

**The International Journal of Volunteer Administration**  
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**“Volunteerism and Community Development”**

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Key words: collaboration, partnership, committee roles, capacity building

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Key Words: volunteers, community development, economic development, revitalization, organizational development

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Key words: African-Americans, volunteers, voluntary associations, community organizations

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**Key Words:** volunteer, impact, evaluation, environment, mediation, dispute management

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*The purpose of this study was to assess the experiences and daily challenges of family planning volunteers in Uganda. Focus group discussions were conducted with active volunteers and former volunteers. Four study sites were selected from 24 program sites. Volunteers rated lack of remuneration and rewards as a major factor for a low working morale. Lack of recognition by the family planning program undermined their credibility in the community. In spite of these frustrations most volunteers expressed their willingness to continue with their work. The Kabarole family planning program needs to seriously address the deficiencies in supporting their volunteers. As the volunteers have made very modest requests, an innovative incentive system could be quickly put in place without major increase in program spending.*

**Key Words:** family planning, volunteers, Uganda

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Mark A. Brennan

*Individual volunteer efforts and voluntary organizations serve to meet a wide variety of community needs, and significantly contribute to local quality of life. This is particularly true in the rural communities of Ireland and Pennsylvania. This international comparative study was designed to assess factors shaping volunteerism in both locations. A mixed methods framework was used that included extensive key informant interviews and household survey data. Important differences were noted in the communities studied. In Ireland, sociodemographic characteristics and volunteer motivations largely shaped volunteerism. In America, social interaction variables alone shaped volunteer decisions. In both locations, the social interaction variables were the strongest predictor of voluntary behavior. From these findings, implications for future research and policy are presented.*

**Key Words:** volunteerism, community development, Ireland

**Community Volunteers: The Front Line of Disaster Response .....71**

M.A. Brennan, Rosemary V. Barnett, & Courtney G. Flint

*The dramatic and tragic events of Hurricane Katrina have highlighted the need for coordinated, community-based volunteer efforts to prepare for, and respond to, natural and other disasters.*

*The recent hurricanes in the Gulf States underscore the problems and shortcomings associated with coordinating outside logistics and show a clear need for local volunteers to serve as the first line of response to such catastrophes. Such disasters are likely to occur again. When disasters do occur, citizen groups and coordinated local volunteers will again be the first responders, and will act to lessen impacts. This article identifies and suggests methods for linking local organizations, recruiting volunteers, and implementing coordinated action plans prior to, and after, the impact of natural disasters.*

Key Words: community, volunteers, disaster response, natural disasters

**In This Issue:**  
**“It Takes an Entire Village: Volunteerism and Community Development”**

Most of us have heard the phrase, “It takes an entire village to raise a child.” (In fact, the phrase has become so commonplace during the past decade to have become almost cliché.) However, behind these nine simple words lies a monumental idea: every community citizen has some role to play, either biologically, physically, socially or culturally, in ensuring that each youth in the community has a positive and nurturing journey into adulthood.

Communities are not unlike children. They are born; mature (while often experiencing growing pangs) into vibrant self-sustaining entities; age; and sometimes (unfortunately) die. The most successful, positive and sustainable communities are those in which all members share in the community’s biological, physical, social and cultural responsibilities necessary to maintain that community. As such, the community’s members organize themselves into institutions that focus upon specific aspects of the community’s development. We broadly speak of two major sectors of such organizations: businesses and industries (the for-profit sector); and government, mutual-benefit and commonweal organizations (the non-profit sector). But within the past three decades, communities around the world have come to rely more and more upon an emerging third sector of human society to contribute actively to positive community development, the volunteer sector.

The issue opens with two *Feature Articles* highlighting critical roles that volunteers play in holistic community development. Mark Brennan emphasizes the paramount importance of volunteers in initiating, implementing, and monitoring community development efforts. According to the author, “Volunteers are at the core of effective community development and are routinely the catalysts behind successful efforts.” Lynne Borden and Daniel Perkins discuss more specific roles volunteers play at various levels of community-based development efforts in serving as critical links between formal community-focused organizations and the clients the organizations seek to serve. “Volunteers offer community-based organizations one way to expand their influence without the addition of paid staff. Given the financial limitations facing community-based organizations, volunteers can truly enhance and strengthen the work of the organization.”

William Woodrum’s insightful *Commentary* discusses the need for a major paradigm shift by many community-development professionals regarding (what he perceives) is a disregard for, and lack of focus upon, volunteerism and volunteer involvement. According to the author, “this lack of focus on volunteerism’s role in community and economic development has limited the efficacy of professionals in the field.” Using the Main Street Project as an example (an economic development program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation), the author concludes that ultimately, community-development “. . . is about building the people who build the group, and a specific focus in this area is volunteer development.”

*From The JOVA Annals* features five excellent articles focused upon the volume’s theme, yet published previously in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* (The JOVA): “African-American Participation in Mainstream Greater Richmond Voluntary Organizations: A Report From The Field,” by Nelson Wikstrom, Ph.D. (originally published in 1995); “Assessing Impacts on Volunteers who Participate in Collaborative Efforts to Manage Environmental Disputes,” by

Loretta Singletary, Marilyn Smith and George C. Hill (first published in 2003); “Where a Bar of Soap Can Make a Difference: Family Planning Volunteers in Uganda Express Their Needs,” by Annette Flaherty and Walter Kipp (published originally in 2004); and, “Volunteerism and Community Development: A Comparison of Factors Shaping Volunteer Behavior in Irish and American Communities,” by Mark A. Brennan and “Community Volunteers: The Front Line of Disaster Response,” by M.A. Brennan, Rosemary V. Barnett, and Courtney G. Flint (both published originally in 2005).

We hope this issue of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* will provide the reader with insights and aspirations as we think globally to better mobilize volunteers so as to act locally to strengthen and develop vibrantly thriving communities.

R. Dale Safrit, Ed.D.  
Editor-In-Chief

**Dedication of Volume XXIV  
to**

**Mary V. Merrill, LSW**



*If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.*

(Sir Isaac Newton, 1675)

Volume XXIV of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Mary V. Merrill, LSW, a dear friend to any volunteer, a colleague to all managers of volunteers, a mentor to me personally, and the former editor of *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*. Mary left this world suddenly and unexpectedly on February 19, 2006, yet her legacy will remain with us forever.

Mary Merrill dedicated her career and her life as an international speaker and author to providing consultation and training in volunteer administration, board development, and strategic planning to strengthen the leadership and structures that support volunteerism. She was adjunct faculty at The Ohio State University and Editor of *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* from 2002 until her death. Mary taught and consulted internationally in 15 countries, and nationally in 37 of the 50 United States. Working with the Points of Light Foundation she helped establish the first volunteer center in Russia and worked for two years with developing Non Government Organizations (NGOs) in Armenia.

More recently, Mary worked with the Volunteer Development Committee of the United Nations, and presented at the European Volunteerism Conference in Croatia. Mary was an invited speaker for the Asian Pacific Conferences for Volunteer Administration in Korea (2002) and Hong Kong

(2005), the IAVE Latin American Conference on Volunteerism (Venezuela, 1998), and the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference of Museum Volunteers (Mexico City, 2002). She was an annual star trainer for the Points of Light National Community Service Conference and recipient of a 2004 Distinguished Service Award from AVA.

Mary's innovative ideas and models have been published in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*; *Voluntary Action: The International Journal of the Institute for Volunteering Research*; and the *Not-For-Profit CEO Monthly Letter*. She authored a book for the Paradigm Project, Points of Light Foundation, wrote the Volunteer Literacy Manual for Reading Recovery International, and co-authored and produced teleconferences/training videos on risk management, ethical decision making, and, non-profit board development.

Mary was an invited speaker at the 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2004 Biennial World Volunteerism Conferences in Canada, The Netherlands, Korea, and Barcelona (resp.), and presented joint and individual volunteer-related research at the 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 annual conferences of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA). She was past-president of Volunteer Ohio, and a past recipient of the Award for Excellence presented by the Volunteer Administrators' Network of Central Ohio. She helped create and co-taught the Institute for Community Leadership through the Leadership Center of The Ohio State University, and developed pioneering work in the area of impact evaluation for volunteer programs.

*So, Mary, if we have been able to see further into the future of volunteerism and volunteer administration, it is because we as your peers benefited from your individual dedication to humanity, your professional passion for volunteerism, and your personal unconditional love for your family, friends and colleagues. You were a giant in our profession, and we miss you dearly.*

*R. Dale Safrit, Ed.D.*  
Editor

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## **Placing Volunteers at the Center of Community Development**

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### **Abstract**

*It is the goal of this article to take back the ownership of community development efforts and place them where they belong; squarely on the shoulders of active local volunteers. It is essential that program and policy makers understand the central role that volunteers play in the community development process. Volunteers are at the core of effective community development and are routinely the catalysts behind successful efforts. Through their efforts, volunteers shape channels of communication, and more importantly, facilitate interaction that cuts across class and other divides, serving to connect local citizens. This effort results in the emergence of community. It is therefore essential that volunteers be better utilized, trained, rewarded, and more closely linked to broad-based community development efforts.*

### **Key Words:**

volunteers, community development, community agency

### **Introduction**

It is essential that program and policy makers at all levels understand the central role that volunteers play in the community development process. However this process is often viewed as a grand effort facilitated solely in the realm of government and business sectors utilizing their vast funding and related resources. Volunteers, when considered, are only credited a minimal impact, often in select sectoral settings (religious organizations, educational settings) that do not spill over into the wider community. As a result, the vital and primary roles of volunteers are often ignored, forgotten, or too easily dismissed.

This article seeks to stress and highlight

the invaluable role that volunteers play in the development of community. We have become conditioned to thinking that the capacity for volunteer-led community development has been lost and must now come from skilled learned experts outside the community. Community development has wrongly come to be seen as the privy of academics, government, and economic development strategists. It is the goal of this article, and this special edition of the *International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, to take back the ownership

of community development efforts and place them where they belong; squarely on the shoulders of active community volunteers.

Contrary to existing misconceptions is the fact that volunteers and nonprofits are more often the catalysts and primary actors that drive successful community development (Claude, Bridger, & Luloff, 2000; Brennan, 2005). It is interesting that we continue to be surprised by the impacts of, and rediscovery of, volunteers as agents of community development. Historically, it has always been our active citizens, civic groups, and local organizations that have fostered the development of community. Active volunteers are at the core of effective community development. Such development is based on the deliberate involvement of local citizens coming together to meet the general needs of the community (Luloff & Bridger 2003; Brennan, 2006; Brennan & Luloff, 2006). Through their efforts, volunteers contribute to channels of communication, and more importantly, facilitate interaction that cuts across class and other divides, serving to connect local citizens. This active effort results in the emergence of community (Wilkinson, 1991).

An understanding and recognition of volunteers and their contributions to the emergence of community are particularly relevant in light of current social and economic conditions. Communities, and particularly those in rural areas, are being encouraged, and in some cases mandated to “do more with less.” As local, state, and federal funding to support a variety of local services become increasingly sparse, the need for an informed, proactive, and well-trained volunteer force is paramount. Similarly, as responsibility for social services continues to be transferred to the local level, volunteers are being asked to take on a variety of new tasks, master new skills, and contribute to community life at an extent that far surpasses

similar demands of the past (Sharp & Parisi, 2003). It is therefore essential that volunteers be better utilized, trained, rewarded, and more closely linked to broad based community development efforts.

### **Review of Related Literature: The Relationship Between Community, Development, and Active Volunteers**

Traditional approaches to community development have relied heavily on the intervention and guidance of individuals with relevant expertise, usually recruited from outside the community. In response to failures and shortcomings of these outside efforts, emphasis on participatory approaches to development has emerged (Luloff & Bridger 2003; Brennan et al., 2005; Brennan, 2006). Such approaches are characterized by active local communities and residents contributing to all facets of program planning and implementation (Luloff & Bridger 2003; Brennan & Luloff, 2006; Brennan, 2006). Such approaches are at the core of many conceptions of community.

#### *Community: A Process of Interaction*

Definitions of community often include a variety of characteristics such as geography, human life dimensions, and locality oriented social actions (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Brennan, 2006). Yet the presence of these elements does not automatically signal the presence of community. For example, it is true that place or locality is important components of community. However, community is much more than a geographic location. It is a social and psychological entity that represents a place, its people, and the relationships that exist there (Wilkinson, 1991; Bridger & Luloff, 1999; Theodori, 2005). In this setting, volunteerism, active citizens, and social participation are seen as the cornerstones in the emergence of community and its development.

A more accurate definition of community views locality as a place where people live and meet their common daily needs together (Wilkinson, 1991; Theodori, 2005). Rather than a geographic boundary, community can be seen as a comprehensive network of individual relationships that meet common needs, express common interests, and act to meet the general needs of the locality. However, it is important to note that not all relationships serve to create the sense of connection that characterizes community. It is only through a process of deliberate and focused actions that diverse groups present in localities express their common interests and discover methods for meeting their general needs. This process of interaction culminates in the emergence of community.

Wilkinson (1991) and others view community from an interactional perspective, where the emergence of community was a dynamic process of bringing people together. Through people volunteering and interacting with each other, an entity can emerge that is far greater than the sum of its parts. This perspective does not imply that local institutions, social structure or more formal entities are unimportant. Alternately this viewpoint does not presuppose a utopian view of community that is devoid of conflict and self-interest. Similarly, the local economy, sociodemographics, power structures, organizations, and formal institutions are without a doubt vital to the make up of the community (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Brennan et al., 2005). However, they only serve as the backdrop for our lives and the relationships we have on a daily basis with other residents. They do not speak to the motivation of people to voluntarily come together to improve their local society.

Interaction is a pervasive and constant feature of local life. It provides meaning, context, and structure to our daily lives. Without such interaction, collective action, common identity, and community simply

cannot exist. Equally important interactions increase awareness of local issues/problems, help identify opportunities for volunteering, and lead to the development of focused actions aimed at enhancing local well being. From an interactional perspective, community development is the process of facilitating this interaction and building relationships that increase the adaptive capacity of local people to address the issues relevant to their lives (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Such capacity is reflected in the ability of local people to organize, manage, utilize, and enhance those resources available to them in addressing local issues and problems. This ability and capacity for collective action has come to be known as community agency (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Luloff & Bridger, 2003).

This process of building social relationships, communication networks, and volunteer capacities, constitutes community development. Summers (1986) further defined this process and notes the distinction between the development of and the development in community is important.

#### *The Development of Community*

The term community development is often used interchangeably to represent both social and economic change. The viewpoint that is adopted therefore dictates different roles for volunteers and their capacities. Many times development is directly associated with the recruitment or establishment of industry and other economic structures. This usage can be seen as the development in community (Summers, 1986). In this context, a community is seen as a given and development is said to enhance this already existing entity (Wilkinson, 1991). From this development in perspective, clearly defined outcomes are envisioned and their achievement or failure signals end of development. In this setting, little if any role is seen for the volunteer, with

development being dictated by local elites or extra local forces.

Alternately, the development of community seeks to enhance the social realm and relationships between people (Summers, 1986). These are seen as the basis for a wide range of local development efforts. Under this framework, it is the process of interaction, establishment of channels of communication, and collective mobilization of volunteers that signal the development of community. Central to this perspective is the establishment of relationships and networks between community members of diverse backgrounds (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Brennan, 2006). Based on these, opportunities for action, volunteerism, and locally based plans for social and economic development can be prepared. In this process, volunteers and other active citizens are at the center of, and are the driving force behind community development. From this viewpoint, the success or failure of individual community development projects is irrelevant. More importantly, through process of coordination among volunteering residents, a capacity is created that allows for long-term and sustainable efforts to enhance local quality of life.

#### *The Impact of Volunteers on the Development of Community*

The substantial impact of volunteers in the development of community is evident in the research literature. In a variety of ways, volunteers provide structure, deliver services, and contribute the human and other resources needed by local societies (Ollis, 2001). Common throughout the community development and volunteerism literature is the impact of volunteers in providing service. Such activities are in many ways community-building efforts that cut across many of our social divides. Included have

been volunteers responding to poverty (Messias, Hilfinger, DeJong, & McLoughlin, 2005; McBride, Sherraden, & Pritzker, 2006), welfare reform (Bloom & Kilgore, 2003), services to residents with special needs (Choma & Ochocka, 2006), health care (McDowell, 2002), and hospice care (Coury, 2002). Volunteers are also playing an increasing role in enabling communities to respond to disaster and other times of crisis (Brennan, Flint, & Barnett, 2005; Flint & Brennan, 2006). Equally important has been the recognition of the role of volunteers in shaping decision-making and local governance. All of the above activities bring a diverse group of residents into concerted efforts designed to enhance local personal and community well being.

Volunteers interacting together also serve the function of transcending class and racial divides in the search for community well being (Chavez, 2005). Similarly, volunteerism provides a mechanism to cut across gender barriers and more adequately include women, youth, and minorities in local decision-making (Barnes, 2005). Such volunteerism is seen as providing a venue for interaction that builds community, while providing social, emotional, and political support for select groups as well as the wider community. Volunteerism can also be seen as contributing to individual self-efficacy and empowerment, and therefore establishing a basis for wider and long term community contributions by individuals.

Recent data on American volunteering highlights the increasing number of volunteers (65 million in 2005) and the consistent rate at which they volunteer (29% for 2003, 2004, and 2005) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). This data also present implications for better merging volunteerism and community development in the future. Included are relatively high levels of volunteer rates among teens (30%) and older

adults (35- to 44-year-olds at a rate of 34% and 45- to 54-year-olds at a rate of 33%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). While teens may be active as a result of school requirements, their high levels also present an opportunity to firmly place them into long-term community development efforts with volunteering adults.

In 2005 the average contribution of volunteer time was 50 hours per year, with the majority of volunteers being associated with religious (35%) or educational/youth service organizations (26%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). Equally important, 13% contributed their time to social or community service. The activities that people took part in represented a variety of services and community building activities, including fundraising for groups (29%), collecting/preparing/distributing food (26%), providing labor or transportation (22%), and tutoring or teaching (21%).

This recent data highlight the continuing impact that local citizens have in their communities. Such volunteerism provides opportunities for increasing awareness of needs and opportunities for contributing to the development of community. Further, by connecting these active citizens and their groups, channels of communication can be established and resources contributing to community maximized. Such connection and interaction between volunteers set the stage for the emergence of community.

### **Implications for the Profession and Suggestions for Increasing Community Development Through Volunteers**

Volunteers acting in support of their community are vital to immediate and long term local social and economic viability. However, the deliberate and focused actions of local residents emerge only when the conditions are right. More specifically, community can exist only as long as people care about each other and the place in which

they live. This care is expressed by coordinated volunteers acting to enhance local well being.

To achieve local well being communities need to create their own solutions to the challenges that face them today. This is particularly true in the context of increasing local responsibility for a variety of services, where a direct need exists for volunteers to effectively plan, manage resources, and come together to meet local needs. Without such capacity, the chances of achieving widespread community well-being are dim. To achieve local volunteer empowerment, training, support, and program development in the following areas are vital:

- *Enhance or increase venues for interaction.* Venues for interaction play an important role in promoting awareness of issues, presenting opportunities for citizens to become involved in community development, and bring together a diverse representation of residents in formal and nonformal settings. Venues for interaction can take many forms such as community festivals, interdenominational religious celebrations, seasonal celebrations, and sport events. All bring together diverse parts of the community that might not otherwise interact. This process sets the stage for more focused and deliberate interaction.
- *Increased community capacity building.* Local capacity building must take place if volunteers are to effectively contribute to the community development process. This coordination, training, and encouragement of volunteers are essential to effective community development. To facilitate empowerment, specialized training in the form of community organizing,

methods for collaborating with other groups, conflict management, strategic planning, and advanced support for nonprofits and grassroots organizations should be encouraged. While many private organizations and consultants can provide these trainings, a variety also exists through local university and Cooperative Extension outreach programs. Such training and management can help ensure that volunteer resources are maximized, and that the volunteer process is beneficial to all involved.

- *Broad-based local representation* inclusive of the diversity in the local population is absolutely essential to the development of community. For any development effort to be effective, local committees and development efforts need to be reflective of the local population. Volunteer groups should be reflective of the age, gender, race, and ethnic makeup of the locality. Without such local representation the potential for select groups to be excluded, ignored, and eliminated from decision-making exists. More importantly, this reflective grouping of volunteers brings together the entirety of local experiences, skills, formal/informal knowledge, networks, and resources. Volunteers that are representative of the population are vital in that they maximize resources/skills for action, help guard against action being dominated by power elites, and ensure that the general needs of all local groups are met. Volunteer administrators would do well to issue formal invitations to participate to local groups which may be underrepresented.
- *Leadership development.* The ability of local volunteers to develop

leadership capacities, assume leadership roles, and manage groups for results is vital to long-term community development efforts. Leadership training through a variety of academic, Extension, government, or private sector sources would help better empower local communities and transform volunteers into proactive leaders.

- *Training for needs assessments and asset based planning.* Volunteers and their groups require the ability to assess general community needs, but even more importantly the training to identify local assets, possibilities, and strengths on which unique locally-based social and economic development can originate. Training programs in community asset mapping and asset based planning would be useful, and can often be provided by university community development specialists, Extension programs, and regional rural development centers.
- *Increased skills based training to better prepare volunteers and their organizations as they attempt to achieve their goals.* Included would be training in the areas of grant writing, managing conflict, negotiation strategies, understanding local decision-making, and mapping power structures. Similarly, training in methods for working with local power structures would also help volunteer groups to position themselves for success. Sources of such trainings would include state development agencies, university outreach programs, and community development institutes.

## **Conclusions**

The discussion and presentation of community presented in this article is not meant to present a romantic or idealized notion of local harmony and solidarity. Our localities are often dominated by self-interest, outside development interests, distrust, conflict, and other negative conditions. This, however, does not mean that the development of community cannot take place. Instead, such conditions speak to the need for focused locally driven volunteer efforts to bridge divides, self-interest, and other obstacles in the search for solutions to common general needs.

Community emerges out of voluntary interaction between diverse social groups, often with clashing or at least distinctly different points of view. This interaction facilitates the coming together of volunteers to assess their common needs, increase awareness of issues facing all residents, and to identify volunteer efforts available to meet general needs.

This article has sought to reclaim the central role that volunteers play in community development. Volunteers are an essential and far too often forgotten element of effective community development. They are the basis on which development is envisioned and implemented. While outside entities may be seen as the basis for development, volunteers are the workhorses and visionaries that facilitate social change. It is, after all, these volunteers that are most aware of local life, culture, resources, and other context that can best be garnered when attempting to improve local well-being.

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## The Roles Volunteers Can Fill in Community-wide Efforts

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### Abstract

*Community-based organizations are often asked to meet the complex needs of their communities by joining with other organizations to address these issues at various levels of engagement. As Gray (1989) has noted, this is often a "process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem [issue] can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible" (p. 5). The coming together to address complex community problems often requires a great deal of time and commitment on behalf of each organization. Volunteers can be an important link between the home organization and these community-based initiatives. This article examines the roles volunteers can play at different levels of community-based efforts, the responsibilities of volunteers in diverse roles, and the extent to which volunteers can represent the organization at each level. The article concludes with the discussion of the implications for organizations that wish to engage volunteers in communitywide efforts.*

### Key Words:

collaboration, partnership, committee roles, capacity building

This paper has two objectives pertaining to the work of volunteers on behalf of organizations in communitywide efforts. First, it provides a description of the multiple levels of linkages among community groups (Borden & Perkins, 2003; Himmelman, 2004; Houge, 1993) and delineates the common roles across various levels of linkages. Second, the capacity of volunteers to perform common roles when overlaid within the specific levels of linkages is examined in terms of whether volunteers can adequately represent their organization.

### **Importance of Communitywide Efforts**

Increasingly, today's communities are being asked to address complex issues with fewer resources. These complex issues include: rising rates of poverty, shortfall of money for public education, increasing numbers of youth spending larger amounts of unsupervised time, increasing crime, teen dropouts and others, while seeing the available funds to address these issues decrease. Communities recognize that many social problems are influenced at multiple levels and thus require a comprehensive examination of the issues through a communitywide effort, such as collaboration (Connell & Kubisch, 2001; Donnermeyer, Plested, Edwards, Oetting & Littlethunder, 1997; Jason, 2006; Kegler, et. al., 2005; Perkins, Borden & Knox, 1999; Silverman & Williamson, 1997; Wandersman & Nation, 1998).

Given the complexity, these issues cannot be solved by any one individual, organization, or governmental body. Bringing together different groups offers an opportunity to "create new leaders, expand social and organizational networks, add to knowledge and skills and enhance a sense of community" (Kegler, et. al., 2005, p. S32) while addressing important issues. More recently, communitywide efforts have been

seen as a way to build important social capital (Mitchell, Stone-Wiggins, Stevenson, & Florin, 2004) that has deteriorated over the last quarter of a century (Putnam, 2000). Given the importance of community groups, we believe that volunteers can play an important role within a communitywide effort enhancing the work of their home organization, bringing important skills to bear on critical issues, and creating opportunities to learn and gain new skills. However, not all communitywide efforts are alike nor have the same purpose. In an earlier article, Borden and Perkins (2003) outlined the various levels of linkages within a community and whether volunteers could adequately represent their home organization. This next section is a brief summary of those levels.

### **Levels of Linkages**

There are five levels of community linkage (aka communitywide efforts), including networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition, and collaboration (see Table 1; Borden & Perkins, 2003; Himmelman, 2004; Houge, 1993). Networking, the first level of linkage is defined as the sharing of information among organizations on a specific topic (e.g., disaster relief, employment opportunities, and child care referrals). The purpose of Networking is to provide an opportunity for dialogue and common understanding, to act as a clearinghouse for information, and to create a base of support for a specific issue. The second level of linkage, Cooperation, is defined as the matching and organizing of existing programs and services with the purpose of meeting identified needs, limiting duplication of services, and ensuring that tasks are completed. An example of Cooperation is a voluntary association comprised of multiple organizations that meet to organize their services to better

coordinate the volunteer efforts within the community. (See Table I)

The third level of linkage, Coordination, is defined as the integration of resources whose purpose is the development or creation of new projects/programs to address a common issue. An example, of coordination would be youth organizations partnering to create a joint budget to support a common brochure listing the activities available through each organization. The fourth level of linkage, Coalition, is defined as multiple organizations coming together and pooling their resources from existing systems for the purpose of working together on a prescribed issue for a minimum of three years. For example, a group may form a Coalition to increase the availability of after-school programs for youth by pooling their resources to sponsor AmeriCorp members to provide much needed support to local youth programs. The fifth and final level, Collaboration, is defined as multiple organizations coming together to act as a new entity with a shared vision and the power to impact the participating organizations. The purpose of Collaboration is to accomplish shared and impact benchmarks, to build an interdependent system to address issues and opportunities. An example of a collaborative effort is the Family Violence Collaboration, formed to address family violence by including such groups as social services, law enforcement, hospitals, schools, judicial system, and others. This collaborative effort determined that in order to better serve and assist victims of family violence, local law enforcement system reporting needed to change. Therefore, new reporting procedures were established and sent by the collaborative to local law enforcement agencies to be implemented.

### **Common Roles Across Levels of Linkages**

As noted in the previous section, each level of linkage has a specific purpose that offers organizations the opportunity to work with other organizations to better meet their own goals and objectives. According to Himmelman (2004), there are common roles that representatives of organizations play in the linkage processes. These roles include: convener, conduit, advocate, community organizer, technical assistance provider, capacity builder, and facilitator. The convener role is the individual who brings representatives from the different organizations to the table for initial discussion which may result in further action. The role of conduit involves serving as the fiscal-agency for funding pass-through for the level of linkage. The challenge in this role is to remain independent rather than become the defacto leader.

The advocacy role involves individuals or organizations representing persons that are the focus of the group's effort. The role of community organizer involves ensuring that the appropriate people are involved in the decision-making process at that particular level of linkage. Technical assistance provider is another common role that involves human and technical resources made available to the group to advance and sustain the group's efforts. These resources may involve: data retrieval and analyses, legal expertise, strategic planning expertise, and grant writing expertise. The capacity builder role within groups involves keeping the group focused and targeted on the prioritized issue, rather than straying from it. The facilitator role entails that of a servant leader, that is, the individual focuses on helping the group work more effectively. Facilitation involves advancing the dialog from ideas to action through a group decision-making process that is fair and inclusive of all partners.

### **Levels of Linkages, Roles, and Volunteers**

Volunteers can be utilized in many of these roles to expand the reach and capacity of an organization to maximize their involvement within various communitywide efforts or levels of linkages. Using volunteers to support an organization within a particular level of linkage first requires the identification of the various common roles that the volunteer can play at each level. The volunteer's responsibilities change dramatically as the level of linkage becomes more complex moving from networking to collaboration.

Networking, the first level of linkage offers volunteers a number of potential roles. Volunteers can serve in the following roles within a Network:

- Convener - facilitates sharing of information through meetings with groups, agencies, organizations, and individuals pertaining to particular identified issue of concern to the home organization;
- Advocate - provides information to the network about the home organization's identification of specific population's needs;
- Community Organizer - identifies others who might be interested in engaging in an ongoing sharing of information; and
- Technical Assistance Provider - facilitates information gathering pertaining to identified issue and services being provided.

At the networking level, volunteers offer a community-based organization the opportunity to be involved in numerous information sharing conversations within the community about important issues. Volunteers will need to be able to attend meetings on a regular basis, be very well-versed regarding the vision, mission, and goals of the organization, and be able to accurately report back to the organizations the results of the meetings.

The second level is that of **Cooperation**. Cooperation offers organizations the opportunity to work more collectively with others to increase programs and services. Volunteers can serve in a number of different roles at this level:

- Convener - calls together organizations addressing a similar group or need to limit the duplication of services and increase the efficiency of each organization;
- Conduit - acts on behalf of the home organization as a liaison for the communitywide effort to identify and garner potential resources and possible funders;
- Advocate - provides information pertaining to the organization's vision, mission, goals, and services;
- Community Organizer - ensures that all the appropriate organizations are involved in the decision-making process related to coordination of programs and services;
- Technical Assistance - provides individual expertise and technical skills as appropriate in terms of the types of services provided and the types of services needed;
- Capacity Builder - guides the group discussion and coordination to stay focused on the identified needs and matches them to organizations' services;
- Facilitator - ensures that the conversation is inclusive and all organizations participate equally in discussion and decision-making.

The roles in this level require volunteers to have a strong in-depth understanding of the home organization. Volunteers may be asked to identify programs and resources that could be linked. They also must be able to take on new tasks and complete these in a timely manner within the framework of the home organization.

The third level of linkage, Coordination, strives to integrate resources and allows for the possibility of the development of new programs. Volunteers at this particular level are able to serve in the following roles:

- Convener - organizes and facilitates opportunities to discuss possible ways to share existing resources and address common issues;
- Conduit - serves as the distributor and coordinator of new resources and joint budgets;
- Community Organizer - identifies and extends invitations to potential members of the communitywide effort that should be involved in the process;
- Technical Assistance - provides individual expertise and technical skills related to the identified needs, promotes the sharing of resources, and communicates information pertaining to the work of the group between the organization and the group and within the home organization.

Volunteers at this level face increasing challenges as they can no longer adequately represent the organization except in the roles identified above since at this level participants are often asked to take part in discussions requiring decision-making authority of the home organization. Moreover, this level becomes much more time consuming and may preclude the ongoing involvement of some volunteers.

The fourth level of linkage, Coalition, is defined as the involvement of multiple organizations coming together and pooling resources from existing systems for the purpose of working together on a prescribed issue for a minimum of three years. The role of volunteers at this level includes:

- Conduit - serves as the distributor and coordinator of new resources and joint budgets (may be seen as more neutral

than that of a paid staff member of an organization);

- Community Organizer - identifies and encourages the inclusion of other potential members of the communitywide effort that should be included in the group process, and facilitates a sub-committee of the larger group.
- Technical Assistance - provides individual expertise and technical skills as appropriate and related to identified needs, promotes the sharing of resources, and communicates information pertaining to the work of the group between the organization and the group and within the home organization.

This level is quite complex and the role of volunteers is limited. Volunteers will need to possess expertise in facilitation skills in order to successfully navigate the roles within this complex level. In order for this to be effective, the organization and the volunteer must have long-term experience with one another and a relationship involving high levels of trust.

Collaboration, the fifth level of linkage, requires agencies to come together and develop a new entity that has a shared vision and the power to impact the participating organizations. Because of the power to impact home organizations, the role of volunteers at this level is quite limited. In our 2003 article, we argue that since collaborative efforts cannot be successful if those involved do not have the power to make the necessary decisions to move the effort forward, the use of volunteers is neither feasible nor recommended. However, there are two roles that volunteers may be brought into as a co-representative for a specific home organization:

- Community Organizer - ensures that potential key people are invited to be members of the collaboration (the volunteer would be a person with an in-

depth understanding of grassroots community leaders);

- Technical Assistance - provides individual expertise and technical skills that members of the collaboration are lacking.

Collaboration is the most complex level for organizations to be engaged in and has long-term implications for the work of the organization. These efforts often require the organization to redefine or refocus the work of the organization. As noted above, volunteers may be involved in this role on a limited basis providing specific support to another representative of a home organization.

### **Organizational Support for Volunteer Role Assignment**

Today's organizations are being asked to be more involved within their communities; however the demand for this involvement often exceeds the ability of the staff. Volunteers represent an underutilized resource for organizations to expand their reach and capacity to participate in community wide efforts. Therefore, understanding the potential roles that volunteers can play within a communitywide effort offers organizations the opportunity to participate more widely and more efficiently in these efforts. Having volunteers serve on community teams provides the organization the ability to be recognized as a part of the solution addressing important community issues, the opportunity to participate more widely in collaborative grant opportunities, increased opportunities to better serve clientele, and offers broader community recognition.

Although volunteers offer community-based organizations a strategy for expansion of their organizational reach into community efforts, "volunteers must be recruited; they must be screened and given orientation to the agency; they must be assigned to

positions and afforded training as necessary; they must be supervised, motivated, and accorded appropriate recognition; they should be evaluated to assess the efficacy of their placement for themselves as well as for the organization" (Brudney, 1994, p. 279). Moreover, it is essential that the volunteers have a clear description of their roles and responsibilities within the communitywide effort of the organization that they are representing. The degree of volunteer management required by the organization increases at each successive level of linkage from network to collaboration and the role changes for the volunteer. Communication between the volunteer manager and the volunteer becomes more complex and necessary as the level of linkage increase in complexity. Volunteers within a community organization can strengthen and expand existing work by representing the organization and becoming vital members of communitywide efforts at their various levels (i.e., networking, coordination, cooperation, coalition, and collaboration) whether in the role of convener, conduit, advocate, community organizer, technical assistance provider, capacity builder, or facilitator.

Volunteers offer community-based organizations one way to expand their influence without the addition of paid staff. Given the financial limitations facing community-based organizations volunteers can truly enhance and strengthen the work of the organization. However, volunteers are not paid staff and thus must be well-trained to understand the overall mission of the organization, their ability to make decisions on the part of the organization, and their role in communicating the results of the meetings in which they have participated. Without proper training and ongoing support, volunteers may find their role confusing and the organizations may find that the role of the volunteer neither

supports nor enhances the mission of the organization. Clearly, there is a need for organizations to establish regularly scheduled communication sessions to ensure that volunteers are appropriately representing the organization and that the volunteer is receiving the necessary support to be an effective liaison for the organization.

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**Table 1**  
**Community Linkages – Choices and Decisions**

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Volunteers Skills Needed</b>	<b>Roles for Volunteers</b>
<b>Networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialog and common understanding</li> <li>• Clearinghouse for information</li> <li>• Create base of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-hierarchical</li> <li>• Loose/flexible link</li> <li>• Roles loosely defined</li> <li>• Community action is primary link among members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low key leadership</li> <li>• Minimal decision making</li> <li>• Little conflict</li> <li>• Informal communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convener</li> <li>• Advocate</li> <li>• Community Organizer</li> <li>• Technical Assistance Provider</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperation or Alliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match needs and provide coordination</li> <li>• Limit duplication of services</li> <li>• Ensure tasks are done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central body of people as communication hub</li> <li>• Semi-formal links</li> <li>• Roles somewhat defined</li> <li>• Links are advisory</li> <li>• Group leverages/raises money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitative leaders</li> <li>• Complex decision making</li> <li>• Some conflict</li> <li>• Formal communications within the central group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent communication skills</li> <li>• Function as a member of the central body</li> <li>• Able and willing to take on and complete tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convener</li> <li>• Conduit</li> <li>• Advocate</li> <li>• Community Organizer</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Capacity Builder</li> <li>• Facilitator</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination or Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share resources to address common issues</li> <li>• Merge resource base to create something new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central body of people consists of decision makers</li> <li>• Roles defined</li> <li>• Links formalized</li> <li>• Group develops new resources and joint budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous leadership but focus in on issue</li> <li>• Group decision making in central and subgroups</li> <li>• Communication is frequent and clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent communication skills</li> <li>• Excellent decision-making skills</li> <li>• Take on a role in the group</li> <li>• Must be able to complete tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convener</li> <li>• Conduit</li> <li>• Community Organizer</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> </ul>
<b><u>Coalition</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems</li> <li>• Develop commitment for a minimum of three years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All members involved in decision making</li> <li>• Roles and time defined</li> <li>• Links formal with written agreement</li> <li>• Group develops new resources and joint budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared leadership</li> <li>• Decision making formal with all members</li> <li>• Communication is common and prioritized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent communication skills</li> <li>• Excellent decision making skills</li> <li>• High degree of trust between volunteer and organization</li> <li>• Excellent knowledge of the home organization</li> <li>• Excellent interpersonal skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduit</li> <li>• Community Organizer</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks</li> <li>• Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus used in shared decision making</li> <li>• Roles, time and evaluation formalized</li> <li>• Links are formal and written in work assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high</li> <li>• Ideas and decisions equally shared</li> <li>• Highly developed communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent director of home organization</li> <li>• Excellent communication skills – oral and written</li> <li>• Good negotiation skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Organizers</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> </ul>

(Modified chart from Houge (1994) Community Based Collaborations-Wellness Multiplied)

## **Volunteerism and Holistic Community Development: The Main Street Paradigm**

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### **Abstract**

The field of community and economic development in the not-for-profit sector has exploded in the past 40 years. During this time a great deal of emphasis has been given to the end effect these various organizations have had upon our community. From lending programs, to home building and entrepreneurial incubators there is a great depth of knowledge concerning the products that have come from various development efforts. Little attention has been paid during that time, however, to the social capital that builds these organizations and allows them to do their work. Inside of that limited field of study, even less attention has been paid to proper utilization and management of volunteers. This lack of focus on volunteerism's role in community and economic development has limited the efficacy of professionals in the field. A notable exception has been the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program that preaches, and practices, holistic community development.

### **Key Words:**

volunteers, community development, economic development,  
revitalization, organizational development

### **The Need for a Paradigm Shift**

A paradigm shift is needed in the way that the vast majority of professionals in the field of community and economic development regard volunteerism. Kuhn (1996) first proposed the term "paradigm shift" in the scientific community as it related to the evolution of scientific theories. The term has become more loosely defined since then to become more fully indicative of any change of sociological thought inside professional fields (Barker, Anderson, & Chen, 2006).

A shift is currently needed in the field of community and economic development (CED) when it comes to the field's relationship with and utilization of standard volunteerism practices. In 2003, the author presented a volunteerism session to a group of CED professionals for West Virginia University's Community Development Institute-East. These professionals represented various aspects of the CED field from economic development authority directors through various city and county public employees who worked in CED. The

program as delivered was a remedial lesson in attracting, developing, and utilizing highly skilled volunteers in economic development efforts. After the class, several participants responded that they had enjoyed the discussion very much, but that they never utilized volunteers in any of their work. However, when asked if they worked for a board of directors and/or focus groups, each replied affirmatively. Each of the board and focus group members, even those affiliated with the activities because of their employment, were, in actuality, volunteers that needed to be developed. Each participant would expand or contract their service role based on their satisfaction with the position in which they were asked to serve if the program would engage them in such a manner and the field must develop opportunities for participants from the easily identifiable demographics already present in our communities (Safrit, 1998).

Anglin and Herts (2004) suggested that the entire field of community development is in dire need of examination of the social capital that creates the system. They pointed to the movement's origination out of the social and political movements of the 1960s. These organizing efforts were made to pave the way for sweeping change in our communities and promoted the idea that concentrated groups of private citizens could come together to make an organization that would become an intermediary between government and the common citizen. The main problem in that the field, according to the authors, is that because of the dispersed and widely varied models that were used in community development, there was not much study given to what made the system work, or fail, especially in the area of developing social capital.

### **A Different Economic Development Organization**

The leading organization in the promotion of holistic economic development (volunteerism tied to community development) in the country today is Main Street, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation since 1980. The Main Street program calls for holistic economic development of a community in the Main Street Four Point Approach to community revitalization (Dane, 2003). Dane posited that one of the problems with traditional community and economic development approaches is that they have focused on one or two areas and haven't taken a full spectrum approach to the issues that affect the district. The problem with this compartmentalization is that many times social issues are so interrelated that addressing only one element does not provide sufficient understanding and cannot solve problems that exist in complex and sometimes contentious environments (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001).

Main Street, however, uses only three of its four points in the Four Point approach in standard community development practices. While the first three points focus on design (the look of the street), economic restructuring (creating a viable business district), and promotion (holding events to get people onto the street) and are not greatly different from efforts that have been replicated in part by many organizations throughout the country to revitalize blighted areas, the fourth point provides a difference. The fourth point is nearly nationally unique among economic development organizations and focuses on social capital and volunteerism. Main Street's holistic approach adds organization as the fourth vital piece of the puzzle. Organization is about building the people who build the group and one of the specific focuses of this area is volunteer development.

In addition, Main Street stresses eight guiding principles that also help to set them apart from economic development organizations and initiatives across the country (Dane, 2003). These principles state that redevelopment must be comprehensive, incremental, built on partnership, asset-based, always of top quality, change-oriented, and implementation (or activity) based. The eighth step, self-help, stresses that the Main Street organization needs to reach out to the local residents, businesses, and property owners. This guiding principle posits that without the volunteerism of local stakeholders, no amount of investment will ever be successful in the long-term.

When taken together, the fourth point (organization) and the eighth principle (self-help) create a unique paradigm for economic development efforts in their grounding in volunteer management. Unlike most models of economic development that rely primarily on paid professional staff to create change for communities, Main Street's philosophy puts the volunteers into action working to solve a community's issues. To assist Main Street organizations in developing both episodic and long-term volunteers to work on revitalization, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center provides many volunteer development resources. These include the typical subject matter-focused books for building facades, business planning, event ideas, etc., but they also have committee manuals that stress mainstream volunteer management strategies. Support material is provided on attracting, selecting, training, utilizing, and evaluating the volunteers that make the Main Street engine work.

This holistic volunteer utilization and development model has made Main Street uniquely successful in its efforts to revitalize formerly vibrant economic corridors in cities across the country. The Main Street effort nationally has generated more than \$31.5

billion in reinvestment in the 180 communities involved since 1980 (Main Street Center, 2007). These efforts have generated nearly 73,000 new businesses, approximately 330,000 new jobs and have also produced the renovation of more than 178,000 buildings. For every one dollar invested in the local Main Street organization, \$28.31 is produced in the local economy.

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### **About the Author**

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## **African-American Participation in Mainstream Greater Richmond Voluntary Organizations: A Report From The Field**

Nelson Wikstrom, Ph.D.

### **Abstract**

*This article explores the involvement of African-American citizens in ten prominent third sector organizations in the greater Richmond, Virginia area. The author concludes with several broad generalizations: (1) African-American involvement in these organizations is generally less than their proportionate share of the citizens in the area; (2) most organizations have adopted a policy, either formal or informal, seeking to enhance African-American involvement in their organization; (3) organizations have generally made use of mass media, mailing lists, churches, and personal referrals to increase African-American involvement in their organization; (4) most organizations reported that African-American involvement has increased in their organization over the past decade; (5) most significantly, the example of African Americans on staff serves to enhance African-American volunteerism in these organizations; and, (6) finally, African-American involvement in these organizations is hindered by their often low visibility in the African-American community, due to economic constraints felt by many African-Americans which serve to restrain volunteer efforts, and the perception of many African Americans that members of their ethnic group do not participate in the decision making of these organizations.*

### **Key Words:**

African-Americans, volunteers, voluntary associations, community organizations

Dr. Kingman Brewster, former President of Yale University, in his introductory remarks to Carl Milofsky's edited volume *Community Organizations: Studies in Resource Mobilization and Exchange* (0988:ix) noted:

The United States relies more heavily than any other country on the voluntary non-profit sector to conduct that nation's social, cultural, and economic business-to bring us into the world, to educate and entertain us, even to bury us. Indeed, the United States can be distinguished from all other societies by virtue of the work load it assigns to its "third sector," as compared to business firms or government agencies. Yet this non-profit universe has been the least well studied,

the least well understood aspect of our national life.

Brewster's general remarks about our relative ignorance of "third sector" organizations and volunteerism apply with particular force to our lack of cognizance of the level of African-American participation in mainstream Greater Richmond voluntary organizations. This woeful state of ignorance is especially significant in view of the fact that Richmond, Virginia has a population which is approximately fifty percent of African-American heritage and this population category constitutes approximately twenty-five percent of the citizenry of the Richmond metropolitan area.

### **Focus of this Research**

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the extent of involvement of African-American citizens in the ten following prominent "third sector" groups functioning in the Greater Richmond area: (1) American Cancer Society; (2) American Heart Association; (3) American Lung Association; (4) American Red Cross; (5) Big Brothers/Big Sisters; (6) Easter Seal Society; (7) March of Dimes; (8) Virginia League of Planned Parenthood; (9) Salvation Army; and, 10) Meals on Wheels.

By way of learning contrast, a secondary facet of this inquiry was to gain some familiarity with the organizational nature and activities of the Richmond chapters of the volunteer community-centered Concerned Black Men, and the Continental Societies, the latter composed exclusively of females. The membership of each of these organizations is exclusively African-American and both are involved in volunteer self-help efforts specifically centered on the African-American community.

### **Methodology**

A semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix A) was developed as a research tool to ascertain the involvement of African-Americans in mainstream voluntary organizations. A letter was forwarded in the Summer of 1990 to the Executive Director of each organization requesting an on-site personal interview. This was followed by a telephone call in order to arrange an appropriate time and place to conduct the interview. Although each of the executive directors (ultimately in several instances more than one telephone request was needed) agreed to be interviewed, several subsequently stressed at the time of the interview their desire to complete the interview schedule in writing at a later date and forward it to the investigator. It was clear that several of the executive directors

displayed some measure of uneasiness concerning being queried about the subject matter. Finally, despite repeated requests, the Executive Director of one organization, Meals on Wheels, failed to provide most of the requested information.

The questionnaire administered to the executive directors of each of the mainstream voluntary organizations addressed a number of facets involving African-American participation in these groups including: Does the organization have a formal or informal policy promoting African-American participation? How many African-Americans volunteer their time to the organization? Has this number increased during the period 1980-1990? How many African-Americans are employed on your staff? What percentage of your voting membership is African-American? Concerning your Board of Directors, how many are African-American? What percentage of the leadership positions of the Board of Directors is held by African-Americans? Does your organization specifically "target" programs for the African-American community? Has your organization made a deliberate effort to increase African-American voluntary participation in your organization? What steps? How successful were these efforts? Do you feel that your organization is satisfactorily answering the needs of the African-American community?

In addition, informal interviews were conducted with a representative of the Concerned Black Men, and with a spokeswoman of the Continental Societies to gain some familiarity with the organizational nature, membership, and activities of these African-American organizations. These organizations, whose members are largely drawn from the professional strata of the African-American community, have enjoyed a long record of service in the Richmond region.

### **General Findings: Voluntary Mainstream Organizations**

As is demonstrated in the following section of this report, findings pertaining to the extent of African-American involvement in each of the mainstream voluntary organizations is somewhat specific for each organization. Nevertheless, bearing this qualification in mind, a broad generalization may be advanced concerning African American involvement in these organizations. These generalizations include: (1) African-American involvement in these organizations is generally less than their proportionate share of the citizens in the area; (2) most organizations have adopted a policy, either formal or informal, seeking to enhance African-American involvement in their organization; (3) organizations have generally made use of mass media, mailing lists, churches, and personal referrals to increase African-American involvement in their organization; (4) most organizations reported that African-American involvement has increased in their organization over the past decade; (5) most significantly, the example of African Americans on staff serves to enhance African-American volunteerism in these organizations; and, (6) finally, African-American involvement in these organizations is hindered by their often low visibility in the African-American community, due to economic constraints felt by many African-Americans which serve to restrain volunteer efforts, and the perception of many African Americans that members of their ethnic group do not participate in the decision making of these organizations.

### **Specific Findings: Voluntary Mainstream Organization**

Following below are some specific findings concerning the extent and level of

African-American involvement in voluntary mainstream organizations. It should be emphasized that because these organizations generally do not maintain records according to race the resulting data, in many cases, is based upon informed estimates. Nevertheless, this estimated data provides us with an understanding of the extent of African-American involvement in Greater Richmond voluntary mainstream organizations.

### **Structural Organization**

In order to gain some familiarity with the nature of the leadership structure, executive directors were asked to identify the manner in which members of the board of directors of their organization are selected. Table I provides this information. As can be learned from Table I, the board of directors of the vast majority of these organizations is chosen by incumbent board members. Only the governing board of the American Heart Association is chosen by the entire voting membership. What this infers, of course, is that efforts to increase African-American involvement in these organizations is heavily dependent upon the commitment of the organization's leadership.

### **Solicitation of African -American Community Involvement**

Table II documents whether each organization has adopted a formal or informal policy of aggressively soliciting the involvement of the African-American community.

As can be seen in Table II, the following six organizations have adopted a formal or informal policy aggressively seeking to enhance African-American participation in their organization:

**Table I**  
**Method of Selection: Board of Directors**

	A. Board of Directors Elected by Voting Membership	B. Self-perpetuating Board of Directors
American Cancer Society		x
American Heart Association	x	
American Lung Association		x
American Red Cross		x
Big Brothers/Big Sisters		x
Easter Seal Society		x
March of Dimes		x
Virginia League of Planned Parenthood		x
Salvation Army		x
Meals on Wheels	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>
	10%	80%

*Note: Tables I through VI are the tabled representations of the responses to the questionnaire found in Appendix A.*

\*Information not provided by Meals on Wheels

**Table II**  
**Adopted Policy: Solicitation of African-American Involvement**

	YES	NO
American Cancer Society	x	
American. Heart Association.	x	
American Lung Association		x
American Red Cross	x	
Big Brothers/Big Sisters		x
Easter Seal Society	x	
March of Dimes	x	
Virginia League of Planned Parenthood	x	
Salvation Army		x
Meals on Wheels	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>
	60%	30%

\*Information not provided by Meals on Wheels

American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Red Cross, Easter Seal Society, March of Dimes, and the Virginia League of Planned Parenthood. However, as is later documented in this report, the adoption of an affirmative action-type policy by these organizations seeking greater African-American involvement has generated mixed results.

Table III provides data concerning the extent of African-American volunteers and staff in leadership positions in voluntary mainstream organizations.

As can be gained from Table III, the extent of African-American volunteerism in

these organizations varies considerably, although in terms of absolute numbers voluntary mainstream organizations have been able to secure a considerable amount of volunteer effort by African-Americans. Indeed, about one-out-of-every-three volunteers canvassing for the March of Dimes is African-American. Many organizations reported that about twenty-five percent of their volunteers are African-American. Only the Virginia League of Planned Parenthood noted a total absence of volunteer efforts by African-Americans on behalf of the organization.

**Table III**  
**Extent of African-American Volunteers, Staff, and Leadership Positions:**  
**Voluntary Mainstream Organizations**

Organization	3. Volunteers			4. Staff			5. Members			6. Directors			7. Leaders
	Total No.	A/A No.	A/A! %	Total No.	A/A No.	A/A %	Voting No.	A/A No.	A/A %	Total No.	A/A No.	A/A %	A/A %
1.	6,000	1,000	16.6	60	15	25	700	75	11	30	4	13	17
2.	8,000	1,000	12.5	85	7	8	120	25	21	26	4	15	12
3.	100	30	30	5	0	0	30	3	1	30	3	1	0
4.	3,300	825	25	46	12	26	72	22	30	72	22	30	11
5.	240	60	25	11	3	27	21	2	9	21	2	9	0
6.	900	225	25	2.5	0	0	24	0	0	24	0	0	0
7.	300	100	33.3	13	1	7	7	1	14	7	1	14	0
8.	65	0	0	9	1	11	35	2	6	35	2	6	0
9.	8715	2,000	23	38	14	37	27	2	7	27	2	7	0
10.	*	*	20	*	*	18	*	*	14	*	*	14	*
TOT.	27,620	5,235	21%	269	53	16%	1036	132	11	272	40	11%	4%

*Organization Key:*

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. American Cancer Society    | 6. Easter Seal Society                          |
| 2. American Heart Association | 7. March of Dimes                               |
| 3. American Lung Association  | 8. Virginia League of Planned Parenthood        |
| 4. American Red Cross         | 9. Salvation Army                               |
| 5. Big Brothers/Big Sisters   | 10. Meals on Wheels (*Information not provided) |

*Response Key:* (the following numbers correspond to questions in Appendix A)

3. Total number of volunteers; number and percentage of African-American volunteers.
4. Total paid staff; number and percentage of African-American paid staff.
5. Total voting membership; number and percentage of African-American directors.
6. Total number of board of directors members; number and percentage of African-American voting membership.
7. Percentage of African-Americans who hold leadership positions on the board of directors.

A/A! = African-American

Similarly, the percentage of African-American compensated staff retained by voluntary mainstream organizations varies considerably. On the average, about one-fifth of the paid staff employed by these organizations are African-American, although the Salvation Army reported that almost two-fifths of its compensated staff is African American in ethnic background. This study lends credence to the conjecture that there is a positive relationship between the extent of African-American compensated staff and the ability of the organization of secure voluntary efforts by African-Americans.

**"Targeting" The African-American Community**

Table IV contains data concerning whether or not voluntary mainstream organizations desire enhanced African-American voluntary participation and, in addition, whether these organizations have engaged in activities specifically designed to increase African-American voluntary participation in their organization, and if these activities were successful. In addition, Table IV documents the number of these organizations which have specifically "targeted" programs for the African-American community.

**Table IV**  
**"Targeting" the African-American (A/A) Community:**  
**Mainstream Voluntary Organizations**

	8. Programs Target A/A community		9. Desire participation A/A community		10. Actively targeted A/A community	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
1.	x		x		x	
2.	x		x		x	
3.	x		x		x	
4.		x	x		x	
5.		x	x		x	
6.		x	x			x
7.	x		x		x	
8.	x		x		x	
9.		x	x		x	
10.	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
	56%	44%	100%		89%	11%

*Organization Key:*

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. American Cancer Society    | 6. Easter Seal Society                          |
| 2. American Heart Association | 7. March of Dimes                               |
| 3. American Lung Association  | 8. Virginia League of Planned Parenthood        |
| 4. American Red Cross         | 9. Salvation Army                               |
| 5. Big Brothers/Big Sisters   | 10. Meals on Wheels (*Information not provided) |

*Response Key:* (the following numbers correspond to questions in Appendix A)

- 8. Direct specific programs to the African-American community.
- 9. Desire enhanced voluntary African-American participation in the organization.
- 10. Engaged in an aggressive program designed to increase voluntary African-American participation in the organization

As documented in Table IV, half of the organizations surveyed specifically target the African-American community in their programmatic efforts. All the responding organizations acknowledged that they are eager to gain more African-American volunteers; indeed, eight organizations have undertaken efforts specifically designed to enhance African-American volunteers.

Table V presents data pertaining to the various sources utilized by mainstream voluntary bodies designed to increase African-American voluntary efforts on behalf of their organizations. As can be readily gained from Table V, voluntary mainstream

organizations have primarily relied upon churches (which is understandable, given the generally prominent role of the church in the African-American community), and informal person-to-person requests in seeking to enhance African-American voluntary participation. In addition, in regard to the latter, voluntary mainstream organizations have made use of paid radio and television announcements, newspaper advertisements, and mass media public service announcements. As documented by Table V, the success of these varied efforts has been mixed.

**Table V**  
**Specific Sources Utilized by Voluntary Mainstream Organization Designed to Enhance African-American Voluntary Efforts: Degree of Success**

	What Media Sources were used to facilitate these program?								11. Success of Programs			
	Mailing Lists	Flyers	Churches	Referral	Radio Ads	TV Ads	Print Ads	Public Service Media	E	G	F	P
1.		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
2.	x	x	x	x						x		
3.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
4.		x		x	x	x	x	x		x		
5.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
6.												
7.		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
8.		x	x							x		
9.			x	x							x	
10.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
TOTAL	3	3	8	7	5	5	5	5				
	33%	33%	87.5%	77%	55%	55%	55%	55%		55%	22%	11%

*Organization Key:*

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. American Cancer Society    | 6. Easter Seal Society                          |
| 2. American Heart Association | 7. March of Dimes                               |
| 3. American Lung Association  | 8. Virginia League of Planned Parenthood        |
| 4. American Red Cross         | 9. Salvation Army                               |
| 5. Big Brothers/Big Sisters   | 10. Meals on Wheels (*Information not provided) |

*Key to Symbols Utilized in Response to question Number 11.*

- E = Excellent    F = Fair  
G = Good        P = Poor

The executive directors of voluntary mainstream organizations advanced a variety of reasons why their organizations enjoyed only a limited amount of success in attracting enhanced African-American voluntary efforts. These reasons include: (1) the often low visibility of these organizations in the African-American community; (2) the widespread popular perception held by African-Americans that members of their ethnic group play little role in the decision-making process of voluntary mainstream organizations; and, (3) the economic constraints under which many African-Americans labor, precluding their involvement in voluntary efforts.

Table VI contains a variety of data relating to voluntary mainstream organizations and the African-American community including (1) whether or not a voluntary mainstream organization has attempted to address those factors which serve to impede African-American voluntary efforts; (2) the extent to which additional organizational appeals should be made to enhance African-American voluntary efforts; (3) whether ethnic groups and, more specifically, the African-American community is specifically "targeted" in terms of fund-raising efforts; (4) the approximate percentage of organizational funding derived from the African-American community; (5) whether or not the organization is basically meeting the needs of the African-American community; (6) whether the retention of increased numbers of paid African-American staff and the promotion of African-Americans into organizational leadership roles enhanced African-American participation over the past five-year period.

The data contained in Table VI allows us to posit the following general observations regarding the African-American community and voluntary mainstream organizations. First, about half of these organizations have adopted specific measures to increase their

visibility in the African-American community and have encouraged and/or promoted African-Americans to assume leadership positions. Second, for the most part, voluntary mainstream organizations do not make specific, or "targeted," funding appeals to particular ethnic groups, including African-Americans. Third, because of the lack of pertinent record-keeping, executive directors were generally unable to advance an "informed estimate" of what amount of their funding is presently derived from the African-American community. Fourth, more than a majority of the executive directors subscribed to the belief that the retention of additional paid African-American staff and the promotion of African-Americans into leadership roles would encourage more African-American voluntary efforts on behalf of their organization. And finally, half of the voluntary mainstream organizations surveyed have experienced increased participation by African Americans, over the past five years.

### **African-American Voluntary Organizations: Concerned Black Men and Continental Societies**

As previously noted, a secondary aspect of this inquiry was to gain some familiarity with the organizational structure and activities of the Concerned Black Men and the Continental Societies, each incorporated local chapters of a national African-American voluntary and self-help organization.

Concerned Black Men, organized in Richmond in 1987, has forty-five members who pay annual dues of \$50. This organization also relies upon a varied array of financial donations to support its activities. The membership of Concerned Black Men is drawn from the professional and business strata of the African-American community. Concerned Black Men is particularly dedicated to improving the self-esteem and

self-respect of young African-American males. It focuses its activities, consisting of workshops, field trips, and camping experiences, on African-American males

attending the Mosby Middle School, a public school located in the City of Richmond.

**Table VI**  
**Voluntary Mainstream Organizations and the African-American Community:**  
**Relevant Evaluative Data**

	13		14			15				16	17		18		19	
	Programmatic Responses		Extent of Effort			Fund Raising Ethnic Groups		Fund Raising Target A/A		% from A/A	Answering Needs		Addition of A/A		Participation Increase	
	Yes	No	Sig.	Mod	Some	Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	x		x				x		x	N/A		x	x		x	
2.			x				x		x	10%		x	x		x	
3.	x		x				x		x	N/A		x	x			
4.	x		x				x		x	N/A	x		x			x
5.			x				x		x	0%		x				
6.					x		x		x	N/A	x		x			x
7.			x			x			x	N/A			x		x	
8.		x	x				x		x	N/A		x	x		x	
9.		x		x			x		x	N/A	x			x	x	
10.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	3	2	7	1	1	1	8	0	9		3	5	7	2	5	2
	33%	22%	77%	11%	11%	11%	88%	0%	100%		33%	55%	77%	22%	55%	22%

*Organization Key:*

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. American Cancer Society    | 6. Easter Seal Society                           |
| 2. American Heart Association | 7. March of Dimes                                |
| 3. American Lung Association  | 8. Virginia League of Planned Parenthood         |
| 4. American Red Cross         | 9. Salvation Army                                |
| 5. Big Brothers/Big Sisters   | 10. Meals on Wheels ("Information not provided") |

*Response Key:*

13. Programmatic responses to overcome those factors which impede African-American voluntary efforts.
14. Extent of above effort: significant, moderate, or some.
15. Whether or not fund raising efforts are specifically "targeted" to ethnic groups, specifically the African-American community.
16. Approximate percentage of current funding derived from the African-American community.
17. Whether or not the organization is perceived by African-Americans as fully meeting the needs of the African-American community.
18. Whether the addition of paid African-American staff and the promotion of more African-Americans into organizational leadership roles would enhance African-American voluntary efforts.
19. Whether the organization has experienced enhanced African-American participation over the past five years.

The Continental Societies, established in Richmond in 1965, has a total membership of twenty-five females who pay annual dues of \$100. The activities of the Continental Societies involve programs designed to promote individual self-esteem and motivation among young African-Americans. Its activities center on children attending Richmond's Whitcomb Court Elementary School. On occasion, the Concerned Black Men and the Continental Societies have jointly sponsored field trips for young African-Americans to Virginia State University and Norfolk State University. The primary purpose of these field trips has been to help young African-Americans develop plans to achieve career and personal objectives.

Those volunteers involved in the Concerned Black Men and the Continental Societies are largely motivated by their desire to "pay back" the African-American community for the socio-economic success they currently enjoy, and to serve as successful "role models" for young African-Americans who are being raised most often in single-parent homes, and in a dysfunctional culture marked by poverty, drugs, and crime. The activities and volunteer efforts of both of these organizations have been well received by community residents, and these organizations enjoy a sense of visibility and rapport not usually experienced by the larger traditional mainstream voluntary organizations. Nevertheless, the voluntary efforts of the concerned Black Men and the Continental Societies are largely unknown by the larger community, due to their relative lack of coverage by the major local press.

### **Conclusions**

This inquiry confirms that mainstream voluntary organizations in the Greater Richmond metropolitan area have attracted a considerable amount of voluntary effort from the African-American community.

However, the vast majority of the volunteer members, compensated staff, and organizational leadership of mainstream voluntary organizations remain overwhelmingly white. Although these organizations are eager to attract greater voluntary efforts from the African-American community, and have engaged in various appeals to accomplish this result, these appeals have met with mixed success. The latter is largely because mainstream voluntary organizations appear to enjoy relatively low public visibility in the African-American community and are perceived by African-Americans as largely being devoid of African-American leadership. Further, economic constraints also serve to mitigate against increased African-American voluntary involvement with these organizations.

On the other hand, it should be recognized that "volunteerism" plays a significant role in the African-American community, particularly as is evidenced by the efforts of the Concerned Black Men and the Continental Societies. Through the voluntary efforts of their members, these organizations have enjoyed considerable success in providing young African-Americans with the appropriate varied assistance to develop personal skills and career objectives. Indeed, it is not rash to assert that whether or not the African-American community is successful in overcoming its myriad array of social problems will at least be partially determined by the extent to which volunteer effort is recruited to this cause.

### **Notes**

This article is a significant revision of a report entitled "African-American Participation in Mainstream Richmond Voluntary Organizations" presented at the Center for Volunteer Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,

Blacksburg, Virginia, December 4, 1990. Funding for the research involved in the study was provided by the Center for Volunteer Development. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Ms. Sheri Thaxton, who assisted me in conducting the research.

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## **Assessing Impacts on Volunteers who Participate in Collaborative Efforts to Manage Environmental Disputes**

Loretta Singletary  
Marilyn Smith  
George C. Hill

### **Abstract:**

*This study identifies several criteria to use in assessing impacts on volunteers who participate in collaborative efforts to manage environmental disputes. Study participants were volunteers who worked together over a two-year period to manage an environmental dispute involving water. Major findings are as follows: the collaborative effort raised general awareness of the dispute and increased knowledge about issues underlying the dispute. Volunteers heard diverse viewpoints, learned about technical aspects of the problem, interacted and networked with diverse parties involved, and shared their views. In addition, volunteers improved communication and relationship building skills, and learned how to manage a complex environmental dispute collaboratively. Results from this study may help establish guidelines for future impact assessments. Results indicate additionally that volunteers who participate in a collaborative effort may benefit potentially from education in many of the skills and concepts identified in this study.*

### **Key Words:**

volunteer, impact, evaluation, environment, mediation, dispute management

### **Introduction**

Increased competition for natural resources, including land, water, air and wildlife, has spawned unprecedented numbers of environmental disputes and lawsuits. Since the 1970s, the United States has witnessed a steady increase in collaborative efforts to manage environmental disputes as an alternative to litigation (Bingham, 1986). These approaches include alternative dispute resolution, principled negotiation, consensus building and public issues education (Bingham, 1997; Fisher & Ury, 1981; Dale and Hahn, 1994).

Experts offer two major reasons for collaborating to manage environmental

disputes. First, many believe conventional litigation and legislation are ineffective. Such actions inevitably result in winners and losers. These approaches encourage losers to get even by undermining implementation of the solution (Deutsch, 1973; Carpenter & Kennedy, 1988; Gray, 1989; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). Second, people are demanding more involvement in public decisions affecting management of natural resources in which they have a vested stake (Susskind & Field, 1996; Sirmon, Shands, & Liggett, 1993; Selin and Chavez, 1995; Inkpen, 1996).

Volunteers are required for most collaborative efforts to manage environmental

disputes. These volunteers typically are key stakeholders in the dispute. As such, they act as representatives for a number of stakeholders who share similar concerns or have a similar stake in the issue. This study focuses on the impacts on volunteers who participate in a collaborative effort to manage an environmental dispute.

### **Theoretical Framework for Study**

Research illustrates that there are two objective criteria used to measure the impacts of a collaborative effort. The first objective is whether or not the effort manages the dispute through a negotiated agreement and the second is whether or not an agreement is implemented. Although an agreement, and its implementation provide objective measures of successful collaboration, they are not conclusive. This is especially true if the agreement is economically infeasible to implement, is arrived at unfairly and does not solicit full participation, and the dispute resurfaces soon after it is managed.

Gray (1989) maintains there are other more subjective criteria that indicate the impact of collaborative efforts. In particular, these are the impacts on the volunteers who participate in the collaborative effort. Gray (1989) suggests that a collaborative process can alter attitudes and thus behavior towards dispute and collaboration. She suggests that criteria to measure these changes include improved communication, networking and relationship building skills, in addition to increased hope of resolving the dispute. Further, a formal collaborative effort involves numerous operational details. These include how volunteers learn to share power and whether they treat one another fairly and with respect.

Similarly, Innes (1999) suggests that even a collaborative effort that produces a high-quality agreement satisfies only a

"first-order effect." Innes maintains that "secondary" effects achieved in a collaborative process are as beneficial in the end as a high quality agreement. These effects include increased knowledge about the issues; increased awareness of the dispute and the diverse viewpoints of stakeholders; new personal and working relationships among stakeholders; scientific analyses that stakeholders accept and understand; shared knowledge with others, and stakeholders regard the process and its outcomes as fair. Other effects can include a change in behavior, such as responding to future disputes civilly and cooperatively rather than in an adversarial way.

In addition, Innes (1999) suggests that researchers measure secondary effects retrospectively. That is, the assessment should take place at least one year after it is completed. She contends that assessments of collaborative efforts to date have not adequately assessed these types of effects, partly because the assessment takes place too early. Poor timing of an assessment does not allow volunteers to adequately digest and perceive these effects.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to assess the impacts on volunteers who/participated in a collaborative effort to manage a water dispute. Research guidelines suggested by Gray (1989) and Innes (1999) were adapted to conduct this assessment. Impacts measure the degree to which volunteers perceive they have increased their knowledge about underlying issues, technical aspects of the problem, and possible solutions to the dispute. Other impacts measure the degree to which participants perceived that improved communication, relationship building, networking and collaboration skills were improved. Additional impacts measure increases in awareness of the dispute and diverse viewpoints represented, increased

citizen involvement, and increased hope that lasting solutions to the dispute are possible.

A diverse group of stakeholders indicated an interest to volunteer in a effort to manage the dispute collaboratively and avoid litigation.

### **Overview/History of a Collaborative Effort to Manage an Environmental Dispute**

The dispute highlighted in this study is centered in the Walker River Basin. The Walker River drains the Sierra Nevada southeast of Lake Tahoe and flows 160 miles to its terminus at Walker Lake in northwestern Nevada. The basin includes Mono County, California; Lyon and Mineral Counties in Nevada; and the Walker River Paiute Reservation located adjacent to Walker Lake.

The water of Walker River, as is the case with many western rivers, is over-allocated. In 1992, the United States joined with the Walker River Tribe to file claims for a water right for the Reservations' Reservoir (est. 1934) and to irrigate lands added in 1936. All water right holders upstream of the reservation are defendants. In addition, since 1882, Walker Lake's surface elevation and water quality have declined steadily. Additionally, there is a build-up of salts in Walker Lake, stemming from low inflows which have caused the Lahontan Cutthroat trout population to decline precipitously.

The Walker Lake Working Group, a special interest group was organized to protect Walker Lake and its wildlife, moved in 1994 to intervene in existing litigation and file a new and senior claim to water rights in order to establish a minimum lake level at Walker Lake (Horton, 1996).

In 1998, a diverse group of stakeholders indicated an interest to volunteer in an effort to manage the dispute collaboratively and

avoid litigation. This group identified themselves as the Walker River Basin Advisory Committee (WRBAC). Eight individuals comprised the WRBAC representing interests from headwaters of the Walker River in California to its terminus at Walker Lake. Goals established by the WRBAC included: a) identify issues causing the dispute, b) identify and investigate possible solutions, c) acquire funding to conduct scientific research to investigate potential solutions, d) direct the research and dissemination of the results, and e) inform the public of all activities and findings. The efforts incorporated field tours and public forums to clarify and prioritize issues.

Social activities were held to encourage volunteers to develop relationships with one another. These activities included lunches and refreshment breaks. All events of the groups were publicized to encourage broad public participation by notices in community newspapers and postings in public buildings. Announcements were mailed to any interested individuals who offered their mailing addresses. Journalists were invited to attend all meetings and events in order to publicize further the group's activities. Additionally, a web page was established to inform citizens with Internet access about project goals, volunteers, research, and education activities.

Attendance at activities varied from 20 to 100 persons with an average attendance of 35. Most activities were held in Yerington, NY, a community located in the center of the basin and selected by WRBAC as a reasonable location to meet. Public forums to garner input and disseminate research were held in Yerington at the public library. On-site tours were held in four different areas of the basin to educate volunteers about technical issues unique to those areas and to provide volunteer stakeholders an opportunity to formally voice their concerns on site. All activities

were free and open to any interested party.

## **Data Collection**

### **Participants/Subjects in the Study**

In September 2001, 16 months after the collaborative effort concluded, 121 volunteers who had provided mailing addresses collected from event attendance sheets were chosen as study participants/subjects. In addition to the eight key volunteer stakeholders (WRBAC), these included all other volunteers such as private citizens, water users, irrigation district board members, county government officials, tribal officials and special interest groups, including Ducks Unlimited, Sierra Club and Nature Conservancy. Federal and State resource management agencies were represented at nearly every meeting and included Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Nevada Fish and Game, California Fish and Game, Nevada Department of Agriculture and Nevada Division of Water Planning. These individuals were also considered volunteers in the collaborative effort as they indicated they were not directed but rather volunteered to participate and support the collaborative effort.

### **Instrumentation**

A questionnaire was developed to collect data from participants/subjects in this study. The instrument was adapted from guidelines outlined by Innes (1999) and Gray (1989) to assess secondary impacts on volunteers who seek to collaboratively manage environmental disputes.

One of the professionals involved with the WRBAC volunteer group drafted the initial survey. That professional has extensive experience in survey development. Survey questions were based upon Innes (1999) and Gray (1989) and adapted for local needs.

Prior to mailing the questionnaire, a

panel of Walker River Basin residents knowledgeable about the dispute, but not involved as volunteers, reviewed several drafts of the questionnaire for content validity. These individuals reviewed and approved the final draft. A panel of survey methodology experts reviewed the final draft of the questionnaire. The investigators modified the questionnaire based upon their recommendations. Finally, the questionnaire was tested using three volunteers excluded from the study sample. The purpose of this review was to identify missing attributes, wording clarity, and time required to complete the instrument.

The questionnaire that was mailed to participants is shown in Table 1. The questionnaire featured 17 Likert-type scale items to assess impacts on volunteers. These included eight items intended to measure the extent to which, as a result of their participation in a collaborative effort, volunteers increased their knowledge about: a) the dispute and issues causing the dispute; b) diverse viewpoints involved in the dispute, c) technical aspects of the dispute; d) possible solutions and; how to participate in a collaborative process. Six items measured the extent to which volunteers improved communication, relationship building, networking, and similar collaborative skills. Two items measured the extent to which the collaborative effort raised public awareness of the dispute and increased the number of citizens involved to manage the dispute collaboratively. The remaining item measured hopefulness about resolving the dispute. Specifically, it asked volunteers to what extent 'they believed lasting solutions to the dispute were possible.

Each of the seventeen items on the questionnaire were Likert-type items using a five-point equal weight increment scale where 1=ineffective and 5=Very effective. A "DK" option, where DK=Don't Know, was

included as an option on each scale. Content validity, of the questionnaire was established using an expert panel discussed previously. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated to estimate internal consistency or reliability of the 17 items. The average alpha score for all 17 items was high ( $r = .90$ ) (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

Six items measured the extent to which volunteers improved communication, relationship building, networking, and similar collaborative skills.

### Procedure

Each volunteer was mailed the two-page (front and back) questionnaire with instructions and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. A cover letter was included that explained the purpose of the survey, ensured confidentiality and thanked them for their input. This one-time data collection protocol received exemption from the University Human Subjects Committee and did not require consent forms. Due to the legal nature of the dispute and concern that volunteers would not respond candidly, if they believed their names and addresses were "traced," the researchers concluded a one-time mailing would encourage the highest response rate.

### Results

Thirty-six of the 121 volunteers returned completed questionnaires resulting in an approximately 30 percent (.297) response rate. This is a robust response rate given that the average response rate to a more rigorous mail survey is around 10 to 12 percent (Dillman, 1978).

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS, 2001). Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the results and the means ranked for each item.

Table 2 presents ranked mean scores for each of the 17 items to assess impacts on

volunteers who participated in the collaborative effort. The top five items are: a) more citizens became aware of the dispute; b) I was treated fairly and with respect; c) I heard diverse viewpoints from others; d) more citizens learned about issues causing the dispute; and e) I interacted and networked with diverse interests.

A concern, when assessing the impact of any effort, is the sensitivity of the instrumentation. This was a particular concern for investigators of this effort, given the diverse perspectives of the volunteer stakeholders involved. Therefore, an additional analysis was conducted to determine if there was congruence in the responses. The additional analysis, a Spearman's rank order correlation, was used to measure congruence among the impact variables. Spearman's rank order correlation was chosen because the data were finite, collected using a Likert-type scale questionnaire.

Preliminary indications are that the positive secondary effects helped to establish the sustainability of the volunteer group over the long-term.

Table 3 illustrates the results of the correlation analysis. The variable that showed the least congruence among the 17 impact variables was the variable [that the volunteer was] "treated fairly and with respect." This variable, which ranked second in the mean scores provided by volunteers (see Table 2), is very important when working with volunteers. Such a high mean ranking by volunteers, however, may not necessarily translate into success (or a belief by participants that the collaborative effort has been effective) or a positive impact on volunteers. The correlation results from the survey data indicate that serious interaction issues may have existed among volunteers

who participated in this effort. The results suggest further that when assessing impacts of collaborative efforts, researchers go beyond simple ranking of variables to use tests of association to determine if key impact variables show congruence with other variables.

While most of the impact variables significantly correlated with being "treated fairly and with respect" in Table 3, the relationships were not strong enough to make meaningful predictions and, in fact, several were very low. These results indicate that ensuring fairness and respect among participants, while an ideal and necessary goal in shaping 'a collaborative effort, does not guarantee real impact or positive change among volunteer stakeholders.

### Conclusions

An assessment of impacts on volunteers who participated in this collaborative effort to manage an environmental dispute indicates overall positive impacts.

- Volunteers indicated that the program raised awareness of the dispute and allowed citizens to express their diverse viewpoints about the dispute.
- The collaborative effort increased volunteers' knowledge about the technical aspects of the dispute.
- Volunteers believed that they interacted with other stakeholders involved in the dispute and improved their understanding of others' viewpoints:
- Volunteers felt they received fair and respectful treatment during the collaborative effort and learned how to work together to manage a dispute.
- Volunteers indicated that participation in the collaborative effort helped to improve their communication and relationship building skills.

Secondary impacts on volunteers who participate in collaborative efforts are

somewhat subjective and may be difficult to identify precisely. Volunteers' perceptions are invaluable in assessing these impacts, which can include increases in knowledge, skills and awareness. Although these secondary impacts were generally positive, the measure of hopefulness that lasting solutions to the dispute were possible (questionnaire item #16) rated comparatively weaker.

Additional secondary impacts may include a change in attitude towards a dispute as demonstrated by increased skills and confidence to manage a dispute collaboratively rather than through polarized behavior and litigious action. Volunteers who participated in this collaborative effort continue to remain involved in collaboratively managing the dispute. Approximately two years after this effort ended, the majority of key volunteer stakeholders requested federal and state government leaders to support and fund an "alternative dispute resolution process," in order to resolve the dispute out of court. Elected officials agreed and to date, parties identified to participate in that process include the majority of key volunteer stakeholders who participated in the WRBAC effort.

Environmental disputes involving the Walker River and many other rivers in the western United States are likely to continue. The secondary impacts assessed in this study may contribute to the skills of the current group in continuing to resolve differences. The willingness to manage and potentially resolve disputes through collaborative volunteer efforts rather than litigation is clear.

Results of this study suggest that collaborative volunteer efforts can

- increase knowledge about the dispute
- increase awareness of diverse viewpoints, and
- improve skills needed to manage the dis-

pute collaboratively.

Results also suggest a potential need to educate volunteers involved in environmental disputes in communication, networking, relationship building and other collaborative skills. These skills will empower volunteers to participate more equitably and effectively in collaborative processes should the opportunity arise.

Results from this study helped the professionals involved in this effort to establish guidelines for design, management and impact assessment of future collaborative efforts. An assessment of the group, one-year after completion of original goals, provided valuable information about the knowledge and skills required to sustain a group of volunteers interested in on-going work on environmental issues and disputes. Preliminary indications are that the positive secondary effects helped to establish the sustain ability of the volunteer group over the long-term.

Managers must help volunteers establish written goals for the collaborative effort.

### **Implications For Volunteer Management**

Volunteers who participate in collaborative efforts to manage environmental disputes require thoughtful and diligent management. Managers must first identify and prioritize the educational needs of volunteers. More than likely, volunteers will need to learn about what defining features comprise a collaborative effort. This implies that managers educate volunteers on how to communicate with one another so that collaborative efforts remain civil and purposeful. Often the manager helps volunteers establish "ground-rules" to guide and support effective communication.

Managers must help volunteers establish written goals for the collaborative effort. Goals should be clear, concise, practical and meaningful to all volunteers. The manager should periodically remind volunteers about their goals to keep them "on track." Managers may also help volunteers decide when and how to bring closure to discussions and perhaps the overall effort.

Finally, managers must avoid personalizing issues that characterize the dispute. An effective manager does not voice his/her viewpoint about the dispute or potential solutions offered. Rather, the manager educates volunteers and guides the collaborative effort, encouraging volunteers to voice their views.

Collaborative efforts to manage disputes are seemingly complex and overwhelming to some volunteer managers. Unless managers understand their role in these efforts as educators and guides, their efforts are unlikely to produce the desired results.

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Dr. Loretta Singletary is an Associate faculty and Extension Educator in the University of Nevada, College of Cooperative Extension. Her research and educational programs focus on managing natural resource conflicts. She is particularly interested in assessing the impacts of these kinds of programs.

Marilyn Smith has 28 years of professional experience working with volunteers in community settings. This is her first effort in dealing with volunteers regarding an environmental issue. Her efforts in evaluating program impacts received national recognition in 2002.

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**TABLE 1**

Questions Included in WRBAC Impact Assessment

1. WRBAC project provided me adequate opportunities to learn about technical aspects of the problem .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
2. WRBAC project provided me adequate opportunities to hear information presented by diverse interests .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
3. WRBAC project provided me adequate opportunities to interact and network with diverse interests involved .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
4. WRBAC project helped me to better understand the viewpoints of others involved in the dispute.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
5. WRBAC project offered me adequate opportunities to share my views with others involved in the dispute.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
6. WRBAC project improved my ability to communicate my views to others involved in the dispute.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
7. WRBAC project improved my relationship with others involved in the dispute .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
8. Through the WRBAC project I learned about collaborative ways to manage disputes.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
9. Through the WRBAC project I was treated fairly and with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	DK
10. Through the WRBAC project I improved my skills to participate in a collaborative process .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
11. As a result of the WRBAC project, I helped others to clarify the problem.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
12. As a result of the WRBAC project, more citizens became aware of the dispute .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
13. As a result of the WRBAC project, more citizens learned about the issues causing the dispute .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
14. As a result of the WRBAC project, more citizens learned about some possible solutions to the dispute .....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
15. As result of the WRBAC project, more citizens became actively involved in the dispute.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
16. As a result of the WRBAC project, I believe lasting solutions to the dispute are possible.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK
17. Overall, I believe the WRBAC project was a success in terms of educating the public about how to work together to manage a dispute.....	1	2	3	4	5	DK

Code Rating: 5 = very effective; 1 = ineffective; OK = don't know

**TABLE 2**  
**Ranked Mean Scores for Impacts on Volunteers**

Impacts on Volunteers	N	Ranked M
More citizens became aware of the dispute	34	4.39
I was treated fairly and with respect	34	4.38
I heard diverse viewpoints of others	36	4.31
More citizens learned about issues causing the dispute	35	4.31
I interacted and networked with diverse interests	35	4.29
I shared my views with others involved	34	4.21
I learned about technical aspects of the problem	34	4.19
I better understand the viewpoints of others involved	35	4.17
Educated the public about how to work together to manage a dispute	34	4.15
I improved my ability to communicate my views to others involved	33	4.06
More citizens became actively involved in the dispute	34	4.00
More citizens learned about some possible solutions to the dispute	34	3.97
I improved my relationship with others involved in the dispute	30	3.87
I learned about collaborative ways to manage disputes	31	3.81
I helped others to clarify the problem	32	3.50
I improved my skills to participate in a collaborative process	32	3.44
I believe lasting solutions to the dispute are possible	32	2.94
Code Rating: 5 = very effective; 1 = ineffective		

**TABLE 3**  
**Intercorrelations for Impact on Volunteers by "Treated Fairly and with Respect."**

Impacts on Volunteers	N	r
More citizens became aware of the dispute	35	.232
I heard diverse viewpoints of others	35	.413*
More citizens learned about issues causing the dispute	35	.232
I interacted and networked with diverse interests	35	.388*
I shared my views with others involved	35	.684**
I learned about technical aspects of the problem	35	.425
I better understand the viewpoints of others involved	35	.693**
Educated the public about how to work together to manage a dispute	35	.366*
I improved my ability to communicate my views to others involved	35	.693**
More citizens became actively involved in the dispute	35	.171
More citizens learned about some possible solutions to the dispute	34	.472*
I improved my relationship with others involved in the dispute	35	.624**
I learned about collaborative ways to manage disputes	34	.600
I helped others to clarify the problem	35	.422*
I improved my skills to participate in a collaborative process	34	.285
I believe lasting solutions to the dispute are possible	35	.114

\*significant at the .05 level

\*\*significant at the .01 level

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## **Where a Bar of Soap Can Make a Difference: Family Planning Volunteers in Uganda Express Their Needs**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to assess the experiences and daily challenges of family planning volunteers in Uganda. Focus group discussions were conducted with active volunteers and former volunteers. Four study sites were selected from 24 program sites. Volunteers rated lack of remuneration and rewards as a major factor for a low working morale. Lack of recognition by the family planning program undermined their credibility in the community. In spite of these frustrations most volunteers expressed their willingness to continue with their work. The Kabarole family planning program needs to seriously address the deficiencies in supporting their volunteers. As the volunteers have made very modest requests, an innovative incentive system could be quickly put in place without major increase in program spending.*

### **Key Words:**

family planning, volunteers, Uganda

### **Introduction**

Trained community-based distribution (CBD) volunteers provide contraceptives and family planning information to their fellow neighbors in numerous villages, towns and cities of the developing world. By taking safe and simple contraceptives to people within their community rather than requiring people to visit clinics for these services, CBD volunteers meet the family planning needs of those who regard clinic-based services to be too far away, too time consuming or socially and culturally inappropriate. A 1999 review of community-based family planning initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa concluded that CBD is administratively feasible in Africa and that it does indeed generate contraceptive use that would not otherwise occur (Phillips et al.,

1999). This study also emphasized that CBD volunteers are ideally placed to reduce fear and misconceptions about contraceptive use, to encourage male participation, to address religious and cultural barriers to family planning and to mobilize overall community support for family planning (Simmons et al., 1988).

Acknowledging the crucial role played by volunteers in the effectiveness and overall sustainability of a CBD program, we embarked on a study to assess CBD volunteers' experiences with their CBD program in Kabarole district, western Uganda. The perceptions of active and former CBD volunteers were ascertained with the intention of incorporating these grassroots ideas and suggestions into organizational efforts to improve and

expand the CBD program. As outlined above, the literature shows that volunteer motivation was the greatest challenge to sustaining CBD programs and their impact (Phillips et al., 1999; Evans et al., 1997; Population Council, 1987).

In this article, we share CBD volunteers' perceptions of factors affecting their motivation and program output, as well as their suggestions on how their efforts can be more satisfactorily facilitated. Focus group discussions with active and former CBD volunteers uncovered a preoccupation with the poverty and socioeconomic hardships and subsequent "empty bellies" of CBD volunteers. Like the clients they serve, most CBD volunteers live in poverty, are overburdened with multiple commitments and the daily struggle for survival, and are often unable to meet the basic needs of their families. Given that CBD volunteers' poverty, ensuing low motivation, directly impact program success and sustainability, we conclude that the socioeconomic context in which family planning services are received and provided must be acknowledged and be addressed by programs aiming to improve family planning and reproductive health.

### **Community-based Distribution in Kabarole District**

In Uganda's Kabarole district, geographical access barriers mesh with a complex web of community challenges (such as male and/or religious opposition and misconceptions and/or fears about family planning) to keep reproductive health indicators low. The average annual population growth rate is 3.3% and the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is eight both poorer than national figures (District Health Department Kabarole, 2000). Although awareness of family planning is high, contraceptive use remains low with only about five percent of Kabarole women using

modern contraceptives (Ferguson, 1998).

Recognizing that family planning services in the district were not satisfactory, the Kabarole Health Department first initiated the Kabarole CBD program in 1991. To date, there are CBD sites operating in 24 sub-counties within Kabarole district. The number of CBD volunteers operating in each sub-county ranges from six to 30, with an average of 22 CBD volunteers per site. Officially, this involves over 500 CBD volunteers. However, a worrisome number of these volunteers is either partially active, completely inactive or not reporting consistently. Additionally, only a few CBD sites have volunteers reporting more than 10 client contacts per month, though the average number of households covered by a CBD volunteer is estimated to be between 40 and 80. The majority of clients are female, although the number of male clients continues to rise. The number of male CBD volunteers has also increased in recent years. At present about 40% of the active CBD volunteers are male (Baryomunsi, 2000). Both male and female CBD volunteers provide services to both male and female clients.

Family planning staff work together with local community leaders to recruit and select CBD volunteers, generally one to two per village, who then attend a two-week, non-residential, training course. Selection criteria include residence in the area to be covered, literacy (at least in the local language), ability to keep simple records, and a willingness to work as a volunteer. CBD volunteers' main duties are to provide family planning education to communities, to recruit and counsel clients, distribute contraceptives, to refer clients for other health services, and to compile and submit monthly activity reports. CBD volunteers do not receive any monetary incentives for their efforts. While they are required to attend monthly reporting meetings at the sub-

county health unit, they are not regularly provided with lunch or travel allowances to do so. A few CBD groups have attempted to initiate small-scale income-generating projects, such as brick making or weaving, and some groups operate small (often sporadic) revolving loan funds.

### Methods

Four sites were selected from the 24 existing CBD program sites for this study. Based on documented information from the Kabarole Health Department, all 24 program sites were ranked according to their program performance. The sites with the highest and lowest program performance were chosen, as well as two sites that had average program performance. Selected study sites were geographically dispersed throughout the district and included semi-rural and rural areas ranging from 40 to 140 return kilometers from the town of Fort Portal, the district capital.

Four focus group discussions (FGDs), ranging from 55 to 75 minutes, took place with active CBD volunteers (n=15, 11 females) and former CBD volunteers (n=8, 5 females). The FGDs were carried out in the local Rutooro language and were facilitated by a qualified local research assistant. Pilot-tested interview guides consisting of probe questions were available for all FGDs. FGDs were audio recorded with permission of the participants and recordings were translated from Rutooro into English by the facilitator immediately following the FGD. These initial translations were checked for accuracy and augmented by a second translator. A trained and experienced local note-taker also kept written accounts of the discussions. The audiotapes were transcribed and entered into Microsoft Word®. A thematic approach to the qualitative analysis of focus groups was used, the general goal being to locate and group together patterns and themes of

program constraints and challenges faced by CBD volunteers (Rothe, 1998).

Approval for the study was received from the Health Ethics Research Board at the University of Alberta and the Ugandan Ministry of Health via the Kabarole District Director of Health Services. All study participants were assured of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity before participating and were requested to sign consent forms before participating in data collection activities.

### Results

When asked about the challenges faced by CBD volunteers, the overwhelming response from all participants was that they "are not properly facilitated" or they "lack facilitation." In Ugandan English, the word "facilitation" was discovered to be an all-encompassing one. When used in reference to the CBD program, facilitation was literally anything needed to ensure that CBD activities are carried out as well as anything that would make the work of the CBD volunteers easier. A common theme was discovered to run through all discussions on facilitation and motivation - a preoccupation with the poverty or socioeconomic hardships and subsequent "empty bellies" of CBD volunteers.

### Not Even a Bar of Soap

Though participants cited lack of remuneration or rewards for CBD volunteers as the major program related problem, it must be noted that very few participants referred to the need for CBD volunteers to receive actual salaries. More often, "remuneration" implied modest cash allowances for lunch or travel and non-monetary rewards or token incentives such as soap, lunch or other food items.

*"You go to mobilize people, you spend the whole day and you have not eaten,*

*you have gone hungry and you have not been given an allowance.*" (Former CBD volunteer, male)

*"It is not that we wanted to be paid primarily but we needed some help because we are poor people, we expected some little help and we deserved some. Help because of the good work we were doing."* (Former CBD volunteer, female)

*"The main problem is that they are not properly facilitated, we have seen that it is necessary for them to have even a piece of soap for their motivation."* (Local Council Leader)

In the majority of cases, the underlying basis for complaints of lack of "remuneration" appeared to be a genuine concern for the livelihoods of CBD volunteers and a keen recognition of the fact that they are poor. Like the clients they serve, most CBD volunteers live in poverty, are overburdened with multiple commitments and the daily struggle for survival, and are often unable to meet the basic needs of their families.

*"To work for nothing is too much especially if you have hungry children at home."* (CBD volunteer, female)

*"You cannot continue working for nothing when you do not have what you need to live, you need to be facilitated"* (Former CBD volunteer, female)

*"You walk a lot, you walk through the village and you do not even have money to buy soaps. You are walking and you don't even have a piece of bread to eat."* (CBD volunteer, female)

This lack of remuneration or compensation was also thought to contribute to the

community ridicule experienced by some CBD volunteers. In villages characterized by poverty and desperation, there is often an understandable suspicion that if one is doing community work, she or he is either being "idle" and unproductive or accruing benefits, financial or otherwise. Some CBD volunteers sensed a lack of support from their husbands or other community members, and at times experienced blatant ridicule from other poor women, for their involvement in CBD volunteer work.

*"Other women ridiculing the CBD volunteers, women who are busy in the fields and when she is passing by she is just laughing at you, saying what are you getting from that work: she thinks you have time to waste."* (CBD volunteer, female)

*"The other thing is that when people see you coming with the chairman (the local government leader), they think that you are 'eating money' with the chairman and yet you are not getting anything."* (CBD volunteer, female)

*"Spouses say to us 'you have been away all day (at the CBD monthly meeting) and you come home without even a bit of salt."* (CBD volunteer, female)

### **It's Like Chasing the Sun**

Low morale was evident amongst some volunteers, particularly those who had already dropped out of the program. CBD volunteers often expressed that despite their substantial efforts and time commitment, they were "disappointed" or felt they were "wasting their time". This frustration, often accompanied by a sense of failure, is suggested in the following comments:

*"Distance, for example. The CBD volunteers who are supposed to be going to*

*seminars, they walk a long distance, she stays all day, it is a waste of time, she gets no food, no money, she has no transport." (CBD volunteer, female)*

*"You come to the training seminar for three weeks and in that time you cannot work. And you have no time to do anything else. And this discourages you. And you say to yourself. You have wasted your time. "' (CBD volunteer, female)*

*"It's like chasing the sun, we are not getting anything, we are engaged in a venture where we are not going to get anything from it." (CBD volunteer, female)*

CBD volunteers complained of being asked by management to express their ideas and suggestions and then never receiving any response or reaction. Although many participants acknowledged that lack of funds was a probable reason for the lack of response, a substantial number of CBD volunteers appeared to assume that this lack of interest stemmed from the fact that the CBD program relies on volunteers, not paid staff, and is therefore somehow less worthy of support and attention. Lack of feedback was taken as an indication that CBD problems and issues were not being listened to or taken seriously by program supervisors. Some pointed out that since they were "not looking for handouts", but instead were expressing their commitment to working even harder, for example, in income-generating projects, they expected feedback and were even more disappointed when it was not forthcoming. Disinterest from supervisors and management was also perceived to be the reason for the lack of follow-up after training, the lack of supervision and the lack of refresher courses to reinforce or supplement training curriculum

content.

The cry for increased support for CBD volunteers and the CBD program was loud and constant, and participants offered a variety of ideas for improving the knowledge and activity of CBD volunteers (e.g. increasing training activities and refresher courses and providing more and better information, education and communication materials). However, more frequently cited were requests for increased recognition, respect and legitimacy for CBD volunteer work. CBD volunteers expressed a desire to have their perspectives considered, their issues listened to, and their ideas and suggestions entertained. They stated that honest communication, immediate feedback and better coordination between them and program managers would greatly ease their concerns and improve their sense of purpose.

*"If you put those problems we have told you about under consideration then we know that the program will take off" (CBD volunteer, female)*

*"There should always be feedback whenever such problems are presented to people like you, like today during this research. " (Former CBD volunteer, male)*

### **Frustrated But Committed**

Most CBDs agreed that their work as a CBD volunteer was 'making a positive change to the health of families in their communities and the majority agreed that being a CBD volunteer had increased their popularity, prestige, recognition or respect. CBD volunteers, both former and active, spontaneously offered expressions of CBD volunteer commitment and recognition that their efforts have made a difference:

*"We know women's problems - you produce lots of children and then you die*

*and you produce lots of children and you cannot even have money to let them go to school. We really love to help women, we have that commitment, and the problem is, that we are becoming frustrated."* (CBD volunteer, female)

*"What really makes me happy that I was a part of this is that I can see the benefits. Some people express their gratitude now for the work we did back then, they are better off because of fewer children. Our work was appreciated by the community. "* (Former CBD volunteer, male)

### **Incentive Schemes**

When asked for suggestions on how to combat the low morale of CBD volunteers and ensure their continued participation in the program, participants requested that monthly motivation and incentives be provided to CBD volunteers. Some participants also mentioned the need to develop a system of competitions and contests so that CBD volunteers working the hardest, e.g. obtaining the most new clients in a year, would be recognized and rewarded for their efforts. Again, it was made clear that only meager, humble requests for financial support were being made. '

Facilitator: *"How much do you think you would like to be paid every month if it was possible?"*

Participant 1: *"You should just be able to earn enough to get some salt, some soap, we really are not asking for so much money but just the ability, to get some things we need"* (Former CBD volunteer, female)

Participant 2: *"Personally I would like to have made enough money to get my lunch."* (Former CBD volunteer, female)

Participant 3: *"Remuneration, like being given lunch when you are on the job, when you are doing your work."*  
(Former CBD volunteer, male)

Providing encouragement and financial support to CBD programs interested in improving their drama and drumming initiatives and income-generating activities was another solution offered by many participants. Drama and drumming was thought of as potentially serving the dual role of educating communities about family planning and generating some income for CBD volunteers. Support for income-generating activities was not limited to financial input or set-up funds but included issues of capacity building and training. This type of support was viewed as a key to increase CBD volunteer morale and ensure the sustainability of the program.

### **Discussion**

There is scarce published literature providing examples of community-based program volunteers and how their motivation can be sustained. A literature review of the databases Medline, Cinahl and Embase with keywords "community-based," "volunteer(s)," "motivation" revealed three citations from developing countries (South Africa, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) and 12 citations from developed countries. In South Africa, it was reported that the supervision for direct observed treatment (DOT) of tuberculosis was as effective when done by volunteers as when done by health staff (Dick et al., 1996). In another study the same authors found that volunteers provided a more personalized service, and concluded that volunteers can bridge the gap between TB patients and the health care system. It was also concluded that support for the volunteers was absolutely vital to the sustainability of this volunteer program (Dick et al., 1996). Research findings from

Indonesia indicate that volunteers performed considerable duties and faced numerous difficulties in the course of their volunteer activities. It was also reported that incentives played an important role in determining the motivation and the performance of volunteer cadres. The authors concluded that the first step of a better understanding of volunteer work is to know what it is like to be a volunteer (Lysack et al., 1993). Studies from North America also indicate that volunteers can be very useful and provide supportive, pragmatic and personalized services (Hiatt et al., 2000). In another study from an AIDS Hospice, continued volunteer involvement depended on the support and sense of value they received from staff and on the intensity of their experiences (Murrant et al., 1995). Other studies also found that a functional incentive and recognition schemes for volunteers are essential for their sustained involvement (Danoff et al., 1994; Christensen et al., 1999).

Our study findings agree with the literature cited above in the following ways: 1) CBD volunteers in Kabarole district feel that they make a contribution towards their communities. This has been acknowledged in informal discussions between the research team and key informants held during the implementation of the study. However, as we did not collect data on specific contributions of CBDs to the overall distribution or use of contraceptives in Kabarole, we cannot draw any definite conclusions in this regard. 2) CBD volunteers want to be recognized for their volunteer work by the health care system. As they asked for only modest incentives or remuneration (mostly in kind), this request could be granted without a lot of additional program spending, but with innovative programmatic approaches and engagement of the CBD supervisors towards the volunteers.

Some of the constraints for CBDs which

we found in our study can be directly addressed by the managers of the CBD family planning program in Kabarole District: e.g. the unresponsiveness of the district health system to questions and complaints of CBDs about their work in a timely manner. A better organized supervision system with supportive (vs. authoritarian) supervision being one of the corner stones for the support of CBDs in the district could be designed and implemented in a short time. In addition, regular refresher courses for upgrading CBDs knowledge and skills can be easily organized and used for more effective interactions between supervisors and CBD volunteers.

The efforts in Kabarole to formally recognize CBDs are grossly inadequate. Lack of visible program support for the CBDs and lack of visible recognition of their activities undermines their credibility with their communities and exposes them to the ridicule of community members. Incentives can work, as shown by an example from western Kenya where in a large CBD program some 10,000 volunteers have been sustained based on recognition of their work without any regular payment (Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit, 1998). The severe resource constraints of western Uganda implies that only non-monetary incentives can and should be considered at this time. The disbursement of cash allowances, even if cash were available, would set an unsustainable precedent. Similarly, the introduction of user fees to generate cash for volunteers does not appear to be a viable option - expecting cost recovery from the economically desperate rural population would likely exclude the poorest (Price, 2000).

## Conclusions

The quotes from the volunteers, their delicacy in describing the lack of program

"facilitation," their perceived reactions of some members of the community (e.g. ridiculing their work), and some professional commitment to their roles - at least in helping women to avoid unwanted pregnancies provide a clear and valuable description of the realities in a rural district in Uganda. The quotes they use paint a vibrant and believable picture of CBD workers "negotiating via the researchers" for some remuneration and recognition of their work. We were impressed by the volunteers participating in our study. They deserve the full attention of family planning program managers and researchers alike to create a conducive working environment for them without further delay. This study gave voice to a group of volunteers in Kabarole district, who are saying that they cannot effectively fulfill their roles as community-based distributors of contraceptives largely because they have "empty bellies." Their urgency to meet their own basic needs (i.e. food or even a bar of soap) and the lack remuneration, rewards or recognition makes it difficult to sustain their CBD volunteer activities, despite their desire to do so.

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## **Volunteerism and Community Development: A Comparison of Factors Shaping Volunteer Behavior in Irish and American Communities**

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### **Abstract**

*Individual volunteer efforts and voluntary organizations serve to meet a wide variety of community needs, and significantly contribute to local quality of life. This is particularly true in the rural communities of Ireland and Pennsylvania. This international comparative study was designed to assess factors shaping volunteerism in both locations. A mixed methods framework was used that included extensive key informant interviews and household survey data. Important differences were noted in the communities studied. In Ireland, sociodemographic characteristics and volunteer motivations largely shaped volunteerism. In America, social interaction variables alone shaped volunteer decisions. In both locations, the social interaction variables were the strongest predictor of voluntary behavior. From these findings, implications for future research and policy are presented.*

### **Key Words:**

*volunteerism, community development, Ireland, behavior*

### **Introduction**

A need exists for program and policy interests in America and other industrialized nations to better understand the impact of volunteers in the rural and community development process (Brown & Swanson, 2003; Commins, Hamrick, Jansen, Murphy & Stenberg, 2000). Volunteers fill gaps in meeting social, economic, and community needs, and provide opportunities for individual selffulfillment in places that often have limited capacities to meet such needs. Voluntary action is vital to protecting,

retaining, and maintaining rural communities (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Wilkinson, 1991). Similarly, as increased dependence on the voluntary sector occurs, it is important that we identify the factors contributing to participation in related activities. To facilitate this understanding, a central research question is presented: What conditions shape voluntary action and do these conditions differ in Irish and American communities?

The communities of Pennsylvania and Ireland are well suited for comparison

(Commins et al., 2000). Both areas have large rural populations, important natural resource bases, and have experienced extensive attempts at development by extra-local forces. Likewise both have had troubled rural economies characterized by consistent declines in agriculture and major extractive industries. Most important, both locations have seen a consistent trend of devolution where rural residents and, in particular, volunteers; have taken on an increased role in providing services and related functions. Some have suggested that the voluntary efforts of residents are necessary conditions for mitigating the negative forces impacting communities and enhancing the positive factors associated with social well-being (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Luloff & Swanson, 1995).

To explore volunteerism and its connection to community development, an interactional perspective is presented. Following this perspective, people sharing a common territory interact with one another over place-relevant matters (Wilkinson, 1991). Voluntary action evolves out of these interactions and sets the stage for purposive efforts designed to meet common needs. Community development is therefore a process of building relationships that increase the adaptive capacity of people who share a common locality (Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Wilkinson, 1991). These capacities reflect the ability of local people to voluntarily organize, manage, utilize, and enhance those resources available to them in addressing local needs.

### **Review of Literature**

Volunteers and their contributions are central to the development of community. To better identify volunteerism's role in the community development process, an understanding of community, voluntary action, and the factors shaping volunteerism

are needed.

### **Community, Voluntary Efforts, and Interaction**

Many usages are associated with the concept of community. Sociological definitions tend to emphasize locality, structural components, and personal bonds that derive from a shared territory. Community is, however, much more than a geographic location. It is a social and psychological entity that represents a place, its people, and their interaction (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Wilkinson, 1991). In this setting, voluntary action and social participation are viewed as quintessential to the development of community.

From an interactional perspective, the community is a dynamic field of interaction rather than a rigid system (Brown & Swanson, 2003; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). This process reflects the building of relationships among diverse groups of residents in pursuit of common community interests (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Wilkinson, 1991). Through voluntary efforts, individuals interact with one another, and begin to mutually understand common needs (Luloff & Swanson, 1995). From this interaction, voluntary efforts to improve the social, cultural, and psychological needs of local people emerge.

Ultimately, the development of community is an active process involving diverse segments of the locality. The key component to this process is found in the creation and maintenance of channels of interaction and communication among diverse local groups that otherwise are directed toward more limited interests (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Where these relationships can be established and maintained, increases in local adaptive capacity materialize. Through this process and through active volunteer efforts, community can emerge.

### **Factors Shaping Volunteerism**

Recent research suggests that giving and volunteering have reached record highs in the last decade (Independent Sector, 2001). This behavior is shaped by a variety of factors. For example, sociodemographic variables have been linked to volunteerism and social participation. Most research indicates that older females, with higher levels of education, higher incomes, who are married, and have an overall higher socioeconomic status are more likely to participate in formal volunteer efforts (Cook, 1993; Cox, 2000; Smith, 1994).

Alternately, other research sees individuals of lower socioeconomic status as sometimes being involved in informal volunteerism. Smith (1994) suggests that such individuals may view voluntary activities as routine social support behaviors (common courtesy, neighborliness), and not as formal volunteer activities. Household size is also seen as being important, reflecting the importance of interaction between family members and the outside world in fostering opportunities for volunteerism (Independent Sector, 2001).

Volunteerism can also be the result of more practical conditions, such as a need to develop job contacts and enhance existing skills. In geographic areas where employment opportunities are limited, voluntary activities can offer a valuable alternative to paid employment (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; Clary, Snyder, Copeland, & French, 1994; Independent Sector, 2001).

Individuals also volunteer for self-actualization (recognition, raising self-esteem) and social responsibility (setting an example, public duty) (Clary et al., 1994; Cook, 1993; Independent Sector, 2001). Finally, volunteerism is facilitated by participation in community-based groups. Interaction between social groups promotes awareness of needs and helps identify

volunteer opportunities (Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Wilkinson, 1991).

Overall, a variety of characteristics are seen as shaping volunteer behavior. Included are traditional factors (motivations and sociodemographics), but also the extent to which people interact with each other. Such conditions speak to the need for administrators to closely consider the unique local context in which these emerge and shape volunteer activity.

### **Methodology**

Multiple research sites in Ireland and Pennsylvania and a mixed-methods research design were used to explore factors shaping volunteerism. Individual community residents served as the units of analysis. Their attitudes and opinions were used to determine levels of voluntary action, and factors that contributed to it. From these, generalizations to the wider community were drawn.

Communities were identified for study based on a typology of geographic location" (rural) and volunteer conditions (active volunteers). Killala, Ireland and Bedford, Pennsylvania were selected and matched for analysis. Both are situated in rural areas with a limited urban presence, have low population densities, and are characterized by population changes over the last decade due to in- and out-migration. The communities are similar with large farms, natural resource extractive industries, and limited manufacturing. The economies of Killala and Bedford are stable, but often threatened by changes in market demands and declines in local manufacturing industries.

In the two communities 24 key informant interviews were conducted. Key informants are individuals who, as a result of their knowledge, experience, or social status can provide insights and access to information valuable in understanding the issues, prob-

lems and needs of a community. These individuals consisted of public officials, activists, residents, religious representatives, local business members, and community development agents.

Among the positive conditions noted in the interviews were increased tourism to the areas, improvements to environmental quality, and the success of locally-based community improvement efforts. Concern was also voiced over declining economic conditions, infrastructure needs, outside development, and out-migration of younger residents. In both locations respondents indicated an active interest in enhancing locally based decision making.

These interviews helped guide the development of survey items and also facilitated the identification of appropriate existing measures to include in the questionnaire. The latter were reliably used in previous research (Claude, Bridger, & Luloff, 2000; Jacob, Bourke, & Luloff 1997; Luloff, et al., 1995).

Subsequent to the key informant interviews, a household survey of the local population was conducted to assess the relationship between local characteristics and volunteerism. In Killala, survey collection took place between March and June 2003 using a drop-off/pick-up methodology (Melby, Bourke, Luloff, Liao, Theodori, & Krannich, 2000). In Bedford, data was gathered between June and August 1995 through a mail survey (Luloff et al., 1995). Responses did not differ significantly between the two data collection methodologies or time periods.

While several years existed between the survey data collection periods, the data is comparable. Sociocultural changes that took place between the two time periods were assessed during the key informant interviews. None were seen as dramatically changing the context in which local volunteerism emerged. Further, in both

datasets, the same site selection criteria, similar data collection methods, and identical question formats were used.

A total of 407 Killala and 800 Bedford households were randomly selected. In Killala, 255 completed questionnaires were obtained (response rate of 65%--excluding undeliverables). In Bedford, 343 completed questionnaires were obtained (54% response rate). These samples and response rates were sufficient to limit sampling error and be statistically representative of the population at a .05 level (Isaac & Michael, 1997).

A variety of characteristics including sociodemographics, volunteer motivation factors, and measures of social interaction were assessed in the questionnaire. Participation in voluntary action was measured by several questions: Do you belong to any local club, group or organization? Approximately how many clubs, groups or organizations do you belong to? How many hours a month do you spend in organized activities with other members of this community? How would you describe your level of involvement in local activities, events, or organizations? These variables were combined into a composite scale (Cronbach's Alpha= .81).

Sociodemographic variables included age, gender, household size, educational attainment, marital status, employment status, and income. Volunteer motivation items assessed the importance of monetary compensation, recognition, setting an example, the need for new ideas, the need for better services, dissatisfaction with local decision making, contribution of skills, enjoyment of local politics, the need for less spending, getting acquainted with people, public duty, being asked by local leaders, and being urged by friends.

Assessments of frequency of interaction include, How often do you meet with the following: family, close friends, acquaintances, neighbors." Interaction was

also measured by asking respondents if they interacted with others in nonrequired group activities. These variables were analyzed individually and also combined into a composite scale (Cronbach's Alpha= .73).

### Analysis of Data

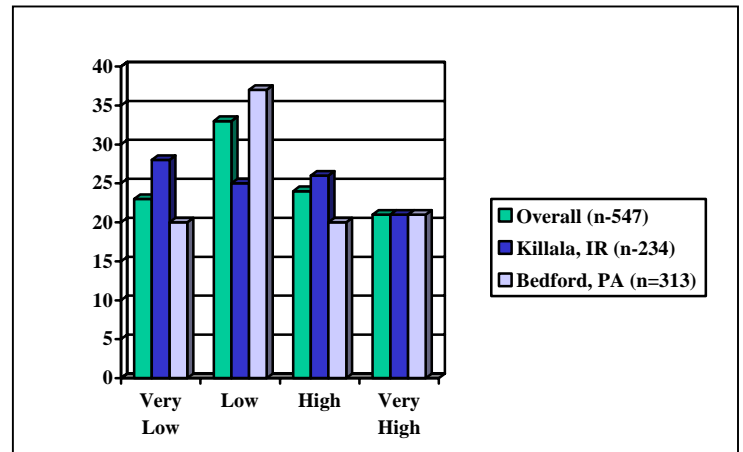
Sociodemographic characteristics were first assessed. Compared across communities, Bedford respondents showed a slightly higher proportion of males, lived in their community longer, had higher levels of education, smaller households, and had higher incomes than did the Killala respondents. Participation in voluntary actions was compared next.

### Comparison of Voluntary Action

Half of all respondents belonged to local groups or voluntary organizations. Most of the respondents belonged to one or two groups (30%) and the majority (64%) contributed four hours or less per month to local groups. Sixty percent reported their level of involvement in the community as being "not very" or "not at all active." These four variables were included in the composite score reflecting voluntary action. Using this scale, 56% of respondents were categorized as exhibiting either low or somewhat low levels of voluntary action (Figure 1).

Volunteerism was next compared across nations. Belonging to local groups, and the number of groups belonged to, did not statistically differ between the JM'0 sites. However, Bedford respondents contributed more hours per month and were more likely to view themselves as being very active in their communities than were Killala respondents. All of these influenced scores for American respondents on the voluntary action scale.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Level of Voluntary Activity**



### Sociodemographic Correlates of Volunteerism

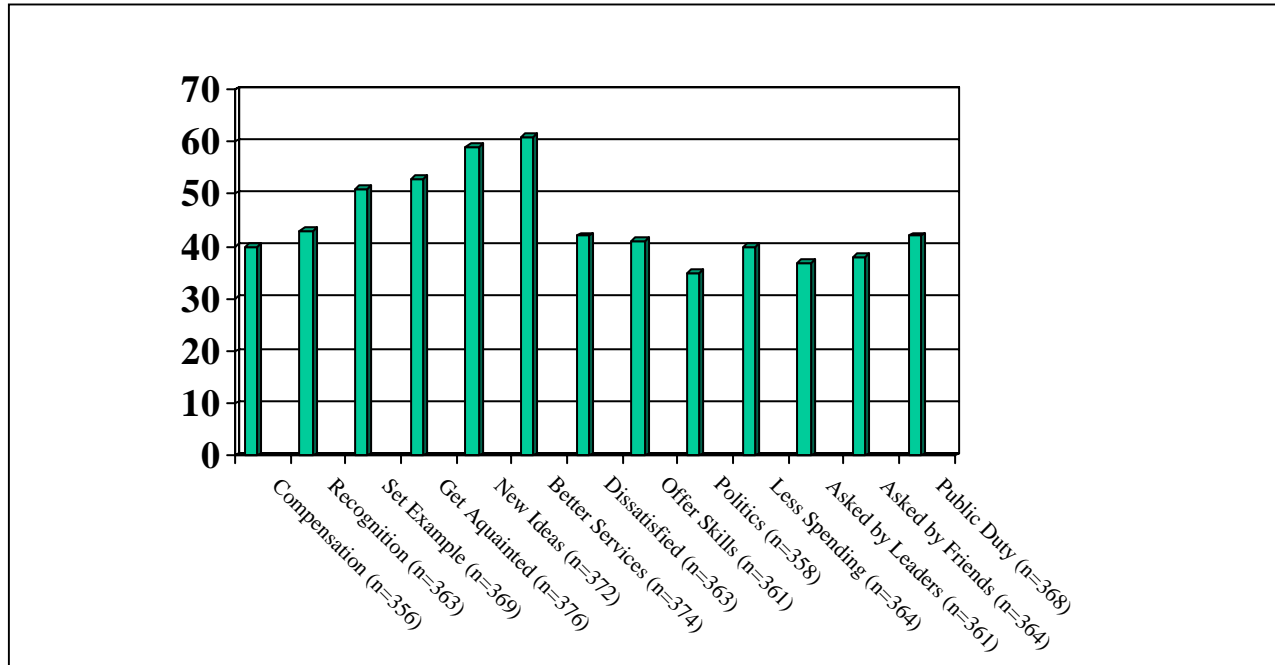
Several of the sociodemographic variables were significantly correlated to level of voluntary action. Included were household size, educational attainment, length of residence, and income. All were positively related, indicating that as they increased, so too did volunteerism. The significance of these variables differed greatly by community, however.

In Bedford, only educational attainment was significantly related to voluntary action, with more educated respondents being more active (Appendix 1). However, in Killala a variety of sociodemographics were important (age, marital status, household size, length of residence, employment status, and income).

### Motivational Factor Correlates of Volunteerism

Several motivations for volunteerism were statistically significant. Included were volunteering because a need existed: for better local services (62%), new ideas (59%), as a way to get acquainted (53%), and to set an example for others (51 %) (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2**  
**“Very Important” Motivations for Volunteering**



In Bedford, an enjoyment of local politics was the only condition correlated with voluntary action; in Killala, setting an example, getting acquainted, dissatisfaction with local conditions, the need for new ideas, better services, and having valuable skills to contribute were significantly related (Appendix 1). Also important in Killala were an enjoyment of local politics, a need for less spending, being asked by local leaders or asked by friends, and the sense of public duty.

**Social Interaction Correlates of Volunteerism**

One third of the respondents reported interacting with others in non-required group activities outside work. Respondents also reported interacting once or more per week with family (77%), friends (54%), neighbors (54%), and acquaintances (28%). Taken together as a composite score, respondents who interacted more frequently

with others were more likely to take part in voluntary activities (Figure 3).

All five interaction variables were statistically correlated to participation in voluntary activity (Appendix 1). These measures of social interaction were among the highest correlations of volunteer behavior. Compared across communities, Killala reflected this overall picture. However, in Bedford, only interacting in nonrequired group activity and frequency of interaction with acquaintances were significant.

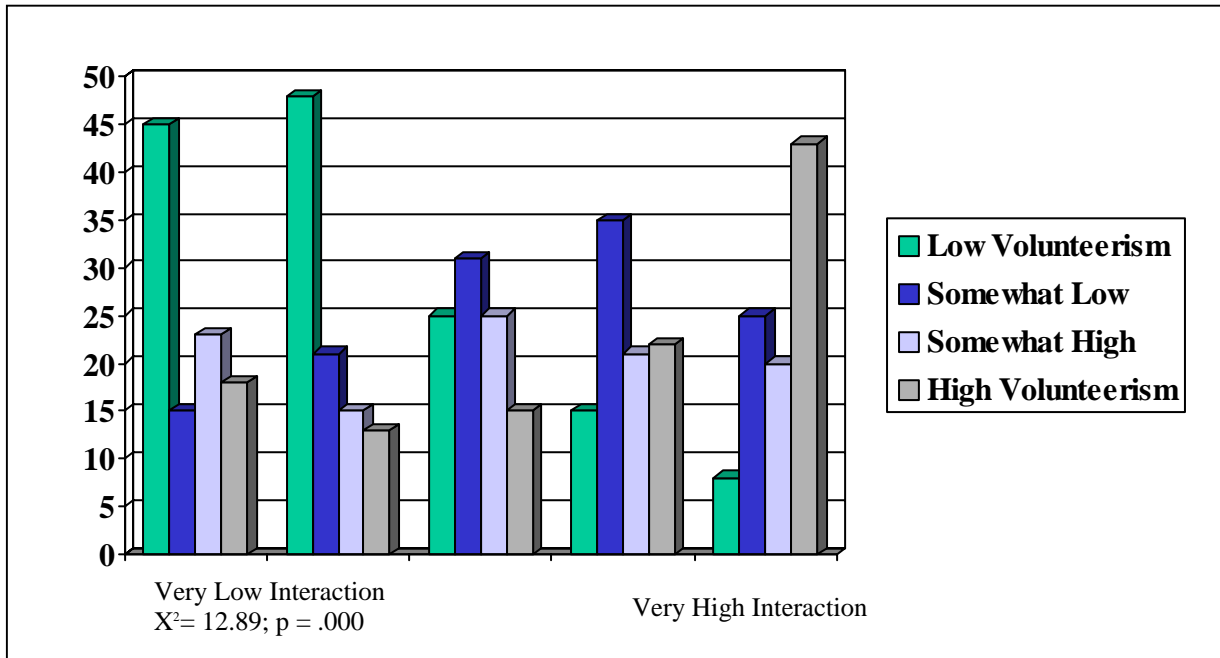
**Implications for Volunteer Administration and Conclusion**

The utilization of volunteers, and the services that they provide, continue to be of vital importance to community development efforts in Pennsylvania and Ireland. This study was based on the premise that through volunteering, local residents have the capacity to enhance local community well-

being. It reflects input from 24 key informants and 598 residents in Ireland and Pennsylvania who participated in a survey

assessing development and volunteer issues facing their communities.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Level of Voluntary Activity by Level of Interaction (n=547)**



As seen in previous research, a variety of factors shaped volunteerism in both locations. Equally important, the value of these characteristics varied greatly across communities. This, in part, highlights the need to closely consider the unique context of local life that shapes the impact of these variables and ultimately volunteerism. In Killala, sociodemographic characteristics, volunteer motivations, and levels of interaction all played an important role. In Bedford, social interaction variables alone largely shaped volunteer decisions. However, in both communities, it was the social interaction variables that showed the strongest correlations to voluntary behavior. Such findings support those of previous research (Goudy, 1990; Luloff et al., 1995).

Volunteer administrators would do well to focus on social interaction as a key to

advancing volunteer efforts. This interaction provides an environment where awareness of community needs increases, social networks evolve, and opportunities for volunteerism are presented. Interaction with family and friends also increases awareness of issues with strong emotional ties that impact relatives, siblings, and children. Alternately, increased interactions with neighbors and acquaintances are likely to represent broad community needs and areas for contributing to local well-being (Granovetter, 1973).

Applied uses of these findings could take the form of linking volunteer activities with local social groups, clubs, and organizations in which residents freely participate. To benefit from the interaction with family and friends, volunteer programs could coordinate with educational groups, sports

clubs, social/civic groups, and religious organizations. Similarly, to capitalize on interaction with acquaintances and neighbors, volunteer efforts could be linked with local business/professional associations, neighborhood groups, religious organizations/events and homeowner associations. Such organizations could be made aware of community needs and encouraged to have outreach programs that partner with ongoing voluntary activities. By coordinating efforts between groups, greater impact can be made in meeting local needs and contributing to local well-being.

In addition to the social interaction variables, the impact of sociodemographics and volunteer motivation factors were unique in each community. By focusing on these in the context of local life, customized advances can be made to local volunteer efforts.

While the significant sociodemographic characteristics support previous research, these variables should serve as an indicator of who is involved in the community and who is not. It is possible that those identified as being active may volunteer because of self interest, whereas those who are not active may be discouraged to volunteer out of social exclusion conditions (income level, employment status). Administrators can use these sociodemographics to remain cognizant of such conditions. In this research, such local context can be seen. In Killala, for example, various socio-demographic indicators contributed to volunteerism, while in Bedford such factors were largely unrelated. Equally important, those significant in Killala reflect the importance of interaction. There, factors such as length of residence, household size, and marital status all shape the amount and substance of interaction with other community members.

Similarly, the significant volunteer motivation variables present opportunities

for volunteer administration. These variables can also be seen as being shaped by local context. In Killala many of these were significant, while in Bedford only one was important. Generally, significant variables represented social responsibility and personal conditions. In Killala, this was likely the result of the social and cultural factors present. There, volunteerism served as a social support function, as well as a means for personal and professional growth. In Bedford, local conditions dictated that such factors were less important in shaping volunteerism.

Applied efforts could include promoting volunteerism as a venue for civic engagement and social participation that directly contributes to local quality of life. Recruitment efforts could stress that local volunteers make a difference and play important roles in providing services, skills, and new ideas. Similarly, volunteer recruitment could stress that local people have a duty, responsibility, and clearly defined role in contributing to their communities. Capitalizing on more personal conditions, recruitment drives could include public and personal calls for volunteers from local officials, encouragement of friend/family volunteer partnership opportunities, and efforts to publicly highlight the benefits that volunteering brings to personal and community well-being.

### **Conclusions**

In many ways, the attitudes, beliefs, actions, and opinions of residents in the American and Irish communities were similar despite vast historical, cultural, and social differences. While differences were noted in the areas of sociodemographic characteristics and volunteer motivational factors, it was social interaction that most directly correlated with volunteer behaviors in both nations. Volunteer administrators and program managers would do well to

focus on the importance of such interaction in their recruitment and management efforts. By incorporating both the research findings presented here, and the unique local context present in our communities, administrators can develop more effective and focused volunteer efforts. From these, significant contributions to community development and social well-being can be made.

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### About the Author

M. A. Brennan's teaching, research, writing, and program development concentrates on the role of volunteerism and community involvement/action in the community development process. Of particular interest has been the impact of rapid social change on communities, natural resource management, tourism, and local culture. He has over 15 years of experience designing, conducting, and analyzing research. This work has resulted in over 20 publications in journals, books, reports and over 25 Cooperative Extension fact sheets. He has conducted comparative research extensively throughout America, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Japan.

**Appendix 1:  
Bivariate Analysis of Factors Shaping Voluntary Action by Location**

	Bedford, PA		Killala, Ireland		Overall	
	(n=343)		(n=255)		(n=598)	
	Voluntary Action		Voluntary Action		Voluntary Action	
	Correlation	Chi-Square	Correlation	Chi-Square	Correlation	Chi-Square
<b>Social Interaction <sup>1</sup></b>						
How Often Meet Family	.01	14.74	.23**	45.10**	.12**	32.53**
How Often Meet Friends	.01	15.11	.32**	52.68	.15**	43.55**
How Often Meet Acquaintances	.21 **	26.98*	.19**	44.97**	.20**	51.38**
How Often Meet Neighbors	.11 *	18.75*	.16*	58.58**	.14**	55.17**
Interacting in Non Required Activities (Yes/No)	.41 **	26.14**	.79**	153.14**	.62**	152.19**
<b>Sociodemographic Characteristics</b>						
Length of Residence (In Years)	.01	6.08	.42**	59.66**	.26**	61.64**
Education Level (1-Less than High School to 5-Graduate Degree)	.18**	20.56*	-.05	13.85	.11 **	20.96*
Age (in Years)	-.02	8.92	.23**	31.94	.08	15.85
Marital Status (Never Married, Married, Divorced, Widowed)	.01	7.66	.04	54.50**	.03	52.94**
Household Size (Number of Residents)	.07	6.17	.33**	37.05**	.19**	25.93**
Employment Status (Employed, Homemaker, Unemployed, Retired)	.05	10.24	-.18**	41.66**	-.03	43.87**
Income (1- Less than \$10,000 to 6 - \$50,000 or More)	.08	31.85*	.21 **	34.74**	.12**	57.01**
Gender (Females=0, Males=1)	.05	.87	-.09	3.78	-.01	0.27
<b>Volunteer Motivations<sup>2</sup></b>						
Monetary Compensation	.05	6.16	-.01	6.01	-.02	8.91
Recognition and Prestige	.17	8.33	.10	4.53	.07	8.48
Setting Example	.03	4.47	.29**	22.39**	.19**	15.43*
Getting Acquainted	.00	6.17	.24**	25.65**	.13*	8.12
Need for New Ideas	.77	5.03	.24**	18.88*	.14**	10.29
Need for Better Services	-.09	4.23	.14*	22.70**	.12*	6.97
Dissatisfaction	-.14	8.13	.14*	7.98	.02	2.97
Having Professional Skills	.04	9.68	.15*	8.85	.10	6.34
Enjoying Politics	.20*	11.85	.25**	19.93**	.19**	16.35**
Need for Less Spending	-.07	1.19	.22**	14.41 *	.12*	7.08
Being Asked by Leaders	-.06	1.99	.29**	22.23**	.15**	10.89
Being Urged by Friends	.12	5.41	.25**	17.10**	.19**	14.68*
Public Duty	-.02	4.57	.28**	25.51**	.17**	12.07

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

<sup>1</sup>Response options for each were: 1) Never, 2) A few times a year, 3) Once a month, 4) A few times a month, 5) Once a week, and 6) More than once a week.

<sup>2</sup>Response options for each were: 1) Not at all important, 2) Important, and 3) Very important

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## **Community Volunteers: The Front Line of Disaster Response**

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### **Abstract**

*The dramatic and tragic events of Hurricane Katrina have highlighted the need for coordinated, community-based volunteer efforts to prepare for, and respond to, natural and other disasters. The recent hurricanes in the Gulf States underscore the problems and shortcomings associated with coordinating outside logistics and show a clear need for local volunteers to serve as the first line of response to such catastrophes. Such disasters are likely to occur again. When disasters do occur, citizen groups and coordinated local volunteers will again be the first responders, and will act to lessen impacts. This article identifies and suggests methods for linking local organizations, recruiting volunteers, and implementing coordinated action plans prior to, and after, the impact of natural disasters.*

### **Key Words:**

community, volunteers, disaster response, natural disasters

### **Introduction**

The dramatic and tragic events of Hurricane Katrina have highlighted the need for coordinated community-based volunteer efforts to prepare for, and respond to, natural and other disasters. National attention was drawn to the potential for wide scale destruction during the 2004 Atlantic hurricane season with devastating storms resulting in 27 federal disaster declarations across 15 states. Florida was particularly hard hit in 2004 by one tropical storm and four hurricanes causing continuous and

cumulative damage. Unfortunately, these events were only a grim foreshadowing of the lost lives, devastated communities, disrupted economies, and demolished infrastructure that would come less than a year later to Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, and western Florida during Hurricanes Dennis, Rita, and Katrina.

The recent disasters in the Gulf States underscore the problems and shortcomings associated with coordinating outside logistics, and show a dear need for local volunteers to serve as the first line of

response to such catastrophes. This was most obvious in the first weeks after Hurricane Katrina, when volunteers and active community residents were the rescuers, caretakers and, in many cases, the final comforting companions to the dying. They were the first, and often the only, line of response that would exist for weeks. Highlighting the importance of the local level, government officials immediately called on local citizens to volunteer their time, money, and sweat equity in addressing this massive and unprecedented natural disaster in America. Such calls took place long before significant government resources were committed. Most vividly portrayed in New Orleans, such local level action set a trend that continued in many places, particularly rural locales, for some time.

Such disasters are likely to occur again. The routine threats from hurricanes, tornados, flooding, and other natural disasters to the southeastern United States and elsewhere are well documented and predicted. In particular, given the trend of increased storm intensity, the likelihood of impending threat of severe hurricanes (Category 4 or 5) requires careful crisis and emergency planning strategies. When disasters do occur, citizen groups and coordinated efforts of local volunteers can respond to lessen the impacts and "build back better" (the theme from the 2005Tsunami recovery effort). Local residents will be the first responders. However, the process of organizing local residents must take place before, during, and after such catastrophic events occur (Berke, Kartez, & Wenger, 1993). This article identifies and suggests methods for linking local organizations, recruiting volunteers, and implementing coordinated action plans prior to, and after, the impact of natural disasters.

### **Importance and Role of Community in Disaster Preparation and Recovery**

Communities have long been seen as helpless victims in much of the disaster and emergency management literature, where outside help has been seen as vital to returning conditions "back to normal" or to reducing social vulnerability (Berke et al., 1993; Flint & Lulo£F, 2005; Hewitt, 1998). In recent years, however, considerably more emphasis has been placed on the role of community in disaster recovery and the importance of local knowledge, action, participation, and control in determining the nature of disaster response (Anderson & Woodrow, 1989; Berke et al., 1993; Enarson & Morrow, 1998; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 2000a, 2000b; Mitchell, 1996; Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Center (NHRAIC), 2001; Schwab et al., 1998; Stehr, 2001). Berke et al. (1993) looked beyond immediate disaster events: "The community can assume the role of active participant, rather than helpless victim. Local people can define goals, control resources, and direct redevelopment initiatives with long-term economic and social benefits" (p.93).

The local community serves a variety of functions that directly contribute to social and economic well-being. It is logical that the community should be the first line of defense in preparing and responding in the event of disaster. Local residents and groups are in a position to best identify their immediate needs, coordinate preparations, supplement official response efforts, implement emergency response programs, and contribute to local decision making for future events. Similarly, local communities can provide a sense of connection, and decrease the isolation and abandonment that is often felt among residents in times of disaster. Such capacity to provide these community services does not always exist,

but can be cultivated and should be encouraged and local communities empowered.

Viewing community from an interactional perspective provides a particularly useful vantage point when considering local level disaster response. From this perspective, the community is a dynamic field of interaction rather than a rigid system (Brown & Swanson, 2003; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). This process reflects the building of relationships among diverse groups of residents in pursuit of common community interests (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Wilkinson, 1991). Through voluntary efforts, individuals interact with one another, and begin to mutually understand common needs (Brennan, 2005; Luloff & Swanson, 1995). From this interaction, voluntary efforts to improve the social, cultural, and psychological needs of local people can emerge. A central part of a community's interactional capacity is the ability to collectively construct meanings, respond to environmental and societal change, and attend to shared needs (Brennan, 2005; Flint & Luloff, 2005).

In all communities, a variety of groups exists with diverse skills and abilities combined with personal and professional experiences, which are essential to successful preparation and response to disasters (Independent Sector, 2001). Included are resident groups with needed professional and trade skills for damage control and assessment (engineers, environmental scientists, architects, contractors, and skilled laborers), disaster preparedness and response training (VFW, retired military/national guard/police), medical, psychological and social service delivery experience (health practitioners, counselors, religious/civic groups), as well as long time residents who have witnessed previous responses to natural disasters.

Effective community responses connect these diverse groups and develop action

plans to meet common needs. The next section discusses opportunities created by the Community Emergency Response Team Program to coordinate preparedness and response activities at the local level. Successfully linking local organizations, citizens, and leaders provides a strong network and a method for local citizens and groups to become actively involved in local preparedness and response efforts. To be most effective, this process of capacity building must take place before disasters occur, and continue during and after such catastrophic events.

### **Applications and Suggestions for Mobilizing Communities and Volunteers**

Disaster preparedness and response is often hampered by the coordination of conflicting interests and differing pressures (Stehr, 2001). One way to mobilize local participation and readiness, while maintaining coordination among multiple jurisdictions and interests, is to establish Community Emergency Response Teams or CERTs. The CERT program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is a direct attempt to put into practice what disaster researchers and practitioners have acknowledged for some time—that a trained team of local volunteers can help provide effective disaster preparedness and disaster recovery. The CERT Web site (Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), 2005) affirms this mission: "Naturals for the training are neighborhood watch, community organizations, communities of faith, school staff, workplace employees, scouting organizations and other groups that come together regularly for a common purpose. CERT skills are useful in disaster and everyday life events."

CERT training includes disaster preparedness, disaster fire suppression, basic medical operations, and light search and rescue operations. Resulting groups are

linked into the network of emergency management. As of August 2005, there were 1,966 community or county level CERTs across the United States. (CERT, 2005). Unfortunately, funding for Citizen Corps, the umbrella organization that administers CERT, was cut from \$40 million in 2004 to \$15 million in 2005 (Grant, 2005). This is a worrying shift in light of the current disaster recovery situation and widespread acknowledgement of the need for greater local level participation in disaster situations. Nonetheless, the CERT program is a model framework for mobilizing local volunteers as the front line of disaster response.

Similarly, more general grassroots mobilizations can plan for, respond to, and rebuild in the aftermath of disaster. Included would be active efforts to bring together diverse local groups, the formation of local groups for planning, establishment of formal long-term visioning and goal setting for disaster preparation and recovery, and recruitment of experienced local citizens to take direct action. Similarly, the establishment of alliances between local groups could set the stage for a more effective sharing of resources and responsibilities during times of crisis. Such alliances can include the identification of organizations or individuals to serve as liaisons between local grassroots efforts and more formal structures (state and federal response organizations, military and national guard, emergence response agencies).

To maximize their impact, local groups or citizen coalitions should identify their possible contributions and assess their unique resources. In this setting, asset mapping can be a valuable tool, which allows the diverse skills, resources, and expertise of organization members to be identified and most effectively utilized (Green & Haines, 2002). Asset mapping is a useful way to prepare for impending disasters and to facilitate effective post-

disaster development based on the unique character and niches of the locality. Such preparation and responses can also be further enhanced by incorporating local culture into development efforts (Brennan, Flint, et al., 2005). The unique culture of a location can provide opportunities for alternative development and response strategies.

### Conclusions

Local volunteers and community level action are essential to effective natural disaster preparation and response. They are particularly important in that these citizens are, in many cases, the first responders and have the greatest chance to save lives and provide support in the hours and days immediately after disaster occurrences. Certainly, an effective community response would have diminished some, no matter how small, of the suffering and loss that occurred during and after the recent hurricanes. From the bowels of the Louisiana Superdome to the ravaged rural areas of Gulfport, Mississippi, some betterment could have been achieved if communication and logistical planning had effectively maintained crisis support.

An organized community and volunteer response could have helped in a number of ways before, during, and immediately after the recent disasters. They may have been able to

- coordinate a more successful evacuation and transportation effort, where instead thousands were unable or chose not to evacuate;
- provide some structure and order in places like the Superdome and New Orleans Convention Center, where instead chaos reigned;
- aid in organizing resources for distribution before and after the hurricane, where instead basic needs were left unmet for days; and

- decrease some of the isolation and sense of abandonment that quickly engulfed victims in the affected areas.

Community and volunteer coordinators have an obligation to help facilitate community organization and preparation to aid fellow citizens in times of such great need. The only thing that is certain in these times is that local residents will be the first capable of responding. In these disaster settings, local volunteers and community organizations are presented with an unprecedented opportunity to make a measurable impact on the human condition. The quality and extent of this response may hold the key to minimizing disaster effects, maintaining order, increasing hope, and maximizing recovery efforts.

It is time to bring local groups together in a concerted and coordinated effort to prevent future incidents of crisis-related chaos. In the end, facilitating local involvement in disaster preparedness and response is about far more than the provision of basic and logistical needs. It ensures that local voices are heard, local struggles are recognized, and the dignity of local people is respected. With this capacity established, local citizens can respond and recover in a manner that improves local life. The response and rebuilding process will belong to the front line of disaster responders-community volunteers-who will reinvest in their communities.

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### About the Authors

M. A. Brennan's teaching, research, writing, and program development concentrates on the role of volunteerism and community involvement/action in the community development process. Of particular interest has been the impact of rapid social change on communities, natural resource management, tourism, and local culture. He has over 15 years of experience designing, conducting, and analyzing research. This work has resulted in over 20 publications in journals, books, reports and over 25 Cooperative Extension fact sheets. He has conducted comparative

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