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SOUTH-SOUTH IN ACTION

SOUTH-SOUTH VOLUNTEERING AS A DRIVING
FORCE FOR DEVELOPMENT:
EXPERIENCES FROM ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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Foreword

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) are pleased to present the publication *South-South volunteering as a driving force for development: Experiences from the Asia-Pacific region*. In this time of global crisis, solidarity between people and communities is more important than ever. Volunteerism exists in all human societies and reflects important human values of mutual aid, service, community-building and engagement. It is often scaled up in times of crisis in response to immediate needs. Volunteers are already providing important services in the COVID-19 response and will be critical in supporting the recovery, especially as the public health crisis exacerbates economic and social inequalities and exposes vulnerabilities in many communities.

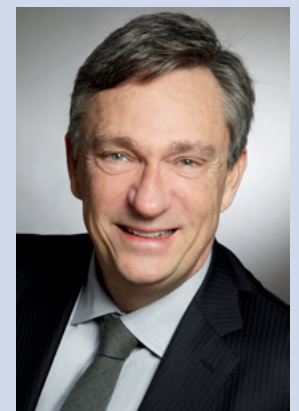
Volunteering and South-South cooperation share the common principles of mutuality, reciprocity, respect and equality and foster participatory approaches to development. For countries of the global south and their development partners, continuing to document lessons learned and share knowledge even in times of crisis enhances support and solidarity while helping countries stay the course of implementing best practices in development.

This publication reflects UNV's belief that South-South and Triangular Cooperation and volunteerism are mutually reinforcing and enhance each other's impact on driving forward sustainable development. The paper features three case studies that show different aspects of South-South Triangular Cooperation in volunteering: a volunteer programme embedded in a national development cooperation agency (Thailand), a national volunteer scheme supported by South-South funding, triangular and South-South knowledge exchange (Cambodia) and a project enhancing knowledge exchange to increase capacity for international volunteering for volunteer-involving organizations (China). UNV has long been at the forefront of promoting southern participation in international volunteering, with over 80 percent of UN Volunteers coming from and working in the global South.



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We hope that this publication will further enhance understanding of the roles of volunteerism and South-South Triangular Cooperation in supporting communities through the current crisis and into the future.

We would like to thank our partner governments, organizations, stakeholders and volunteers featured in this publication for their support in producing this edition of the *South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Action* publication series, with special thanks to the Thailand International Cooperation Agency for providing funding.

Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BAPA+40	Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation
BRI	The Belt and Road Initiative
BRVSA	The Belt and Road Volunteer Service Alliance
BVF	Beijing Volunteer Service Federation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
FFT	Friends From Thailand
IBSA	India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation
IYEPL	International Youth Exchange for Peer Learning
IVCO	International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
SEP	Sufficiency Economy Philosophy
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TICA	Thailand International Cooperation Agency
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNV	United Nations Volunteers programme
VIO	Volunteer Involving Organization

Preface

As South-South and triangular cooperation continue to expand in importance, and in light of the conclusion of the Second United Nations High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) in March 2019 and the Global Technical Meeting (GTM2020) on “Reimagining volunteering for the 2030 Agenda” in July 2020, it seemed appropriate to examine the contributions that the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and its partners are making to implementation of the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation on volunteerism. As such, the UNV Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) have partnered to produce this *South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Action* publication, which uses a case study analysis approach to examine volunteer programmes in Cambodia, China and Thailand that have strong South-South components.

The hypothesis is that South-South cooperation and volunteerism are mutually reinforcing and highly compatible concepts. Normative discussions of volunteerism and South-South cooperation note that they share common principles of “mutuality, reciprocity, respect and equality” and that they have the potential to promote participatory and needs-based approaches to development, while cultivating global citizens and strengthening people to people ties.¹

This publication will use the 2002 United Nations General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/56/38) definition of volunteerism: “Activities undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor.” This definition is cognizant of the rich discussion of various definitions and limitations to definitions of volunteerism in different cultures.² Volunteerism incorporates a wide variety of activities, including service delivery (e.g. provision of health care and education, disaster response), mutual aid (e.g. self-help groups, professional organizations, community-based resource management) and civic participation (e.g. advocacy, political campaigning, protest movements).³ Research on informal volunteerism (i.e. activities done directly without the mediation of a formal organization) is expanding concepts of volunteerism.⁴

1 UNV, 2017b.

2 See for example, ILO 2011 and several of the articles in Butcher and Einolf, eds. 2017.

3 UNV, 2011.

4 UNV, 2018d.





Chapter 1: Volunteering and South-South and triangular cooperation

Volunteering and South-South and triangular cooperation

1.1 Volunteerism and relevance in the context of the SDGs

As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges, the key to its success is being “of the people, by the people and for the people.”⁵ Volunteering is one of the main ways that people participate in development processes. Five years into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), governments, civil society and other partners are stepping up their efforts to promote and use volunteering as a vehicle for participation, consultation and inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups. Voluntary National Reviews that track progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda confirm that countries have started to capitalize on the power of volunteerism as a vehicle for SDG implementation. In 2019, eight countries from the Asia-Pacific region detailed the essential contributions that volunteers are making to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2020, five countries⁶ in the region so far have integrated volunteerism into their efforts in achieving the SDGs. However, further research, evidence and quantitative data are required to inform policy options on how volunteerism can accelerate SDG implementation.

The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme estimates that the global informal and formal volunteer workforce consists of 109 million full-time equivalent workers. Of these, 29 million

are in Asia and the Pacific. Seventy percent of the world’s volunteering is informal, that is, volunteering person to person, distinct from formally volunteering through an organization. Worldwide, Asia and North America have the highest rates of formal volunteering at 38.2 percent and 38.7 percent respectively. The Asia and the Pacific region also has the greatest gender balance of all regions, with men and women volunteering about equally. In all other regions, women volunteer at higher rates both formally and informally. Detailed data is difficult to obtain on rates of volunteering in the global south especially as informal volunteering dominates volunteering modalities in lower income countries.⁷ While recognizing the importance of informal volunteerism to communities and development, South-South cooperation in volunteerism is much more likely to take place through formal channels. As such, this paper focuses on formal volunteerism.

1.2 South-South cooperation and volunteerism

South-South cooperation is broadly defined as “collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains.”⁸ This encompasses a wide variety of cooperation that goes beyond traditional types of aid relationships and may include trade and investment as well as public and private financing.⁹ As defined by

5 UNGA, 2015.

6 Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Papua New Guinea, Samoa.

7 UNV, 2018d.

8 UNOSSC, n.d.

9 Li, 2018.

the BAPA+40 Outcome Document, South-South cooperation is based on the “principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.”¹⁰ South-South cooperation includes many people-centred modalities, such as “technical cooperation, the sharing of knowledge and experience, training, capacity building and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, aimed at achieving sustainable development.”¹¹ People-centred activities make volunteerism a good fit for delivering many of these components of South-South cooperation.

In its earliest days, international volunteerism was idealized as a way to create solidarity between people and build peace between countries.¹² However, in the 1960s, critiques of volunteer programmes began to characterize them as “paternalistic, colonial and culturally imperialistic.”¹³ In the following decades, a new development ethos emerged based on a “capabilities or assets approach” that recognized that everyone has contributions to make to development and many International Volunteering Cooperation Organizations (IVCO) from the geographical north joined with southern partners to advocate to governments and donors for changes in programming. However, organizations are at times still constrained by donor priorities, preventing full implementation of strongly egalitarian volunteer programmes.¹⁴ It is within this context of evolving development discourse that South-South cooperation in volunteerism has garnered greater interest and support.

As many developing countries seek to expand their volunteering ecosystems, they are drawing

on lessons from southern partners, resulting in the field of volunteerism being enhanced by South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is the “manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South,”¹⁵ and when volunteers are involved, they put a “human face”¹⁶ on this development cooperation. At the same time, a concern exists that the effectiveness of South-South cooperation volunteer programmes may be limited if top down power dynamics between sending and receiving countries are replicated.¹⁷ Strong volunteering models that help realize the full potential of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation for development will assist in mitigating this concern.

As research on South-South cooperation and volunteerism is still in its infancy, there is no agreed-upon formal definition of South-South volunteerism. However, the growing number of cases that are identified as examples of South-South cooperation-related volunteering share some common characteristics. These cases generally involve formal volunteering through volunteer involving organizations (VIOs) and cooperation between southern partners. The prominence of formal volunteering may be due to research limitations or logistical limitations to sending or exchanging volunteers internationally.

Many of these cases also incorporate triangular cooperation, defined by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) as “collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, management and technological systems as well as other forms of support.”¹⁸

10 UNGA A/RES/73/291, 2019.

11 Ibid.

12 CCIVS, 2020.

13 Lough, 2015.

14 Comhlámh, 2013.

15 Ibid.

16 UNOSSC, interview.

17 Laurie and Baillie, 2017; UNV 2018a.

18 UNOSSC, n.d.a.

South-South and triangular cooperation on volunteering most often refers to:

- a formal volunteer placement through which a person from one southern country travels to another to work as a volunteer supported by funds from southern, northern or a mix of sources;
- funding from southern partners to support volunteer projects that either have a country to country (or regional) component or that supports volunteers within a country;
- on-line volunteering between southern partners supported by southern and/or northern funding; and
- knowledge exchange between southern partners or triangular partners through workshops, conferences, online platforms, informal networks, etc.

1.3 Infrastructure to support South-South cooperation and volunteerism: The rise of new volunteering actors

Supportive policy frameworks and emerging volunteering actors

Policy frameworks to support volunteering have been expanding rapidly worldwide. According to the *Global Synthesis Report: Plan of Action to Integrate Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda*, at least 82 countries now have specific national laws on volunteering and 58 have specific national policies, schemes, strategies and plans.¹⁹ More than seventy percent of these countries are from the global south. The growth in volunteering infrastructure in the global south is helping to create an enabling environment for South-South cooperation in volunteerism.

¹⁹ Davis, 2020.

Volunteerism is incorporated into many national development strategies across Asia and the Pacific.²⁰ The three case study countries explored in this paper, Cambodia, China and Thailand, all have fairly robust national volunteer infrastructures. In Thailand, more than eight million volunteers contribute to domestic development through government programmes in areas such as health care, environmental protection, disaster management, education and heritage preservation. Cambodia has incorporated volunteerism into its youth policy, collaborates with UNV and national and international VIOs to observe International Volunteer Day and provides some budgetary support for promoting volunteerism at the national and subnational level.²¹ China has regulations requiring governments at or above the county level to incorporate volunteerism into national social and economic plans and to provide financial support for volunteering schemes. Each province has government-funded volunteer service federations, while the national level has the China Volunteer Service Federation and there are private sector and civil society supported volunteer programmes.²²

UNV has supported the expansion of volunteering infrastructure in many countries in the global south. For example, UNV supported the government of Cambodia to establish its National Volunteer Programme, “Volunteer for My Community.” In Sri Lanka, UNV worked with the Ministry of Primary Industries and Social Empowerment to develop their National Policy on Volunteerism.²³ In India, UNV partnered with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to strengthen national volunteer infrastructure in 58 districts through a network of youth clubs.²⁴

²⁰ UNESCAP, 2019.

²¹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia, 2018.

²² CVSF, 2018.

²³ The policy was approved in August 2019.

²⁴ UNV, 2018c; UNV, 2019a.

It is likely that a strong domestic enabling environment for volunteerism, which provides greater incentives for people to engage in volunteerism at home, also supports the development of international volunteering schemes. All the volunteers interviewed for this publication had previous experience of volunteering domestically before they engaged in international volunteering.²⁵

While policy frameworks to support volunteerism are clearly expanding across the global south, it is more difficult to track whether volunteerism is specifically incorporated into government policy on international or South-South cooperation bases. This is an area that deserves further research. In terms of the three case studies explored in this paper, the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) is an example of a southern partner and a new donor agency that has explicitly incorporated both South-South cooperation and volunteerism into its cooperation strategy. According to TICA, its Friends from Thailand volunteer programme is positioned as a way to “strengthen the impact of our development cooperation and enhance mutual understanding with our partner countries,” as well as to engage Thai people in development.²⁶ China has also incorporated volunteerism into its international cooperation strategies and has identified volunteerism as one way to implement the ‘people to people bond’ pillar of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).²⁷ Cambodia has participated in United Nations Peacekeeping missions abroad and several international volunteering cooperation organizations support Cambodians to volunteer internationally, but data on volunteerism, domestic and international, are still limited.²⁸

25 Interviews.

26 TICA, n.d.

27 NDRC, 2015.

28 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia, 2018.

Box 1: Regional volunteering schemes

Regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community, the African Union Commission and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) actively support regional volunteer exchanges. For example, the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps recruits young African professionals to serve in twelve-month placements in Member States other than their own. The African Union Commission notes that one of the motivations for this programme is that for a long time inter-African missions had been limited to peacekeeping in areas of unrest. This programme promotes pan-Africanism and youth empowerment through youth providing community services.²⁹ ASEAN has identified volunteering as a strategic measure for building an open and adaptive region through its Socio-cultural Community Blueprint. Affiliated youth volunteer programmes, such as the eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN Programme³⁰ and the ASEAN Youth Volunteer Programme, hold collaborative capacity building workshops for regional youth, who subsequently return to their own countries to implement projects.³¹

Some national volunteering schemes also contribute to regional cooperation. For example, the Fiji Volunteer Service Scheme has recruited over 600 retired health care professionals to take three-year placements in Nauru, the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu in the spirit of South-South cooperation.³²

In spite of the growth in international volunteer programmes in the global south, South-South volunteer programmes are still limited by lack of funds, capacity and face inconsistent operations and programming.³³

29 AU, n.d.

30 ASEAN Foundation, 2019.

31 ASEAN Youth Volunteer Programme, 2020.

32 Presentation by Litia Mawi at the 16th IAVE Asia Pacific Volunteer Conference.

33 UNV, 2018d.

Civil society organizations have also played a part in increasing the profile of South-South cooperation in volunteering. While northern IVCOs continue to support programmes that send northern volunteers to work in the global south, shifts in building local approaches to development have encouraged IVCOs to move from emphasizing skills-based service delivery models to emphasizing capacity building, development policy and advocacy and increased alignment with local volunteer involving organizations. As a result, several IVCOs, such as Voluntary Service Overseas, CUSO and FT Norway, now have multidirectional (North-South, South-North, South-South and Diaspora) programmes.³⁴

34 Mati and Perold, 2019.





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Chapter 2: Experiences in South-South volunteering from the Asia and the Pacific region

Experiences in South-South volunteering from the Asia and the Pacific Region

The three case studies of this report highlight different approaches to volunteer programming. The Poverty Reduction Among Youth in Cambodia project shows how South-South funding and knowledge exchange can support domestic volunteering programmes and infrastructure. The China project demonstrates how South-South knowledge sharing helps develop the international volunteering capacity of volunteer involving organizations from the South. The Friends from Thailand (FFT) programme illustrates how volunteering can be incorporated into government development cooperation strategies. At the same time, all three cases share similar themes based on South-South cooperation principles. These include solidarity, mutual respect and building people to people relationships. South-South cooperation is aligned with national priorities, demand-driven, participative and uses holistic approaches to foster development and cultivate citizens who can fully participate in national and global society.

2.1 Cambodia: South-South financing supports SDGs achievement through volunteer infrastructure and South-South volunteer exchange

2.1.1 Overview

The Poverty Reduction Among Youth in Cambodia - Development of Youth Volunteers'

Skill Sets for Increased Employability project was a collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia and UNV from 2017 to 2020. It was funded by the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund). The IBSA Fund is a \$35 million development fund based explicitly on South-South cooperation principles. It was established by the three governments in 2004 to "identify replicable and scalable projects that can be disseminated to interested developing countries as examples of best practices in the fight against poverty and hunger."³⁵

Informally referred to as the IBSA project, this project formed an umbrella for a number of youth volunteering pilot projects. The IBSA project demonstrated the value of volunteerism as a modality to support skills development in youth and as a way to support the implementation of development goals. It also strengthened capacity in the government to be able to implement volunteering schemes. The strong partnerships and capacity building that occurred during the IBSA project have been consolidated and expanded in a government-led youth volunteer scheme called Volunteering for My Community.

³⁵ UNOSSC, n.d.b.

Thus, a South-South cooperation development fund provided the capital that supported the robust development of a national volunteer policy and a youth volunteering scheme in Cambodia. Furthermore, triangular cooperation through which UNV facilitated a South-South exchange between youth volunteers in Cambodia and India as part of this project led to knowledge exchange on volunteer infrastructure between Cambodia and India.



Figure 1: Reach of the Youth Volunteers Skills Development, IBSA Project, Cambodia.

2.1.2 Development approach

South-South funding

As noted above, the IBSA project was made possible through funding from southern countries using South-South cooperation principles.³⁶ One reflection of those principles was the demand-driven nature of the development projects. South-South cooperation was not a prerequisite of the IBSA Fund, meaning the development projects did not need to involve more than one southern country. However, IBSA did expect the projects to generate learning that could be replicated in other southern countries, with IBSA itself providing the South-South cooperation link. The IBSA Cambodia project is considered successful not only because it engaged large numbers of volunteers who developed transferable skills, but also because it has been adopted and expanded by the government. The project has enhanced government capacity to develop infrastructure and an enabling environment for volunteerism.³⁷

National development

While the IBSA project's focus was on national development, the South-South and triangular cooperation aspects enabled the project through funding, knowledge exchange and capacity building. The project was integrated and aligned with the national policy context. The 2011 National Policy on Cambodian Youth Development identifies volunteering as one of twelve strategies for youth development. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is responsible for spearheading the implementation of this strategy in cooperation with other stakeholders responsible for youth development in Cambodia. Volunteerism is also a priority strategy in the country's 2019-2023 Education Strategic Plan. Youth skill development and employment is also well supported through the National Employment Policy and the Labour Migration Policy.³⁸

Youth volunteerism under the IBSA project fulfilled the dual goals of contributing to community and national development and building volunteers' own skills. Volunteers were also able to develop networks that helped secure employment.³⁹ As detailed in the final project evaluation report, an online survey of 137 youth volunteers indicated that 52 (38 percent) were employed at the end of the project period. Seventy-nine percent of the 52 perceived that they received their jobs through having participated in the project's volunteering activities, during which time they gained relevant skills.

36 See the 2018 IBSA Declaration of South South Cooperation, at: www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29955/IBSA_Declaration_on_SouthSouth_Cooperation.

37 IBSA, 2018b.

38 See UNV 2017d for details on these and other policies supporting youth volunteerism and employment.

39 UNV, 2020.



Figure 2: Skills youth reported they gained during their volunteer assignments and that they now apply in their jobs.

The project also increased awareness of and support for volunteerism in Cambodia. Recruiting volunteers and finding placements for volunteers became progressively easier as concrete benefits from the project for the volunteers and the communities and organizations in which they worked became apparent.⁴⁰

South-South knowledge exchange

The IBSA project coordinated with the International Youth Exchange for Peer Learning (IYEPL). IYEPL is a UNV, UNDP and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of India initiative that sends youth volunteers from India to partner countries to share learning with their counterparts on volunteerism and development. In 2018, four volunteers from India spent two weeks in Cambodia working with local volunteers. The objectives of the placement were to understand the similarities and differences of youth volunteerism in India and Cambodia and to exchange ideas and best practices to improve volunteering infrastructure in their respective countries. The India and Cambodia UNV country offices coordinated the placement.

The problems of youth will be solved by sharing. From one state to another, one country to another, we share experience, get ideas and solve problems.

Rojan Pradhan, IYEPL volunteer from India to Cambodia

The people to people connection has been maintained by the volunteers from India and Cambodia via a Facebook group through which they continue to share their experiences on volunteering. The IYEPL volunteers also shared their experiences about India's National Service Scheme and volunteer accreditation. Of particular interest to the Cambodian government

⁴⁰ Interviews.

was that the volunteers' accreditation was recognized in applications for higher education and by employers as work experience. A similar approach could help support Cambodia's youth development strategies by providing a formal framework for linking skills development through volunteering to employment and higher education. Discussions and sharing of experiences have continued, for example, at a workshop held in conjunction with International Volunteer Day in 2019 and at the India Volunteering Conclave 2019.⁴¹



Volunteer activities in Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia

2.1.3 Volunteering infrastructure

Management capacity building

South-South funding and triangular cooperation with UNV has helped develop capacity within the Cambodian government for managing volunteer projects. In spite of a strong policy framework, there was not much practical experience within the government in running volunteer schemes. Therefore, the IBSA project was set up so that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport participated in each step of the process through recruitment, training, management and debriefing, building government capacity for running national volunteer schemes. The Ministry

⁴¹ Interviews.

has now built upon one of the pilots of the IBSA project to create a national youth volunteer scheme called "Volunteering for My Community" and is considering expanding another pilot, depending on funding.⁴²

Recruitment

The IBSA project contributed to the 2030 Agenda's pledge to ensure that "no-one is left behind" by ensuring the pilot projects were implemented in 17 provinces and encouraged women, rural youth and 'dropout' youth to apply for recruitment in the Youth Centres. The process set quotas for women and 'dropout' youth for some pilot groups.

2.1.4 Lessons learned

Volunteering infrastructure: The IBSA project supported the development of domestic volunteering projects and infrastructure whose lessons can be scaled up across the country and shared with other countries from the global south. The South-South knowledge exchange component contributed to strengthening volunteering infrastructure, both domestically, through the discussion on accreditation, and potentially internationally if a formal India-Cambodia youth exchange programme is established.

Policy: The project was strongly aligned with Cambodia's national policies supporting youth development and highlights a global trend of using volunteering as a modality for national governments to implement youth development priorities.⁴³ Skills development and employment as direct results of the project were well-documented and tangible, fulfilling national policy.

⁴² Interviews.

⁴³ UNV, 2018e.

Institutions: Creating partnerships and building trust were critical to the success of the project. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport built trust and understanding of work processes with its triangular partner, UNV, and was therefore able to facilitate support for cooperation at senior levels of government, which then ensured that the central government directed sub-national governments to support the project. Multi-stakeholder processes involving the public and private sectors and civil society strengthened ownership and support for volunteering infrastructure in Cambodia. South-South funding from IBSA supported capacity building throughout the project. UNV's understanding of their partners' needs and abilities ensured a good match between Cambodia and India that enhanced South-South knowledge exchange. Both countries had a similar institutional structure (youth centres) and policy alignment (youth development) to build upon, facilitating discussions on how to establish a national accreditation framework.⁴⁴

Individual volunteers: Positivity, persistence and patience were cited as important personal attributes and attitudes needed for success as a volunteer. Volunteers found that results did not always come as quickly as expected or in a manner that was originally anticipated. Some volunteers faced opposition or indifference from their families and communities who did not see the value in volunteering or opposed a specific intervention (e.g. anti-tobacco and anti-drug campaigns, environmental protection). However, the volunteers noted that at the same time many people helped them, donating money or profiling them in the media and providing them the opportunity to participate in International Volunteer Day events or be recognized through accreditation, contests, etc. This external support had a positive impact on volunteer morale.⁴⁵

Going forward, the programme could focus on ensuring inclusiveness of vulnerable youth by further promoting the programme with excluded groups and by establishing selection criteria and appropriate procedures that would open opportunities for more diverse groups, redressing an imbalance favouring urban and more experienced youth.

A few years ago, young people thought volunteering took too much time. Now young people are more interested. They tell their friends to come to us. It is easy for the Youth Centre to recruit.

Lay Sothavin, Kampong Thom Youth Office Staff, Cambodia

⁴⁴ Interviews.

⁴⁵ Interviews.

2.2 Thailand: Friends from Thailand Programme – Volunteerism policy and strategy for sharing a home-grown development approach through South-South cooperation

2.2.1 Overview

In 2002, Thailand announced its intention to move from an aid recipient country to an aid provider country. It has achieved that goal; for example, the annual Official Development Assistance budget for 2019 was US\$90 million.⁴⁶ As part of this shift from recipient to donor, the Friends from Thailand (FFT) Volunteer Programme was launched in 2003 as a major scheme of the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA). The mission of the FFT programme is to “cultivate friendship and better understanding between the people of Thailand and those of our development partners.” The programme promotes partnerships at the local and people to people level, providing technical advice in its main development areas, including agriculture, public health, technology, education, carpentry, eco-tourism, local products development and community development based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). As of November 2019, the FFT Programme had sent more than 160 Thai volunteers for periods of one to two years to many countries, including Benin, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Mozambique, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.⁴⁷



FFT volunteer Charitlada Sangakij participates in an impromptu Buddhist puja ceremony with the local bee-keepers while on household database collecting duty in Tsirang, Bhutan

⁴⁶ TICA, 2019.

⁴⁷ TICA, November 2019.

2.2.2 Development approach

Policy integration and international cooperation

The Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) ensures that everything it does from the highest policy levels to projects on the ground is coordinated and aligned with Thailand's 20-year National Strategy (2018-2037) and foreign policy strategy. TICA's approach is grounded in South-South cooperation principles and focused on achieving the SDGs, through which all partners benefit from development cooperation programmes that provide opportunities for mutual learning. TICA prefers to use the term 'partner' to 'donor,' emphasizing the importance of equal partnerships in line with South-South cooperation principles. In 2003, when Thailand decided that it would become an aid provider, it made the decision that its cooperation agency, TICA, would be located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to demonstrate that international development cooperation was an arm of foreign policy, a way to expand diplomatic relations⁴⁸ and pursue the achievement of internationally-agreed development goals while underscoring the roles of partnerships and development diplomacy as a means to accomplish these goals.

Box 2: Thailand's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

As part of its international cooperation, Thailand seeks to share its homegrown development experiences, which have coalesced around the concept of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), promulgated by the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

SEP is characterized by three interrelated principles - reasonableness or wisdom, moderation and prudence - and two underlying conditions, which are knowledge and morality. These principles and conditions interact in a holistic manner and are used as a framework for decision-making. This development approach is highly compatible with sustainable development. Hence, the Thai government is advocating for the SEP approach to be used as a model for the achievement of the SDGs.⁴⁹

SEP has guided the country's development and balances environmental preservation, the capacity for self-reliance and improved livelihoods. Thailand is now sharing their experiences with other southern countries, focusing on agriculture, health and education, along with smaller programmes in public administration, social development, natural resources, environment, tourism, science and technology, trade, services and investment.⁵⁰ Thailand recognizes the importance of using appropriate approaches and technologies that match the needs of its partners and, as such, fosters each partner country's homegrown development approach for more effective joint development programmes.

48 Interviews.

49 Ibid.

50 UNOSSC, 2017.

The Friends from Thailand Programme has two types of volunteer assignments. Through the first, volunteers are assigned to Thailand's development cooperation projects in various countries (project-based), while through the second, volunteers are sent in response to TICA's partner country requests for particular capacities and designated to specific positions. A volunteer to Benin, for example, was sent at the request of the Benin government, on a project-based basis, to share Thailand's SEP experiences and agricultural techniques that were relevant to Benin at the grassroots level.



FFT volunteer Sakulkan Liblab learns how to make traditional food from Djakotomey, Benin farmers



Figure 1: Reach of the Friends from Thailand Programme.

The FFT Programme's projects are demand-driven and TICA emphasizes listening to its partners as a reflection of its dedication to equal and participatory partnerships, which in turn serve as an effective strategy to ensure success. For example, in 2018 the Bhutanese Government submitted a request for four volunteers with specific skill-sets to fill the following positions: 1) audio visual production supervisor; 2) laboratory officer in drug analysis; 3) laboratory technologist; and 4) micro-propagation.⁵¹ TICA sent two additional volunteers who were attached to an ongoing sustainable community development project. Those volunteers focused on community-based tourism and product development.⁵²

Volunteerism is a way to engage many stakeholders. Thai youth are interested in diplomacy and global affairs. Thus, the FFT Programme provides them with opportunities to immerse themselves in international working environments and see the world.

*Sirithon Wairatpanij, Minister Counsellor,
TICA*

The FFT Programme is considered by TICA to be an expression of Thailand's soft diplomacy and a means to promote "people to people connection and friendship-building" that fosters "mutual understanding and trust" that "goes beyond government-to-government cooperation."⁵³ FFT projects are mostly small-scale, capacity building projects that support diplomatic ties between countries. For example, a volunteer to Mozambique introduced a Thai technique for making mango paste to the villagers he was working with. It became very popular as a means to earn extra money for villagers. This helped the volunteer develop trust that facilitated his work on the agricultural project that was his main objective. This instance illustrates how volunteerism at the local level can provide a unique opportunity for development partners to identify local needs and specific requirements through direct contact, increasing the likelihood that appropriate actions will be taken during the development projects. The experience of the FFT volunteer in Mozambique was also mentioned by the Mozambique Government at a farewell ceremony thanking the Thai ambassador upon the conclusion of his diplomatic posting.⁵⁴



FFT volunteer Sompong Woragool helps Tuane, Mozambique farmers to catch and raise rabbits in traditional cages.

⁵¹ TICA, November 2019.

⁵² Interviews.

⁵³ TICA, 2019.

⁵⁴ Interviews.

National development

The FFT Programme is also an opportunity for Thailand to develop the skills of Thai youth in various areas through their experiences as volunteers, demonstrating volunteerism's value as a two-way learning process with mutual benefits. During their assignments, volunteers develop skills, increase their understanding of development and gain international experience in line with national priorities. All the volunteers attributed their desire for international experience as one of the motivating factors for applying to this programme. Development of human resources is the third of the six indicators of Thailand's National Strategy while the 12TH National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021) includes the goals of skills development, international cooperation and the aim for Thai people to be good national, ASEAN and global citizens.⁵⁵ One volunteer, now at the end of his placement, has been accepted into a prestigious Thai university, his admission to which he partially attributes to his participation in the FFT programme.⁵⁶

Many volunteers already have knowledge of the field they will be working in. We equip them not only to work, but to work as a volunteer, as a representative of Thailand, to engage with others' humanity, to work with people of different backgrounds, to be adaptable.

Weeraboon Wisartsakul, Thammasat University

⁵⁵ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2017.
⁵⁶ Interviews.

2.2.3 Volunteering infrastructure

Recruitment, training and field management

The Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies, Thammasat University, provides recruitment and training services for the FFT Programme. The school found that the majority of applicants were female, below the age of 30 (applicants up to the age of 35 are accepted) and all had at least a bachelor's degree.⁵⁷

Recruitment criteria for inclusion in the programme include positive attitudes, especially about working with people from other southern countries, independence, work experience and skills that match those needed for specific placements. Training focuses on supporting the volunteers to function in an international setting (language and culture training, their role as representatives of Thailand) and development skills (concepts of volunteerism, training in SEP and knowledge relevant to the placement). Training is continually updated based on feedback from the volunteers during and after their placements.⁵⁸



FFT volunteer Wipasiri Somnuk paints the Dudjom Rinpoche (Very Great Lama) statue at the Dorji Choeling monastery, Bhutan, as part of on-the-job training for her students in editing and painting

⁵⁷ Interviews.
⁵⁸ Interviews.

TICA, together with the Royal Thai Embassies, Consulates-General and the governments of receiving countries (upon agreement) are responsible for supporting the volunteers while in the field and ensuring the safety and well-being of volunteers. Support includes help with finding housing and providing medical assistance, as well as repatriation for volunteers when needed. For instance, in Bhutan, where there is no Thai Embassy, the Royal Civil Service Commission under the Royal Government of Bhutan has an agreement with the Royal Thai Government to be responsible for the Thai volunteers' security and supports other needs, such as visa applications, accommodation, etc. The volunteer to Mozambique noted that the embassy staff helped with acculturation, for example suggesting that he should walk rather than get a motorcycle to better fit in with the community where he was working.⁵⁹ Moreover, TICA has in place an interactive evaluation process that enables returning volunteers to give feedback to the programme and help with orienting new volunteers.



FFT volunteer Piched Khammeekan demonstrates how to make a small irrigation canal for a paddy field or garden in Mozambique

⁵⁹ Interviews.

Informal networks

The volunteers also drew on informal networks, such as expatriate Thai communities or other international volunteers in the placement countries. The volunteer to Mozambique explained that the Thai community in Maputo helped him by donating clothes and money to his community project. Thai technicians who were building a power plant came to the village on their days off and trained villagers in solar cell installation and use of sewing machines, as well as helped to fix bicycles and cars. The volunteer to Benin noted that he often discussed issues and enjoyed social support from volunteers on projects supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the German international cooperation agency (GIZ) near his place of assignment and that he communicated regularly with other FFT volunteers by phone and social media apps. Volunteers also shared information on their projects and experiences with each other through private social media groups.⁶⁰

2.2.4 Lessons learned

TICA has integrated the FFT Programme into its development cooperation as an instrumental component that contributes to project implementation. Some lessons from the FFT Programme are described below.

Policy: The FFT Programme is well aligned with Thailand's bilateral foreign relations and national development priorities. It exists to support Thailand's development cooperation based on South-South cooperation principles. Projects are demand-driven, arising out of diplomatic agreements between countries, and focused on capacity-building rather than service delivery. The FFT Programme shares SEP concepts to

⁶⁰ Interviews.

advance sustainable development for the benefit of recipient countries. The programme also encourages building the capacity of Thai citizens, which in turn can contribute to Thailand's development, highlighting the South-South cooperation principle of mutual benefit.

Institutions: The FFT Programme is structured to support principles of equality, mutuality and sustainability. Recruitment and training are oriented around ensuring that volunteers have a good understanding of SEP, are able to make concrete contributions to the sustainable development of the communities where they are placed and have the right attitude to enable them to respectfully engage with development partners. The programme is set up so TICA and its development partners can develop mutual trust, understanding and garner institutional and local support, which contribute to the achievement of project goals.

Individual volunteers: The fact that during recruitment the qualities required of volunteers include positive attitudes, the ability to work independently and adequate problem-solving skills lays the groundwork for successful projects. Selecting volunteers that are open-minded and equipped with practical skills that they can share with local people, while being able to adapt to local conditions, helps with interpersonal relationships and community acceptance. Another important contributing factor to success is the ability to identify local partners to work with and champion projects in order to gain support from locals through practical demonstrations of Thai development approaches. Volunteers cited that having contact with fellow FFT volunteers, expatriate Thai communities and other international volunteers employed nearby gave them with both moral and material support.⁶¹

61 Interviews.

When I first got to the village, some government staff from the local area came with me, but then I was by myself with two to three local people as partners. Some people didn't believe I could do anything, I was only 28 years old. But I said, join with me and we will learn together.

Suphawit Phrarom, FFT volunteer to Mozambique



FFT volunteer Sompong Woragool learns how to make traditional food in Mozambique

Length of assignment: Incorporating volunteers into development projects is one way to ensure that projects are participatory and need-driven. Volunteers on one to two year placements may be better positioned to develop trust and understand on-the-ground needs than development officers or short-term visitors.⁶² For example, the volunteer to Benin was placed in his assigned village for long enough that he was able to become friends with a farmer in the village and later helped him on a project to increase production of local cash crops, increasing revenue for that family. This practical intervention garnered interest from other villagers in the larger project.

62 Interviews.

Going forward, the FFT Programme faces challenges typical of other international volunteer programmes, such as being able to measure results. For example, it is difficult to gauge volunteer contributions to capacity building in the recipient country and the programme's contributions to recipient country national development strategies and to broader SDG efforts.

2.3 China: Knowledge exchange and bringing new southern voices to the volunteering sector



China & Cambodia VIOs sign MOU in 2018

2.3.1 Overview

With a strong domestic volunteering ecosystem in China and the rapid development of China's international cooperation, many Chinese VIOs are now seeking to launch or expand their international programmes. UNV has been working with the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF) to create knowledge exchange platforms to assist Chinese VIOs to develop their international volunteer programmes and increase South-South knowledge exchange on international volunteering and development.

The "Strengthening China's Involvement in the Development of International Volunteer Service through South-South Cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative (2016-2019)" project has supported BVF in engaging in knowledge exchange through hosting the 2017 International Volunteer Service Exchange Conference, hosting and attending other forums, workshops and international exchanges, supporting research and developing training courses for international volunteering.

The Beijing Volunteer Service Federation has also been instrumental in increasing the number of Chinese volunteers serving as national and international UN Volunteers, a step towards engaging young Chinese voices in international development discussions.

2.3.2 Development approach

The development of international volunteering capacity in China's VIOs is influenced by two major policy initiatives: 1) the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is currently providing an umbrella policy framework for much of China's international cooperation; and 2) the adoption of national Regulations on Voluntary Services.

The Belt and Road Initiative's overall aim is to advance global and regional connectivity. The key policy document of the BRI, *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk the Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*, sets out five pillars for cooperation: policy coordination; facilities connectivity; unimpeded trade; financial integration; and people to people bonds.⁶³ Volunteer services as well as a variety of other types of exchanges are identified under the people to people bond pillar as a way to win public support for bilateral and multilateral cooperation.⁶⁴

As China's international cooperation has expanded, international volunteering has been characterized by Chinese scholars and policymakers as a way to build people to people relationships, mutual understanding and friendship based on South-South cooperation principles.⁶⁵ BVF believes that South-South cooperation and the SDGs provide a framework for southern countries, including China, to participate in international development and cooperation and express their development

63 NDRC et al., 2015.

64 See www.cn.undp.org/content/china/en/home/belt-and-road.html for an overview of the BRI and what it means for sustainable development.

65 Ceccagno and Graziani, 2016.

experience in internationally recognized languages. The language of South-South cooperation has given southern countries a sense of identity and belonging. BVF uses these principles to guide project design and planning.⁶⁶

2.3.3 Volunteering infrastructure

Formal volunteering has increased dramatically in China since the turn of the millennium. China's volunteering infrastructure received a boost when its first national Regulations on Voluntary Services went into effect in December 2017. The Regulations establish a framework for integrating volunteering into national and local social and economic plans, allowing local governments to fund voluntary activities and identifying government departments and mass organizations are responsible for registering and coordinating volunteer organizations. Although as yet there are no separate regulations governing international volunteering in China, according to the Deputy Secretary-General of the BVF, Li Lei, the national regulations form a basis for IVCOs to organize their activities.

Chinese international volunteer organizations are still not that familiar with the language and principles of South-South cooperation, but it can provide a discourse system for southern countries to participate in international development and cooperation.

Li Lei, Deputy Secretary-General, BVF

BVF engages in and supports a wide range of South-South knowledge exchange activities. A key event in the development of China's international volunteering ecosystem under the

BRI framework was the International Volunteer Service Exchange Conference in the Belt and Road Era (IVSEC), co-hosted by BVF and UNV from 12-14 December 2017 in Beijing. 126 international and domestic VIOs, mostly from countries participating in the BRI, attended and shared experiences on volunteering and South-South cooperation, urban volunteering, managing and deploying youth volunteers, monitoring and evaluation of volunteer programmes and the role of corporate volunteering.⁶⁷

The Belt and Road Volunteer Service Alliance (BRVSA) was launched by the BVF, UNV and UNDP at the 2017 conference. The BRVSA is a platform designed to support people to people exchange under the BRI and build capacity for international volunteering among Chinese VIOs. BRVSA regularly holds volunteer service conferences, forums and international exchanges, providing Chinese and partner country VIOs opportunities for knowledge exchange. For example, the inaugural International Volunteer Exchange Camp held within BRVSA partnership in Nepal in 2018 was supported by a number of government departments, civil society organizations and academic institutions in Nepal, as well as government departments from Thailand.⁶⁸

In December 2019, the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation signed memoranda of cooperation under the BRVSA umbrella with voluntary organizations in Cambodia, Nepal and the Philippines with plans to carry out cooperation in the fields of disaster reduction and relief, medical and health care, cultural exchange, volunteer exchange and youth exchange. As part of the project, BVF is also strengthening its network of partners by maintaining relations with 87 VIOs from 52 countries and regions.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Interviews.

⁶⁷ See <https://www.bv2008.cn/show/1040828.html>.

⁶⁸ Communist Youth League, 2018.

⁶⁹ UNV China, 2018.

The Beijing Volunteer Service Federation has been hosting national UN Volunteers since 2007 and since 2017 has begun recruiting Chinese youth volunteers to serve overseas in the United Nations system. Six Chinese UN Volunteers served in UNDP (Thailand), UNV (Cambodia and Myanmar) and UN-Habitat (Kenya) with all of the UN Volunteers asked to extend their service, a milestone in Chinese volunteers' engagement with the United Nations system.⁷⁰

Expanding its recruitment and training work with Chinese UN Volunteers, BVF has developed an annual multi-day training camp for young Chinese volunteers. The camp trains not only UNV recruits, but also other youth volunteers interested in overseas volunteering. BVF recognized strong interest in overseas volunteering but a gap persisted in capacity, especially in the areas of language ability, cross-cultural communication, psychological preparedness, project management and risk awareness. Therefore, this training was designed to include Chinese youth in addition to the ones who qualified for the UNV programme to increase the country's overall capacity for international volunteering. Training includes materials on domestic and international policies, the current state of international relations, the cultural context of countries participating in the BRI, overviews of skills developed through voluntary service, safety, emergency preparedness, psychological adjustment for international volunteering, and more. Its *Manual of International Volunteer Management* was enhanced in 2018.⁷¹

The Beijing Volunteer Service Federation also facilitated the establishment of a knowledge production platform, the Beijing Volunteer Service Research and Development Institute in 2011. The Institute hosts more than 100 volunteer service scholars who provide intellectual

support and policy recommendations for China's volunteer service development. The Institute contributed to China's participation in research for the *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report* and other research inputs into UNV's work. Other research papers on international volunteering, such as "Cutting-edge Development of International Volunteerism and Analysis on Typical Countries along the BRI Region," "State of Chinese Volunteerism" and "Comparative Study on the Development of International Volunteerism," are being produced.⁷²

2.3.4 Lessons learned

China's domestic volunteering infrastructure has rapidly scaled up in recent years and is now integrated into many aspects of social development. This, along with China's BRI and international cooperation frameworks, is providing the context for the expansion of Chinese VIOs' international programmes and China's involvement in the United Nations system as volunteers.

Policy: China's Regulations on Voluntary Service provide guidance on the registration, recruitment, training, security, record-keeping, incentives and insurance of volunteers. Having unified guidelines is useful for organizations such as BVF that are responsible for coordinating between many VIOs (many subnational governments had promulgated their own regulations on which the national regulations are based).

Institutions: Knowledge-sharing and training help prepare Chinese volunteers to work abroad and enhance cross-cultural communication skills and an understanding of South-South cooperation principles. Knowledge exchange activities have supported network- and partnership-building,

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Interviews.

⁷² Interviews; UNV China, 2018.

creating an environment in which it is more likely that Chinese VIOs will be able to engage in development projects based on the South-South cooperation principles of mutuality, reciprocity, respect and equality, so that projects can be more demand-driven and the people to people pillar of the BRI can be better implemented. China's strong research capacity and capacity for hosting events is also expanding research on volunteerism and knowledge exchanges and is helping to reduce dominance by northern actors.⁷³

Individual volunteers: The projects discussed have increased opportunities for Chinese youth to volunteer in the United Nations system, bringing young Chinese voices into the international development ecosystem.

Moving forward, translating knowledge exchange forums with a strong focus on engagement with southern partners into a broader platform which can bring partners to work together to generate knowledge will further inform the integration of volunteerism into SDG-related sectoral policies.



FFT volunteer Phuttiaphum Arsanok and Djakotomey, Benin farmers adapt local materials to make equipment for organic fertilizer

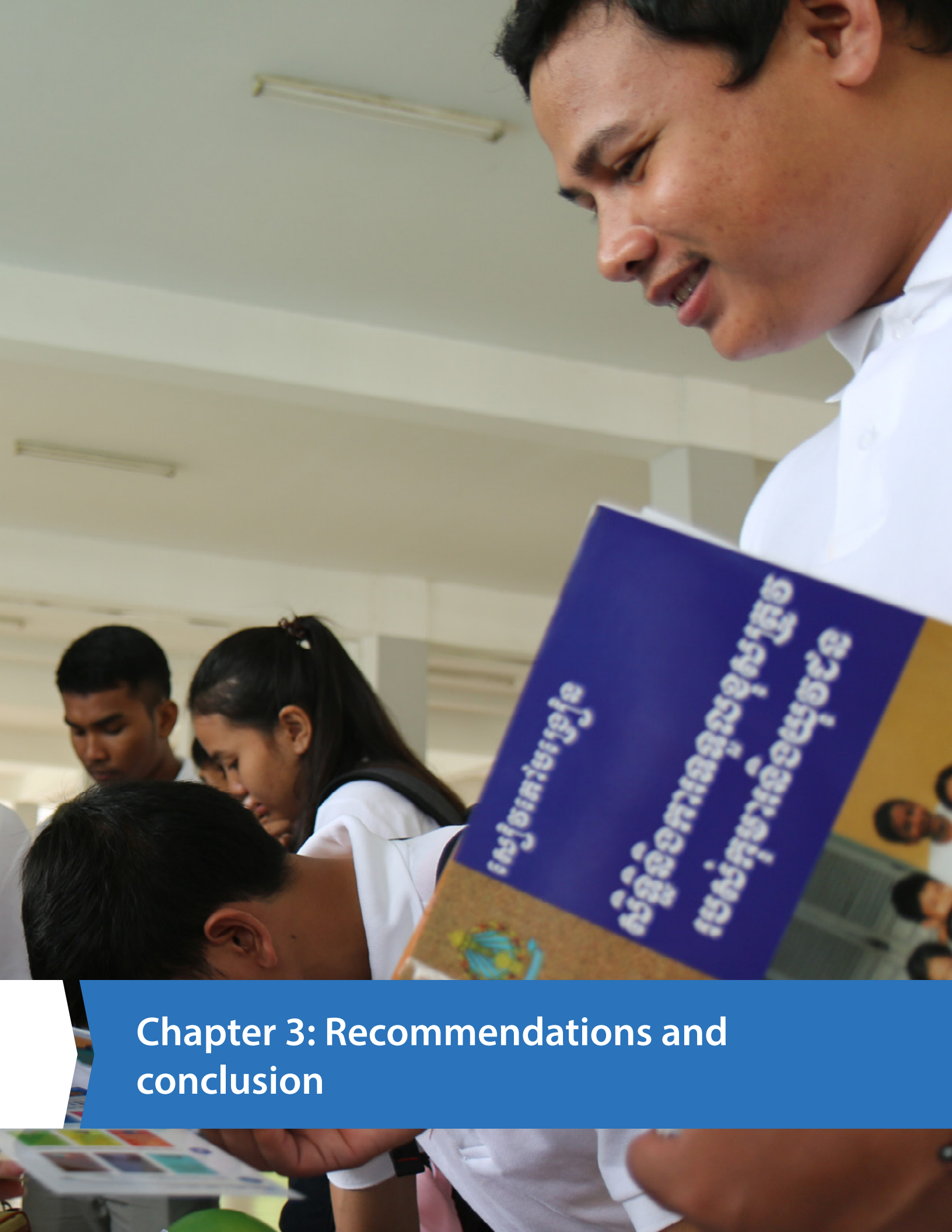
73 Interviews.



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Chapter 3: Recommendations and conclusion

Recommendations and conclusion

3.1 Recommendations to strengthen the role of South-South volunteerism in achieving the Sustainable Development agenda

For South-South Volunteerism to contribute more substantively to the Sustainable Development Agenda, South-South Volunteerism must be expanded. The actions described below are recommended.

1. *Generate evidence and enhance knowledge exchanges among southern partners in volunteering to transfer and scale up good practices.* Sharing knowledge and practices in the inclusion of volunteers in country's review processes on SDGs can help advancement of sustainable development. In addition, development, sharing and promotion of inclusive, multidimensional volunteer-based assessment approaches to SDGs can further support people-powered development and ownership. Significant gaps still exist in documentation, monitoring and evaluation of the coordination mechanisms between South-South cooperation and volunteerism and overall data for Southern volunteerism is lacking. Coordinating volunteers to document case studies and the experiences of sending and receiving countries and organizations would enrich the
2. *Strengthen partnerships, networks and platforms.* Strong partnerships bolstered by principles of mutuality, reciprocity and respect between development partners, whether between governments, international organizations, IVCOs, VIOs, communities or individuals, are critical to successful South-South cooperation and volunteering projects. The development of partnerships and networks require investments of time and provision of platforms for engagement. Online platforms offer good opportunities to maintain networks and share stories. As seen in the case studies, volunteers often take the initiative to establish their own online networks and information sharing practices for their projects. These efforts could benefit from additional support from more formal online platforms that could maintain networks and keep archives on projects as members come

discussion on South-South cooperation and volunteerism and make it more context specific. The China case study illustrated that research and knowledge sharing on international volunteering can feed into the expansion of regulations for international volunteering in a country and build the capacity of national VIOs to become better integrated into a country's foreign development assistance system, as well as the international development ecosystem.

and go. The launch of the UNV Knowledge Portal and Good Practices Database in the leadup to the GTM 2020 is a good opportunity to feature volunteer projects incorporating South-South cooperation. Having such type of platforms as a repository for information could ensure better information sharing and easy access.

3. *Align South-South cooperation and volunteering to national priorities and give the concept a stronger voice at regional and international levels.* The case studies found that explicit alignment of volunteer programmes with national priorities, strategies, plans and legislation is a good way to garner support from governments for South-South volunteering efforts. Volunteerism as a modality helps countries achieve their national development goals and their international cooperation goals. Alignment contributes to an enabling environment for volunteer engagement in development nationally and internationally. Despite some successes, South-South volunteerism practices and its contribution to SDGs are not fully integrated in regional and international documents and Southern volunteer representation at events on sustainable development remains ad-hoc. Champion governments from the south and other stakeholders should augment advocacy for a stronger voice of southern volunteers and greater representation, for example at the future South-South cooperation Conferences and sustainable development regional and international events. It is crucial that south-south volunteering practices and

their contributions to SDGs are reflected in the outcome documents of these events. A Call-to-Action on Volunteering in the Decade of Action at the recent GTM 2020 calls for the alignment of volunteer efforts with the 2030 Agenda and for deepening the engagement and common solidarity of the global volunteering community to help deliver the SDGs.

4. *Bolster effective volunteering programmes to make achieving the SDGs more attainable in developing countries, especially where resources are scarce.* Indeed, developing countries have witnessed many exemplary contributions from national, regional and international volunteers in humanitarian emergencies, health, disaster prevention and recovery efforts and more recently, in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Going forward and building back better, partner alliances could support southern governments to start or expand South-South cooperation volunteer schemes and engage private sector actors in volunteerism with a South-South component. This would require consistent funding mechanisms for South-South volunteering programmes. Future South-South development projects should include volunteering components to ensure greater SDG attainment.



FFT volunteer Nisanart Yeamkhong supports the COVID-19 data entry and processing team at the Royal Centre for Disease Control in Bhutan as part of her work establishing a quality management system (QMS) in the laboratory

5. ***Empower new southern voices to engage in development.*** Engaging more volunteers in development through South-South cooperation means the empowering of southern voices in global development discussions. New perspectives and experiences can be brought to bear on development issues from the grassroots to the global level, making development more participatory and needs based. In the context of South-South and triangular cooperation, southern partners can continue to document case studies and stories to show development partners how South-South cooperation in volunteerism can make development practices more participatory, inclusive and needs based, while promoting people to people interactions. In addition, Southern partners should pay attention to providing opportunities for other traditionally marginalized groups (the elderly, minorities, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, etc.). Greater opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange and learning among marginalized groups in a South-South cooperation context would provide rich development dividends.

3.2 Conclusion

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights South-South and triangular cooperation as critical partnership modalities in delivering the SDGs. In September 2019, the United Nations Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges — ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality

and closing the finance gap. Against this backdrop, the framework for the role of volunteers in implementing the 2030 Agenda is outlined in the Plan of Action to Integrate Volunteering into the 2030 Agenda through the following objectives: strengthen people's ownership of the development agenda through enhanced civic engagement and enabling environments for citizen action; integrate volunteerism into national and global implementation strategies for the post-2015 development agenda; and measure volunteerism to contribute to a holistic understanding of the engagement of people and their well-being and be part of the monitoring of the SDGs.

UNV has committed to support South-South cooperation in volunteerism in its 2018-2021 Strategic Framework. The case studies in this publication demonstrate that South-South volunteers are effective and bring traits that other developing countries value. These include similar cultures, adaptability to living in the community, ability to build trust and sharing similar languages that enables them to communicate well with the host community. The typical South-South volunteer is curious about other countries and cultures. They also strive to do well as it may open pathways for their own advancement.

International volunteer projects create solidarity and bonds between people of the global south. A well-constructed volunteer programme based on the principles of respect and mutuality can build strong personal relationships between volunteers, between volunteers and communities and between countries. Solidarity and mutual benefits can be further strengthened by incorporating reciprocal exchanges through which volunteers work in each other's countries and benefit from each other's rich experiences. Workshops and conferences that bring volunteers

together to engage with development issues can likewise provide platforms for building solidarity. As evidenced from the strong partnerships built between Cambodia and India, exchanges of volunteers can even create a formal reciprocal youth exchange programme that can support youth of participant countries to become global citizens and strengthen people to people ties between countries.

Southern countries have their own development approaches and volunteer cultures. Their citizens may be excellent ambassadors to other southern countries to share and expand on common development pathways. Looking at development through innovative southern prisms, such as Thailand's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Bhutan's measurement of prosperity through happiness rather than Gross National Product, has the potential to introduce alternative development concepts and to enrich southern development pathways. This requires the expansion of South-South volunteer programmes.

Just as North-South volunteerism grew with increased North-South cooperation, today South-South volunteerism is on the rise with expanded South-South cooperation. The principles of South-South cooperation, including solidarity and mutual benefit, are best achievable when people to people exchanges are part of the equation. Increased collaboration between neighbours and inter-regionally – with volunteerism at its root – will help reap the greatest development benefits. South-South cooperation and volunteerism can drive forward sustainable development at a time when solidarity between people and communities is more important than ever.

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List of interviewees

Cambodia

His Excellency Chek Lim, Deputy Director General of the Youth Department, Ministry of Education Youth and Sport

Ms. Keo Kannika, Volunteer, SDGs Youth Ambassador project

Ms. Lay Sothavoin, Kampong Thom Youth Centre Office Staff

Mr. Mech Bora, Youth Center Staff

Mr. Mon Sovandarith, Volunteer, Sustainable Enterprise Project

Mr. Ouk Sothea, Director of National Youth Center, Siem Reap

Mr. Rin Sokden, Volunteer, Community Service project

Ms. Sokun Socheata, Volunteer, Volunteer for My Community project

China

Mr. Daniel Adugna, Youth Officer, African Union

Mr. Li Lei, Deputy Secretary General, Beijing Volunteer Service Federation

Ms. Liu Jinzhi, Manager of International Cooperation, Beijing Volunteer Service Federation

India

Ms. Manisha Bezbaruah, IYEPL Volunteer

Mr. Rojan Pradhan, IYEPL Volunteer

Thailand

Mr. Phutti-phum Arsanok, FFT Volunteer to Benin

Mr. Pongsanan Chantarotai, FFT Volunteer to Bhutan

Mr. Torsak Janpian, Counsellor, TICA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Sirithon Wairatpanij, Minister Counsellor, TICA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Suphawit Phrarom, FFT Volunteer to Mozambique

Mr. Theerawit Vajirakaphan, Attaché, TICA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Professor Weeraboon Wisartsakul, Vice Dean of the Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies, Thammasat University

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Mr. Bhushan Shrestha, Results Management Specialist, UNOSSC Headquarters, New York

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Ms. Shreya Baruah, National Project Manager, UNV India

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