

Chapter 2

Closing the Gap? New Perspectives on Volunteering North and South

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Introduction

Volunteering is a complex phenomenon that has often defied definition, let alone measurement. Undertaken in leisure time, it is nevertheless a form of work. Pursued for no monetary compensation, it nevertheless produces both tangible and intangible benefits not only for its beneficiaries but also for the volunteers. Supposed to be undertaken as a matter of free will, it is often motivated by a sense of personal, cultural, religious, or other obligation. Treated by statistical authorities as a form of work, it is nevertheless believed to perform important social functions by promoting social integration, civic participation, and sentiments of altruism.

Despite the prominent place of volunteering in the pantheon of civic virtues of almost every culture, very little is actually known about its magnitude in all but a handful of high-income countries. And even in those high-income countries, such as Australia, Canada, Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, that systematically track volunteering through robust national surveys, the measurement of volunteering focuses almost exclusively on volunteering conducted through organizations, ignoring, for the most part, what is believed to be at least an equal, and possibly far more substantial, volume of volunteering performed directly for other people or communities without the intermediation of nonprofit or other organizations.¹ Because the presence of nonprofit organizations varies widely among

¹Regular surveys of formal volunteering carried out through organizations are currently conducted by the statistical offices of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, Germany,

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countries, this approach leads easily to the self-fulfilling myth that these more developed countries have a more highly developed “volunteer culture” than most other countries of the world.

This myth runs counter, however, to a contrary belief grounded in sociological and anthropological observation that the basic forms of human behavior, such as rationality, social solidarity, and altruism, are similar across different cultures and societies, varying only in the forms of their expression (Einolf, 2011; Gouldner, 1960; Haidt, 2001, 2003; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Komter, 2005; Malinowski, 1922; Mauss, 1990). While altruistic sentiments might take the form of charitable contributions or organization-based volunteering in more developed societies, it could be expected to take the form of direct volunteering in less developed societies. This line of reasoning would lead us to believe that the myth of enormous disparities in volunteer participation between developed and less developed regions would be exploded if direct volunteering were factored into the equation.

More than that, sociological theory stretching back to Max Weber would suggest not only that less developed areas would come to appear equal to more developed ones in their rates of volunteer work if direct volunteering were considered, but that they would surpass them. This is so, Weber observed, because less developed societies depend more on custom and charisma rather than formal legal rules for their authority, and on tribal and kinship networks to provide for human needs. As industrialization and urbanization take place, they displace these traditional networks of person-to-person caring and replace them with formal institutions of caregiving, many of which take governmental form. Direct volunteering (which is sometimes referred to as “informal” volunteering, and perhaps even organization-based volunteering, can thus be expected to be displaced by formal institutions, leaving more robust volunteering cultures in less-advanced societies than in advanced ones (Egerton & Mullan, 2008; Finlayson, 1994; Owen, 1965; Weber, 1978).

In the absence of systematically comparable cross-national data on both direct and organization-based volunteering, it has been impossible to verify or refute any of these theories, leaving different schools of thought free to advance their preferred interpretations. This chapter seeks to improve on this situation by providing a first, at least preliminary, empirical test of these various theories. To do so, it first paints in a bit of the context in which empirical study of volunteering is taking place at the present time, outlining why so little comprehensive, reliable, and comparative data is available on volunteering; and then describing the encouraging recent progress we have made with the aid of the international statistical community to put in place a far more robust and effective internationally sanctioned approach for measuring volunteer activity in both its direct and organization-based forms. Finally, the chap-

and the United States. A new *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*, developed by a technical experts group under the leadership of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies with support from United Nations Volunteers and issued by the International Labour Organization, calls on countries for the first time to measure direct as well as organization-based volunteering and provides a consensus approach for doing so. This *Manual* is available for adoption by countries and can be downloaded at: http://www.ilo.org/stat/Publications/WCMS_162119/lang=en/index.htm. A discussion of this new *Manual* is presented in the third section of this chapter.

ter describes the results of our preliminary efforts to develop a more comprehensive view of the scale of both direct and organization-based volunteering in both the North and the South drawing on newly tapped sources of empirical data.

Ultimately, we find that when both organization-based and direct volunteering are taken into account, differences in the absolute amounts of volunteering between well-off and less-well-off countries narrow significantly, but relative rates of volunteering remain stubbornly constant. We conclude that this may be due, however, as much to the volunteering overachievement of citizens of the better-off countries than any meaningful volunteering underachievement on the part of citizens in the less-well-off countries once account is taken of the relative obstacles each faces.

Challenges to Measuring Volunteering

To be sure, measuring volunteer work is an extremely difficult task that faces multiple challenges. In the first place, even the definition of volunteering is unsettled, in part because the term carries different meanings, and different connotations, in different cultures and settings, and some of these are unflattering or problematic (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Handy et al., 2000). In some settings, volunteering becomes a pseudonym for what is really required extra work without pay. For some purposes, volunteering is conceived as a set of activities done only for or through organizations. In other uses, it includes as well activities done directly for individuals. But this immediately raises the question of which individuals are valid beneficiaries of an activity that meets the definition of volunteering—one's children? Other family members? Only persons outside one's family? If so, how broad a definition of "family" should be used? Just the "next-of-kin," or cousins and second cousins twice removed? Furthermore, although volunteering is typically thought to be activity undertaken without pay, is no compensation possible? What about reimbursement for expenses or gaining occupational skills? Clearly, no definition of the concept can therefore rest on the use of the term alone, at least none that hopes to have it understood the same way by all respondents or used in cross-national comparisons.

Another formidable challenge is the logistics of data collection. Since volunteering does not involve significant monetary transactions, it is seldom tracked in any administrative records. Even organizations that systematically engage volunteers often find it difficult to record accurately the exact amount and type of work performed by volunteers. This leaves population surveys as the most feasible methodology for capturing the magnitude of volunteer work. However, this methodology is also fraught with multiple problems. Unlike paid employment, which is a well-defined and regularly performed activity, volunteer work is performed irregularly, often at particular times of the year, and by fewer people than those who are employed. Therefore, adequately capturing its magnitude requires a methodology that surveys a relatively large number of individuals and covers multiple "reference periods." However, such surveys are expensive, so most volunteering surveys

involve relatively small samples (a few thousand respondents at most), attempt to cover a long reference period (typically 1 year), and assume that respondents have the same concept in mind when they are asked about an activity referred to as “volunteering.” As a result, these surveys often lead to distorted, unreliable, and uncomparable results. Chief among these problems are the following:

- *Ambiguity about what activities are captured by a survey:* As already mentioned, the concept of volunteering is ambiguous and its understanding varies not only among different schools of thought but also among members of the general public. As a result, even common use of the term “volunteering” within the survey questionnaire can produce inconsistent results;
- *Nonresponse bias:* Survey participation is akin to volunteering in that both require that an individual dedicates some of his or her time to a task that does not entail compensation; consequently, people who refuse to participate in a survey are also more likely to be those who do not volunteer. Since the size of the sample used in a typical volunteering survey is relatively small, this “nonresponse bias” may grossly exaggerate the share of volunteers in a population (Abraham, Helms, & Presser, 2008);
- *Recall bias:* Respondents rely on their memory to answer survey questions, and the longer the reference period, the more difficult it is to recall the required information accurately. Respondents tend to forget activities performed sporadically or long ago, and to exaggerate or highlight ones that are especially salient even when they are outside the reference period. This, again, may distort results (Hassan, 2005); and
- *Social desirability bias:* Survey respondents tend to overreport socially desirable or socially expected behaviors, such as religious worship attendance, helping others, or volunteering. As a result, surveys often lead to systematic and substantial overestimations of the incidence of such behaviors (Fisher, 1993).

The extent to which these problems can distort the results is evident when we consider the wide variation in volunteering estimates produced by existing general opinion surveys, such as the survey of ten European countries conducted in the 1990s by the UK Volunteer Centre (Smith, 1996, pp. 180–189), successive waves of the World Values Survey (World Values Survey, 2009), the recent Gallup Worldview Survey (English, 2011), and country-specific general social surveys. For example, the World Values Survey, which, at least up through 2001, generated data on 96 countries and asked respondents whether they had volunteered, focused only on organization-based volunteering, used a long, 1-year reference period, and failed to collect data on the amount of time respondents devote to volunteering.² The recent cross-national survey touching on volunteering carried out by the Gallup organization covered 153 countries and gathered information on both organization-based and direct volunteering (English, 2011). However, the information on volunteering in this survey is limited to capturing the number of people involved (the volunteer-

²Following 2001, the questions about membership and volunteer work in voluntary organizations were replaced with one about active and inactive membership in voluntary organizations.

ing rate) with no indication of how much time these volunteers devoted. In addition, the survey relied on relatively small samples (typically 1–2 thousand people per country) and utilized quite general questions that could be interpreted differently by different respondents.³ As a consequence, this survey has produced results that are of dubious accuracy. For example, this survey reports US volunteering rates to be 39–43 % for organization-based volunteering and 65–73 % for direct volunteering. In contrast, the Current Population Survey carried out by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) on a much larger sample of about 60,000 respondents found the organizational volunteering rate to be about 26 % (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Similar discrepancies exist in other countries' results (e.g., Canada, Australia, and South Africa). Furthermore, the cross-national reliability of the Gallup data also raises questions. The rate of organizational volunteering reported for Russia, for example, at 26 %, is significantly higher than that reported for Sweden (13 %), Denmark (20 %), and France (22 %), which is inconsistent with every other known survey of volunteering in these countries (Salamon, Sokolowski et al., 2004).

The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), which covers all 27 EU member states (McCloughan, 2011) collected information about number of hours spent on unpaid work, but its primary focus was on the perceptions of well-being rather than measuring volunteer work. Consequently it asked only a generic question about “volunteering and charitable activities,” which bundled volunteering with a number of potential other “charitable activities” (e.g., making charitable contributions and taking part in charity balls or other events). Furthermore, it is not clear whether these activities were performed through organizations or directly for individuals, a distinction that is of crucial importance for interpreting volunteer work in different settings. Finally, the data source is available only for the European region and no comparable data using a similarly vague concept of “volunteering and charitable activities” are available on countries outside of the European region.

Methodological and conceptual difficulties are not the only obstacles to measuring volunteer effort, however. Another obstacle arises from concerns among segments of the volunteer practitioner community that the measurement of volunteer effort dehumanizes and unnecessarily commodifies volunteer effort, thereby robbing volunteering of its essential character as a fulfilling human activity undertaken out of a sense of altruism and social solidarity (see, for example, <http://coyotecomunications.com/coyoteblog/2011/09/22/un-volunteers-ifrc-ilo-others-make-huge-misst/>). In this view, measuring the amount and value of volunteering is the first step on the slippery slope to government efforts to use the evidence of substantial volunteer input as a rationale to justify cuts in government expenditures on social programs.

³For example, the question asking whether respondents helped a stranger or someone they didn't know who needed help could be interpreted by respondents as entailing anything from providing hours of assistance to incidental acts, such as giving someone directions on the street. Likewise, questions about whether respondents volunteered time to an organization may entail compulsory community service required as a condition of graduation or mere attendance at events (such as religious services).

While some politicians may leap to this conclusion, there is little evidence to support the idea that volunteers replace paid workers. Indeed, evidence seems to point to the contrary, that high levels of volunteering are correlated with high levels of paid employment in nonprofit organizations (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2001). Indeed, French sociologist Alain Touraine (1981) has found that participants in popular social movements gain a sense of validation and efficacy from seeing evidence of their power and potential. From this perspective, information on the scope and value of volunteering can validate and incentivize volunteers in addition to enhancing understanding of how to improve the promotion of and support for volunteer effort.

Toward Improvements in the Comparative Measurement of Volunteer Effort

To overcome the problems that have so far undercut efforts to gain a clear, cross-national understanding of the scope and impact of volunteering, we worked closely with the International Labour Organization to produce in 2011 a *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* (ILO *Manual*). The distinguishing features of this *Manual* are that it (1) offers an internationally accepted operational definition of volunteer work that allows unambiguous identification of activities in scope in a broad international context; and (2) connects the measurement of volunteer work to the statistical apparatus for measuring paid work, thus increasing the likelihood that volunteer work will be measured regularly.

The ILO approach to measuring volunteer work was developed by a group of international volunteer experts and national labor force statisticians to facilitate the assembly of reliable and cross-nationally comparable measures of volunteer work. To this end, the ILO *Manual's* approach was designed to meet four criteria:

- *Breadth*, i.e., to encompass the broadest array of volunteer activity, including such activity done through organizations as well as such work done directly for individuals;
- *Conceptual clarity*, i.e., to allow unambiguous identification of activities that are in and out of scope;
- *Objectivity*, i.e., grounded in empirically observable and measurable features of human activity as opposed to unobservable ones (e.g., intentions or motivations); and
- *Institutionalizability*, i.e., utilizing techniques that can be feasibly integrated into existing statistical data systems so that reliable data can be assembled on a regular basis.

ILO Manual Definition of Volunteering

To meet these criteria, the ILO *Manual* defines volunteering as *unpaid non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for others outside their own household or*

related family members.⁴ Several key features of this definition are particularly helpful to the measurement task of interest to us here:

- (a) It defines volunteering in operational terms instead of simply using the word “volunteering.” This makes it easier to apply to the broadest set of countries due to the divergent connotations that this word conveys;
- (b) It makes clear that volunteering involves “work,” i.e., dedicated activity taking a meaningful period of time⁵ and producing goods or services that are of value to its recipients or beneficiaries and not just to the volunteers. This makes it possible to integrate the measurement of volunteering in statistical systems measuring other forms of work, including paid work, using the same classification structures;
- (c) It differentiates volunteer work from other work activities by emphasizing that it is *unpaid* and willingly entered into, sidestepping the difficult-to-asertain objectives or motivations for the activity; and
- (d) It differentiates volunteer work from household activities by stipulating that its beneficiaries are not members of the volunteers’ household or related family members.

This internationally accepted definition is sufficiently broad to cover a wide range of activities across the world, including unpaid work through organizations of any kind (NGOs, international organizations such as the UN or Red Cross, schools, hospitals, churches, professional associations, community organizations, government agencies, and corporations), as well as activities performed outside any institution directly for other people or broader communities (e.g., helping others, taking care of animals, helping with community cleanups or construction projects). At the same time, this definition is sufficiently clear and precise to set meaningful boundaries on the concept of volunteering and exclude activities that are not in scope. Specifically excluded are any forms of employment-related activities, including apprenticeship or internship engagements, any activities that are compulsory (e.g., military service or court-ordered actions), participation in social gatherings or events,⁶ and sporadic acts of person-to-person help that do not involve a meaningful amount of time (e.g., at least an hour in a typical week) (e.g., giving someone directions or a ride).⁷

⁴The 2011 ILO *Manual* set the boundary for in-scope volunteer work at the household level, but the 19th ICLS Resolution extended this boundary to include also unpaid work done for related family members. See: 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, “Resolution I: Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization,” October 2013.

⁵The internationally accepted minimum period of time in labor statistics is 1 hour during the reference period (i.e., 4 weeks).

⁶Ordinary participation in social gatherings or public events, e.g., concerts, festivals, celebrations, sporting games, religious ceremonies, demonstrations, etc., is excluded on the grounds that the main beneficiaries of such participation are the participants themselves. However, any activity that involves organizing, facilitating, or conducting such events produces benefits to others and is included if it meets other criteria specified in the definition.

⁷Other definitions of direct or “informal” volunteering do not provide such exclusion (c.f. Einolf, 2011). This exclusion makes conceptual sense, however, because it separates volunteering from

ILO Manual Survey Approach

The new *ILO Manual* recommends the use of official labor force or other household surveys as the platform for measuring volunteer work. This approach guarantees that the measurement of volunteer work is institutionalized in existing economic statistical systems rather than being left to periodic and uneven private data collection efforts. The use of labor force surveys has particular advantages: they are based on large samples, involve a short reference period that minimizes recall bias, and entail interviewing techniques aimed to minimize nonresponse bias.

Respondents to the survey module recommended by the *ILO Manual* are asked to identify any activity in which they have engaged over the past month (the recommended recall period) that fits the definition of volunteer work. They are then asked a series of questions about the frequency, amount of time, type of work, and auspices of each such activity in turn. This approach maintains throughout the interview the focus on what the respondent actually did.

Unlike paid labor, however, volunteer work often occurs irregularly and for relatively short periods of time, and as a result, the accurate recall of these activities may prove problematic for many people. To reduce this error, the *ILO Manual* recommends the use of limited prompting to fix the definition of volunteering more securely in the respondent's mind, thus assisting the respondents in recalling their past behavior. The prompting method it recommends provides some detailed illustrations of the kinds of activity that are generally considered to be volunteer work, which is less burdensome and time consuming than providing a list of specific prompts, as is done in some surveys.

Estimating the Scale of Global Volunteering

As of this writing, only some 10 countries, mostly in the global North, have implemented the *ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* in whole or in part. This makes the availability of comparable data on volunteer activity extremely limited. Accordingly, to generate at least a preliminary picture of the scope of volunteering globally, it is necessary to use estimating techniques that rely on extrapolations from reasonably known values and relationships. This section reports on one such set of estimates. To do so, it first identifies the data sets that provide the foundation for the estimates; then outlines the extrapolation methodologies used to build up the estimates of these different forms of volunteering from partial samples of countries to the global level; and, finally, presents the results.

other everyday activities that involve interpersonal interaction. Without such separation, virtually any interpersonal interaction can be considered volunteering, rendering the concept devoid of specific meaning.

Available Data Sets

Currently, only two types of comparable and reliable data exist for estimating the volume of volunteer work cross-nationally: the comparative data on nonprofit institutions in over 40 countries assembled by the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (Salamon, 2010; Salamon et al., 2004; Salamon, Anheier, List et al., 1999), and time use surveys (TUS) conducted by statistical offices around the world to measure how individuals use their time in an average day.

CNP Data. The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP) collected information about the workforce, both paid and volunteer, engaged by nonprofit institutions in 43 countries, representing virtually all regions, religious traditions, and income categories as defined by the World Bank. Most of these data were derived from official economic statistics and supplemented by specially commissioned surveys in which information was collected about the number of volunteers, the duration of their work, and their field of activity. In the global South and transition countries, where comprehensive registers of nonprofit organizations generally do not exist, hyper-network sampling was used to identify unregistered organizations operating in targeted geographical areas and these organizations were then surveyed and asked about both paid and volunteer workers. The resulting hours of volunteer time were then converted into full-time equivalent (FTE) workers and computed as a share of the economically active population (EAP) in a country in order to put all countries on the same relational measure.⁸

As shown in Table 2.1, so computed, the FTE organization-based volunteer workforce ranges from a low of less than 0.5 % of the economically active population in Pakistan, Colombia, and Egypt, to a high of 7 % in Sweden. As a general rule, such volunteering is higher in western developed countries than in the countries with lower per capita income, as might be expected since this is volunteer work that is mediated through organizations, and the network of civil society organizations is generally less extensive in poorer regions. At the same time, however, there is a considerable degree of variation in the scale of such volunteer work in every region.

Time Use Survey Data. The second type of data available for estimating the amount of volunteer work is that generated through Time Use Surveys (TUS).⁹ These surveys, conducted by national statistical offices in many countries, collect

⁸The economically active population is the population aged 15 or over that is not incarcerated or otherwise unable to work. Because volunteers typically work only part time, the full-time equivalent number of volunteers is likely much smaller than the number of people who do *any* volunteering, even though care has been taken to estimate the *annual time* a volunteer devotes to this activity over an entire year even when the reference period for the survey covers a shorter period. A complication of organization-based surveys is that a particular individual may volunteer for more than a single organization, thus potentially overstating the number of individuals volunteering. For an estimate of the number of physical persons volunteering, see Salamon et al. Table A2.

⁹Alternative data sources include opinion surveys, such as the Gallup World Giving Index, the International Social Survey Programme, or the Eurobarometer (for a review see Einolf, 2011). However, we believe that existing opinion surveys are far less reliable than TUS for the reasons explained earlier in this chapter.

Table 2.1 Full-time equivalent (FTE) organization-based volunteers as a share of the total economically active population (EAP), 43 countries (CNP)

Country	FTE Volunteers as % of EAP
<i>Western Developed</i>	
Australia	2.9
Austria	5.6
Belgium	3.4
Canada	3.2
Denmark	3.9
Finland	3.1
France	3.1
Germany	3.0
Ireland	2.3
Italy	1.8
Netherlands	5.8
New Zealand	6.4
Norway	4.5
Portugal	1.3
Spain	1.5
Sweden	7.0
Switzerland	2.6
United Kingdom	5.8
United States	3.0
<i>Eastern Europe and Russia</i>	
Czech Republic	0.3
Hungary	0.4
Poland	0.2
Romania	0.4
Russia	0.4
Slovakia	0.3
<i>Latin America</i>	
Argentina	2.7
Brazil	0.6
Chile	2.4
Colombia	0.5
Mexico	1.5
Peru	0.8
<i>Asia</i>	
India	0.8
Japan	1.5
Pakistan	0.4
Philippines	1.2
Korea, Republic of	1.7
<i>Africa and Middle East</i>	
Egypt	0.1
Israel	1.5

Table 2.1 (continued)

Country	FTE Volunteers as % of EAP
Kenya	0.8
Morocco	0.8
South Africa	1.7
Tanzania	1.4
Uganda	1.4
<i>Average</i>	2.2
<i>Standard deviation</i>	1.8
<i>Skewness</i>	1.10

Source: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Civil Society Studies

information on the amount of time people allocate to their everyday life activities. TUSs use a very rigorous methodology to record the exact duration of a wide range of well-defined activities and reconcile these reports with the 24-h time frame, which provides a powerful “reality check” guarding against overreporting activities that may put the respondents in a favorable light (such as helping others or volunteering). Survey respondents are asked to compile a diary of their daily activities by relatively short, 30-min time intervals over the course of an entire week to capture both workday and weekend activities.¹⁰

Of particular interest to us is the TUS activity category titled “Community services and help to other households,” which includes volunteering for organizations, various forms of community work, informal help to other households, as well as auxiliary activities (i.e., travel and waiting).¹¹ For our purposes here, we included as forms of “direct volunteering” all activities listed in this category except for “volunteering with or for an organization,” “travel related to community services,” and “waiting for community services.” This embraces a wide assortment of different types of activity that could conceivably be considered to be direct volunteering. As just one example, in the time use survey used by the Pakistan statistical office, the following activities were separately listed under the category of “community services and help to other households”: “community organized construction and repairs”; “cleaning of classrooms”; “community work such as cooking for collective celebrations”; “cooking for school nutrition programs”; “involvement in civic activities, rallies”; “caring for nonhousehold children”; “caring for nonhousehold sick, disabled, or elderly adults”; “other informal help to other households”; and “other community services not elsewhere classified.”¹² (For further detail and for a parallel list from the South Africa Time Use Survey, see [Annex A](#)).

¹⁰ For further details about the methodological approaches and range of activities measured by TUSs see the United Nations Statistics Division website: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/timeuse/tus-resource.htm>, and <http://unstats.un.org/UNSD/demographic/sconcerns/tuse/default.aspx>

¹¹ Annex A shows typical details of “Community services and help to other households” activities used in TUS methodology.

¹² Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division, Federal Bureau of Statistics, *Time Use Survey 2007*, Islamabad, 2009.

With the help of documents compiled by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the website of the Harmonised European Time Use Survey, and individual country web sites, we were able to identify 33 countries reporting TUS results in which direct volunteering as defined here was separately reported and could thus be measured.¹³ Table 2.2 records the data that emerged from this search. What this table shows is that the scale of direct volunteering, measured here as the average minutes per day of direct volunteering per person in the country, varies considerably across regions, but that, like organization-based volunteering, it seems to be more pronounced in the more developed regions than in the less developed ones.

From Samples to Global Estimates: Extrapolation Methodology

In order to develop estimates of the global scale of organization-based and direct volunteering and its variation among countries at different levels of economic development, it is necessary to blow up our sample to the global population of countries using a common technique known as extrapolation. Because of the nature of the underlying data, we had to deploy two separate extrapolation techniques: one for the organization-based volunteering data generated on 43 countries through our CNP project; and the other for our direct volunteering data generated through our assembly of TUS results for 33 countries. The first data source is used to estimate volunteering through organizations, while the second to estimate direct volunteering.

Organizational volunteering. Our methodology for estimating volunteering through organizations takes advantage of the data on the NPI workforce in 43 countries assembled by the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP).¹⁴ For the 43 countries in the CNP data set, we used the actual volunteer shares of EAP reported in Table 2.1 to estimate the actual number of FTE volunteers. These 43 countries on which we have actual observations account for nearly 59% of the total estimated number of FTE volunteers globally. For the remaining countries, we used a two-step process that made use of a linear least square regression model derived from data on these 43 countries to estimate the aggregate size of the organizational volunteer workforce in the remaining 139 countries of the world not covered by the CNP.¹⁵

¹³ Although a far greater number of countries conducted time use surveys, the results are either unavailable, inaccessible, or lacking sufficient detail. For further information on sources of data, see: OECD http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/OECD_1564_TUSUpdatePortal.xls; Harmonised European Time Use Survey, <https://www.h5.scb.se/tus/tus/Statistics.html>; Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division, Federal Bureau of Statistics, Islamabad, 2009.

¹⁴ For detailed country data and data assembly methodology see Salamon et al., 2004.

¹⁵ We used a regression analysis to find our way to a good predictor of the aggregate size of the organization-based volunteer workforce measured as a share of the economically active population (EAP) in each country. We examined different regression models trying to find one that explains most of the cross-country variance on the dependent variable observed in the 43-country dataset.

Table 2.2 Average minutes per person per day spent on direct volunteering, by country

Region/Country	Minutes
<i>Developed Western</i>	
Australia	6
Austria	6
Belgium	5
Canada	13
Denmark	13
Finland	16
France	7
Germany	15
Ireland	8
Italy	8
Netherlands	20
New Zealand	13
Portugal	9
Spain	9
Sweden	8
United Kingdom	3
United States	17
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	
Bulgaria	8
Estonia	14
Latvia	11
Lithuania	13
Poland	14
Slovenia	8
<i>Other Countries</i>	
China	3
India	1
Japan	4
Korea, Republic of	1
Mexico	8
Mozambique	6
Pakistan	1
South Africa	2
Thailand	5
Turkey	19
<i>Average</i>	8.9
<i>Standard deviation</i>	5.2
<i>Skewness</i>	0.39

Source: OECD http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/OECD_1564_TUSupdatePortal.xls; Harmonised European Time Use Survey, <https://www.h5.scb.se/tus/tus/Statistics.html>; Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division, Federal Bureau of Statistics, Islamabad

Direct volunteering . Our methodology for estimating direct volunteering is based on the Time Use Survey data presented in Table 2.2 and takes advantage of the fact that the actual observations (average time) are available for the most populous countries in the world: China, India, the United States, Japan, and Pakistan, which account for over 47 % of the global population. The use of actual observations rather than estimates for such a large share of the global population increases the accuracy of our total estimates of direct volunteering. We proceeded in three steps. First, we used the available data on 33 countries to estimate the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) direct volunteers per year in these countries.¹⁶ In the second step, we took advantage of the availability of data on a relatively large set of Eastern European countries, which have a rather distinct pattern of direct volunteering. We calculated the average volunteer time in these countries and used that average to estimate direct volunteering in 11 other Eastern European countries not included in the data set (Russia and a handful of former Soviet republics), using the estimation procedure described earlier. For the remaining 138 countries on which no TUS data are available, we calculated a meaningful “average” rate of direct volunteering based on the values in our TUS sample of countries. Because this sample contained a disproportionate number of Northern countries that reported fairly high levels of direct volunteering, we computed a “normalized” average value of direct volunteering time by removing these high value “outliers” to avoid possible overestimation.¹⁷

We found that the best results measured by the share of explained variance ($R^2=62\%$) was the model with the entire nonprofit workforce share of EAP as the dependent variable, and per capita GDP (in USD) as the predictor variable. One important advantage of this approach was that per capita GDP data are available for virtually all countries in the world. We therefore proceeded in two steps. First, we estimated the size of the entire nonprofit workforce in the 139 countries in which CNP data were not available using the regression equation that emerged from our analysis of the 43 countries on which we have data. That model took the form of $y = 0.02 + 0.0027x$, where x is per capita GDP in US dollars and y is the nonprofit workforce as a share of the economically active population. In some instances, we applied downward adjustments if the predicted results seemed to run seriously counter to other available evidence. The result gave us an estimate of the nonprofit workforce share of EAP in each of these additional 139 countries. Then, as the second step, we computed the volunteer share of this nonprofit workforce in these same countries by applying the volunteer share of the nonprofit workforce estimated from the 43-country CNP data (41 %) to the aggregate nonprofit workforce in these 139 countries to yield the estimate of the organization-based volunteer share of EAP in each country, our ultimate dependent variable.

¹⁶ We used a straightforward projection method based on the size of each country's population 15 years of age or older. We calculate the total number of volunteer hours within the reference period of one year by multiplying the average number of minutes per person-day by 365 days, dividing minutes by 60 to convert to hours, multiplying the result by the size of the population 15 years of age or older in a given country to obtain the total number of volunteer-hours in that country in a year, and finally converting these volunteer hours to FTE volunteers by dividing by the number of hours per full-time job (1760 h). The base year for these estimations is 2005.

¹⁷ The “normalization” procedure involved step-by-step removal of the outliers, starting from the highest and observing the effect of that removal on the skew value, a procedure also known as “top-coding.” When the positive skew value was reduced without becoming negative (which would produce underestimated results), we calculated the average based on the remaining observations. The “top-coded” value of average time was 13 min, which means that observations higher than this

Resulting Global Estimates of Volunteering

The methodological procedures described in the preceding section allow us to bring the global scale of volunteer work into clearer focus. More specifically, three conclusions emerge from these estimates.

Aggregate scale of volunteer workforce

In the first place, we are now in a position to provide an aggregate estimate of the size of the global volunteer workforce. As shown in Table 2.3, that total amounts to the equivalent of 126.2 million full-time workers.

To put this figure into context, it is useful to compare it to the total size of the workforce of some entire countries. This is done in Fig. 2.1, which compares the global full-time equivalent volunteer workforce to the entire economically active populations of the world's seven largest countries as measured by the size of their economically active populations.¹⁸

Direct vs. Organization-based volunteering

A second conclusion that emerges from the estimates we have developed underlines the enormous scale of the portion of volunteering that has been overlooked in measures that focus exclusively on organization-based volunteering. As Table 2.3 shows, organization-based volunteering actually represents only about one-fourth of the global full-time equivalent workforce. Compared to the approximately 35 million full-time equivalent workers that organization-based volunteering brings to the work of dealing with global social, economic, psychological, and other problems and of contributing to the general quality of life, direct volunteering brings a workforce that is nearly three times larger—92 million full-time equivalent workers strong!

value did not affect this final step of our estimation procedure. Even with this process, we may have somewhat overestimated the actual amount of direct volunteering in the global South since the average of the actual direct volunteering values for countries in the South on which TUS data were available were well under the 6 min average we ultimately used for our estimations.

¹⁸As this figure shows “Volunteerland,” if there were such a place, would command the fourth largest workforce in the world, behind only China, India, and the U.S., but ahead of Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, and Japan. And this takes no account of the fact, noted earlier, that the actual number of people engaged in volunteer work is much larger than this due to the fact that most people volunteer for relatively brief periods of time so that the actual number of people represented by these 126 million FTE workers is really many times that. In fact, in earlier estimates we have put that figure at 971 million people (Salamon et al., 2011, p. 237).

Table 2.3 Global estimate of FTE volunteer workers (millions)

Type	Number (millions)	Percent
Organization-based	34.7	27 %
Direct	91.5	73 %
Total	126.2	100 %

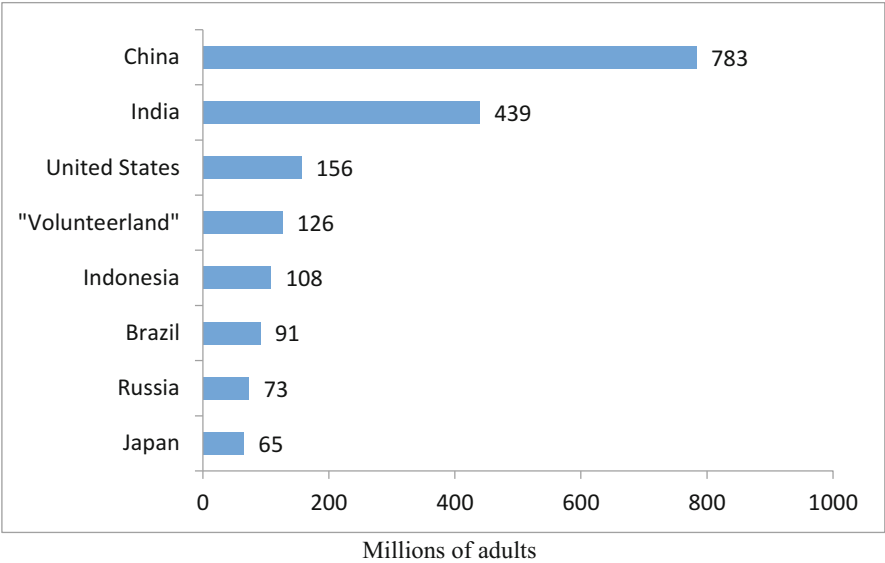


Fig. 2.1 The Global FTE Volunteer Workforce vs. the total EAP of the seven largest countries

Closing the North–south volunteering gap?

The third important conclusion flowing from our data addresses the central question with which we began this paper: is it the case that once direct volunteering is brought into solid empirical view, the North–South volunteering gap visible in some prior research narrows significantly?

The answer emerging from our data on this question is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it is the case that once a decent estimate of direct volunteering is available, it does appear that the volunteering gap between middle- and upper-income countries, on the one hand, and lower-middle and lower-income countries on the other, does narrow, *at least when measured in terms of absolute numbers of FTE volunteers of both types*. This is evident in Table 2.4, which records the number of organization-based and direct FTE volunteer workers in countries grouped by their level of per capita income.¹⁹ As this table reveals, the number of full-time equivalent volunteer workers that low-income and lower-middle income countries field to deal

¹⁹This grouping is based on World Bank data. The World Bank groups countries into five categories based on their per capita national income and OECD status. For the purpose of this analysis, we combined high-income OECD and high-income non-OECD countries into one “high-income” group.

Table 2.4 Global estimates of volunteer work, by region, by type of volunteer work

Country groupings	Number of FTE volunteers by type of volunteering (millions)			Volunteer workers as share of total EAP	
Income level	Org Based	Direct	Total	Org based (%)	Total (%)
Low	7.9	18.6	26.5	0.8	2.8
Lower middle	9.0	25.6	34.6	0.7	2.8
Upper middle	3.6	18.5	22.2	1.0	6.0
High	14.2	28.8	43.0	2.8	8.6
Global	34.7	91.5	126.2	1.1	4.1

with human problems and improve the quality of life is virtually identical to the number fielded by middle-income and high-income countries (61.1 vs. 65.2 million FTE volunteer workers, respectively).

A different story emerges, however, when we look at relative levels of volunteering measured as a share of the overall economically active population in the respective groups of countries. Measured as a share of the EAP, the inclusion of direct volunteering increases the levels of volunteering reported by the two lower income groups of countries from under 1 % of the economically active population to nearly 3 %. However, this nearly fourfold jump in the volunteering levels affects countries almost identically in the upper income group. As a consequence, the addition of direct volunteering does not significantly narrow the relative gap between high- and low-income countries at all. To the contrary, for the upper middle-income countries it widens the gap, and for the high income countries it shrinks slightly from 3.5:1 to 3.1:1 (i.e., from 2.8/0.8 to 8.6/2.8).

Interpreting the Results

How can we explain these results? In particular, how can we make sense of the failure of direct volunteering to narrow the gaps between the relative scale of volunteer work measured along the same dimensions in better-off and worse-off countries? At least three lines of possible explanation can be examined.

Limitations of the Data

An appealing first line of explanation could be to blame the messenger—in this case the data used to generate the estimates. To be sure, there is blame to go around here, for neither the CNP data nor the TUS data are perfect, which is why the present authors have been making such vigorous efforts to improve the systems and methodologies for measuring volunteer work comparatively on a global level.

In the case of the CNP data, many were collected during an earlier era with limited resources, which typically meant relatively small samples that could be accessed only by purchasing time on existing omnibus survey platforms. Inevitably, it was also necessary to be parsimonious in the identification of questions to include.

In the case of time use surveys, other problems arise. For one thing, unlike eating, sleeping, or working, a fairly small proportion of respondents are likely to engage in volunteering of any type in any particular week—probably less than 10 % and sometimes as low as 1 %. As a result, a country's score may be unduly determined by the non-random behavior of a very few individuals, creating potentially large deviations in a country's reported volunteer rate from year to year that are at base statistical artifacts.

A second problem arises from the use of the “household” as the unit of observation in time use surveys. A household is a group of people living together in one place of residence. Statisticians use this as a convention due to the ambiguity of other concepts such as “family.” But this can have ramifications for the measurement of volunteer work since such work is defined as help without pay for someone living outside of one's household. In other words, the TUS uses a definition of volunteer work different from the *ILO Manual*. In countries where extended families do not live in the same household, help provided to family members living outside one's own household would count as direct volunteering. But in countries where extended family members live in the same household, that same help to such a family member would not count as direct volunteering. This could thus artificially lower the relative amount of direct volunteering reported in the countries with extended family members living in the volunteer's household.

Finally, concepts used in self-reported diaries are subject to interpretation by respondents and do not always correspond with official definitions. For example, while helping neighbors is considered a form of direct volunteering, respondents may instead report it as other types of household activities, such as cleaning, preparing meals, or socializing, depending on the nature of the task.

While these limitations are important and need to be addressed in future data gathering, we do not believe they challenge the basic conclusions reached here. In the case of the CNP data, great care was taken to create a carefully structured common survey protocol for use in all sites that avoided unclear buzz words. Steps were also taken to include both direct and organization-based volunteering and to record the specific auspices of the latter. Finally, at the end of the day, these data have stood the test of time and remain the only widely accepted systematically comparative data on the scope of both types of volunteer work in some 43 countries widely dispersed around the world.

In the case of the time use data, despite its limitations—of which the household unit of analysis may be the most serious—this remains the most accurate method available for recording the time individuals spend on various daily activities, including volunteering. It is far superior to ordinary opinion surveys because it collects information about direct as well as organization-based volunteering (something most other surveys do not do) and reconciles the results with the 24-h framework. What is more, the use of written diaries that record activities as they happen significantly

reduces errors associated with recall, which are inherent in general surveys; and TUS results are carefully weighted to the population, which greatly simplifies making national estimates. Finally, if low-income countries with large numbers of extended families living in the households of TUS respondents were devoting anywhere close to enough time to direct volunteering for extended family members living in their households to alter the results reported here substantially, this would logically show up in higher hours doing “work for own household” in the time use surveys for these countries. In fact however, the time reported on “work for own household” for the countries in the South where such family patterns could be expected turn out to reveal fewer hours devoted to work for own household than is the case for countries where extended families within the same household are far less common.

In short, while the data used here are certainly not ideal, problems with the data may still not be sufficient to explain the results that have emerged. How, then, can they be explained?

Barriers to Volunteering in the Global South

A potentially more promising explanation for the failure of direct volunteering to close the volunteering gap between North and South may lie in an even more obvious place: the conditions of life for people in low-income countries may put so many other demands on such people that the time left for volunteering, whether direct or organization based, is simply squeezed. Time use survey results indicate that people in such countries have to devote upwards of over one-third more of their time earning a living than do people in Western developed countries. On top of that, much more of their time is spent traveling to work, waiting for service, and even traveling to undertake volunteer activities. Under the circumstances, what should surprise us may not be that residents in poor countries seem to have less of the volunteering spirit than some have ascribed to them, but that they manage to achieve the levels of volunteering that they do given the other obstacles they face.

Surprising Persistence of Direct Volunteering in the Global North

Finally, another source of surprise may be the levels of direct volunteering among citizens in the global North. It is well to remember that a gap is something that opens between at least two entities, either or both of which can move, and in either direction. As noted at the outset, the idea that gave rise to the belief that the gap between volunteering rates in the global North and those in the global South would narrow and potentially reverse once direct volunteering came into view assumed that direct volunteering would slowly disappear as the global North modernized and replaced inadequate traditional relationships with more modern formal ones.

In practice, however, direct volunteering has stubbornly refused to disappear in the developed North. To the contrary, it has engaged more people for more time, albeit perhaps in different pursuits—sports, recreation, civic activism, advocacy, self-help, and culture rather than social welfare assistance as before. As direct volunteering in poor countries has grown and come into view, direct volunteering in well-off countries has continued to survive, and even to grow, so that the gap between the two barely narrows at all, and may even expand. In other words, the persistence of a gap in relative volunteering rates between residents of better-off and less-well-off countries even after direct volunteering is brought into the picture may have less to do with the volunteering underachievement of the latter than the volunteering overachievement of the former.

Conclusion

Even conservatively estimated, volunteering is an enormous social and economic force in the world today. The volunteer workforce, even when expressed in terms of full-time equivalent workers is larger than the economically active population of all but the three most populous countries of the world—China, India, and the United States.

Although most of the research attention, and most of the data, on volunteering has so far focused on volunteering carried out through organizations, the overwhelming majority of all volunteering actually takes place directly between people without the intermediation of organizations. And this is so not only in less-well-off countries but in more-well-off countries as well.

Despite powerful theories suggesting that less-well-off countries would come to equal, and perhaps even to surpass, better-off countries in their rates of volunteering, a preliminary estimate undertaken here with the benefit of newly tapped data suggests a far more nuanced picture. While the gap between these two sets of countries draws much closer at least in absolute terms when direct volunteering is added to the picture, this gap remains stubbornly wide when measured in terms of volunteering rates. The reason for this, the chapter suggests, may have more to do with the volunteering overachievement of residents in the better-off countries than the volunteering underachievement of the less-well-off countries, especially when the relative barriers that the two face is taken into account.

At the same time, it seems clear that the cross-national measurement of volunteer work remains in its infancy. Volunteer work is not captured in administrative records, and the existing population surveys produce unreliable results. Time use surveys capture both organizational and direct volunteering, but this methodology is not without its limitations, in important part because their generally limited sample sizes. What is more, neither type of survey is often carried out in the less-well-off countries of the Global South. As a consequence, volunteer work is robbed of the visibility it deserves and opportunities to take greater advantage of its contributions are being lost.

Fortunately, the recent adoption by the International Labour Organization of a *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* offers an opportunity to begin to solve this problem. This manual establishes an officially sanctioned international standard for defining volunteer work and a practical means for measuring it in both its direct and organization-based forms in a systematic, comparable way around the world. Armed with this foundational data on the basic scale, size, and composition of the volunteer workforce, countries will be in a position to make better use of this renewable resource for social, economic, and environmental problem-solving, and advocates and researchers will have a firmer basis on which to engage and support volunteers and to assess the full impacts and consequences of volunteer activity.

What is needed now is for volunteer advocates, researchers, government officials, and volunteers themselves to seize this opportunity and put volunteer work more securely on the social and economic map of the world.

Annex A: Community Services and Help to Other Households in TUS

Pakistan

Community services and help to other households

Time used for:

610	Community organized construction and repairs: buildings, roads, dams, wells, etc.
615	Cleaning of classrooms
621	Community organized work: cooking for collective celebrations, etc.
622	Cooking for School Nutrition Programs for Girls: Tawana Pakistan Project, etc.
630	Volunteering with or for an organization
650	Participation in meetings of local and informal groups/caste, tribes, professional associations, union, political and similar organizations
660	Involvement in civic and related responsibilities: voting, rallies, etc.
671	Caring for nonhousehold children
672	Caring for nonhousehold sick and disabled adults
673	Caring for nonhousehold elderly adults
674	Other informal help to other households
680	Travel related to community services
688	Waiting for community services and to help to other households
690	Community services not elsewhere classified

Source: Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division, Federal Bureau of Statistics, *Time Use Survey 2007*, Islamabad, [2009](#)

South Africa

Community services and help to other households

Time used for:

610	Community organized construction and repairs: buildings, roads, dams, wells, etc.
615	Cleaning of classrooms
620	Community organized work: cooking for collective celebrations, etc.
630	Volunteering with or for an organization
650	Participation in meetings of local and informal groups/caste, tribes, professional associations, union, political and similar organizations
660	Involvement in civic and related responsibilities: voting, rallies, etc.
671	Caring for nonhousehold children mentioned spontaneously
672	Caring for nonhousehold children not mentioned spontaneously
673	Caring for nonhousehold adults
674	Other informal help to other households
680	Travel related to community services
690	Community services not elsewhere classified

Source: Statistics South Africa, *A Survey of Time Use: How South African Women and Men Spend their Time*, Pretoria, 2001.

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