designing public policies for volunteer work support as they would provide the decision makers with a clear map of initiatives and assets that would make the development of local strengthening proposals. At the same time, they would be useful to the elderly who might want to engage in volunteer activities. One of the reasons for the small impact made by volunteer work is the limited dissemination of information about available opportunities.

Initiatives should come from the civil sector, they should have freedom of proactive and conceptual action but should be coordinated, promoted and supported by the State, since this social issue is central to its mission.

Preparatory courses that address the difficulties of adjusting to retirement would be a very useful addition to the labor environment itself. These courses could be taught by retirees of that particular labor sector, who could convey their experiences and the process of separation from the labor world they already went through.

The diversity of interests and preferred areas as well as the levels of commitment that the elderly are willing to affirm should be respected. For this reason, there is a positive judgment on the existence of initiatives with a battery of varied action proposals and with different levels of involvement, as well as the presence of others with more compromising initiatives and with a conducive conceptual and referring thread, as it was observed in the analysis.

The areas of influence of the organizations should be expanded, that is, the generation of alternatives that are anchored within the communities where the elderly are found should be encouraged.

It seems that the elderly feel more comfortable and more skilled at developing projects that focus on local impact.

According to the survey, it would be highly positive to offer—prior to the performance of volunteer work—preparatory courses aimed at making the retirement process easier. These courses should focus on encouraging older adults to undertake self-reassessment in order to channel their interests into social action. Subsequently, there should be introductory courses with regard to the significance of performing volunteer work, the commitment to beneficiaries inherent in the work, and the scope, and limits of the work.

### 6-Scope of this work and future lines of research

This research is the first empirical study and theoretical analysis in Uruguay concerning the proposals aiming at promoting volunteer work and civic service among the elderly. For this reason, the scope and importance of its product is already satisfactory. At the same time, it has been possible to reconstruct the present Montevideo universe of institutional, public, and private programs, which increases the usefulness and broadens the scope of research.

Therefore, we are satisfied with regard to the multiplicity of findings and results obtained through this study, deriving especially from successful field work where several techniques and methodological orientations were implemented. We consider the study to be a great contribution not only for organizations focused on the enhancement of elderly volunteer work and civic service, but also for the public entities devoted to bringing attention to this population. In addition, the study can be used as a reference when designing policies of citizens' integration and promotion in this age range.

The field study has been very productive and the main features and general considerations of the various assessed entities have been detected, which has made it possible to rebuild in very faithful way the analyzed universe. But the fact that the study was restricted to the capital of Uruguay and accordingly did not encompass the existing initiatives in the rest of the country, limits its scope. The research conducted (and presented in this report) allows us to hypothesize that the initiatives developed outside Montevideo will present large differences due mainly to the diversity and divergences observed between the metropolis and the rest of the cities of the provinces. One of the future lines of research could be to conduct this study nationwide.

A study of the general impact made on the various programs as well as a monitoring of the results achieved in the beneficiaries have not been included either. This was partly due to the absence of systematization in organizations observed in this study as well as to the absence of existing analysis on this topic. In future research, a second stage could be implemented. This stage would consist of an assessment of impact made by the programs, analyzing the various results both in the actors and leaders of the various initiatives and in the beneficiaries of such actions.

Nevertheless, as it has been observed during the course of this study, civic service is a concept not deeply rooted in the social action spheres of Uruguay. Future research could also explore how this modality of civic engagement could be enhanced.

One of the most important findings obtained during this research was the discovery of a great deal of volunteer- like activity that was not assessed as such by the actors or by the surrounding community. Thus, it would be interesting to assess the qualitative and quantitative impact of this "concealed" volunteer work in Uruguay as far as the elderly are concerned.

Finally it would be particularly interesting to develop comparative studies and analyses. In particular, the comparability could provide clues regarding the strengths and weaknesses of

volunteer work development carried out by the elderly in Brazil and Chile. Consequently, the assessment of the scope, characteristics, and modalities developed in these countries in comparison to those common to Uruguay could shed new light on the subject, specially taking into account that Brazil and Chile are two Latin American countries with numerous initiatives of great impact that are aimed at strengthening the elderly as social actors.