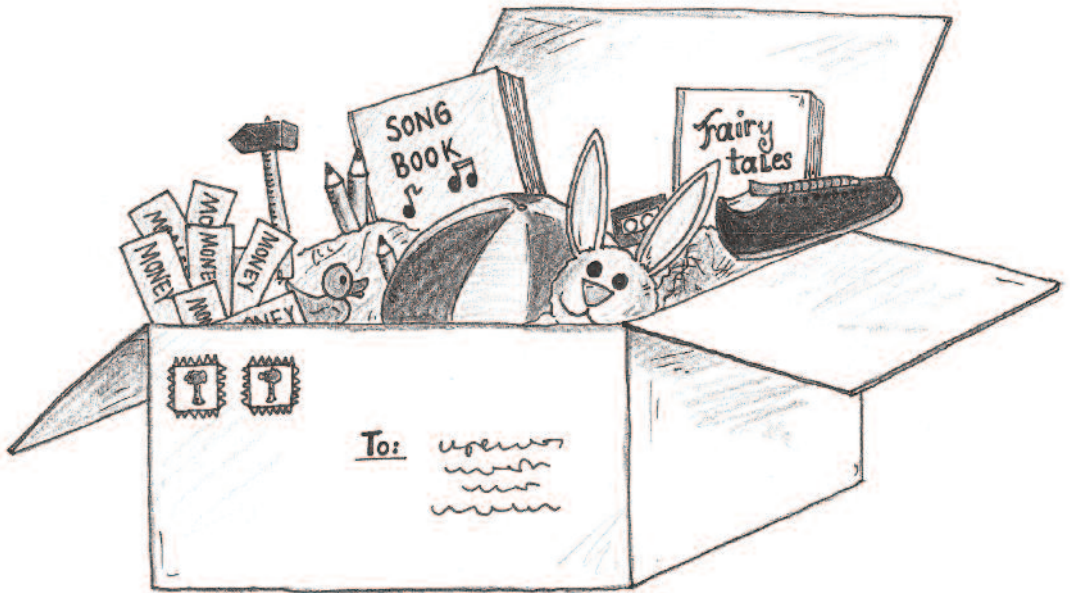


Meaning Well. Doing Good?

Critical Perspectives on Donations made by International
Volunteers from the Global North within the North-South Context



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Table of contents

Preface	6
Introduction	8
Glossary	11

I Theoretical Perspectives 13

Sudhi Seshadri: Ad hoc charitable donations to host projects by volunteers: An “agency” perspective	14
Eckhard Röhm: The right way to donate	20
Clara West (Interview): “There are various categories of donation”	25
Preeti Purohit: The “giver” and the “receiver”: A change of perspective	29
Markus Savander: Motives behind donations – a psychological perspective	32
Shashi Rao: Donations for dependency or interdependence: A post-colonial perspective	37
Lucía Muriel (Interview): “Donations make no difference”	41
Benjamin Haas: White charity or global solidarity?	48
Thomas Gebauer & Felix Speidel: Social human rights and social solidarity instead of voluntary charity	55
Nina Alff (Interview): “Donations in kind should be avoided at all costs”	61
Mustapha Machrafi: Learning is the best donation that a volunteer can make	65
Theo Rauch: Good intentions are not enough!	68
Comic: Mola and the scissors	76

II Practical Experience 79

Sending organisation

Barbara Hege Galle, Mennonite Voluntary Service e.V. – Christliche Dienste, Germany: An open door to more money	80
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Receiving organisations

Ravinder Singh, ICDE India: Volunteering for life changing experiences	84
Kerubo Nyaribo, ICYE Kenya: Donations and volunteers – Donations are welcome, but at what price?	88
Omaira Olano, ICYE Colombia: The Pros and Cons of Donations – Prohibition and/or promotion?	93

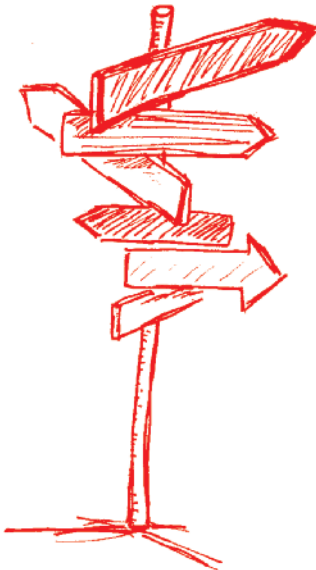
Host projects

Shashi Rao, Ananya Trust, India: Volunteering: A way to challenge stereotypes	97
Sara Grossenbacher, Cielo Azul, Ecuador: Donate, yes – But how?	101
Usha Venugopal, Modern English Medium School, India: Mixed bag of experiences	104
John Ephraim, Living Hope, Uganda: Case study of Living Hope	106
Karuppu Samy, READ, India: Experience at READ	108

Volunteers

Sophia Jungblut, Kenya: How money can become a burden	110
Laszlo Kelemen, Colombia: Why I donate	114
Bruno Gideon Bergheim, Uganda: Problematic sponsorships	116
Insa Weilage, India: Do donations have a longer-term effect than voluntary service?	120
Samuel Flach, Uganda: Volunteers: Mascots of the aid industry?	122
Gesa Langhoop, Mozambique: Are donations triggered by pangs of conscience?	126

Conclusion	130
The Editorial Team	136
Imprint	138



Preface

An act undertaken with the intention of “doing good”, can sometimes have inadvertent side effects or even the opposite result. The vaguer our understanding of the underlying circumstances and mechanisms and the less familiar we are with the cultural aspects, the native language and historical background, the greater the risk to the final outcome. It therefore stands to reason that this is a weak spot of development work and now – having had various unpleasant experiences – the sector has to rethink its own work strategy.

ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch (ICYE Germany) weltweit, the instigator of this publication, actively engages in the fight to end discrimination and for peace in the world, for cultural and social diversity, for respect and solidarity and urges “people to assume social responsibility and take an active stance on social equality”¹. Through our range of intercultural exchanges and voluntary service, as in the educational work which we carry out above and beyond this, we strive to make a contribution towards these goals. Confrontation with global inequality and to some extent extreme poverty – especially in the context of the so-called North-South exchanges – is inherent in these activities. It is understandable that this triggers concern and the desire to help. But as we already mentioned, even help given with the best of intentions – such as donations of money or in kind – can result in effects which enhance and reinforce hierarchies, prejudices or racism, creating new dependencies or competitive situations or stifling initiative. So what can be done? After all, in some cases help may be meaningful and justified. We cannot expect our participants to always do “the right thing”, as there are no golden rules. And in any case, who has the right to dictate norms over the heads of those directly involved?

Hence this booklet. We have collated different points of view, providing a critical evaluation on the subject of donations within the framework of voluntary service. The intention is to help the opinion forming process, in particular for all those who are involved in voluntary service in countries of the Global South: sending and host organisations, partners in both North and South, voluntary assignment locations, host families, sponsors and donors – and of course volunteers themselves or those who are thinking of becoming volunteers, in addition to anyone else interested by the issue.

Our special thanks go to the honorary editorial team who made this publication project possible. This team was composed of former German volunteers and honorary ICJA employees Esther Neitzel, Insa Weilage, Judith Scheer, Laszlo Kelemen, Malte Legenhausen, Nora Scharffenberg and Samuel Flach, our Indian partner organisation ICDE India, represented by Mr Ravinder Singh, four Indian assignment locations, represented by Mr Ananth Nag M (Divya Deepa Trust), Dr. (Mrs) Shashi Rao (Ananya Trust), Mr Karuppu Samy (READ) and Mrs Usha Venugopal (Modern English Medium School), Mrs Nusrat Sheikh from ICJA and the project leader Felix Speidel, who devoted so much energy to this project.

We would also like to thank all the authors, who either provided contributions for this booklet directly or who agreed to be interviewed by the editorial team.

And finally we would like to thank the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, which provided financial support for the project.

So now, curtain up for what we hope will be an inspiring, perhaps even motivating, fascinating and edifying read! 🍷

Governing body of ICJA/ICYE Germany

Jannis Gebken, Yury Hannaleck, Mareike Westhäuser, Carl-Heinz Pommer, Stefanie Hauser

¹ From the ICJA profile

Dear Reader,

More and more people are doing voluntary service abroad. Many of them come from the Global North and decide to go to the Global South. During this time they usually work for several months (up to a year) in host projects or assignment locations. Normally they live with host families or are accommodated directly on the project. The primary objective of such international voluntary service is intercultural exchange and consequently learning from one another.

Experience has shown that during their stay in the host country in the Global South, many volunteers from the Global North ask themselves the question: Should I donate something? To the project in which I am involved, to the host family in which I live or to the local community? The answer is often positive and donations of money or in kind are frequently made. The idea behind making a donation may come from any number of sources: Sometimes volunteers are confronted with social evils such as poverty and social disadvantage in their host country and feel the desire to do something about it directly. Sometimes the host projects or host families make a request for a donation, either explicitly or by inference. Or family and friends at home feel that this is an opportunity to make a donation of money or in kind, as it will arrive without detours and be used in full in the project where the volunteer is working. In our experience, the extent and value of donations can vary considerably from just a few pencils to a new football ground.

But do volunteers really help a school by buying pencils and exercise books? Should volunteers use their contacts at home to raise money for a host project? How should we evaluate the fact that assignment locations and host families more or less expect volunteers to provide them with monetary donations, food and presents? This booklet takes a critical look at these and other questions: What are the moral arguments for or against donations from international volunteers? What are the psychological and moral motives behind donations? To what extent can a donation alter the (power) relationship between the volunteer as donor and the project or host family as recipient? To what extent do donations intensify colonial thought patterns? How do they influence social, political and economic structures on a local scale? What should one take into account to avoid any eventual

negative effects of donations or at least minimise them? What are the alternatives to charitable donations?

On the other hand, this booklet does not deal with donations that prospective volunteers raise (e.g. through support groups) to finance their participation in an international voluntary service programme. Nor does the booklet take part in the debate on the intent and purpose of international development work. Broadly speaking, it is confined to a critical analysis of donations by international volunteers from the Global North to assignment projects and host families in the Global South.

Our editorial team consisted of former volunteers from Germany, of representatives from various assignment projects in India as well as staff from ICDE India and the German ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch weltweit e.V., who act as sending and receiving organisations respectively for international volunteers. In the course of several editorial workshops in India and Germany, we discussed and decided together how we would address the issue and select the authors.

The booklet can be divided into two parts. The first part contains more specialised articles by experts from the sciences and civil society, which include various somewhat theoretical approaches to the issue. In the second part former volunteers, assignment projects as well as host and sending organisations voice their opinions through reports and statements based on their own experiences. The authors of the different articles come from almost all continents of the world.

We lay no claim to the completeness of the perspectives in this booklet. Nevertheless we hope that the questions and aspects discussed will serve the reader as a broad base on which to found his/her own critical analysis of the issue.

And last of all, this booklet is intended to help volunteers, assignment projects, as well as sending and receiving organisations make an informed decision on how they should deal with the subject of “volunteer donations” in practice.

Our intention here is not to provide a universally valid and definitive answer to the question of whether charitable donations by volunteers can

be meaningful and beneficial in certain circumstances or by adhering to certain rules, or whether they should be rejected on principle due to the problems that they can cause. In this respect, the various authors contributing to this booklet come to different conclusions.

The views and standpoints expressed in the various articles are the sole responsibility of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the attitude of the editors or the publisher.

Armed now with this prior knowledge, we hope you will enjoy the present booklet and gain many interesting and enlightening insights from it. 🍷

The ICDE/ICJA editorial team

Glossary

Terms used in the international voluntary service sector

Receiving or host organisations (also known as coordinating organisations) look after and support international volunteers during their time in the host country. Full-time or honorary staff members from the receiving organisation take on the role of mentor. They usually organise the placement of the international volunteer in an assignment project and host family. Within the scope of the ICYE network (International Cultural Youth Exchange), which consists of partner committees in 36 countries, volunteer service programmes are devised as exchange programmes. The separate ICYE partner committees act as receiving organisation and at the same time as volunteer sending organisation.

The **assignment location/host project** is the place or institution in which the international volunteers do their voluntary service. Usually social, ecological and frequently charitable organisations are involved. In some instances the international volunteers also live in their assignment project during their voluntary service.

Sending organisations: Organisations which select national volunteers for voluntary service, prepare them for their stay abroad and arrange their voluntary service, debrief them after their return and work together with the separate receiving organisations in the individual volunteer host countries.

International volunteers: Here: People who participate in an international voluntary service programme, working for a longer period (usually several months to one year) without payment, e.g. in a charitable organisation.

Host families: In most cases, international volunteers live with host families during their voluntary service. They are sometimes accommodated free of charge, sometimes in return for a financial payment.

Theoretical perspectives:

Volunteer donations can be considered from a multitude of different aspects and from different points of view. What are the motives for wanting to donate? What economic factors play a part for the recipients? Is there such a thing as a moral obligation to donate? What could be done apart from donating? These are some of the questions we asked authors from different sectors, with different backgrounds. In the following contributions they come to grips with these questions and suggest possible solutions for how to handle volunteer donations.

The danger of a role reversal between volunteer and project – the volunteer becoming a donor and the project a monetary recipient – happens more often than you/one think(s). Seshadri gives guidance on how to preserve integrity in volunteerism.

Sudhi Seshadri

Ad hoc charitable donations to host projects by volunteers: An “agency” perspective.¹

Welcome to the challenging world of Volunteering! Of the many challenges, one of the most vexing you might encounter can be to unravel the tangle of humanitarian feeling from social reasoning – or put differently, to separate the urges of your personal affect from those of your cognitive insight.² One puzzle you may encounter is in the knotty issue of whether to make ad hoc donations to host projects. On the one hand you have volunteered for the project very likely because of a deep personal humanitarian feeling; on the other, you know that your knowledge, training and skills are unique to the project and these are what must eventually carry the day. How do these two sides to volunteerism inform your decision to donate to a host project?

To set a context, let me offer two examples. A volunteer in central India was hosted by a rural women’s self-employment skills development project that lasted several weeks. At the end of her stay the host project director asked the volunteer if she was happy with her stay with them (she was), the various non-project experiences she had (these were many, educative, and charming), and about her intention to favorably recommend the project to future compatriots (she would). Then the host project asked if she could help them with a charitable donation – in this particular case towards installing a solar powered pump set for irrigation at a farm which was not reached by the electric grid. This would solve one farming family’s irrigation problem, make it possible for year round vegetable farming, and enormously raise their living standards. A second volunteer, at a drinking water supply project at a school in the neighboring township, was considering

(without being asked) a donation to the host project, one that would provide several weeks of school supplies for needy children. In both instances, the collateral of favorable outcomes and positive experiences of project work is being leveraged for charitable donations.

Bias

Here: One-sided perspective which is distorted or prejudiced by the culture specific perception of the viewer.

One of the side benefits of volunteering is to encourage the questioning mind. Coming as it does, after the act of volunteering, is there an unwelcome bias introduced by the act of donating? Does the host project's effort in making your stay successful have a bearing on the decision to donate? Does the purpose of the donation – a one-time investment into a better productive facility for a target family, versus a schoolchild's ongoing need for supplies – make a difference to your motivations? Does the origin of the pressure to donate – a direct request from the host project versus a self-induced gesture of solidarity from your feeling of indebtedness to the host project – matter? What further information would help make your decision to donate easier, if any? This piece offers you a perspective that might help you (and the host project) with such questions, one based in the idea of inter-organizational agency relationships involving money.

* * *

What is “agency” in the context of volunteers and host projects? Presumably the goals of the project are shared and the skills you bring as a volunteer are unavailable or in short supply at the host project location. The host project therefore realizes some portion of its goals through the agency of your volunteerism, and the costs associated with your stay are part of the payment made.³

Now, here is a key point: This agency understanding is upset, and a role reversal occurs when you make a charitable donation. The host project

¹ “Agency” is a term from sociology and economics that has become popular in understanding the difference between who actually makes an effort and who extracts its benefit. It also refers to volunteers seeking to make a difference – as in the widely used term “change agent.”

² Affect is used to indicate feelings and emotions; cognitive refers to thinking and reasoning about those feelings.

³ In the jargon, payments so made are called the “agency compensation contract” for your deliverables.

becomes the recipient part of the relationship for the deliverables that you now define, and is implicitly dependent and responsible to you – the principal, the source of the compensation.⁴ Was the pump set successfully installed? Did school supplies reach the children? Now you are no longer a volunteer and have become a proxy administrator. Is that what you want to be? Is that what the host project wants you to be?

Usually the host project works with a disadvantaged community, and deep poverty would likely surround you. A potential role reversal where you will be the source of charitable donations can easily turn the agency value of your voluntary work on its head. In an uncharitable view of charity, when given solely as compensation without accompanying agency effort of the giver, it is a self-indulgence driven by guilt and absence of involvement. A perverse incentive develops in the host project to seek donations from exposing you, the volunteer, to situations that have psychological affect but are otherwise unrelated to your professed, shared goals.⁵

Usually the host project works with a disadvantaged community, and deep poverty would likely surround you.

Having thought this through in these terms, paying attention to your role as a volunteer versus as a donor, as the agent of effort versus the principal offering compensation, you would probably still have misgivings about turning down a direct personal request for a productive use of an affordable donation. What guidance is available? In such a case consider the charitable auction mechanism popularized by some long-term volunteers in Africa. The advantage of this mechanism is that your volunteer brand of agency remains with you, and you “socialize” the donor role. Here is the scenario: Put together your donation in kind rather than currency, with additional contributors from the community and your home organization, all of whom have been made aware of the benefits of the project and your debt to your host. Include gifts from your community of friends and well-wishers back home. The entire collection of goods is offered for sale in an auction format – to the highest bidder – with proceeds to go as your charitable donation. This has the advantage of extending your volunteerism, possibly leveraging your personal funds, drawing publicity for your host project’s cause, the donation’s likely benefits to the community, and the transparent process assures your host and the community of your best intentions.⁶

Another agency problem you may grapple with is whether your proposed charitable donation is needed to cover some unrecognized or unanticipated costs incurred by the host project to support your own volunteer work. While most costs are anticipated and planned for, you observe your hosts often exceed prior expenditure agreements to make your mission successful and your stay personally rewarding. This actual host project effort is “hidden” from your parent organization, since it occurs at the grassroots level and is difficult to monitor from afar, but you see it clearly because you are in the thick of the action. Some of this hidden effort has to be personal – entirely on your behalf. For instance, the candidates in the self-employment project may have home cooked your meals because your digestive system could not handle market bought food. The veggies you consumed could have fetched income had they been sent to market. Or the school-teacher at the drinking water project may have a brother who gave you rides on his motorcycle to your favorite hardware store or evening cinema entertainment, using his own fuel and enduring some wear-and-tear on the bike. This sort of hidden effort was not identified or included in a formal compensation arrangement with the host project. You realize this effort that could not have been observed and verified by others (since it was hidden) has come at a private cost to your host project, and would likely go unrewarded. Unless ... yes, unless you dig into your own personal funds and make a charitable donation. Moreover, this is not only a “might-happen” – your hosts at the self-employment project have already requested a donation. But even if they had not, as in the drinking water project, you feel indebted. You are the only person who knows the amount of costly effort expended by the host project for your success. Should you not try to compensate this hidden effort through a donation? Is not your decision strictly personal, as the effort was on your behalf?

⁴ The two roles are referred to as “Principal” and “Agent” – of course, there can be multiple principles and multiple agents in any situation. But we will not deal with these complications here.

⁵ A strong – but memorable – term used to describe this selective exposure is “poverty porn.” Images of abject poverty which are certainly not representative are deliberately presented as though they are, for psychological effect.

⁶ Of course, for clean administration all such funds should be routed through proper channels, and conform to rules and regulations of the host country and donor country.

⁷ Implicit because there is no formal written or verbal agreement – more of a cultural norm, that is understood without saying. But remember that there are often cultural gaps between you as a volunteer and the host project as a recipient.

Poverty-Porn

Poverty-Porn is if something is given solely as compensation without accompanying involvement of the giver – it is a self-indulgence driven by guilt. A perverse incentive develops for the receiver to expose the donor to situations that psychologically push him to give more, thereby also exposing himself


I would argue not, as your donation decision impacts the behavior of future compatriots, hosts, and the community. You alter the host's motivations and behavior with personalized compensation: hidden effort may not be forthcoming in the future unless paid; or your organization may perforce have to formalize a fixed payment at a higher level to cover the host's costs of this hidden effort independent of its actual provision – remember, it is “hidden.” Perhaps some hidden ef-

fort was already accounted for in the blanket agreement your parent organization has with your host project. You also alter behavior of your compatriots, who cannot but help think that their host would provide better service and expend more effort if some compensation from them were locally and continually on offer – we won't call it a bribe – either as a bonus or as a “pay as you go” sort of implicit contract.⁷ Expectations change, and you engage in a new dynamic of previously un-foreseen and therefore arbitrary compensation. Expectations change, and you engage in a new sequence of cause-and-effect in pay-and-accomplish.⁸ Open to question are a compensation amount to cover hidden costs and possibly perverse incentives that may arise from compensation. What guidance is available here?

On the matter of compensation amount, my recommendation is to determine early in the duration the privately borne (in other words, uncompensated by prior agreements) cost of hidden effort in your particular host's case that may accumulate over the course of your interactions. What is the cumulative extra cost of unmonitored extra effort on your account – for instance, home cooking and bike fuel burning – that you will accept? Determine if this exceeds a benchmark figure you may objectively set during your visit and how you can share and justify this excess figure with your colleagues and parent organization. It may be that what you think are private costs are already calculated and built into host project compensation prior to engagement. Once you are satisfied these extra costs were not, examine your capability to recompense your host for the excess unanticipated costs through your organization in a more formal manner (rather than a personal donation that could be confused with charity, you can route your own personal money through your organization to remove any personal debt your host may feel to you, if your organization allows this

route). Otherwise, if the level is not exceeded (the more usual case) do not offer any personal donation for extra compensation reasons.

On incentives, my recommendation is to rule out any payments related to future results – never tie a charitable donation to a favorable outcome. Is a farmer less deserving of a diesel pump set if your self-employment project was less successful and you did not eat home cooked veggies? Are children less deserving of school supplies if your drinking water project ran dry and you did not enjoy bike rides? Despite the effort being seemingly hidden from your stakeholder organizations, it is very likely that the host has intimate knowledge of the impact of hidden effort on outcomes. The incentive problem arises only because this knowledge is unobservable and cannot be monitored or verified by others, and therefore not directly recompensed. It has absolutely nothing to do with the legitimacy or otherwise of the expenditures. Try to generate a check list of such possible actions that the host takes. Host projects have goals similar to yours, and that is the reason you are a volunteer with them. Charitable donations are not central to these goals and inability to directly compensate some costs should not detract host projects from incurring them anyway, for the good of the project.

In sum, discuss these issues of volunteer or donor agency roles, hidden effort, uncompensated costs, and incentives with all those who will be affected by project outcomes, including your host and beneficiaries. These are persons who could best uncover a possible bias in your own and your host's behaviors introduced by your donation, and the role reversals it inevitably causes. This approach preserves integrity in volunteerism and would be more likely to lead to desirable volunteer-host project outcomes. 

After his engineering studies, **Dr. Sudhi Seshadri** worked for several years with a voluntary group near a remote cluster of villages in Central India helping run a rural workshop and an experimental farm, imparting training and involving local stakeholders in a regional environmental planning exercise. Several NGOs sent volunteers from colleges around the country to the group to engage in locally developed programs ranging from planning surveys to technology transfer to educative initiatives and community services. No charitable donations were ever requested from volunteers.

⁸ This is not a hypothetical or unlikely case – it has been observed in many disparate contexts, and this behavior modification is common enough to have been given a special name: “moral hazard.” Moral – because it may involve telling lies or misleading partners who cannot observe or verify; Hazard – because it could ruin the relationship. Complications arise when disagreements follow on payment amounts to cover hidden costs and possibly perverse incentives to extract more compensation.

In principle, many of the aid organisations associated with the Evangelical Church in Germany look favourably on volunteer donations. But in order for them to really make the world a better place, certain rules of conduct should be observed.

Eckhard Röhm

The right way to donate

If you ask a young person who has applied for voluntary development service about their motives, the answer is quite frequently: I want to help! And if by “helping” they mean thinking beyond themselves, playing a part in a community, doing something for others, then this should be rated very highly. No one can exist on his/her own. We are always dependent on the community and support. Human fellowship is based on the exchange of gifts and talents, of give and take.¹

Giving and donating are fundamental human actions and essential to the human community. They are an indispensable part of life in Christian communities. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the offering of the firstling (first-born of an animal, first fruit of the harvest) as well as the offering of a tithe is an important duty, fundamental to the fulfilment of social obligations.² Reflected in these offerings is the fact that mankind owes his life – and all he needs in life – to God and not to himself. He is called upon to give away a part of these things out of gratitude, so that the needy can be looked after.

When justifying the offertory before the congregation in Jerusalem (2nd Corinthians 8), Paul argued using the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus had given his life for the life of his brethren, so should the church congregation also give generously and willingly.³ They should give to the needy, to reconcile the balance. And in the description of the first Christians in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, all members of the community were engaged in a constant give and take, an active exchange of gifts.

Giving is therefore an essential manifestation of Christian communities. This is particularly true for church development work. Right from the beginning, this was largely financed by donations. “Brot für die Welt” (Bread

for the World – a German aid organisation) emerged in this context. In the light of the highly positive significance attributed to donating in the field of church development partnerships, it is hardly surprising that donations play a role in the discharge of voluntary development work.

It may become problematic if volunteers raise money or donations in kind for their receiving organisations or for other organisations in the host country. A whole range of problems can result: NGOs operating in the host countries are usually interlinked with other NGOs in their own countries and the donating countries. It can often cause irritation, envy and resentment if volunteers contribute additional funds beyond the development strategy to one NGO and not to others, which may have a greater need.

In addition, one should consider the lack of experience. Young volunteers, who have not long been in a country of the Global South, presume all too rapidly that a subjectively perceived shortage implies a need. This can lead to difficult situations. For example, if volunteers are spontaneously inspired to raise funds for school desks in India where the schoolchildren sit on the floor – without first asking themselves whether these will be welcome or how offended and irritated the school administration may feel at the mere assumption.

A further cause for concern is the status aspect of donating. If twenty-year-old Germans are able to raise funds which are beyond the reach of long-serving managers of an NGO in the host country and these funds exceed by far the salary of the respective manager, this can have a negative effect on the dignity and the self-esteem of the executive personnel. Indeed, it can represent a considerable setback in the tedious struggle for equal footing between the actual giving and taking organisations.

Not only can this reinforce, rather than reduce, the cross-cultural cliché of the white man with unlimited financial resources but it also brings the

¹ Cf. D. Tometten, Gegenseitiger Gabentausch. Fundraising als Kernaufgabe der Kirche, in: Deutsches Pfarrerberblatt 12-2011 p. 646

² Cf. A. Schnepfer, Akzente einer Theologie des Fundraisings, in V. Kessler u.a. (Hgg.), Geld und Geist in Gemeinde und Gesellschaft, Marburg 2010, p.. 122ff.

³ Cf. H. Liebs, Vision und Vermögen verbinden. Kirchliches Fundraising theologisch bedacht, in: Deutsches Pfarrerberblatt 04-2009, p. 192 f.

power factor of donating into play. The transition from giver/taker relationship to a business relationship on equal terms can be seriously hampered.

The development work of the Evangelical Church in Germany is committed to the objectives of the conciliar process for justice, peace and integrity of creation. This was initiated by the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver in 1982. Aims such as the promotion of democracy, self-determined access to food, health, education, to natural resources and legal certainty stemmed from this process.

In this context, help for self-help is particularly important. People all over the world should be helped to obtain self-determined access to goods – and not just be subject to the whims of others. ‘Help’ should enable people to lead lives in self-determination, to overcome dependencies and clear the hurdles which prevent them from attaining such access to vital resources and development opportunities independently.

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Moreover, the rigid distribution of roles is highly problematic. Who are the givers and who the takers, has been too strictly defined in development work for far too long – including the present day. Church development work needs to focus on rectifying this role distribution and the ensuing power structures. They should be replaced by a world in which compassion and solidarity unite the people around the globe, prompting them to engage in the battle to overcome any injustice, conflict and environmental destruction that they become aware of. In the words of the apostle Paul: “Your abundance shall meet their need”. The “your” and the “their” should never be considered as being permanently fixed. On the contrary, the giver/taker aspect is constantly changing. It describes a reciprocal exchange of goods.

It is only right that development activity policies are scrutinised nowadays. However, generally speaking, young adults doing voluntary service have neither the monitoring tools nor the requisite knowledge of techniques. But objectives have to be precisely defined when planning a project. The measures taken need to match the desired effects. It must be possible to verify whether the measures are appropriate for meeting the objectives. For

example, if tractors are to be bought in order to improve the employment and food situation in a certain area, then it is not enough to say: We have bought tractors, now a greater area of land can be cultivated. A few years later, this should be checked: Is more really being cultivated? Are people eating more healthily? Is the tractor still working? Have technicians been trained to service it? Have new occupations requiring training resulted?

Based on these considerations it can be concluded: If it is recommended that volunteers be sent on a mission, then it makes sense if the volunteers and their supporters make a donation as a contribution towards covering the costs of their service. This also enables the supporters to take an active interest in the project being supported, as they are informed about the progress of the voluntary work. But when volunteers want to help finance other development projects in the host country, this is when the problems start. Some sending organisations even forbid their volunteers to make such donations, others condone or encourage it. Whatever the case, it is advisable to take a sensitive and slightly cautious approach when such donations are involved, taking all aspects into consideration.

The following checklist may be of help:

- 1.** Close consultation with the sending and receiving organisations.
- 2.** If possible, the need for donations should be assessed by the people in the host country.
- 3.** The fundraising activity should be widely discussed by the local NGO network. That will avoid situations where one organisation suddenly has additional finances available while others, that have similar needs, go empty-handed. Furthermore, no donations should be made to projects, which the local NGOs do not consider meaningful.
- 4.** Volunteer donations should always be checked – in the same way as all other donations – as to whether the financing of the projects makes sense from a development point of view, the goals set are realistic and achievable and what effects the donations will have on the project environment.

5. The appropriation of the funds, achievement of objectives and the effect of the projects financed by donations must be subjected to competent scrutiny. The aim is for a sustainable effect of donations, so that the fundraising activity does not create dependency on the giver.

6. Volunteers should not collect donations for development projects arbitrarily or even decide on their own how funds should be appropriated. First of all, they need to familiarise themselves in-depth with the complexity of the subject matter and then seek advice from experienced experts. ☐

Eckhard Röhm (45) is a theologian. He has been involved in development-related educational church work for 15 years and helped set up the volunteer programme for Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World). He is currently in charge of the volunteers and skilled personnel returning from development service with Brot für die Welt – Evangelical development service in Berlin.

What motives are there behind making a donation? The SPD politician Clara West talks in an interview about the various types of donors she researched in the context of her dissertation and what decisive role emotions play in making a donation.

“There are various categories of donation”

An Interview with Clara West

Editor: Frau West, “donations” sounds a fairly dry subject, similar to finances. What made you research precisely that topic?

Clara West: When I was at university it already intrigued me why people commit themselves to a good cause. This led me directly to the subject of “donations”. I have always been involved in voluntary activities. I always enjoyed fundraising. My thesis had to do with why people make donations. In the USA this issue has been widely researched, but in Germany there is relatively little scientific material available. That inspired me to write my doctoral dissertation on the subject. I wanted to find out with my own field study what are the different types of donors.

So what were the results of your research?

The most important result was: there is no one path to donating or one decision to donate. It varies completely from individual to individual.

How does it vary? Can it be typologised?

I identified five donor types. I cannot judge what percentage of the German population belongs to any one type. But it is clear that there are various categories of donation. For example, donating is not per se something emotional or rational. Money is donated to a greater or lesser extent for emotional or rational reasons. And most importantly: there is not just one motive for donating! Generally speaking, people often have several reasons in differing degrees of intensity. Indeed, one and the same person may make different donation decisions inspired by different motives.

Then let's please start on the typology!

First of all, there are the “spontaneous donors”. This type of person doesn't really reflect on where the money is going. The donation is often related to personal circumstances. For example: ‘I have just given birth – and the donation is appropriate for that’. ‘The cause of the people who approached me was just right for me’. ‘It moves me emotionally, that's why I donate.’ No time wasted dithering.

Many donors fall into the classification “compensator”. These are the people who give a lot of thought to making a donation. They donate selectively and strategically. For them, the world is intrinsically bad. As they perceive it: ‘if nobody else is going to do anything about it, then I will’. The donations from this category of people are dispensed precisely, taking a close look at where the money goes. Their worst dread is that the money could be squandered.

But not everyone is rash or donates because of a guilty conscience.

What other types did you find?

Another type is the ‘disappointed’ person. This person wrestles with the question: ‘Will it help if I make a donation; will it even be put to good use?’ On the other hand, this category of people think that something needs to be changed somehow. The ‘disappointed’ person occasionally makes a donation and then for a longer time donates nothing. Then we have the patron or the ‘saturated’ person. They have a relatively high income and they give money regularly and selectively. This kind of person wants to do something for children or the environment – do something for the weak in the world from a position of strength. This category of person looks very closely at which environmental or children's aid organisations match up to his/her expectations.

The last type of person is the activist: these are people who are committed volunteers, whose commitment is often replaced by a donation. For example: Someone was active in their youth and at university. Eventually he/she starts a job, starts a family. They no longer have the time to get involved. Such people then support the causes, in which they were previously active volunteers, with money. They also take a close look at what happens to the money, as they have a clear notion in this respect.

Do people take into account the possible consequences of their donation when they make the decision to give?

That depends on the extent to which the respective decision was made emotionally. Where the category 'spontaneous' donor is concerned, this presumably happens in very few cases. In colloquial terms, for them it is a matter of pressure balance: 'after making a donation I feel better straight away'. This category seldom questions what the donation is really used for. On the other hand, in donor relationships where the donor was previously active or involved with the organisation for quite a while, it is extremely important that the donor receive regular, detailed information about where the money has gone and what it has been used for.


Donations can have negative consequences. For example dependence or jealousy can arise. Are the donors responsible for the consequences of their donation?

That is a question of morality. In my personal opinion: yes! At the end of the day, one is responsible for everything one does. With donations, this responsibility is usually fairly limited: the worst that can happen is, ultimately, that the donation does not necessarily have the effect one had hoped for.

To avoid disappointments, what should potential donors bear in mind before making a donation?

Donors should always take the trouble to find out exactly where money is needed. A lot of money ends up with organisations who invest a huge amount of resources in public relations. That is not necessarily wrong: an organisation that manages without administrative costs cannot be reputable. But donors should look more closely how the organisation is structured. For example, do they make an emotional approach? Or do they provide factual information? Are they obviously just trying to raise a large amount in the shortest possible time? Organisations which raise large amounts quickly often destroy what smaller organisations have built up over a longer period. I would recommend donating to a smaller organisation at regular intervals.

What emotional effect is triggered in the donor when making a donation?

A feeling of wellbeing, which can be divided into various categories. The direct satisfaction of knowing one has done something positive, to the feeling that one has made a profound and lasting contribution. 

Interview: **Judith Scheer**

Dr. Clara West's doctoral thesis concerns the various motives behind making donations. She has worked in different NGOs, including WWF, where she was responsible for fundraising. She is currently a member of the SPD (German Social Democratic Party) fraction in the Berlin state parliament.

Why a qualified psychologist advises against collecting goods in kind and donations for projects in the countries of the South – and instead considers the ideal solution to be for volunteers to convey their abilities and skills to those, to whom they want to “donate”.

Preeti Purohit

The “giver” and the “receiver”: A change of perspective

At the age of 18 or 19 years, a number of youth decide to spend some time abroad after completion of their studies. They often travel to developing countries to work with the underprivileged. There are a number of factors that play a role in the decision to leave one’s home country alone for the first time: to experience a new world, get to know new people, to explore the unknown. For some of the youth, one of the important factors is the feeling of “wanting to give” (to those who have little) – after years of having everything one needs, after having experienced a good childhood. I would like to plead for a preparation of the youth about the meaning of “giving” or “helping” – for oneself (the giver) and for the one who “receives”.

The verb “giving/to give” has several meanings, some of which are:

- to make gifts or donations; contribute
- to effectuate, that something is available
- to bestow, for eg. hope, courage
- to grant someone something (to give someone a chance, to grant relief)

What does one expect from working with the underprivileged, the encounter with “poverty”? How can one change the perspective of “giving” in this context? If poverty is seen at the individual level the perspective is reduced to the obvious lack of food, clothing, housing etc. This can lead to the search for simple short term solutions. This context has the definition of “giving” mainly as “to make gifts or donations; contribute” and lead to the collection of clothes, of money from the relatives etc. to relieve the obvious suffering of the people. The motivating factor is often pity.

Pity is a strong feeling of sorrow and compassion that expresses itself in an impulse to help. Unfortunately “pity” leads to a distinct hierarchical thought process where the “giver” is at a higher level than the “receiver”, the “poor”.

Poverty is a structural problem – a problem that cannot be solved with the help of quick and short-term solutions. A volunteer who gets Christmas presents for all the children because he/she cannot imagine Christmas without presents will probably see the joy on the children’s faces. But he/she also raises expectations that the volunteers who come after him/her.

We will change here to another definition of “giving”: to effectuate that something is available, for e.g. being present, being there for someone, being interested in the daily life of the others. The perspective suddenly changes here – it is not something material that is important, but rather my presence, my time, patience, my motivation. “Giving” becomes an asset that can be accepted and used to master

the difficulties in daily life and to take the next steps forward.

Poverty is a structural problem – a problem that cannot be solved with the help of quick and short-term solutions.

“Giving” in the sense of granting someone something can also mean giving someone a chance – to learn something new, to experience new things. The simplest routines in daily life and things that are self-evident for oneself can become precious gifts for others – the joy of music, theater, sports, handicrafts can be “given”, as well as strategies for learning that one learnt oneself in school. There could be collections of games for the institution instead of Christmas presents for each child – card games that improve mathematics, board games that help to improve logical thinking. What is self-evident for oneself can have a completely new meaning for others. This way you can “give” a lot and with joy and at the same time think about what you can take back. What positive impulses can I take back from people who are financially and structurally “poor”?

The experience that, despite poverty, all people have a daily routine, that they have a craving for learning, the life energy to grasp all possibilities that will help them get out of poverty – this insight gives one the energy to “give” everything one has experienced and helped oneself to overcome dif-



faculties, but also to learn from other about their driving energy.

Experiencing the joy of life, the mastery of all daily difficulties – these are moments that “poverty” loses its horror and can be seen as the structural problem that it is. But structural means that there is no place for simple short-term solutions that are based on pity. It is enough if the fighting spirit has been awakened and if one wants to change the factors leading to poverty – on a long-term level. ◻

24 years ago **Dr. Preeti Purohit** came to Heidelberg from Bangalore, India to study psychology. She did her doctorate on the subject of racism and civilian bravery. She has worked for the past 12 years with children, young people and parents in the psychological counselling service of the German Caritas Association in Heidelberg. Her main focus in the work with young people is on issues such as motivation, life prospects and a thoughtful attitude toward oneself.

Where do/does our motivation(s) to donate come from? – Stereotypes, values and empathy have an influence on our decisions to donate. Markus Savander explains how.

Markus Savander

Motives behind donations – a psychological perspective

Introduction

Volunteers who are going to work in foreign country may find themselves in an environment where almost everything seems different from what they are used to. People, tradition, communication styles, natural environment, habits, food and so on. That is often very confusing in the beginning and confusion can last relatively long, until sufficient level of understanding and acceptance of cultural differences is gained. One of the most pervasive experience for a volunteer is widespread poverty, in other words lack of material resources. There may be a shortage of some of the things we normally take for granted, for example clothes, nutritious food or water. Seeing the clear and remarkable inequality in one's own eyes can raise a question of how to help balance the perceived unequal distribution of resources between different societies. How can the volunteers put their own best effort to make things a little bit better? We can relate the topic of donation by volunteers in their own projects to this framework.

Stereotypes and expectations

Stereotype is a fixed, over-generalized belief about a particular group or class of people. Stereotypes are based on insufficient knowledge or narrow attitudes drawn from rumours, magazines, movies, internet and other medias etc. They are often misleading. There are naturally certain stereotypes among people in the Global South countries about people of Global North, about our habits and culture and so on. Similarly we may have stereotypes about people in the countries we are going to. Though some stereotypes may be more persistent than others, the more first-hand experience one

gains the less rigid these fixed, overgeneralizing views become. Similarly, it can be expected that the more foreign volunteers work in projects the more wide and flexible the image of the heterogenic group of "foreigners" or "Westerners" develops.

Expectations of volunteers can be at least partly based on the stereotypes, especially when there is lack of better knowledge available. However, in most of the cases, expectations are based on experience drawn from interaction with earlier volunteers or other similar people. We tend to build schemas, mental structures, about people according to our past experience (stereotype is a form of schema, very inflexible one) and these schemas have an effect to expectations we have. If the only western person someone has met happens to be left-handed, it is possible that this feature is generalized to include all the western people. Naturally, the more different experiences people will get, the less rigid and narrow expectations will develop. In general, the more knowledge we get of different people in the world, the more we understand and tolerate differences.

All in all, the way in which earlier volunteers have spent their volunteer period in the project will certainly build some expectations of hosts and other workers in the volunteer projects. Some of the expectations are explicit, and usually these are readable in project details before the volunteer starts her exchange period or they are communicated in the beginning of the work period. However, many expectations are implicit, which means that they are not communicated clearly at any point but they can reveal themselves in interactions during the voluntary work period indirectly. For this category of expectations the deeds of previous volunteers can have a big impact. Comparisons may occur between earlier and current volunteers. If in previous year a volunteer has donated a significant amount of money to the project, it may become an implicit expectation that next volunteers will do the same, especially if the people in the project hold such stereotypes that western people are predominantly very wealthy.

Schemata

Schemata (here: in the psychological sense) are organised information and knowledge structures stored in our subconscious memory. They enable mankind to evaluate what is perceived by the sensory organs, to adapt rapidly and effortlessly to new situations and behave accordingly. In addition, they influence our expectations with respect to people and situations.

Motivation to donate, values and pressure

Generally our motives (motive = force that directs a person act in certain way) can be divided to primary needs, that include food, water, clothes, shelter and closeness, and secondary motives, that include for example seeking knowledge, independence, achievement, recognition, affiliation and nurturance. Primary needs are same for all people, but secondary needs can vary between individuals. Secondary needs have a lot to do with values. Values are judgments about how important something is to us. Our values affect our motivations. For example a person, whose core value is taking care of others will more probably engage in work that benefits other people.

Motivation can be intrinsic, which means that behavior is driven by internal rewards. Extrinsic motivation, in turn, refers to behavior that is driven by external rewards. In the case of donations intrinsic motivation can mean for example willingness to contribute money out of sense of responsibility or drive to help others. External motivation could be donation given out of pressure from others or out of showing off one's wealth, for example.

It can be presumed that many of those who decide to volunteer in Global South feel strong social responsibility over other people. If so, taking care of other people's well-being, even in a smallest scale, is at least one of the motives to do volunteering. Besides this there are probably many other motives, for example getting new experiences, exploring the world or getting more independent. The urge of taking responsibility for people with deprived background can possibly grow stronger when a volunteer gets first-hand experience on circumstances and resources in her project. Depending on the country and project the contrast between volunteer's own living standards and the living standards of locals can be remarkable and make a deep impact on young, responsible person's mind. Motivation to help in one way or another will grow larger the bigger the contrast is and the more socially responsible and active or energetic the person is. One may start to think about the most effective ways to help the worse-off people that are now part of one's daily life. If, explicitly or implicitly, financial support is appreciated by the host project, willingness or pressure to donate may increase. This may be the case in some projects and it can be a consequence



of stereotypes on foreigners as invariably well-off people, or expectations built on donations by earlier volunteers or both. In many projects, however, this kind of expectations don't occur and the explicit or official expectations are the ones that are followed.

Helping yourself by helping others


We, as social beings, are naturally able to sympathize with others. Feeling empathy for other people is our inherent ability and its original purpose is to help, cooperate and build close relationships between each other. Smile of a child makes us instantly smile and feel happy and a suffering stranger makes us almost literally feel the same pain as him. Compassion is the base factor of motivation to help someone we see suffering. We feel bad, when someone else feels bad and we feel good if we can help him in the situation. It seems that we do good things to feel better about ourselves, in other words with charity we can buy a clear conscience. But that's only one point of you. If we recognize that there clearly is a lack of essential resources and if we have financial opportunities to help, donating may feel the most responsible or wise thing to do.

Many ways to contribute

There are many ways to make oneself useful in the volunteer project. The primary way is, naturally, to give one's own contribution for the workplace as a worker. Strong motivation to help and do one's work well will affect the quality of work positively. Furthermore, though this is sometimes neglected by volunteers themselves, the amount of work done doesn't always count as much as the attitude it is done with. This is especially true in social projects, working with children, disabled or deprived people, who may be more hungry for love and acceptance than anything else. A volunteer with accepting, caring and warm attitude will leave a permanent impression in whole work community, especially in the nurtured people. In addition, bringing fresh ideas, one's own unique personality and background to the work place can nourish the projects in a significant way. Every volunteer should remember that their labor input is the primary expectation and everything else is surplus. Donations may seem like the best way to help in some cases, especially if there is apparent lack of important resources, but even in these cases it is good to recognize that we look through different standards of what is necessary and what is not.

Conclusions

From a psychological perspective, before giving a donation to one's own host project it's beneficial to think about especially these questions:

- Do I really want to donate money or do I merely feel that I should do it? What motivates me to do it: is my motivation intrinsic or extrinsic?
- Is my financial contribution necessary or useful to the project?
- How will donation affect the relationship and expectations of project staff and current and future volunteers?
- How can I best contribute to my project so that it includes sharing, i.e. meaningful interaction that truly enhances social values and well-being? Is my donation in line with promoting culture of sharing and empowerment of the project itself? 

Markus Savander is a Finnish psychologist specialized in work psychology, counseling and training. He is volunteering for Red Cross Finland as a multicultural trainer. He participated in a one-year volunteer program in India through ICYE in 2013–2014.

Before volunteers decide to donate or the projects decide to seek donations from volunteers, they need to ensure that such a transaction creates a healthy interdependence rather than dependency. The article suggests that any donation that promotes dependency will be detrimental to all the stakeholders involved.

Shashi Rao

Donations for dependency or interdependence: A post colonial perspective

In most development articles and international studies in the 1980s, the word “North” referred to countries that were variously labelled “developed,” “First World,” “rich,” and “advanced.” The word South referred to the countries described as “underdeveloped,” “Third World,” “poor,” and “backward.” The Northern countries invariably received positive labels and were placed at the top of the hierarchy while the Southern countries occupied the lower positions in much of the development literature. This article sets aside this Eurocentric bias of such classification and instead uses natural geographic positions to describe these countries. Hence, North refers to mainly Europe (especially Germany) and the South mainly to India, and some parts of Latin America and Africa.

This article revisits my doctoral thesis entitled “the Long Shadow of Neo-Colonialism: experiences of Asian Students on the American Campus” and draws parallels to the issue of volunteers from the North going to the South volunteering for cross cultural enrichment. While my dissertation traces the long history of trans-nationalization of students from the Asian sub-continent to USA in search of knowledge; this article traces the movement of international volunteers from the North and the projects in the South looking for cross cultural experiences. While my dissertation deals with the issues of academic fulfillment this paper deals with cultural enrichment.

The most prominent feature of the exodus of students in the 1980s was the distinct flow from the South to the North. Such migration of students was supposed to bring about equilibrium in the global demand and supply of man power and it was hoped that the movement would continue until, on a global level, income disparities would near the equilibrium. However, now, the increasingly popular form of volunteering, particularly of gap year students from the North, is a movement of young people to communities in the developing world to work on projects. Activities include teaching English and computers, working in orphanages, mostly with people from disadvantaged backgrounds. International volunteering is said to give participants valuable skills, knowledge, and the experience of a lifetime. The organizations who host volunteers for short periods of time are able to learn new skills and have additional help when needed. Such interactions tend to change perceptions in their community and build a global network that can continue to support them. Thus volunteering is seen as a means of narrowing the cultural divide.

It is a given that most host projects need the services of international volunteers to enhance their services to the communities they work with.

There were a number of arguments that supported the movement of students: primarily, the Interdependence Approach which justified the trans-nationalization as a positive development in the context of growing economic interdependence of nations leading to economic growth on a global scale. Similarly, today volunteering in other countries is justified as a positive step towards growing cultural interdependence among nations and for creating greater awareness of different cultures.

In order to make the voluntary service by the volunteers from the North to the projects in the South promote the spirit of interdependence the exchange needs to bring about a balance in the power structures between the North and the South. It is a given that most host projects need the services of international volunteers to enhance their services to the communities they work with. Their need for volunteers is as important as the volunteers' need for the exposure to enrich their life experiences. Such programs can and should be a mutually beneficial exchange that promotes a healthy interdependence between two cultures.

One of the major counter arguments to the trans-nationalization of students was the Dependency Theory which states that there is a division of the world into two parts: the center and the periphery. The center of the global economy is the political powers of the North and the periphery is the South comprising most of Africa, Latin America and Asia. The theory evolved in the 1970s and mainly argued that the development of the center necessarily implies an underdevelopment of the periphery. In the present context, when volunteers from the North donate to projects in the South it becomes a manifestation of the economic dependency of the periphery on the center. When volunteers take on the role of donors and provide monetary aid to the projects, the dependency theory is reinforced by ensuring that the periphery remains underdeveloped.

When volunteers offer to 'donate' in kind too, for example toys, clothes, stationery and food, it affects the local industries and leads to their underdevelopment. It does not in any way encourage local businesses to become self-sufficient. Culturally too such donations are sometimes inappropriate and impractical. What starts off as an experience in cultural sharing and mutually beneficial exchange between the North and the South often, unintentionally, turns out to reinforce the dependency theory.

In order to minimize such counterproductive developments of volunteering, it is important that volunteers take some time to think deeply about their real desire to volunteer in a project. What is it that they want: get work experience, learn about a new culture, or accomplish something by serving the community? If they are clear about their own goals and expectations, it's going to be easier for them to identify a project that will meet their expectations. They must be aware of the fact that when they volunteer abroad, they are guests and students of these communities for a short period of time. In most cases, they may not see the immediate impact of their efforts. They may put a new system in place but realize it is not being carried forward. When they reflect about it, they may realize that the efforts would have been sustainable if it was initiated, owned and driven by local people. The main purpose of the volunteering service is to enrich and enhance the projects and not to increase the disparities between the North and South. So any action by the projects or the volunteers that creates dependency or disturbs the balance of power, must be thoroughly examined and reviewed by all the stakeholders before being implemented.

From the host project's perspective too, a request for or expectation of monetary donations from international volunteers reinforces the dependency theory. Why do host projects expect young volunteers to provide financial aid to run their projects? Is it because they perceive these volunteers coming from the "rich" North as having easy access to money? Or is it because they do not have access to sufficient local financial resources? Or do they feel incapable of raising funds on their own. □

Dr. Shashi Rao is the founder and Managing Trustee of Ananya Trust that runs a school for first generation learners from the slums of Bangalore, India. She has a PhD in Education and has been an educator and teacher trainer. Her interests are empowerment of women and children through education.

Lucía Muriel from the migrant organisation moveGLOBAL argues that people in the Global North should be aware of their privileges and they should take action at home in their own country.

“Donations make no difference”

An Interview with Lucía Muriel

Editor: Mrs Muriel, you participate in a programme supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development to promote better networking between organisations involved in development work. You work in the migrant umbrella organisation moveGLOBAL, which endeavours to provide a voice for migrants in Germany. In this context, I don't suppose you come into contact with donations very often, do you?

Lucía Muriel: As far as we are concerned, donations are not a main issue. We do not receive donations at our association moveGLOBAL, or hardly any. But many migrant organisations approach us with project ideas which are extremely hard to implement because they do not meet the requirements of charitable trusts. In addition, it is very difficult to obtain the knowledge required for raising funds effectively. I see to it that organisations have access to such knowledge. However, sponsoring is something which we are confronted with more frequently nowadays. We have taken a critical look at sponsoring and try to create awareness about what emancipatory collaboration means. And what it means to put people who are unable to decide for themselves into a position of dependency.

How do you feel about the roles of recipients and donors?

First of all, donors are people who have more money in their account than they require for their daily needs. They have been instilled with moral values which dictate that they should not squander this money but share it, up to a point. However, even people who do not have much money make donations. This happens nearly every day. I think this is fine in a private context. Many people decide to spend more money on fair trade or organically produced products. What I spend my money on is my own personal decision. But people often think they are making a global statement with their purchases. In my opinion, that poses a problem. At the same time contracts

and trade agreements are being negotiated on a global basis and new trade strategies developed from which entire populations in the Global South are excluded and by which – in the long run – they are impoverished. They really do not care about our personal purchasing decisions, life-styles and our well-intentioned messages. These people are more concerned about how they can escape from unjust and often inhumane situations, about what options remain open to them.

In other words, even our conscious decision to buy fair-trade goods does nothing to help the people in the countries of the Global South?

Not much. What global effect should it have for these people if we wear fair-trade cotton or eat a vegan diet? Or donate ten euros? This changes nothing for the people in the Global South. In the North, the privileges enjoyed by white European society are neither discussed nor addressed. Someone should say “You know what? It’s really our economic interests that are destroying everything in the Global South”, thanks to trade agreements for example, which deprive small-scale agricultural workers of their livelihood. Such agreements concluded and adopted by the very parliaments, the governments elected by these well-meaning people who now buy fair-trade products. For me, that is the height of hypocrisy. As long as we maintain a “from the top down” attitude, are privileged, white, wealthy and are used to having a regular income, it is easy to make the occasional donation out of sympathy with the poverty of those in the Global South and speak of a commendable statement.

“You know what? It’s really our economic interests that are destroying everything in the Global South”

But donations can help to set political and social reforms and commitment in motion. Would you not agree?

Donations make no difference. They cannot induce social changes – not even irrelevant ones. The sentiment of “I’m doing OK!” is usually accompanied by “I deserve it!” In Germany we are so industrious, we do the right thing, we have long-standing traditions. This is firmly anchored in our education and upbringing. What did I learn in history and geography? What books have I read? We are constantly given to understand that things are going well for us because we are “the good guys”. We are white. We are European. We discovered the so-called Third World. We are sponsors and developers of the Third World. In this way, the vertical North/South divide is encouraged further.

What do donations mean for migrant organisations?

Of course, a project can sometimes be implemented by a donation. But we must realise that one project does not change the world. As migrants, we are often active despite our own precarious circumstances, which we have to deal with on a daily basis. For example, I – as an Ecuadorian – cannot live in Germany and act as though my home country and its problems do not exist. People who come here from Africa experience this time and again: From the day they arrive in Germany, they support and think about projects back home. The idea of making a positive contribution stems from their sense of responsibility for the community. Whether they are here or there, they are preoccupied by this responsibility for the community. They consider themselves to be responsible individuals, even if they are excluded here and live in precarious and uncertain circumstances.

Racism

“Racism is the process by which people are construed as belonging to a homogeneous group on the basis of actual or supposed physical or cultural characteristics (e.g. colour of their skin, origin, language, religion) (...) are judged and excluded” (Glossary of the German “Centre for Information and documentation of work against racism” – IDA.) Racism is not a phenomenon which is restricted to an extremist right-wing political spectrum. In fact, it runs through the whole of society, affecting the respective mutually shared attitudes, prejudices and behaviour patterns.

Should these donations therefore be seen in a different light to those from people in the Global North to the Global South?

I don't really know whether one can call this making a donation. By contrast with white, privileged citizens in this society, migrants do not find themselves in a situation where they have to decide whether or not to give away part of their income. For them, doing what they do here is the same as they would do in their home country: it is an integral part of their idea of responsibility. I act responsibly. Personally, I have never sent my family money or a donation, because they don't need it. But I know quite a few other people, who are also part of my family and I know that they suffer from poverty. That is why I try to send them money regularly. I don't consider that to be a donation. I see it as my responsibility. I would never say “I'll donate this money so you can send your three children to a better school”. I see it as my responsibility to give something back to those who were there for me when I needed them.

Talking of giving in return: What do you think of the idea of making reparation payments as compensation for colonisation?

A clear distinction should be made between reparation payments and donations. Reparation payments are a structural entitlement of society. In this case the government would say: "We are guilty of offences against these peoples, their history and their fate. We caused hardship and abandoned these peoples to it. We stole their resources, worth countless billions of euros. We lined our pockets and we recognise that we should pay reparations for that." That is something completely different. From the social history aspect, this is a recognition of the hardship for which the colonial government was responsible. Something must be given in return for this. We cannot resurrect all those who died as a result of colonial violence. The rebellions which we crushed cannot be undone. Nor can we return the resources to the mountains. They are here in the North. But we are ready to calculate some kind of equivalent and pay it back. Exactly in the sense of a reparation.

Nevertheless, what is the relationship between such payments and social activities such as voluntary service?

I give my full backing to people – whether young or old – who take a stand for a fairer world. As a volunteer, I'd take a look first at how refugees live in Germany. I would ask what my migrant neighbours need. That is what the diaspora criticises time and again about youth exchange and 'weltwärts' programmes. Why do people need to fly to Indonesia or Nicaragua to find out what people are like, how they tick and what they need? We are here – and have been for some time! But these youth movements do not come to us. For example, the number of mosques which are set on fire is increasing steadily at the moment, especially in Berlin. One person concerned, an imam, told me that he had lived in Berlin for 40 years. He had worked in a large, well-known mosque in Kreuzberg¹, which had done a lot for the neighbourhood – until it was set on fire. What happened? Not a single German neighbour came to him to say they were sorry for what had happened. I ask myself what kind of perception lies behind the assertion "I want to help in the South, I want to get to know the people, I want to do something good?" What kind of logic is that, if at the same time I as a migrant cannot even depend on help when something happens, when things are bad? What am I supposed to think? In particular, I am referring to racist violence which unfortunately plays a part in our daily lives. Migrant brothers and sisters come to me with reports of being attacked. But what upsets them

most of all is the indifference of passers-by.

**How about the donation recipients?
What does it mean to them to receive
money?**

Usually, people in the Global South are not asked whether they would like a donation and in what form. When did anyone talk to them, make arrangements or include them in the organisation process? In 2008, at the height of the so-called financial crisis, I heard that a church congregation in Kenya had collected food donations for Germany – they had heard that many Germans were having a hard time. The Foreign Office was horrified. The officials did not know what to make of this and how to deal with it. The first comment from the Foreign Office was appropriately revealing: ‘Why didn’t they ask us first?’ That is exactly how it should be! People in the Global South want to be asked first, be involved. If we were to follow this example with our donations, a completely different concept of help would exist, which would be far more satisfying, positive and effective for the people. I am quite sure that a totally different relationship would develop in place of today’s uncompromising gulf between North and South. This relationship need not necessarily be paternalistic or colonially influenced. Maybe some people would find other forms of support more important than a donation, for example solidarity.

Solidarity

Here solidarity means generally assisting one another, based on a sense of responsibility and mutual obligation. Social solidarity manifests itself in the committed support of people in need by those who are not in need. Political solidarity can be expressed, for example, by the political support of people who are fighting against forms of repression and exclusion. This implies that repression is recognised as such in the first case.

**What is the relationship between German voluntary service in the
Global South and donations?**

First of all, volunteers are potential life-long donors. Behind voluntary service there is unfortunately an extremely vertical concept, according to which people in the North enjoy the privilege of being able to do good in the South. Something which in their view – in the view of the North – is good. This does not reflect the view of the South. It is not presumed that people who come to Europe from the Global South want to do good there. The perception is crystal clear: anyone coming from the Global South usu-

¹ “Kreuzberg” is a neighbourhood in Berlin, Germany.

ally brings problems and is not able to achieve anything. On the contrary, people from the Global North who go to the Global South always have something great to offer, are always welcome and always have a project in mind.

In 2014 alone there are 50 people from countries of the Global South doing voluntary service with ICYE here in Germany.

This is definitely a major step forward. It provides youngsters from the Global South with an opportunity to get away and experience something new, take an active part somewhere else. Voluntary service for youngsters from the Global South is a good means of rectifying the totally vertical relationship. However, it took decades before this step was implemented. This should not be forgotten.

Are volunteers really not to act responsibly on a private level and make donations after all?

Everyone should learn to act responsibly in his*her immediate surroundings. In the neighbourhood where one has grown up and lives, towards nature, animals. No one needs to go to the South for that. Colonialists went abroad not because of their awe and respect for the people, but out of ruthless mercenary interests. And this did not end 500 years ago, but continued right up until the last century. I still see a colonial tradition today.

That means that when volunteers make a donation, these structures may be reinforced?

Precisely. We should recognise this heritage. It is quite normal for someone to give something to someone else. But one should always take the needs of one's opposite number into consideration.

Does it make a difference if I support a human rights' organisation which actively tries to change structures?

Donations on a structural level are a better way. Nevertheless, organisations which work on a structural basis should likewise ask themselves if they are respecting the Global South and its needs. We already talked about reparations. That – in my opinion – is a good starting point. Not donations, but genuine reparation measures. Giving something back. Not giving from the imaginary goodness of one's heart, out of sympathy or because our conscience pricks. That alone would make a big difference.


What can people with a so-called “migrant background” contribute to the debate on donations?

I would like to see the lack of communication between migrant organisations and the majority of society being overcome. For example, you came to me from ICYE. To me, that is a good sign, something which needs to happen far more often. Conversely, as migrants we need to take the trouble to write down everything we see, what we think, what we feel and what we have analysed. It would be useful if we were to draft recommendations.

So what can people do instead of donating??

Take a better look around them, to see what is going on. Ask oneself who is in need of solidarity. Everyone has the time to do a few hours voluntary work per month. I don't think we need to spend money.

But that is what volunteers have been doing for a long time!

Exactly. Donations strengthen hierarchies – I am totally convinced of that. And they cannot make any essential or significant alterations to the world. Of that, I am equally as convinced. 

Interview: **Esther Neitzel**

Lucía Muriel, a qualified psychologist, born in Ecuador, has lived for over three decades in Berlin. She has established and assisted several migrant organisations and initiatives as an activist there. Her main focus today is to promote the dialogue between migrant activists and the majority of German society as an important basis for civic involvement within the landscape of development aid.

The mere transfer of charity from North to South runs the risk of replicating colonial patterns of perception and depoliticising global social injustice and evils. What is required is political commitment and international solidarity rather than charitable donations.

Benjamin Haas

White charity or global solidarity? Post-colonial perspectives on donations of Northern volunteers' for their assignment locations in the Global South

Anyone making a donation is considered to be altruistic, charitable or philanthropic. He who has, gives to those who are less fortunate to alleviate wrongs. Sounds like a good and noble cause, doesn't it? But it's not quite that easy. Especially when donations in a North-South context are involved.

While doing voluntary service in Latin America in 2005, like many other volunteers I collected donations from friends and family for my assignment location. In retrospect, I doubt this action of mine did any good – particularly in the way I carried it out. Based on my own fundraising activities and with the aid of post-colonial theoretical approaches, I would like to outline the problems associated with volunteer donations.¹ Post-colonial theory can help in analysing the effects of the colonial period on the present-day and clarify the continuing influence of colonial structures on the way people and societies in the Global North and Global South² think and act.

Money is power

Volunteers who collect donations automatically find themselves in a position of power. After all, the money would not be available but for them. The feeling “I raised the money, so I want to help decide what it is spent on” automatically ensues. In addition, after a short while I had the feeling that I

knew what was lacking at the assignment location. For various reasons, such a feeling can be utterly deceptive. On the one hand, volunteers run the risk of collecting for something totally unnecessary in the local and cultural context. On the other hand, they will maneuver themselves into the colonial tradition: people from the Global North speaking on behalf of people in the Global South, without really understanding their real needs and ideas and nor letting them speak for themselves. Post-colonial theory calls this 'representation problems' (Eriksson Baaz 2005, Spivak 2008). We assume that – coming from the Global North – we are in a position to judge what is required and give advice.

If I were a volunteer today I would do my best to give others a share in this position (of power), or disown it altogether. The *modus operandi* for fundraising should be to act with the people in the institutions and not arbitrarily on their behalf. Those responsible in the assignment locations must insist on this and plan each action together with the volunteers. This does not just mean mutually deciding how a donation is used. It starts with a joint decision on how the action group wants to be seen in Germany. Special care should be taken not to use the usual stereotypes concerning the Global South.

The donor image

My voluntary service assignment was unique – for me at least. For the local people and the assignment location, one generation of volunteers follows another. Now I am far more aware that – when fundraising – I am just a link in this chain of generations. No doubt many volunteers will have been asked “And what are you going to buy us?” by the local children. Thanks to the regular fundraising activities by volunteers, the children and young people soon learned: Anyone coming from the North will bring money for things we cannot afford on our own.

¹ Due to lack of space, I can only provide a sketchy picture of the different approaches. For those interested in the theory, I would recommend: do Mar Castro Varela, María and Nikita Dhawan (2005) and in English: Kapoor, Ilan (2008).

² I use the terms “Global North” and “Global South”, which – as far as I am concerned – is the most neutral way of describing global disparity. Written in capitals, this distinguishes the socio-political term from its geographical counterpart.

For decades, this is the logic that has been diffused by the Global North through its 'development aid' and 'development work'. Patronising behaviour emulates established power structures. Impressions about each other are created and propagated by donations, which result in relationships of dependency. The notion that 'someone will come and fix everything' is firmly etched into the relations between social groups in the Global North and South (cf. Kerner 1999). If volunteers continue down this path, they are perpetuating the 'donor image' and the so-called inferiority complex (Frantz Fanon, 1952). By this, Fanon means that the colonised people have accepted the way of thinking of the colonisers and have adopted a similar way of seeing themselves. The Brazilian author, Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães (2006), talks about 'colonisation awareness' which is thus repeatedly instilled, with the result that a sense of regional identity takes a very long time to develop.

A first step towards eluding this trap is the depersonalisation of donations. Both the volunteers and the assignment location should think of ways of making any donation known to their target group. The image of the charitable volunteer, who can raise money in no time at all and to whom one should be eternally grateful, should be avoided at all costs.

Whose problem is it really?

When I was raising funds, I tried to describe the poverty of the children in my assignment location. I wanted to make the 'problem' or the 'deprivation' tangible for those who were donating money towards a remedy. I formulated such sentences as: 'The children's daily lives are characterised by drugs and violence' Or 'More than 50 percent of the population live below the poverty line'.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are oversimplified clichés about people or groups of people. They result from hackneyed perceptions which are no longer disputed and which are often considered to be "typical" of the person (group of people) in question.

At that time I was barely aware of the political dimensions of problematic situations and poverty. And I had blotted out the part that the Global North had played both historically and actually in the deprivations described.

What role does the consumer behaviour of people in the Global North play? What are the effects of the exploitation of resources in the Global South by multinational conglomerates?

What part does the colonial exploitation of the South play in the present-day wealth of the North? What challenges does neoliberal globalisation³ pose for the people in both North and South? Issues such as these are seldom broached by organisations and people trying to raise money. The reason: Anyone who is honest enough to suggest that poverty has political causes and who demands structural changes will soon be punished by a sharp drop in donation income.

But if you depoliticise poverty in the Global South and blot out the structural violence⁴, (Galtung, 1975) on which many globalisation processes are based, then you are putting yourself on the same level as the many advertising posters of aid organisations in Germany.

'If you are coming to help, then go home. If you are coming to understand, then stay.'

Their image is simple and plausible: The charitable (white) Global North gives alms to the immature (black) poor in the South. The people in the Global South are depicted as helpless objects – and not as active subjects capable of managing and mastering their destiny by themselves. At the same time, the use of such stereotypes makes a clear distinction between black and white individuals. A 'we' is construed – as opposed to 'them'. We, the white Germans who have enough for ourselves, give to them, (the poor in the developing countries), who rely on our help.

When I collected donations from my friends as a volunteer, I helped promote this depoliticisation. In the end, this reinforces the system of structural violence, because the people in the North can avoid coming to terms with this violence. The volunteers have the impression that they have done something to combat injustice in the world. It is doubtless more involved and more complex than that, but advantage should be taken of any fundraising activity to question the charitable image of the North.

³ The term neoliberal globalisation refers to the actual, virtually global economic policy project based on a liberalisation of international trade (abolishment of international customs'duties and trade barriers of all kinds), privatisation (market opening to all sectors) and deregulation (non-intervention of the state in the economic domain).

⁴ "Structural violence is the avoidable interference in basic human needs or, in more general terms, living conditions, which reduces the actual extent to which such needs are satisfied to below what is potentially possible" (Galtung, 1975). Cf. The documentary film "White Charity" by Carolin Philipp and Timo Kiesel, which is freely available on the internet (e.g. www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUSMh8kV-xw).

Fundraising by volunteers provides an opportunity which should not be underestimated: the family and friends of volunteers will listen to them far more attentively than they would to an anonymous major aid organisation.

Solidarity campaigns instead of charitable donations

However, none of these suggestions changes the basic problem, namely that power structures are strengthened by donations. What are the alternatives to a classical donation? The key issue is: As a volunteer, is my motivation to raise funds really charity or solidarity-related?

In 2005, when I collected donations, I did not do it to thank my assignment location for the many new experiences they had opened up for me. Nor did I have the negative effects of globalisation in North and South in mind. I just wanted to do something for those people who were not as fortunate as me. I wanted to do something to alleviate the poverty in Latin America because it seemed so easy to collect money in Germany and use it to make a big difference in my assignment location. I know now that helping is always controversial when the balance of giving and taking becomes distorted. This is when dependency and obligations arise (cf. Haas 2012).

It is preferable to use one's powers of persuasion at home than to donate on a global basis

One feels good because one has done something. One expects gratitude from the assignment location and one has a feeling of superiority. It's really not easy to show solidarity in a North-South context. In Mexico⁵, the Zapatistas used the following phrase (freely translated) in the 1990s: 'If you are coming to help, then go home. If you are coming to understand, then stay.' They impressed on the voluntary supporters who came to help them that if they really wanted to demonstrate solidarity, they should fight at home against unjust globalisation and exploitation of the Global South by the Global North (Olesen 2004).

What does that imply for volunteer fundraising? Even if the urge to make a donation to one's own assignment location is great, it is more important to support projects and organisations in the North that want to change things in our countries of origin. Perhaps this may be less appealing to sponsors, but volunteers often have a personal relationship with potential donors.



They have the opportunity to make such projects and organisations better known and support them.

Another possibility is to raise funds for volunteers from the Global South, who are doing their voluntary service in Europe. The structural imbalance between Global North and South makes it much more difficult to send volunteers to Germany from the South. Even publicly sponsored programmes such as *welwärts* have to bear 25 percent of the costs themselves. Northern volunteers usually collect money from donors in their immediate environment. Southern volunteers do not have this option.

Fundraising for the Global South will always be ambivalent, as will volunteer service in the Global South. Therefore there is no single right solution or politically and ethically perfect one. What is crucial is that volunteers, assignment location and – if possible – the sending organisation discuss together how fundraising activities can be used in a sense of solidarity and with meaning, transforming actual power structures and not reinforcing them. ◻

⁵ The Zapatistas (in full: the Zapatista Army of National Liberation – EZLN) are a political organisation and social movement which first appeared on 1st January 1994 in an armed uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas. It consists mainly of indigenous peoples. Their main aims are grassroots democracy and global solidarity. They used the recently introduced internet to disseminate their ideas rapidly in the Global North. Globalisation opponents were profoundly influenced by their ideas. There was a worldwide surge of solidarity and the Zapatistas organised many international meetings. They called for an international network ‘respecting differences and recognising similarities’ (Nachtwey 2002; Olesen 2004).

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Benjamin Haas (M.A.) is the author of a study entitled “The Ambivalence of Reciprocity” and publisher of “Voluntaris – a magazine for voluntary service”. He publishes works and lectures on post-colonialism, racism, voluntary service and the third sector. On completing his alternative civilian service in Buenos Aires, 2005/6, he took charge locally of several donation projects organised by his former partner organisation in Argentina and Paraguay. He holds a Master's degree in Cultural Anthropology & Development Sociology from the University Leiden (NL).
Mail: benjamin.haas@uni-koeln.de

Charitable donations are often confined to treating the symptoms of poverty and social exclusion. However, it would be better and more effective to focus on their causes, which are frequently of a political nature. Consequently, it is important that we strive for the realisation of economic and social human rights, or defend them against asocial, neoliberal politics.

Thomas Gebauer and Felix Speidel

Social human rights and social solidarity instead of voluntary charity

According to Bertolt Brecht in his poem “Das Nachtlager” (A place to sleep), giving a homeless person a bed for the night is all very well and good. However, – as he continues – “the world is not thereby changed, [...] the age of exploitation is not thereby shortened”.

This fundamental problem applies to charitable donations from international volunteers and to charity in general. The well-meaning intention is usually to relieve distress, poverty and need. However, if such charitable help only mitigates the need for a short while, it does not normally go beyond treating the symptoms of social evils. Generally speaking, the political causes of poverty and social exclusion, such as a high inequality in distribution of social resources or unfair international economic relations, are not taken into account. Furthermore, in certain circumstances charitable aid may unintentionally contribute towards a stabilisation of social and political situations which generate need time and again. For this and other reasons which will be discussed here, charitable aid needs to be scrutinized carefully.

Helping people in a social predicament is without doubt an ethical principle. However, it would be much better to prevent need from arising in the first place, by eliminating its causes. Where this is not possible and aid continues to be necessary, this should be provided by public welfare services, i.e. by state welfare structures which guarantee entitlement to the appropriate aid.

The status of social security and social justice in an era of neoliberalism¹

Such state and public welfare organisations have come increasingly under pressure in the last decades. The reason for this is a neoliberal reform policy (see also footnote on “neoliberal globalisation” on p. 51), which along with the privatisation of public goods and deregulation of the markets has prompted massive cuts in social services. This increases the loss of institutionally safeguarded assistance and subsequently of social solidarity, instead of reinforcing them.

On a global scale, neoliberal reform policy over all causes greater inequality in the distribution of social opportunities and resources, with the result that the social divide continues to widen. This affects the societies of the Global South especially. In those countries in which at least the rudiments of public welfare services once existed, cuts in social welfare have led to an almost complete collapse of public social services. At the same time, privatisation in the Global South in particular has meant that many people are deprived of access to important resources such as clean drinking water or farmland. In many areas, labour protection laws have been relaxed and the deregulation of international trade has been the ruin of many small-scale producers – especially in the agricultural sector.

These are some of the reasons for the poverty, social exclusion and economic vulnerability affecting large sections of the world’s population – primarily in the Global South. And it is precisely these social evils that trigger the impulse to make a charitable donation in many international volunteers, as they seek to rectify the situation fast. To many of them, this – at first sight – appears to be the least complicated, most effective and therefore most obvious course of action.

Appraisal of charitable aid

Despite all the energy which is invested by charitable aid organisations and by benevolent, private fundraising efforts, they are unable – either from a quantitative or from a legal point of view – to compensate adequately for the mistakes or shortcomings of socio-political institutions or for the disparate access to economic resources within society.

By contrast with public socio-political institutions, private aid organisations and donors are not formally bound by people's needs and rights. The needy can file claims against public institutions, but not against private organisations and donors.

In this instance, not only is giving itself voluntary but likewise the selection of who should benefit from this kind of help is an arbitrary decision on the part of the giver. Therefore it is frequently not those who are in most urgent need of help who receive it, but those who – in the eyes of the donors – “deserve” it most. In an online article entitled “Arguments against charity”, the BBC quotes the following words of a member of staff of an anti-hunger campaign: “[...] I have to compete sometimes with people who want to feed children [to the exclusion of others]. And I hate that. All hunger is wrong. [...] Look, I feed crack addicts, I feed prostitutes.”²

“Global South” / “Global North”

“The terms ‘Global South’ and ‘Global North’ should not be understood in a geographical sense but rather as a neutral description of different situations in the globalised world. Therefore ‘Global South’ defines an underprivileged social, political and economic situation in a global system. On the other hand, ‘Global North’ describes a privileged situation. For example, Australia belongs preponderantly to the Global North. The terms are used in order to avoid a hierarchy between ‘developing countries’ and ‘developed countries’ from a Eurocentric point of view.” (Source: www.weltwaerts.de/faq-sued-nord.html)

Another criticism of both purely benevolent and humanitarian aid stems from the fact that these can take on the role of a kind of repair workshop in societies where deep-seated social injustice and inequality abound. Such aid releases the state and the social elite, who are the winners when it comes to social inequality, from the obligation to undertake any measures to mitigate existing social ills. Wherever charity softens social hardship on an individual or local level, it runs the risk of contributing toward obscur-

¹ Neoliberalism describes an ideological concept and political project, based on the economic process of globalisation. According to this concept, there is not alternative to market forces and economic stakeholders being given free rein in order to ensure prosperity and freedom. It propagates economic policies for the deregulation of international trade and expansion of market logic to all social sectors through privatisation. The notion of society in the sense of a solidarity-based community is largely rejected. Welfare state institutions and labour laws are considered primarily as a cost factor or a distortion of the market and everyone as architect of his*her own fortune. Predicaments such as poverty are attributed to individual failure rather than to social circumstances and the remedy for that is self-optimisation.

² The BBC online article “Arguments against charity” can be found in full on the following internet page: www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/charity/against_1.shtml

ing eventual political legitimization deficits of those in power and dampening the urge of the population to demand political and social reforms focused on the actual causes of social ills. Therefore the wind is unintentionally taken out of the sails of a political mobilisation of the socially deprived.

Charity on a larger scale can also lead to welfare state mechanisms and redistribution policies being reduced, if the relevant political and social elite notice, that benevolent sponsors are willing and able to take over necessary social benefits and also act as a stopgap when public welfare systems fail. Contrary to guaranteed state benefits, with charitable aid there is often an inherent danger that the source may run dry or that it was just a short-term “flash in the pan”. Wherever private fundraising initiatives and charitable organisations replace social services of the state, those in need are exposed to the threat of losing essential assistance once again.³

The aim must be to create a more balanced and just distribution of social resources to guarantee a good standard of living.

Instead of relieving social and political ills, charity can therefore strengthen or even aggravate them. Consequently, it is important to curb mere charitable aid as far as possible and resort to other forms of remedy against poverty, need and hardship.

Cracking down on charity – Putting access to social resources, social security and life in dignity on a legal footing

Facilitating a life worth living in dignity in the long-term does not only imply relieving need and hardship in the short-term but means overcoming the social conditions which are responsible for these shortcomings, such as increasing social inequality, unfair trade relations and the absence of social security services. To this end, a renunciation of the neoliberal policy described above – which partly created and partly aggravated these conditions – is required.

The aim must be to create a more balanced and just distribution of social resources to guarantee a good standard of living. This includes inter alia fair wages, to ensure life above the poverty line, at the same time as promoting a fairer distribution of overall social wealth. Other examples include (affordable) access to resources such as water, living space, farmland

and medical aid. If everyone has access to such resources, hardship will become an exception. Should it nevertheless occur, solidarity aid is required from socio-political institutions which should be financed via legally binding social redistribution (e.g. through taxes).

If access to these social resources and to aid in case of need (social welfare) are put on a legal footing, in other words enforceable rights of access to these resources and services exist, then overcoming need and hardship become unnecessary in the context of voluntary commitment, donations and charity and a permanent solution is guaranteed.⁴

Such a right of entitlement, combatting need and social deprivation, is already anchored in international law. In one of the most significant declarations of human rights, the “International convention on economic, social and cultural rights” of 1966, the contracting states undertake to guarantee all people the human right of social security, a life free of hunger and the highest possible standard of health. Other rights include the human right to work, to a minimum wage standard and the right to education. However, in reality there are but few nations on earth who guarantee their citizens these rights to their full extent. This may have something to do with the fact that such legal guarantees infringe on the interests and privileges of those who so far have stood on the winning side of an unfair world trade order, of the unequal distribution of social resources and the neoliberal reform policy described above. To this day, for the majority of the world’s population social human rights exist only on paper. The battle to alter this, is a battle worth fighting. Whoever really wants to “help” those affected by poverty and exploitation in the world should get involved in political activities rather than just handing out mere alms.

Such involvement does not exclude donations of money per se. For example, it is possible to make a donation out of political solidarity rather than out of charity. This can be in the form of financial support for local social movements, defenders of human rights and such civilian organisations

³ For more detail, see also BBC online article “Arguments against charity”

⁴ Exceptions to this rule are emergencies caused by sudden natural disasters or wars, where access to resources may be lost and where (socio-political) aid services based on solidarity can no longer function or not function properly. In such instances charitable aid – including donations – is meaningful and important.

that strive to implement or defend political, economic and social rights.⁵ Donations inspired by political solidarity can in fact contribute to the establishment of alternative media and communication structures, towards solicitors' and legal fees, to campaigns and public relations work, to administrative and travel costs or to the psychological care of activists who have suffered political repression or violence. The more successful the struggle for economic and social human rights is, the more superfluous charitable aid will become.

Conclusion

The implementation of economic and social human rights, including legally binding aid in the event of hardship, has many advantages over mere charitable aid and donation activities, which in the long run are dependent on the goodwill of the individual. Such activities often only alleviate the symptoms of hardship and run the risk of ignoring the political nature of their causes, at the same time even indirectly exonerating the instigators. A contemporary of the French Revolution, the pedagogue and social reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi said: "Charity is the drowning of rights in the manure pit of compassion". It is these rights, or more precisely economic and social human rights, which we need to re-establish or defend against the neoliberal orientation of politics. 📍

Thomas Gebauer is a qualified psychologist and managing director of the socio-medical human rights aid organization "medico international". His work focuses on the sectors global health and the provision of psychosocial care. In solidarity and partnership with those who are socially excluded and marginalized in the Global South, medico strives to provide decent standards of living, enabling the highest possible degree of health and social justice. In 1997, the international campaign banning landmines – initiated by medico – was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Felix Speidel is responsible at ICJA for the editorial creation process of the present publication. He is a political scientist and geographer and was active in Mexico on several occasions. Firstly as an international volunteer, then as a human rights' observer in the federal state of Chiapas and lastly in a Mexican NGO, which is involved in promoting political as well as economic, social and cultural human rights.

⁵ These often go hand in hand. It frequently happens that people who are fighting for their economic and social rights are also subjected to restrictions in their political rights to freedom and participation.

Fomer aid worker and adviser Nina Alff on the effects of donations on the political and economic framework in the host countries and the significant role played by the psychological factors involved.

“Donations in kind should be avoided at all costs”

An Interview with Nina Alff

Editor: Nina, you have worked on many development projects. In your experience, how did donations affect the social structure?

Nina Alff: I once raised 3,000 DM for a grain bank project in Niger. Even in the planning phase we developed the project jointly with the local administration and stakeholders. Thanks to the grain bank, the people were able to buy grain at a lower price in times of drought. But after three years, problems began to emerge: It often happened that the agreed price was not paid in emergency situations. The stocks in the grain bank gradually dwindled. An important and positive outcome was that the establishment and running of the new institution in the village was discussed publicly. And no new power structures unfolded thanks to the communal administration. Regardless of whether donations in kind or monetary donations, the local people need to bear the responsibility together, so that no one person wields the decision-making powers. This benefits the sustainability of the projects.

Can political structures be positively or negatively influenced by donations?

Of course donations exert an influence, but this is difficult to gauge in advance. I would contend that donations can on the one hand increase power, but on the other hand also jeopardize people in positions of power by empowering previously weaker members of the community. The problem is that for outsiders it is often difficult to judge the social structure in many regions, even if they have been in the area for a long time. That is why I would always give priority to projects with joint responsibility..

Sustainability

In our context sustainability refers primarily to the ability of projects, host families and the local community to sustain their livelihood and economic subsistence independently from external donations.

What effects do donations have on local economies?

If at all possible, donations in kind should be avoided. It makes far more sense to buy or have things made locally – and pay a fair price for them. In any case, donations in kind incur unnecessary transport costs and – in the long-term environmental damage. Think global, act local! By manufacturing and purchasing locally, we reinforce local economic processes. But it's also a question of the people's self-esteem, of an exchange on an equal footing. For example, donations to the grain bank could disrupt local economies if they are made during a time when there is no lack of affordable grain in the local economic cycle.

Volunteers often experience extreme poverty in their assignment locations – for the first time in their lives. This experience motivates many volunteers to try and help fast and directly by making donations. An ambition that relatives and friends back home are usually prompt to support. What is your opinion on this?

This is a dilemma, which I can understand very well from an emotional point of view. On the one hand, it is fantastic that we function in such a way that we want to help. On the other hand, much harm can be done despite the best intentions. It is important to sit down with the project organisers and others involved instead of taking an active stance and collecting donations.

It is important to mobilise local communities, so that people take action themselves.

One should consider together what is really needed, what the volunteer can do and what the local community can contribute, because if a project is financed entirely by sponsors, it can never be sustainable. It is important to mobilise local communities, so that people take action themselves.

What do you see as alternatives to solidarity activities by the volunteers?

I would look around locally. Who has money? Who are the richer and more influential people? Then you can try and ensure that they and the state do their part. In particular, the local upper class and the administration should be requested to show solidarity when it comes to financing educational facilities. The volunteers could accompany the local people to the relevant institutions to exert more pressure. This may be more difficult and tedious than fund-raising, but joint negotiations result in a learning effect for all participants. They become aware of their rights and abilities, at the

same time getting an insight into local bureaucracy. As far as solidarity is concerned, it is important to pay a fair price. That means paying decent prices for decent goods and not – as volunteers and tourists often do – hagglng to the bitter end.

How do donations affect the self-esteem of the recipients?

Being on the receiving end is always humiliating. You are automatically in a weaker position. This is a matter of dignity. If I make a donation, without expecting anything in return, that implies that I don't believe that the other person is capable of rendering anything. Everyone wants to do something in return for a gift received. That gives people more encouragement than if the volunteers donate out of pity. However, the paternalistic approach adopted by international cooperation has cultivated a 'taker' attitude in many countries. The dignity of the people should be taken seriously and respected and that means: I give you something and you give me something back.

Donations do not just have a psychological effect on recipients. How about the self-esteem of the donor?


Quite simply: donating makes the volunteer feels good. Sometimes I catch myself thinking "I can afford to make a donation". But even if goodwill is the thought behind this, in the end one is lauding oneself.

Making a donation is repeatedly justified by the need to compensate for the colonialism of the Global North. Is that the right motivation?

Of course, we are partly responsible for poverty as a result of world trade relations. But that cannot be put right by donations. We must try to create fairer world trade structures. In addition, we must alter our consumer behaviour and our way of life in the North. That will have a more lasting and powerful effect on regional economies in the Global South than any development cooperation or donation.

First and foremost, volunteers do not sign up to projects in order to donate. They are looking for an intercultural exchange. To what extent can making a donation jeopardise or enhance such an exchange?

An international exchange does not need donations. Curiosity and the desire to learn from each other are paramount. The exchange might be an enrichment, if the volunteer were to spend money on a joint excursion for example. I consider donations in kind to be highly problematic, as they

can cause jealousy. Too many donations upset the balance of the intercultural exchange which no longer takes place on an equal footing. Every human relationship, whether intercultural experience, donation or volunteer work should be based on equality. 

Interview: **Samuel Flach** and **Caroline Kuhn**

Dr. Nina Alff was born in 1963. She studied geography, agriculture and sociology at the Freie Universität, Berlin. She is a wanderer between worlds, between South and North. She went to West Africa as an aid worker and is a counselor and coach for gender equality and participatory methods.

Donations should be subject to the same rigorous criteria as investments. Generally speaking, volunteers have neither the means nor the ability to organise project funding. Volunteers make a valuable contribution in other respects. In the contribution from Mustapha Machrafi, he answers questions put to him by the editorial team.

Mustapha Machrafi

Learning is the best donation that a volunteer can make

Are donations economically sustainable in your view? If yes, do you see any differences in different kinds of donation or ways of donating?

Within the framework of volunteerism, a fundamental distinction should be made between the volunteer's mission and the expectations of the various stakeholders involved. Hypothetically speaking, there is nothing to prevent a volunteer from making a donation, but this would require the clarification of certain points as well as of what is expected of a volunteer. First of all, a volunteer can in no way replace a financing organisation when it comes to funding social development projects. Such organisations have experience in arranging, assessing and following up project finance. Such abilities are seldom to be found among young volunteers. Secondly, in a North-South context a donation from a young volunteer may seem perfectly "natural", given the parameters surrounding this context. However, the volunteer's mission is not only to give but also to receive, or rather learn. Lack of experience or professionalism on the part of the volunteer may influence his or her standing with regard to the project. Indeed, it is necessary or even essential to maintain a certain detachment from the situations encountered and from the spheres of activity in which the host organisation is involved. It is not always easy to remain indifferent in certain cases. However, a donation is not a sustainable solution as it quite simply lacks foresight. It is the quickest way of solving a small problem, but it will not make an in-depth change to the situation. The best donation a volunteer can make is to receive. In other words, learn, so as to prevent and foresee the causes of socio-economic problems which the development projects are attempting to address. The risk with donations is that they can make the

donor or the recipient dependent. Those on the receiving end do not bother to look for effective solutions to rectify the situation and the volunteer making the donation stops looking for a viable solution. To put it differently, it is not up to the volunteer to be charitable.

What are the potential economic effects of donations on local markets? Are they even significant? Where do you see problems or opportunities for local industries, e.g. ‘unfair’ competition vs. empowerment?

The real problem with volunteer donations is how to assess their socio-economic impact in plain terms. Admittedly, host projects in some countries of the Global South are going through difficult financial situations. A volunteer donation may in some instances resolve a liquidity problem or some other urgent need. The donation may be made in the sense of give and take and in this instance it should be seen as a reciprocal action by the volunteer in the light of his social and economic environment. Any logic based on economic rationale must take into account the effects on the local market, on capacity development, etc. Therefore, the donation should be analysed in the same way as an investment strategy. Which brings us to the question: can a donation be worthwhile? And the answer to this question is not easy. It depends on the situation, on the amount, and on the importance given to the donation. Be that as it may, it should be borne in mind that the volunteer may fall into the trap of becoming a substitute for agencies and organisations financing development and if this happens, the answer is obvious. A volunteer, as we have already indicated, has neither the capital nor the abilities required to fulfill such a mission.

What are potential economic effects on the project (problems and opportunities, e.g. dependence on donations vs. empowerment)?

Another problem with donations is that they are not usually based on a business plan for the project’s funding requirements. A donation can create dependency from the project side, as it often involves an emotional element. Project leadership requires clear goals, a vision and implementation which are hard to achieve by making a donation. There’s a Chinese proverb summarising precisely this situation: “If you want to stop me feeling hungry, teach me how to fish rather than giving me a fish.” The inference is that a donation is no substitute for “empowerment”.

Empowerment

Empowerment means to strengthen the autonomy and self-determination of people and communities.

How can volunteers deal with or evaluate the unintended economic consequences of donations?

I think that volunteers should be made aware of «the power of money». A donation can create perverse situations. In my opinion, greater importance should be attached to sensitising the volunteers to their mission and to the nature of that mission. Volunteers give their time, and work on their project, and in exchange they should learn from the situation. The different parties (volunteer, project, host organisations) should respect the moral and ethical contract.

Can you name potential criteria for economically sustainable donations which volunteers should consider before donating?

An economically sustainable donation can be likened to a decision to make an investment. It should show respect for people and the importance they attach to their actions. A donation should be well-considered, should not create dependency, should be socially beneficial and provide outcomes that are easily measurable and perceptible to the donor, in this case the volunteer. A donation presupposes a symmetrical relationship rather than a differential one.

It should be an independent decision (no sense of power or authority/ no feeling of dependency between the volunteer and the recipient of the donation) as volunteering constitutes a specific vision of the world, a logic of give and take and not of market-based rationality, strictly governed by economic interests.

This specific vision should be prominent in the volunteer's decisions. There may be solidarity systems, but not necessarily in the form of monetary donations. To sum up: before giving, one needs to receive and in order to receive one needs to learn. 📍

Dr. Mustapha Machrafi is Professor of Development Economics and International Affairs at the University Mohammed V-Rabat (Morocco). His research focuses on African development, South-South co-operation, and civil society. He is member of many international scientific networks. Professor Machrafi is consultant and author (or editor) of several publications on African economy, South-South co-operation and development.

*The economic effect of donations in a North-South context.
The key requisites for donations to achieve their purpose.*

Theo Rauch

Good intentions are not enough!

Mrs. H. sees the pictures of the devastating damage done by the floodwaters of the Elbe on a TV news programme and is touched by the plight of the people who have lost their homes. She transfers 100 euros to the designated Red Cross donation account. On another occasion she demonstrates solidarity with victims of an earthquake in Haiti or a drought in the Sahel.

A passenger on the underground, J., is confronted on a daily basis with a homeless person who relates a summarised version of his tale of woe or plays some music before asking for a small donation towards something to eat. Depending on his mood, he gives 50 cents or buries his head deeper in his newspaper.

The “M” school has a partnership with a secondary school in Tanzania. The aim is to improve international understanding and exchange, as well as give more meaning to the term “developing countries” in class. The intention is also to help provide better educational materials for the partner school, through yearly collections.

The cases described reflect just a small section of the broad range of fundraising. The aims and motives are therefore equally as diverse. Whereas in the case of Mrs H. and the underground passenger J. human solidarity is involved, in other cases vested interests are often uppermost. Fundraising often embraces not-for-profit environmental, social or culturally relevant issues such as saving the rainforests or rebuilding a city palace – in other words, civil commitment. We make a donation because we do not want to leave our solidarity, public affairs, politics or our own needs and interests completely in the hands of the government or private enterprise.

What do the various forms of and motives for donating have in common? From an economic perspective, donating implies a voluntary transfer of

financial resources or goods in kind between persons and/or organisations for social, political, cultural or charitable purposes.

A donation raised by a volunteer to pay for a computer, chemistry laboratory or a new school roof for his partner school in the host country, is therefore an act of solidarity. The intention is for the more affluent sections of society to assist the less fortunate.

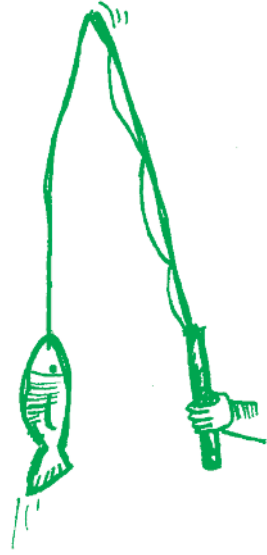
The solidarity relationship is entrenched in the wider North-South context, in the different income levels prevailing in the poorer and richer countries. Unlike donations for an acute emergency, the donation is not prompted by a temporary catastrophe but by a structurally-related, long-term deprivation. This is rooted in an on-going wealth gap between donor and beneficiary.

Such donations form the subject of this article. They always have an economic, social, political, cultural and sometimes also a psychological dimension.

Donations as a solidarity contribution towards reducing the disparity between rich and poor on a global scale

We find it easy to make donations in acute emergencies. The need for support is obvious. Those hit by a catastrophe find themselves in a situation from which it is hard to escape on their own and with their own resources – even in more affluent societies. And we know: Temporary help is usually a way of relieving the immediate need and facilitating the start of reconstruction. The beneficiaries will not need us indefinitely. But when we are asked – as relatively affluent people – to share some of our wealth with the poor on a regular and long-term basis, we find it more difficult. In some areas of the world, where it has been accepted that there are both rich and extremely poor levels of society, begging and charity have been institutionalised. In Muslim and Hindu dominated countries for example, it is a pious duty to give to those who fate or society has not provided with the opportunity to partake in prosperity. In the more affluent industrialised nations, a better distribution of wealth between rich and poor is considered to be the responsibility of the state. This should not be left to the whims of the better-off individual or the fundraising abilities of the poor.

Therefore there is a difference between state and development aid and donations: The former is given neither by private individuals, nor given voluntarily. It is financed by taxpayers' money and allocated according to legal requirements. In common with solidarity donations which are not related to an acute emergency, this aid is a material transfer from the rich to the poor. Where state and development aid are concerned, it is also a question of "helping people to help themselves" or "using the carrot and the stick". The thought behind this is that the external support should encourage those in need to mobilise their own efforts and on no account replace them.



The discussion as to whether payment transfers are an advisable tool for development aid is closely related to the debate on the reasons for the poor/rich disparity. Is the latter primarily a problem of distribution, capable of being solved by redistributing the wealth earned? Or is it a question of access to rights, resources and markets, in other words establishing a better subsistence level for the poor?

The discussion about private donations should also address these basic aid issues. Do they contribute – on a small scale – to more dependence or to more self-reliance? Is it just a case of redistributing income for the temporary relief of a structural deficit? Or is it a contribution to the long-term improvement of basic existential issues?

Eventual effects of solidarity donations made in the context of the disparity between poor and rich

"If you give a poor, hungry person fish, then you have solved the problem in the short-term and he remains dependent on further fish donations. If you give him a fishing rod, then you have solved the problem in the long-term and made him independent of the donors' goodwill." The main difference between the effects of help achieved by donations for consumption purposes and those for investment purposes is reflected in these sentences. The positive effects can therefore be divided into:

- 1. Indirect charitable effects:** These consist of a short-term improvement of the level of consumption. They are appropriate where people in need, who are not able to earn their living either temporarily or in the long-term, are involved. Even here, a legally binding, comprehensive transfer of money to which the beneficiaries are legally entitled, would be preferable to a one-off selective individual donation.
- 2. Improvement of capital assets:** This is aimed at permanently increasing the ability of the beneficiaries to acquire a better standard of living through their own efforts. It can work for people who are capable of earning their own living or helping themselves.

However, donations may also have potentially **negative effects**:

- 3. Distributional effect:** In contrast to legally binding state social aid or benefits, donations are made selectively to those in need. They are discriminatory. This becomes problematic at the point where we make a selective donation of resources. For example, if a poor fisherman is given a better net, then that may mean that other fishermen – who are equally as poor – catch less fish. Such donations are all the more problematic if the beneficiaries belong to a section of the population which is not in quite such dire straits. However, it is usually the slightly better-off sections that have better access to external donation channels.
- 4. Crowding-out effect:** This occurs in particular where material donations are concerned. If we donate second-hand clothes from Europa, this will have a detrimental effect on the income of local tailors. If a donation is made for a corrugated iron roof for a school extension, then the locally produced roof tiles are likely to be squeezed out. If a donation is made for purchasing mineral fertiliser then the beneficiaries are deterred from using locally available forms of natural fertilisation. As a result, local job opportunities are destroyed and more sustainable techniques are wiped out. A greater dependence on imported goods is also created.
- 5. Stimulus effect:** The easier it is to gain access to donations, the more people tend to shy away from seeking laborious, unassisted solutions in their scant free time. Instead, they try to cultivate their contacts with aid organisations or private donors. From their personal point of view, this is easier and more effective. Therefore donations encourage people to devote their energy to obtaining donations rather than to helping themselves.

So well-thought-out donations do not just alleviate acute emergencies. They can also be used to complement the independent search for solutions to prevailing problems. Ill-considered donations on the other hand can be detrimental, by paralysing the will of the individual to make an effort on his own or by excluding those who do not benefit from resources. Good, fair solutions are replaced by pseudo-solutions creating dependence. In other words: donors are interfering. This should be done with the greatest caution.

Donations made by international volunteers to their assigned project

International volunteers have a specific role with respect to their assigned project. Unlike most other donors, they have built up a personal relationship with the beneficiaries. Despite their limited powers of assistance, volunteers usually receive a hearty welcome. For this they are duly grateful – and for the fact that what they gain in experience is more than they can give in return. They feel indebted. Volunteers from affluent countries – even if they only live on a modest grant – represent an opportunity for the assignment project. They are an opportunity to cross-link with the wealthy world of abundance. They constitute a kind of social capital for the assignment location, the local community, certain individuals or families. This results in a clientelistic relationship¹ with mutual dependencies.

Compared with other donors or aid organisations, volunteers have certain systemic advantages – but also disadvantages – in the role of aid-supplying benefactors.

Moreover, volunteers are reliant on receiving a warm welcome in their assignment locations. Here they are seen as someone who has better access to external resources, as a potential benefactor. Linked to this are expectations. Whereas professional stakeholders involved in development work usually have project funding available, to fulfil these expectations, the volunteers generally have to resort to private fund-raising.

Compared with other donors or aid organisations, volunteers have certain systemic advantages – but also disadvantages – in the role of aid-supplying benefactors. One advantage: they are insiders. They know the assignment location, with its strong points and its needs. They are in a better position to dispense and channel donations, so that they bring the maximum bene-

fit and cause the least damage. However, volunteers have little experience with donations. They have no idea of all the things that can go wrong. They are not sufficiently aware of the risks and side effects. Due to their proximity to the local elite, they are more easily in danger of being instrumentalised by them for their own vested interests. Furthermore, by handing out gifts, the rules for providing sustainable help to achieve self-help tend to be forgotten.

The competence of locally integrated volunteers as donation intermediary is offset by role-related pitfalls which should not be underestimated. First of all, one should recognise one's own role and the difficulties it entails before embarking on a course of organising donations.

Key requisites for sustainable solidarity donations

From the foregoing, certain rules can be derived for how donations to assignment projects in poor countries can achieve the desired long-term positive effect.

The overriding principle is: Bear in mind the eventual risks and side effects inherent in donating!

Like medication, donations can help, but they are part of a complex system and can result in massive side-effects. By using a professional approach, these side-effects can be minimised. **“Do no harm!”**² is the order of the day. In this context, the following rules should be observed:

- 1. Know who your donation is destined for.** It is only if you are aware of their needs, their priorities, their potential for solving problems and their weaknesses that there is any hope of the external aid being of use and contributing to a solution of the problem.
- 2. Know how your donation is to be used.** Only if volunteers discuss with their partners what a donation should be used for and it has been

¹ Here, “clientelistic” implies a relationship of dependency based on mutual personal contacts, commitments and obligations.

² “Do no harm” is a principle of development and emergency aid. The aim is to prevent aid and development projects inducing harmful (side) effects.

checked that all the necessary prerequisites – specialised knowledge or operating material for equipment for example – are available, and who will benefit, is there a chance that the desired effects can be achieved.

3. **Only make donations of consumer goods in acute emergencies.** They are only effective in the short-term.
4. **Start by easing difficulties in already existing projects.** If only a tool is needed to make activities that are underway more effective, the leverage effect is high and the risks low – for example in repairing a fence round a vegetable garden. On the other hand, if a donation is intended for a new project or for introducing new technology, the risk of failure is high – for example constructing a fence for a vegetable garden which does not yet exist.
5. **Keep the donation ratio to the overall costs low.** This is the only way of ensuring that the donation contributes to self-help and individual efforts, rather than replacing them. If there is a clear focus on individual efforts, then one can be sure that the beneficiaries will act independently and they will feel permanently responsible. Unlike presents, which are seldom required to produce a certain effect, productive donations are based on conditions and negotiation processes. Therefore the motto should be: “If you can do this, then I can contribute that”.
6. **Never use donations for your own fantasies.** This usually leads to a brainchild that will not work or will not be accepted. It is a mistake to enforce the use of donations behind the backs of the beneficiaries, for something they do not really want (but may not dare to reject, because you should not turn presents down ...).
7. **Nor should donations be used for the unrealistic pipe dreams of the beneficiaries.** Sometimes, when external aid is on offer, people who are in need tend toward expensive technological solutions, the subsequent costs of which they are unable to cover. These are the so-called “white elephants”. A diesel powered pump for the village well would make life a lot easier than a hand pump. But only as long as somebody is there to finance the diesel and arrange its supply.
8. **Donations should not be used for purchasing imported products.** If German donations are used to buy imported apparatus, this will lead to the destruction of local livelihoods, where locally produced apparatus could be used.
9. **All stakeholders should participate in the planning and arranging of activities for which donations are intended.** If activities are only

arranged with a few leading personalities, usually the local elite, then there is a high risk that they will be the main ones to benefit.

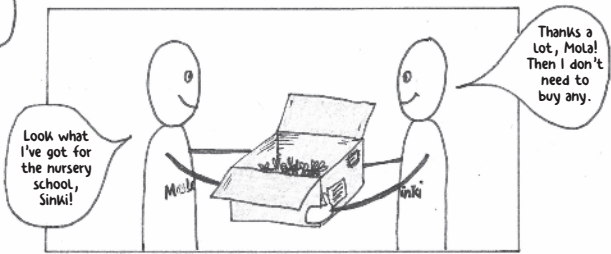
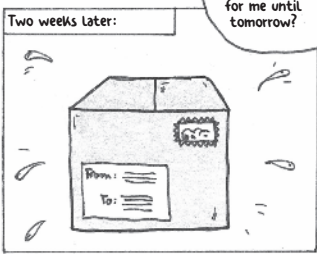
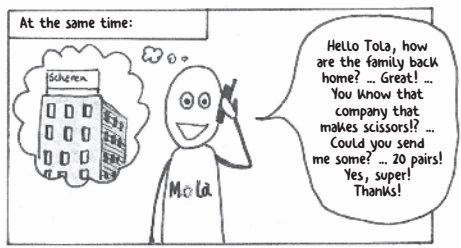
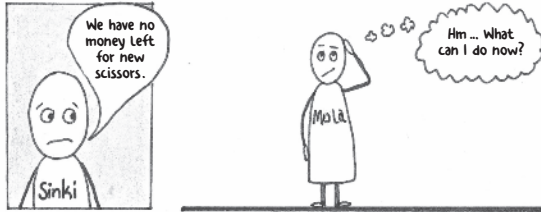
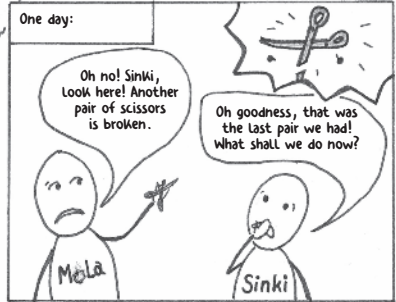
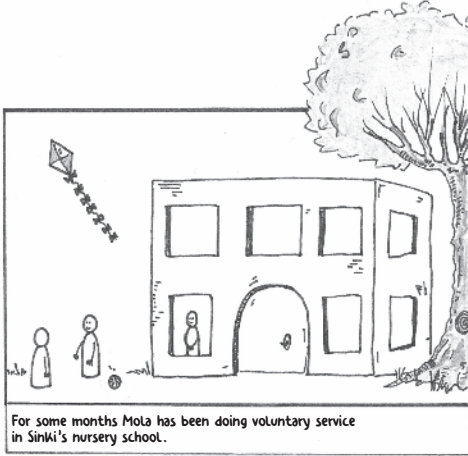
- 10. Donations should not provide a selected group of beneficiaries with a competitive advantage over others who are equally as needy.** Donations always create an advantage for those who receive them over those who do not. If three out of ten seamstresses are given an electric sewing machine, then the other seven could easily lose their customers and consequently their livelihood. Not because their work is not as good, but because the donor disregarded them.

Ignoring these rules has led to many development projects failing or brought about negative effects. Private donors should not repeat the mistakes made by development aid.

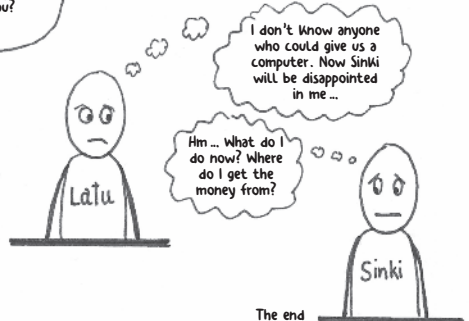
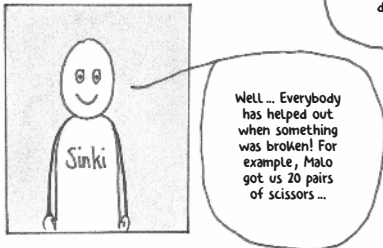
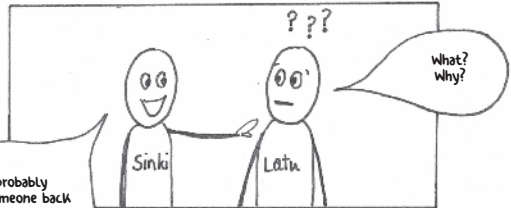
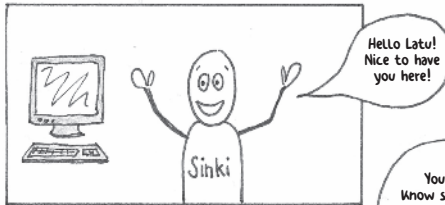
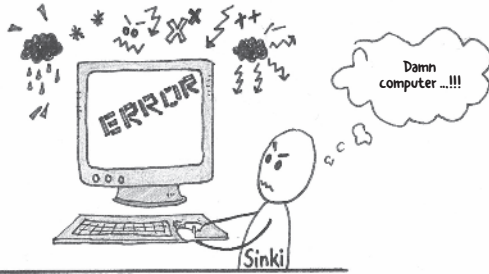
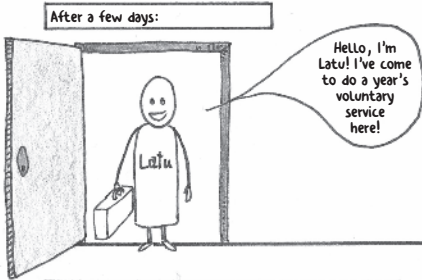
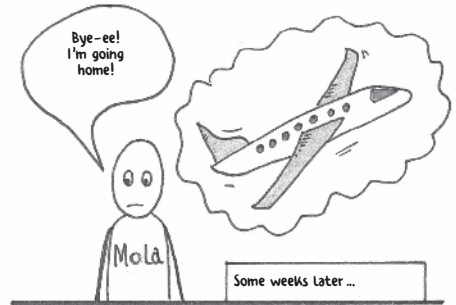
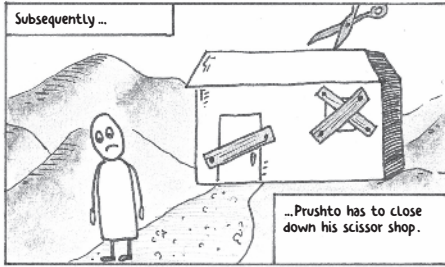
Good intentions are not enough! In addition to common sense and circumspection, regard for the “do no harm” principle and the rules for “accident-free” donations listed above require a certain minimum of professionalism in analysing the effects and side-effects. The result is not only the effective use of donations but also a lifelong learning effect. One does not only learn from one’s mistakes, but also from avoiding them in the first place. 🌍

Prof. Dr. Theo Rauch is honorary professor of the Centre for Development Studies at the Institute of Geographical Sciences at the Free University, Berlin. He is a qualified economist and wrote his doctoral thesis and habilitation on economic and social geography. Nearly half of his career was spent as overseas member of staff for the GIZ (GTZ – German Society for International Cooperation) and as consultant for numerous governmental and non-governmental aid organisations on development policy practice – primarily in African countries. He is the author of a textbook on development policy.

Mola and the Scissors



*Drawings: Malte Legenhausen
Concept: Judith Scheer*



The end

Practical experience:

Representatives of both sending and receiving organisations for international volunteers and the corresponding host projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe write about the role played by international volunteers in their respective context and describe their experiences and opinions on the issue of “volunteer donations”. Likewise, former volunteers from the Global North outline their experiences and tell how they dealt with the issue of “donations” during and after their stay in different countries in the Global South.

Managing donations is difficult – as is shown in the progress report of the German volunteer sending organisation Mennonite Voluntary Service e.V. – Christliche Dienste (MVS-CD)

Barbara Hege-Galle

An open door to more money

Our volunteers work in institutions which are primarily funded by donations. Only a few institutions are entitled to public funding, but some can acquire resources through fund-raising activities. Generally speaking, the donations come from local church congregations, foreign missions or aid organisations.

Volunteers often find that funds are short and that not much can be implemented because of this. Crises can occur because of shortage of funds. For example, there is not enough money for food or no money for Christmas presents for the children in an orphanage. The volunteers talk about this in their newsletters. Parents, friends and relatives prick up their ears. Since the volunteer is working there, they empathise with the project, they consider it to be above suspicion. The feel, “100% of my donation will be used to benefit the children!” Sometimes the volunteers appeal for donations directly, when they see hardship. The project partners do not reject the donations. After all, the volunteers come from rich countries. They are a kind of open door to more money. Even if they do consider other things more important, they are highly unlikely to refuse a donation in the light of their cultural understanding. Both of these aspects are problematic.

Nevertheless, it should be possible to make use of the donors’ commitment and motivation in a constructive manner. Therefore this is already a topic for discussion during the volunteer’s briefing titled: “It is nice when people who support you also want to support your project or your assigned location. But...”

As a sending organisation, we want to support projects by providing volunteers on a partnership basis. We talk about relationships, about people and not so much about financial resources. Our focus is on being appreciated

for the work done by people for the community. This is what the volunteers work for and at the same time learn from the experiences. First and foremost, volunteers are people who want to help and share their lives. Their role is to serve, not to preach or even to dominate. They are new to the country and the project and have little experience of life. They view everything from their European standpoint and are not really able to assess the local situation. Collecting money for a specific project, which they consider to be necessary, implies ignoring the local people in charge – and setting oneself above them. We encourage volunteers to talk to the local people and to ask about their views. Then the volunteers can gain a better understanding of why things are as they are.

Many things can go wrong. In one of the projects which we supported, there was a support group which decided to raise money to paint the rooms in the orphanage. The orphanage was in major financial difficulties: Legal proceedings were outstanding because the previous head of the orphanage had run into difficulties through debt and mismanagement and there was a claim for repayment of social welfare for the orphans. The new orphanage management was well on the way and in the process of solving these problems. However, the basic essentials were lacking. Sometimes there wasn't enough food for the children. A donation from Germany was more than welcome. But painting the walls? That could wait: first of all the children needed something to eat. But the support group in Germany was annoyed by this and withdrew its support.

Donations which are received by the project from one person, make that person popular. That can be tempting for volunteers. It can mean that volunteers are appreciated for their financial resources or their 'generosity' and not because of who they are, nor their commitment and active contribution. Not all volunteers have the same financial resources. Subsequent volunteers may be faced with a difficult situation, as they will also be expected to make donations.

For example: A volunteer is working in a nursery school in Tanzania. The rooms are dark and lack paint. She raises funds for paint and starts painting. She is all alone. The school head barely notices her commitment. The congregation responsible praises the fact that the rooms are now colourful but does not know what to think of the pictures on the walls. As the body responsible for the volunteer service we receive a positive comment on the

'commitment' of the volunteer. But on their arrival, the subsequent volunteers are instantly confronted with: 'Look what your predecessor did. She raised funds from her supporters...'

Donations from volunteers and their supporters should not be handed over personally to the project by the volunteer. It is even worse if the volunteer has funds available for his/her own small projects or activities. As a responsible body for the volunteer service, we have built up partnerships with the local bodies responsible for the projects. We have mutual respect for each other's culture and can talk and negotiate with each other. Donations can be channeled by us or an aid association affiliated to the assignment location. In this way, the donations are not directly linked to the volunteer but with our partnership. Any donations which are intended for a particular institution are forwarded directly and the partners notified. However, we specialise in sending volunteers; we have little experience with financial cooperation and the supervision of projects. For this reason we pass on enquiries about financial support to the Mennonite Relief Organisation. This simplifies our task.

Donations from volunteers and their supporters should not be handed over personally to the project by the volunteer.

In our information leaflet for volunteers, we have summarized this as follows:

As a matter of principle, the CD (Christian missions) does not approve of money from the volunteers going directly into the project. In particular, it is not up to you as volunteer to decide what is needed where. On the one hand you have only been on the project for a short while and not had time to gain an all-round picture. On the other hand, it makes your work more difficult if people are begging from you. With your help, CD actively supports the project. However, if 'your' donors want to assist 'your' project, this can only be welcomed. After consultation with the local management you can raise funds for the project amongst your friends. In this case, please let us know and ask the project management to send us an e-mail too. On no account should you pass donations directly to the project. They should be transferred by the Mennonite Relief Organisation or via CD. This also facilitates the completion of a donation receipt.

If the project requires funds for something particular, it can make an application to CD or to the Mennonite Relief Organisation, which provides financial assistance for many projects. We would also forward the application to them. The Relief Organisation will then decide whether support is possible.

Voluntary service comes under the strain of the economic disparity between the assignment country and Germany. We cannot pretend that the assignment projects do not need financial aid. Particularly as most projects receive no state support. However, at the same time we try to act on a partnership basis and not as donors from whom a handout may be forthcoming. It is a narrow path we tread, from which one can easily slip to either side. Ever since we have been broaching the subject directly with volunteers before their departure, the relationship between us and our partners has greatly improved. And the experiences of the volunteers have also been positive. ☐

Barbara Hege-Galle has been general manager of the registered association "Mennonite Voluntary Service – Christliche Dienste" since 1986.

ICDE India is the Indian Committee of the ICYE Network. It is a multi-faith, multi-cultural and secular organisation headquartered in Bangalore, which offers young people the possibility to spend one-year abroad, participating in a program designed to facilitate an exchange among nations as a means to promote Peace, inter-cultural understanding, and cross-cultural learning.

Ravinder Singh, ICDE India

Volunteering for life changing experiences

Volunteering has produced many positive benefits and helps people to become socially and spiritually empowered. The act of being among and serving others builds confidence, a sense of belonging, responsibility and bondage that is beneficial both to the volunteers and the community.

The main aim of our organization is to provide opportunity and facilitate exchange of youth among nations as a means to promote peace, inter-cultural understanding, and cross-cultural learning, keeping inclusivity in mind. This is facilitated by direct personal experience gained from international volunteer work in the community through a network of host families and development projects.

In India, we, as a hosting coordination organization endeavor to play a positive role as far as their stay is concerned. We assist, encourage and support young people coming from other countries to share their experiences, aspirations, hopes and dreams and develop durable and lifelong friendship with people from other countries. We are committed to provide the volunteers with: purposeful orientation; optimum working knowledge in local language and technical training; a safe and supportive place to live and counseling, if and when needed; clear expectations from work that they are engaged in; and provide any kind of support that volunteers may require during their stay in India so that it is a cherished one.

The host families and host projects also play a vital role during the entire stay of volunteers. We choose our host projects carefully, keeping in mind the safety and security of volunteers. Importance is also given to the role and kind of work of the volunteer in the host project. We discuss a lot with the host project before the arrival of volunteers so that they are clear about the role that they can expect from volunteers. Most of the host projects depend on external assistance for funds for their activities and when the volunteer is hosted within the project, we pay a fixed amount to take care of their food, accommodation and living expenses.

We are also aware that most of the projects are looking for funds so that they can improve their facilities and provide better support to the needy, like, in schools and health care centers. We send volunteers to these projects so that they can provide their support and assistance through service for the smooth running of the host project. We as an organization do not encourage the approach that volunteers should also be given the responsibility to raise some funds for the project. At the same time, they contribute largely by physically participating in various activities for the host project. However, we have seen that some volunteers have taken initiatives, voluntarily, and gone out of the way to raise funds for the host project. It becomes difficult for us to discourage such a move, since the offer to raise funds was made by the volunteers themselves and not by the host project. In order to avoid any undue expectations pertaining to donations, which may lead to misunderstandings, we discuss with the host projects and

make them understand that they cannot expect other volunteers who join the project to also raise funds.

We had a case where two volunteers were placed in the same host project and accommodation was provided with the family of the Director of the host project. Things seemed to be going on well for the first month, but, later one of the volunteers (A) decided to



arrange some funds to help the school to build extra toilets for the children. Highly motivated as she was, she quickly raised requisite funds for the toilets. On the other hand, the other volunteer (B) was very good in helping the children in school through service and various related activities. A few days later when they had visitors to the school. The Director showed them around and proudly told them about the contribution raised by the volunteer (A) to build the toilets and introduced the volunteers to the visitors. Soon thereafter, when they sat together for lunch, he was only praising volunteer (A) and said she was doing so much for the project while totally ignoring volunteer (B) who was also present. There were similar incidents in the school when volunteer (A) was given more importance, sidelining volunteer (B). Initially, it was difficult for volunteer (B) to understand why she was treated in such a manner, but it didn't take long for her to realize the background for this treatment. She was inevitably left with a feeling of being deliberately and differently treated and neglected. She was so hurt that even though she loved her work and children, she decided to leave the project and shifted to another project. Her only demand was that she should not be placed along with any other volunteer for the rest of her stay.

We discuss with the host projects and make them understand that they cannot expect other volunteers who join the project to also raise funds.

We also had a case in the past where the previous volunteers raised some funds and helped the project and when the new volunteer arrived in the project, the host project expected him to do the same and help the organization by raising funds. The new volunteer had no idea of such expectation and had no means to raise fund from back home. After a few months, the project in charge started telling him that he was not doing a good work for the organization as the previous volunteer had done. It was difficult for him to explain that he didn't have the same capability as the previous volunteer to raise funds, but was too happy to assist projects in any other manner. The situation did not change for him and he had to leave the project after a few months of his stay.

In the backdrop of these incidents, we, as host organization, had to sternly tell the host projects that if they are expecting volunteers to donate or raise funds then we are left with no choice but to end our association with them. We don't have any recent cases where volunteers were asked to raise funds,

but it was volunteers on their own who wanted to help the organization by raising funds from home. We always inform our host projects that they should not expect the same from the subsequent volunteers and till now, we have no complaints from volunteers that host projects asked them to raise funds.

In the end, we appreciate that volunteers contribute so much with their time and energy to their host projects. Generation of small funds and donations can never replace the endearing and enduring impression that volunteers invariably leave with their noble and selfless work under a youth exchange program. 🍷

Ravinder Singh is the Director of ICDE India. He holds a Master's in Public Relations. He participated in the ICYE programme in Switzerland (2003–2004) and Sweden (2005–2006).

ICYE Kenya is a member of the International Cultural Youth Exchange Federation. It sends and receives young people who volunteer for six to twelve months. ICYE Kenya was founded in 1994.

Kerubo Nyaribo, ICYE Kenya

Donations and volunteers: Donations are welcome, but at what price?

The ICYE programme is an exchange programme, providing youth with an opportunity to experience a different culture while doing something for the community hosting them. ICYE and the volunteer usually do not go into the experience with the aim of being a donor agency, the idea is to go in there and share their time and skills with the community. However with time, volunteers have been involved more and more in giving funds to their projects, either through their own initiative or due to requests from the projects or communities where they are stationed.

This situation has been perpetuated by history in our country. The way our society has been set up since colonial times, the Europeans (read any foreigner) always had money and the Kenyans were always poor. The automatic assumption was always that any European was richer than any Kenyan; and when tourists started coming to Kenya and spending money, donors started funding activities in different parts of the country, this confirmed the stereotype that Europeans had a lot of money. Unfortunately for us at ICYE, our volunteers do not have a lot of money, at least most of them don't. And this has been one of the things a lot of the families, schools and communities have found difficult to believe about our volunteers. In some cases, projects put pressure on the volunteers indirectly by taking them around the school when they arrive, showing them what other volunteers have done – classrooms, water tanks, any developments done by previous volunteers, of course with a silent question left hanging, what are you going to do? It is amazing how some of the projects believe that they can only progress if the volunteer gives them money.

To counter this misconception we include it in the discussions we have during the orientation for the volunteers and also in the training we hold for the host families and placements. To the volunteers we advise them not have too much money with them, either at home or at work, not to be conspicuous spenders, flashing money around. Sometimes they are not conscious of the fact that the Kenyan shilling is very weak compared to the euro or dollar and when changing money they end up with a lot. Because of the weak shilling they find things which a Kenyan may find expensive, very cheap, thereby giving the impression of being rich to those around. Also going on many safaris reinforces the whole idea of them having a lot of money.

To the host projects and families, we try to explain that the volunteers are young people, most of them newly graduated from high school, and they do not have a lot of money. We explain that some of them even fundraise to come on the programme. We request that none of them solicit for funds from them, and let them decide for themselves if they want to assist the project or not, when they have been there and can appreciate what they can do. These are intelligent young people who can observe and recognise what needs the project may have, without it being pushed in their faces every day. We sensitise them to how used the volunteers feel when they imagine they are being hosted purely for what they can bring to the project, and how that spoils any chances of a good relationship developing. They stand to gain more – in all ways – if they let the volunteer make the decision about donations, and accept them and treat them well whether they give donations or not. ICYE is about long term relationships, not short term financial gains!

However, we are still left with the reality that donations are being given to projects and some placements still try to get them from volunteers. This situation has resulted in the role of the volunteers being seen as donors from the North bringing funds to assist the poor South. Funds from the North are used to develop the South, and the volunteers are now seen as the avenues for these funds. This gives them some perceived power when placed somewhere. The beneficiaries will endeavour to be as nice to the volunteer as possible, giving them preferential treatment, even allowing them to do next to nothing at the project, letting them go on safaris etc., as long as they assure them that they will bring some money or development to their institution. In some situations, the volunteer has enough power to actually

influence how the project is run, because they have brought or are bringing money. They are actually powerful! These projects will do anything to make sure the volunteer stays with them, and so give a positive report to ICYE so that more volunteers are sent to the same project and hopefully continue funding them.

To diffuse or dilute this power, the communities or institutions are encouraged to be actively involved in the projects being funded by the volunteer, making them sustainable. This can be done by having some of the local people trained to run the activity, if it is construction of classrooms for example, the parents or the community can offer their labour for free if they are not able to buy the materials. This gives them a sense of ownership and the satisfaction of having contributed something. Unfortunately in some situations where volunteers have not brought any funding to the project, we have them complaining that projects are giving negative reports about them to ICYE, purely because they have not done anything for the project the way the other volunteers did. When we get information like this we discuss further with the project to hear what they have to say, and in some cases we discontinue the institution as one of our projects.

Donations from volunteers have had quite an impact on the communities that have been hosting them.

A lot of the volunteers who complain are those who categorically say they cannot give donations to a project, they are not donor agencies and they did not come on the ICYE programme as development workers. We respect their opinions but sensitise them that they will not escape being propositioned about donations to their projects. Some of the discussions we have had have indicated that they believe, or have been led to believe that Kenyans just want to exploit the volunteers; that they are lazy and cannot do anything for themselves! These sentiments make them totally against giving or doing anything in their projects, and they become very defensive when donations are being discussed. On the other hand, some volunteers come with the notion that they are coming to save the world, and look for funds to give projects because they actually believe in the stereotypes and would like to help these foolish, helpless Africans. These volunteers actually believe that if they do not assist, the project will collapse and they even want to manage whatever funds they collect for the organisation. They do not really trust the Kenyans at the project to use the money properly, some of the volunteers even get in touch with the follow-

ing volunteers, so they can continue managing the funds when they have left. Although, once in a while some volunteers do request ICYE Kenya to assist in managing or keeping track of whatever funds have been given to the project.

Donations from volunteers have had quite an impact on the communities that have been hosting them. Considering that some of the areas to which they are posted are very marginalised and do not have access to a lot of the services the government is supposed to provide, the donations actually help to fill the gap. Many children who would not have been able to go to school, can now go, and others who had very shoddy structures for classrooms; now have a place to study which is not at the mercy of the elements. Some of the children no longer have to travel several kilometres to get to school every day, there is a school in their vicinity. Many, who could not afford to go to boarding school when the schools were too far away to go back home, are now able to walk to school, and this has been particularly advantageous to girls who are normally the first casualties when there is no money for school fees in a family. The culture of not allowing girls to go to school is slowly dying out in areas where volunteers are hosted, and more so where there are schools built from volunteer donations. Receiving funds from young girls has also challenged some of the communities to appreciate that girls can do something useful if they go to school, and this has relaxed the rigid culture of not sending girls to school. As the community becomes more and more exposed, there are more educated people who can see the reasons to let go of some abusive or detrimental cultural beliefs within the community. The impact of volunteer donations is seen over a period of time, especially by those of us who do not live within the community.

In conclusion, it is obvious to us that volunteer donations have had both a positive and 'negative' impact on the stakeholders (volunteers, the community and ICYE). The donations continue to encourage the myth that volunteers have money and so the community continues to ask for money from them, for the project or their personal problems, like paying school fees or hospital bills. This then gives the volunteer a very poor opinion of the family, placement or community hosting them. On the up side, the community may feel challenged and improve and continue whatever activity the volunteer started. A good example is a school in Dudi, Western Kenya, where a volunteer bought one cow for the school more than ten years ago and they

now have a big herd which sustains the school and other expenses through milk. Communities that have had developments in their area through volunteers have a very positive impression of ICYE, and this has definitely given our organisation a very good reputation. The projects are very happy to host volunteers for us, and the volunteers are most of the time very happy to be there. It is a vicious cycle, but the more all those involved discuss it, the more it can be a positive thing without negative innuendos! ☺

Kerubo Nyaribo holds a BSc in Botany and Zoology from the University of Nairobi and a post graduate diploma in education from Kenyatta University. She has worked for ICYE Kenya for many years and is the organization's director.

ICYE Colombia is the Colombian committee of the ICYE network. ICYE Colombia has been sending young people abroad for international cultural exchanges and voluntary services for 33 years.

Omaira Olano, ICYE Colombia

The pros and cons of donations: Prohibition and/or promotion?

The exchanges and the donations by means of voluntary work that volunteers can do or have done with their projects is the matter that concerns us, and as ICYE Colombia, we are going to share our points of view and the experience that we have gained over years of work.

One of the tasks that all National Committees of the ICYE have according to the Federation's "Minimal Conditions" is to offer placements to volunteers that allow them to get culturally involved by experiencing their daily life. One of those fundamental and privileged areas is the project in which they carry out their voluntary action or voluntary work.

There are three important aspects that we have to consider when we refer to voluntary work and donations.

1. ICYE volunteers who come to Colombia, develop their voluntary work in social organizations that work with people who are socially excluded, marginalized, harmed, have been moved due to economic reasons or were victims of violence and all kinds of deprived people. (Some think that an economic contribution, service or resource provided by the volunteer would not be a bad idea).
2. The action by volunteers depends on several factors: the concept of voluntary work that volunteers may have; the preparation that the organization has given to volunteers; the identification that volunteers have with the ICYE philosophy and its objectives; the perception that volunteers have of the relations between northern and southern countries, and also what motivates volunteers to participate, (to offer goods and

services, solve the problem of conscience objectors, to take advantage of a scholarship, or to express their solidarity and fight to build a fairer world etc.).

3. The expectations of projects on receiving a foreign volunteer from the Global North (caring support in order to fight for better living conditions for their society, a donation, and an economic resource or service).

To combine these three aspects only, we get a range of different points: projects with basic needs, serious social problems, difficult and painful situations, volunteers with different ways of seeing their voluntary work and finally, projects with different expectations.

To face this situation, the ICYE Colombia policy has been to try to harmonize all elements so that each one of the volunteers builds their own model of voluntary work and explains what it is, what it contains and what it finds in the country, and in the project.

We work on the principle that volunteers make their own decision and they may do so by their own free will.

Nevertheless, there are two basic principles which particularly stand out, both in the meeting with the coordinators of the projects and in the introduction camp with the volunteers: The project must be non-profit making and volunteers must not replace a position or a remunerated activity.

The functions of the volunteers are established by mutual agreement between the person in charge of the project and the volunteer. ICYE Colombia also gets to know their functions through the welcoming coordinator who tracks this in a formal and periodic way.

We, as ICYE Colombia, do not openly prohibit donations by volunteers but neither do we promote them.

We work on the principle that volunteers make their own decision and they may do so by their own free will.

Donations must not be a condition to do their voluntary action under any circumstance, nor must they be one of their functions as a volunteer.

Looking back and searching for experiences on donations that foreign volunteers have made to their projects, we find that there are several like these:

- A Belgian volunteer raised money among relatives and friends of his country to buy a camper vehicle that was necessary to improve the transport conditions in a project that was very distant from the city.
- A Swiss volunteer gathered money and provided school materials for an infantile garden in a country village.
- The family of a Finnish volunteer donated a sum of money to the project in which her daughter had worked.
- An English volunteer raised money by means of activities for his project in Bogotá.
- And several volunteers participated by gathering food, goods and hygiene products when the natural disaster of Armero-Tolima occurred in 1985.

There are surely many more cases of donations that the Colombian committee has no knowledge of. These kinds of one-off donations that volunteers made or are making for projects must be a means and not the end of expressing their solidarity and commitment. In a sporadic way and in very special cases, this kind of support can solve unexpected problems.

However, we completely disallow these actions to institutionalize and vouch for a »welfare-oriented volunteering” model (implying a constant role of volunteers as charitable donors) that we do not share for the following reasons:

- It twists the true meaning of ICYE voluntary exchange work. The ICYE is about cultural foreign-exchange and the creation of a more peaceful and fairer world for the long-term.
- It strengthens the relations of superiority between those who donate and set conditions with those who receive and accept conditions.
- Donations create dependency which results in losing the initiative and the creativity to solve problems.
- There is a risk of underrating the people who work in the project when they are considered to be incapable of their own self-management and to solve their problems.
- The circle of dependency strengthens between those who have and those who do not.
- It also promotes paternalism as a kind of power.

And to be even more specific:

- The donations from a volunteer can create false expectations with regard to the next volunteer who arrives at the same project.
- The projects may value the volunteer for what they have donated and not for the social work that they do.
- It strengthens the belief that foreign volunteers have money since they come from Global North countries.
- Donations are palliative, they do not solve problems and they can paralyze the changes or transformations in projects.
- Volunteers have made donations due to emotional moments.
- Donations can make volunteers feel good because they can evaluate their action.

The ICYE foreign volunteers, who have made donations to their projects in Colombia, have framed these donations with a clear conscience of social solidarity and responsibility, providing the tools so that the people fight to change their conditions.

Trying to be coherent with ICYE's philosophy, principles and objectives, we try to promote a model for voluntary work that is able to combat situations of exclusion, marginality and vulnerability of the societies in which ICYE works; an "active voluntary work" model. In this sense, we support volunteer participation in the formulation of projects, initiatives that tend to be for integral development and to improve the quality of life of all the people.

Finally, we want to say that it would be very important to somehow measure the impact that voluntary work has regarding projects, committees, communities, society etc., in order to know for certain if this promotes "justice for all people who suffer social oppression, economic, political and personal injustice, that the barriers collapse between cultures and if we are collaborating in building a better and fairer world".

In good faith, we can be promoting an "active voluntary work" model, which is certainly important, but perhaps doesn't always have the social significance and the changing results that we hope for. 🍷

Omaira Olano is sociologist, co-founder and also director of ICYE Colombia.

Ananya Trust is a charitable trust that runs a unique school for first generation learners from the slums of Bangalore, India. It was started in 1998 to provide meaningful and relevant education to children who drop out of school or have never been to school.

In her contribution Shashi Rao, founder of Ananya, writes about her experiences with international volunteers and in particular about the personal enrichment which mutual contact and intercultural exchange between international volunteers, schoolchildren and teachers can provide for all involved. This is an immaterial enrichment, which cannot be weighed in terms of money or donations.

Shashi Rao

Volunteering: A way to challenge stereotypes

About our work

Ananya Shikshana Kendra (Ananya Centre for Learning) is a residential school that provides meaningful and relevant education to first generation learners from the slums of Bangalore. The school is situated on a 1½ acres coconut grove that is an ideal, safe and happy environment in which the children live and learn together. We are a small school and believe that living together is a learning experience and we teach through contextual exposure rather than through text books. In order to provide our children with a rich and varied learning experience we have a team of highly qualified and compassionate teachers who teach during the day. This learning is supplemented and complimented by a dedicated team of volunteers, both international and local, short term and long term, who work with the children after school.

The volunteers are a perfect blend of young, just out of school volunteers from abroad, often from Germany, and highly specialized older local volunteers. The role these volunteers play in the life of our children is very enriching and cannot be monetized. The young international volunteers

bring with them their youthful enthusiasm, their dedication and commitment, and their unique cultural experiences. They have brought the knowledge of countries so remote and beyond the reach of our students into our school curriculum.



About our expectations from volunteers

Since Ananya is a partly residential school, volunteers are expected to work round the clock, especially in case of emergencies. We believe that volunteering is not only “learning for life” but “learning by living.” The volunteers are expected to live on the campus with the children. We offer a perfect environment for them to understand the children, closely interact with them and get to know details of their lives, their families and their social environment.

By volunteering at Ananya we want to inculcate a feeling of solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people which in turn is transmitted to our children. Through such interactions we hope to develop new skills and improve the personal, educational and professional development of the volunteers and our children too.

With the exposure to our unique teaching-learning methods we hope to motivate young volunteers to pursue teaching as a career. Volunteering gives them an opportunity to plan activities, and share their culture and interests. It also provides them with learning opportunities to enhance their own social skills, find new ways to equip, enable and empower the children to cope with the emotional traumas they have to deal with every day.

Our experiences with a volunteer M

When M first walked into our campus, the first thing that appealed to us was her cheerfulness and smiling face. But we had doubts, would she survive the rough and tumble of our daily routine? Would she be able to handle the highly volatile children? Would she help us with the daily chores and work with the children and staff? Our fears were based on our precon-

ceived notions of ‘foreigners’. However within a few days all our fears were unfounded and what stayed with us until her last day at Ananya was her cheerful smile.

The expectations we have of volunteers at Ananya can be daunting and exhausting. With M it did not seem like that at all. The comfort and ease with which she handled all the work assigned to her was truly amazing. She (along with the other volunteers), was creative and innovative in designing activities for the children. The activities were well balanced and had elements of fun, learning and helped hone the social skills of the children. Whether she initiated the activities or implemented them made no difference: she put heart, soul and all her energy into her work.

During her stint, we had a shortage of staff in the kitchen and thanks to M we were able to function smoothly. She gladly offered to help with breakfast and enthusiastically learnt the names and recipes of our common breakfast dishes. She helped build and maintain the eco-friendly toilet; something we thought was too menial for a ‘foreigner.’ She was equally comfortable and adept at working in the kitchen, the toilets, the classrooms or the playground.

We believe that volunteering is not only “learning for life” but “learning by living”.

Her method of interacting with children and dealing with issues relating to the organization was mature and showed sensitivity. She had a great rapport with the children, her peers and the staff at Ananya. She was not only good at whatever she did but was equally eager to learn new things, try new foods and make the learning-teaching process a memorable experience for all of us. She made good use of her volunteering opportunities to grow as a person.

The learnings

Our experiences with the volunteers have been positive and have helped us, teachers and students, challenge some of the stereotypical views we have of people from the North: that they are all rich, educated, young, immature and unapproachable. What the volunteers over the years have taught us, especially our children, is that they may be richer in comparison but they are human like us. They too have problems of adjusting to a new culture, they too are sometimes insecure and unsure of what to do, they

also make sacrifices in order to travel to another country for a whole year, they work hard to pay for their studies, (unlike our students who are lucky to have donors pay for their education). Most importantly, they are willing to do all kinds of work, some of which are considered 'menial' by our standards. They learn about dignity of labor, dedication and commitment.

What have the volunteers learnt from this cultural exchange—an insight into the disturbing lives of our children, learning how to 'teach' children outside a 'school'; that there is more learning happening outside the classroom than within the four walls of the classroom. They also learn about resilience to a life of poverty and scarcity, and that one can be happy even if one is poor and belong to an unhappy dysfunctional family situation. 🌱

Dr. Shashi Rao is the founder and Managing Trustee of Ananya Trust She has a PhD in Education and has been an educator and teacher trainer. Her interests are empowerment of women and children through education.

Cielo Azul is a Swiss non-governmental organization, which has hosted international volunteers in Ecuador since the year 2000. These volunteers work as teaching staff in the indigenous communities. The aim is to contribute towards making an improvement in the standards of living and education of schoolchildren and their families.

In principle, Cielo Azul does not object to volunteers making donations to their respective project. To avoid pressure being put on helpers, the NGO has established some clear guidelines.

Sara Grossenbacher

Donate, yes – but how?

Cielo Azul is a politically independent Swiss non-governmental organisation (NGO). Since the year 2000 it has sent volunteers as teaching staff to indigenous communities in the vicinity of the Ecuadorian town Otavalo. This is a way of contributing to the improvement of the standards of living and education of children and families there.

The majority of volunteers at Cielo Azul come from Germany, Switzerland and Austria. They work in rural schools in various communities near Otavalo. The inhabitants in most of the communities are primarily indigenous peoples whose native language is Kichwa. With the help of teaching staff and parents, Cielo Azul has set up school gardens in some schools, so that the pupils can be provided with a school lunch.

Cielo Azul has a clear policy regarding donations:

It is the organisation's primary concern that donations are channeled, i.e. volunteers do not make direct donations to the school or family. Those responsible in the organisation prefer to discuss with the volunteers how the money should be used. Cielo Azul's project leaders then implement what has been agreed. New ideas often emerge in the course of discussions, or the project leaders may make suggestions about how the money can be used meaningfully, effectively and sustainably.



Moreover, it is considered important that the schools do not ask the volunteers for money directly. If the donations come via Cielo Azul, they are not associated directly with the volunteer. Advantage: Pressure cannot be put so easily on subsequent volunteers, who would then be compared with their predecessors.

What is given in return is equally as important. Cielo Azul works on various projects with the schools – such as the gardens, buying plants, fertilizer and other products for them. In return the teachers, “mingas” (a kind of communal volunteer cooperative in the Andes) and parents undertake to organise work parties. The gardens are then cared for: seeds are sown, crops are harvested and of course a meal is cooked for the pupils’ lunch.

Another example: a volunteer has raised sufficient funds to have a roof repaired. Cielo Azul arranges for the materials to be delivered and at the same time ensures that skilled workers in the school community repair the roof free of charge.

The most problematic issue for the volunteers is the comparison with their predecessors.

We also strongly recommend all volunteers that on no account do they give their host families cash, as frequently the money is spent on things other than what was originally intended. If volunteers specifically want to donate to their host families, Cielo Azul helps them to choose a practical use for the money and how to do it. For example, the donation can be transferred to Cielo Azul for a school grant. The organisation will then take charge of buying school uniforms or educational material, in conjunction with the prospective beneficiaries.


In addition, the organisation asks the volunteers to raise funds once a year. These can then be used to finance Christmas celebrations and a football competition in the schools.

By now we have acquired considerable experience with donations through the partnership of the Cielo Azul team and the volunteers. The most prob-

lematic issue for the volunteers is the comparison with their predecessors. Time and again the question is about money. Some examples:

- “Karina paid for us all to go to Baños last year.”
- “Last year Sergio raised the money for these chairs.”
- “It was such fun with Martin: he took us all to the zoo.”

When talking with volunteers we often sense that they feel compelled to act like their predecessors. In some schools, the volunteers have even been asked for a “favour” outright, with the comment that all their predecessors had done this. At this point, the Cielo Azul organisation steps in and makes contact with those responsible for the project. However, this is extremely unpleasant for the volunteers. To avoid such comparisons being drawn, Cielo Azul makes use of different host families. This has proved to be a positive way out. The teaching staff at the school assist us with this. The host family for the next volunteer is selected in a joint meeting with the parents. Such a rotation helps to prevent any jealousy among the families.

The topic of donations is discussed with the volunteers in the induction week of their assignment. They are already sensitised at this early stage to question the reason and purpose, as well as the effects, of each donation. 

Sara Grossenbacher, 30, is a primary school teacher who worked at CIELO AZUL from 2012 to 2014 as volunteer coordinator. Prior to that she had worked for four years in Switzerland as a teacher and decided to do volunteer work in Ecuador in 2010. After this experience in a project and a subsequent journey around South America, she decided to stay on in Ecuador and started work at CIELO AZUL in 2012. Since September 2014, she has worked at the German School in Quito, Ecuador.

Modern English Medium School, Diguvapeta, in Ramasamudram, Andhra Pradesh, India, aims to bring good English education to rural children. It has been hosting volunteers since 2008. Their responsibilities are to teach English, conduct arts and crafts classes, organize sports activities, and help in exchange of cultural experiences

Usha Venugopal

Mixed bag of experiences

We have had volunteers since 2008. We have had a very good relationship with the volunteers from the beginning. There has been a lot of cultural exchange, learning languages, visiting traditional temples, functions and marriages etc. Many of our volunteers helped us in bringing changes in our school. Some of their activities have been: painting the school board, wooden toys and games, walls; teaching children how to paint; helping us use spaces which were unusable; provided school supplies that have made learning more effective. In exchange the volunteers have learnt classical dance and taught our children western dance, they have performed together with the children at school functions. They have learnt the local language, cooking local food and been a part of all school activities. I am fondly called “Mother India” of which I am really proud. We are still in touch with our first volunteer who constantly wants to know how he can help.

But one experience left a bitter taste, so much so I began to wonder whether it was worth having volunteers at all. It was a time when I had four volunteers. In the beginning it was very nice. One of the volunteers wanted to help the project. His idea was to construct one room upstairs for the volunteers so that they could stay on the campus.

According to our belief in the ancient rules of construction, one room would not be auspicious; we had to construct at least three rooms. The estimated cost of construction was more than our budget. We wanted to be sincere in our efforts and wanted to ensure that the work continued uninterrupted. Since we needed more money we approached different sources for funding and even got a loan. Finally we started the work.

The volunteer wanted to help because he probably thought that being »White« he could dominate. The problem started here. As soon as he gave us money he started questioning us like: »Why there are few labours?«, ”How come the materials did not come?“, ”What are the labour charges?“, etc. This actually irritated me, I felt like he did not trust us! Even if we answered his question with proper explanation he did not believe me. Some days we had to stop the work because the mason was not available, sometimes there were heavy rains. When the work stopped for few days, for reasons beyond our control, he thought that the construction would end. I always explained to him in detail why we had to stop the work but he refused to understand me. He threatened to sell the raw materials which were lying for some days because of rains which hurt me.

I was always worried about his behaviour and his constant questioning. One day he suspected I was paying them less and cheating him that he demanded that I pay the labours in front of him.

The other volunteers also joined him and started insulting me with their questions as if I was a cheater. I had reached a point where I wanted to stop the work, but I consoled myself and tried to finish off the work as soon as possible. We hired more painters to finish the work. Everything was completed before the end of the summer vacations. It was exhausting! All my efforts seemed to be in showing him that we were serious and had all the documents to support our expenses.

Communication between me and the volunteers broke down and we did not speak to each other. Volunteers were coming to the school and not even saying »hi and bye« to me. To my astonishment I got to know that he informed the sending organization that we are a money making organization and asked them not to send any more volunteers to work in our school.

From this experience I realized that I should not seek any such help from the volunteers even if they offer to do so! ☑

Usha Venugopal is the Head Madam of Modern English Medium School. She has a Master’s degree in Sociology from Mysore University. Her dream was to start a school that provides good English education to rural children. Her dream came true in 1998 when the school was started.

Living Hope is a non-governmental project based in rural Uganda. It's a primary school and additionally runs several community based programs to empower and teach disadvantaged community members how to help themselves. Living Hope is funded by different income generating projects and donations. It regularly hosts volunteers from different countries.

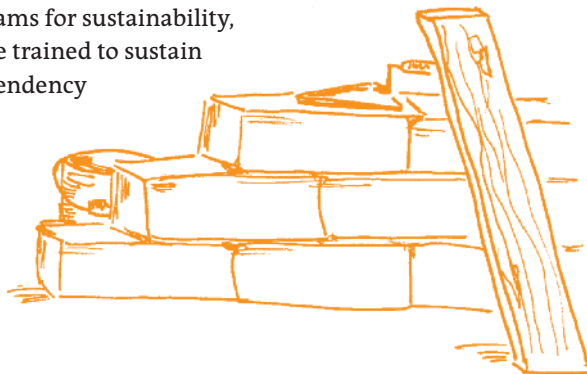
John Ephraim **Case Study of Living Hope**

Benefits of volunteer's donations

Volunteer's donations have had a great impact in our communities. Through them projects, schools and health centers have been built and other community developmental programs could be implemented. But apart from donations volunteers enable a cultural exchange to both sides: national citizens and international volunteers. They are here to work and for making good friends.

Impacts of volunteer donations

Volunteer's donations as well as other donations are creating dependency. Dependency has taken away the inner motivation by some projects to do things by themselves and instead wait and wait for donations. Projects generally create a lot of dependence once they are in place and communities tend to depend on them entirely. Only if the projects introduce programs for sustainability, and communities are trained to sustain themselves, will dependency



decrease. People are losing their culture and become more dependent on the outsiders to solve their problems.

At the Living Hope Project we are trying to create mechanisms for long-term sustainability. The over dependence of projects on foreign funding has been the biggest factor for un-sustainability. It enforces the feeling that we can't do anything without donations.

How donations must be used?

Donations to local projects should be directed to capacity building of projects to generate its own income. In this way projects avoid dependency on volunteer's donations or other foreign funds. Anyway donations should only be supplementary funds, while the projects main capacities are based on other income sources. ☐

Pastor John Ephraim is the Executive Director of Living Hope.

READ (Rights education and development centre) is an organization, working for children and women of the Dalit scavenging community since 2001 at Erode district, Tamilnadu, India. It 's vision is »a society where every person has the right to life and dignity«. Read works with international volunteers from ICYE since 2009. During their stay they at READ, volunteers learn about Dalit issues, untouchable stories and the issue of manual scavenging. At the same time they give their skills and knowledge.

The following contribution shows how volunteers actively support the fundraising work of READ, without being expected to make a donation themselves.

Karuppu Samy

Experience at READ

At READ, we have had volunteers since 2009, and they have the choice to be involved in any of our activities. Over the years volunteering has been a mutual learning experience: the volunteers have learnt a lot they have contributed valuable skills to the project. The field and management staff has learnt English and use it daily during field visits or during staff discussions. This contribution from the volunteers has been very beneficial. In addition to all these services, they have recognized our need for funds and instead of giving donations themselves they have helped us in many ways to raise funds.

The volunteers have opted to help in the office by preparing monthly e-newsletters which have included nice photographs and case studies, and a report of our activities and achievements. They wrote the reports with the help of our programme team. These reports and e-newsletters are sent to our individual donors, institutional donors, corporate partners, friends and well-wishers. The newsletters have increased our visibility and given a good coverage among the donors and friends. It has made our communication

Fundraising


The English term "fundraising" describes a systematic accumulation of resources, for example money. Donation campaigns and appeals can be a part of this funding process.



more effective with the general public, at the national and international level.

Some volunteers helped us update our activity reports every month and this has made seeking donations easy and response to requests for donations have been immediate. It is the efforts of the volunteers that have made it easy for us to seek and receive donations.

Most of the volunteers are also very good at computers, so one of the assignments the volunteers work on is creating and updating the data base of corporate donors. They have used their mastery over the English language to draft letters of appeal for donations and showcase our work with Dalit children to donors and friends.

We do not ask them directly for donations but they volunteer to help us with our fund raising events. 

Karuppu Samy is the director of the Indian organisation READ (Rights Education And Development centre).

A project in Kenya relies on the finances of its volunteers. That is not good for anyone and prevents the development of sustainable structures.

Sophia Jungblut

How money can become a burden

I worked for twelve months in Kenya as a volunteer in an orphanage, which also ran a school. In term time about 160 pupils lived on the site, but during the holidays there were about half as many in the project.

I lived with another volunteer in a host family, near our placement location. I worked mainly with the seniors, but towards the end of my stay also with the junior classes. In addition, I organised leisure programmes for the pupils who spent the holidays on site.

On my first working day, the project leader introduced himself to me and the other new volunteer who was also from Germany. He told us all that the previous volunteers had “achieved” on the project. On the one hand, he continued, the previous year a volunteer had collected money and bought mobile phones for some of the pupils – which was not at all to the project’s liking. On the other hand, he emphasised that our predecessors had painted classrooms, made tables and bought teaching materials and food. Anyhow, German sponsors were surely more motivated to make donations now that two German volunteers were working in the project.

Right from the outset, I had the feeling that the expectations for us to make a material contribution to the project were extremely high. However, I wanted to wait and see how things developed.

In our orphanage there was a volunteer from Costa Rica who had been there for some time. She paid for food and lodging and bought materials for the project out of her own pocket.

Together with the founder of the project she took care of the fundraising. Many donations came from Costa Rica. They were from friends and family

of our co-volunteer. She was in her mid-thirties, usually worked as a lawyer and therefore had a much greater material leeway than we other volunteers.

After I had been with the project for several weeks, she opened a little shop which sold food, together with the wife of the project leader. The proceeds were supposed to be for the project. The volunteer paid the rent for the shop herself – and for everything else that was needed to open it. Or the money came from the donors from Costa Rica.

On occasion I also worked in the shop and realised that it was not financially viable. Unfortunately it was then closed shortly after the Costa Rican volunteer had left the project.

At the time I was working mainly with the pupils. It struck me that there was a shortage of teaching materials: the teacher and 15 pupils sometimes had only one single book for the entire lesson. A new school book cost, converted, about five euros. Second-hand ones were even cheaper.

For days they told us again and again how fantastic it had been the previous year when our predecessors had arranged a party.

Therefore I and my fellow German volunteer wrote to our friends and families in Germany: we asked for a donation to buy new school books. At first nothing happened. But shortly before Christmas we heard from the first friends and acquaintances who wanted to make a donation.

At the time, the volunteer from Costa Rica had just a few days left with the project. She raised a lot of money for a widely publicised Christmas party. Then at the last minute she decided to fly back home to her family before Christmas. So the money raised was to be used for her farewell party.

Although the farewell party was supposed to be instead of the Christmas party, the children still expected us volunteers to organise a Christmas party. For days they told us again and again how fantastic it had been the previous year when our predecessors had arranged such a party. Everyone on the project also seemed to take it for granted that we would be working over Christmas.



It irritated me that such great importance was attached to a Christmas party. Not even the church, of which the people involved in the project were members, was bothered about whether there was a party or not.

Fortunately our fundraising activities for the school books had been so successful that we were able to finance far more than just the books with the money. My co-volunteer and I finally relented. We bought rice, vegetables, chicken and a few sweets. We got up especially early at Christmas to prepare everything. In the end we had a lovely Christmas dinner and a nice little party.

We even had money left over after that. I felt uneasy about the remaining money. Neither I nor my co-volunteer had any use for it. We didn't want to spend the money on things which weren't really necessary. And I knew too, that my co-volunteer's parents and my mother would bring a few things such as balls, skipping ropes and crayons with them, when they came to visit.

A short while later, our assignment project got into financial difficulties. We volunteers were not directly informed about this, but we noticed that food for the children was in short supply. So we used part of the remaining donation money to buy food and as luck would have it, a few more small donations arrived about that time. However, about 90 euros were needed for three main meals for 160 children. Paying for the food with donations could only be a short-term solution. Therefore I continually tried to find sponsors in Kenya itself – but without success.

In addition, one pupil had broken a tooth – an accident – and others fell ill. As there was no money available for treatment, we went to hospital with them – and paid.

At the same time I suggested growing some produce. The orphanage had a large greenhouse, where tomatoes had been growing when I arrived but had been empty ever since. Unfortunately, it turned out that the greenhouse was damaged. Repairs would have been too expensive. My co-volunteer and I didn't have enough donation money left. So we bought seeds and fertilizer so we could start a vegetable patch next to the greenhouse. We planned to sell part of what we harvested, to raise money. The vegetables that were left could be used for the project. Sadly, hardly anyone on the project took any responsibility for the plants. If I was away for a few days, they were often not watered.

The longer we had money available from our fundraising, the more unpleasant the situation became. Towards the end of my voluntary year, I was frequently asked by those responsible for the project for money when I met them – either directly or indirectly. This continued even when we had no money left and we had told them this many times. In the end, the money we raised was a burden on our relationship with the people on the project.

In the mean time, it is my opinion that volunteers should not raise money for their assignment project. All the things which we bought or took there provided only short-term relief. That is why I stopped collecting money for my assignment project when my voluntary service was over. ☺

Sophia was an international volunteer in Kenya from 2012 to 2013.

How one can avoid to some extent being considered a “rich European”. And why one nonetheless starts donating money to the project once back at home.

Laszlo Kelemen

Why I donate

A year’s voluntary service in Columbia. After the induction and acclimatisation in situ, my expectations were high and I could hardly wait to start work on my new project. It should prove to be a special experience. I was curious as to how I would be received in my project, a centre for children and young people. Finally the day arrived: my first day at work. I was made to feel at ease immediately and accepted as one of the team. For the most part, this team consisted of Catholic nuns, while the pre-school groups were looked after by local child-minders. I was particularly impressed by how all the staff carried out their work on the project – with complete dedication and religiously motivated love. The salary was extremely low, even by Columbian standards. Nevertheless, the staff were committed to their work with such vigour and conviction that I was filled with the utmost respect.

The longer I worked on the project, the more I realised what hard battles had to be fought to secure any funding. No help could be expected from the Columbian government: despite several applications the state refused any kind of continued support. The project leader had to look around for other funding options. But it was far from easy to obtain money from NGOs. The only answer was fundraising activities. So the project-leader organised so-called “sponsorships”, partly in Columbia and partly in Europe.

The sponsors contribute a fixed monthly amount for a particular child. It goes without saying, that the money donated does not benefit the respective child alone, but the entire project. In return, the donors are kept up-to-date on the child’s development. This is by no means a lucrative source of income for the project, but is just enough to cover food and materials for the 70-odd children and young people, as well as the staff salaries.

I had a very good relationship with my project leader. She was always very open with me, even where project funding was concerned. But I was never asked to make a donation myself. I would never have complied with such a request. I didn't want to be a volunteer donating money. I didn't want to be considered a rich European. What I wanted was to be accepted as an equal, as a fellow human-being and volunteer – purely and simply because of my volunteer work.


Even when children from the project asked me to buy them chewing gum from the kiosk across the road, I stuck to my guns. Although the Columbian volunteers associated with the project apparently had no qualms about buying such little things, I never succumbed to the children's requests. I did not want to be seen just as a donor.

However, towards the end of my voluntary work assignment I started thinking about donations.

However, towards the end of my voluntary work assignment I started thinking about donations.

How could I make a lasting contribution to the situation of the children, young people and their families and friends? Was it at all possible? How could I make an effective donation?

Once my voluntary work was over, I decided to make a basic monthly donation to my project, which I still do today. So why did I donate all of a sudden? I am convinced that the work on my project is worthwhile and extremely important for the development of the children and young people, in particular for their social environment and their families. I never assumed the role of a "donor" for the duration of my voluntary work assignment. And the children and the team on my project know nothing about my donations. Only the project leader knows that I am one of the donors.

While working on the project, I realised that the scheme works well. I have utter confidence in the team and the project leader. I know that the money is needed and is used effectively. In my opinion, donations – even from volunteers – can have a positive effect, as long as they are continuous and long-term. 

Laszlo was in Colombia from 2012 to 2013 as an international volunteer.

*Observations from an orphanage in Uganda.
And how to do things better.*

Bruno Gideon Bergheim

Problematic sponsorships

Spending for the poor has always been a part of my life. Right from the beginning. For many years, my parents sponsored children in Bangladesh and Sudan. But they hardly ever sent them personal presents. Now and again they might post a box of unused pens. That seemed natural to me. I never wondered why my parents only donated to one organisation which did not allot the donation to one particular family but rather to the child's entire social environment. Then I decided to do voluntary work myself, in Uganda. During this period, the insights I received into a sponsored project resulted in me taking a critical look at the donation practice of many organisations. And, once back in Germany, I went down a different road.

I was a volunteer in a Ugandan orphanage. There was a very strong relationship there between project sponsors and the respective children. After all, the main contributors are usually family and friends of former volunteers. Contacts between sponsors and the project were extremely close. Some sponsors even regarded "their" child as part of their family. They were always very interested in promoting the well-being of "their" children. One instinctively thinks this must be the ideal scenario. But in reality, this close relationship is the cause of a number of difficulties.

For example, I remember the Christmas I spent in Uganda. Sponsors had sent parcels for "their" child. Naturally, they wanted all the children in "their" family to have a good Christmas and therefore sent lots of toys and sweets, a few vitamin tablets for health purposes and secondhand clothes. It was indeed a fantastic Christmas for the children.

But a day later, things looked different: Some children in the project had not received a parcel. And some sponsors were more generous than others. There was fierce competition for the most interesting toys, which were in

pieces after a few hours. Less interesting games and some pens landed in the rubbish-bin in sheer frustration. Many of the new clothes were torn or dirty. In most cases they were far too wide and loosely cut and the colours were anything but suitable for local roads, where the dust settled visibly on everything.

During the days following Christmas, the children started selling their toys and sweets. Not just for money, but sometimes in return for other children doing their homework and chores. Just two days after Christmas some of our dear children had turned into tyrants who paid younger children to do their work or got others to bring them to school on a motorbike. It wasn't long before the money was gone.

When the children realised that they had just as much or as little as all the others, they tried all kinds of tricks to get money from the volunteers. They made up stories and ruses and once even broke into my room.

Their desire to do good led to a deterioration of the situation in the orphanage.

These events led me to the conclusion that too close a relationship between sponsors and children is obviously not the best solution. Of course, it is nice for the sponsors to know a face, so that they know who they are doing good to and in this way create an emotional bond. It was not until I had been in Uganda for six months that I began to understand, what is really needed and what not. Sponsors who have never been there are totally unable to assess what kind of present would be appropriate. And indeed: Their desire to do good led to a deterioration of the situation in the orphanage.

There was also another problem resulting from the close relationship between project and sponsors: the sponsors tried to control the project from Germany. As they contributed about 75 per cent of the orphanage's total funds, it could be argued that their interest in how the money was spent was justified. But it is an illusion to imagine that one can control an orphanage over 1000 kilometers away, when one has never even been there. Personally, this shows me that a sponsor from another country must rely on the fact that the local people in charge are better equipped to judge what is needed for the project. Such reliance was seldom apparent in my project.

On the contrary, the sponsors tended to pay attention to the children's opinion rather than that of the project leaders. The children soon realised that the sponsors, and the volunteers as well, wanted to help them personally and not necessarily the project as a whole. They exploited this discord in various ways: During my stay, I saw how the children intentionally tried to play the sponsors and us off against the project management – they said that they were being beaten. I have to admit, that – at the beginning – I was inclined to believe them. But in contrast to the other volunteers in my project, I decided to talk to those in charge. During the conversation, I soon realised something I had overlooked: As much as I liked to think so, the children in the project were anything but little innocents. In reality they were pubescent youngsters testing their limits. They had hit a soft spot with the volunteers.

Eventually a Ugandan friend of mine planned to open an orphanage himself. He asked me to help him. It is widespread practice in many projects in Uganda for Europeans to take over the principal role when the project reaches a certain stage of completion. The local workers are just employees with no key responsibility on the organisational level. It took all my powers of persuasion to convince my friend that I did not want to take on any organisational responsibility for the project. I only offered to help make contacts for him.

In the beginning I also donated a little money. This was not invested in food or beds for the children, but in a small commercial snack bar. This provided the project with a constant flow of income, which currently contributes the equivalent of 70 euros per month. This covers part of the basic costs and consequently the project is less dependent on other donations.

Furthermore, I have formed a kind of “fair trade agreement” with the project leader. He sends me hand-made necklaces and bracelets from Uganda (usually in the luggage of volunteers returning home, to save transport costs). I sell these in Germany at a profit of between 800 and 2,500 per cent. I send the entire money raised to the project.

For me, it is important that I am not the donor. The entire money generated by the project should flow back to Uganda as soon as possible, so that those in charge there can decide for themselves what should be done with it. I

don't consider myself to be a sponsor, but more as a committed supporter of the project, helping it to open up another market. So far this has enabled the project to buy a cow, goats and chickens, and build a new house.

That's what I call success. And it came about entirely without sponsorship. 

Bruno was an international volunteer in Uganda from 2011 to 2012.

Raising money for one's own project can destroy the basis of trust – and help to rebuild it.

Insa Weilage

Do donations have a longer-term effect than voluntary service?

The volunteers who had worked in the small village school in India before me apparently wanted to leave a lasting impression. During his twelve months' service, one of my predecessors raised a large sum of money in his home town. He used this to have two additional classrooms built. So the school had seven classrooms instead of five – and the new classrooms even had blackboards on which one could write with chalk. However, once construction of the rooms had begun, the volunteers fell out with the headmistress so that they never spoke to each other again.

After this experience, the school nearly ended its policy of hosting international volunteers. It took some time before the trust between the headmistress and us – the new volunteers who started there – was re-established. But, we never found out why the disagreement with our predecessors had escalated so far. At least the two classrooms carried on being in daily use.

At the end of my year, a volunteer from another assignment location approached us. She had money which had been collected by her church congregation in Germany and with which they wanted to support a project in India.

We discussed with our headmistress whether there was anything she could use the money for.

The donors in Germany wanted feedback on what their money had been used for. Therefore an object had to be found which could be paid for in its entirety and could be subsequently reported to the donors, i.e. something tangible.

Together with the headmistress we hit on the idea of equipping the five old classrooms with new blackboards, as one could hardly write on the old ones any more. As there was still enough money left, we decided to paint the classrooms as well. After a brief discussion we rejected the headmistress' original idea of buying a computer. A PC would have needed electricity – which we didn't have most of the time.



The money was finally transferred to our successors. They wrote thank-you letters to the volunteers who had raised the money and to their congregation. From the photos which our successors posted in blogs and on Facebook, we could see that the renovations had helped make the school more user-friendly and nicer for both teachers and pupils.

In retrospect, I think that the money could have been used more meaningfully. Did any child learn more or get to a better school just because one could suddenly use the blackboards again? Or did they help a teacher to teach better? But at least we had something concrete we could show the donors and they were happy. Furthermore, these classrooms were in use for a longer time than our two generations of volunteers were on site directly supporting the project. And so if you consider the classrooms and our volunteer activities combined, then at least we made a slight improvement. ◻

Insa was an international volunteer in India from 2009 to 2010.

Volunteers who make donations to their own projects may find that it is only their money that is appreciated.

Samuel Flach

Volunteers: Mascots of the aid industry?

Donations – are they just a good way of easing the conscience of our affluent society? Bill Gates, Peter Maffay, Bill Clinton – and many other custodians of our selfless actions – all implore us to: Donate towards fighting the hunger in the world! Donate to the fight against suffering and poverty! Donate wholeheartedly and without reservation! In this way, many generous hands inject money into the veins of countless aid organisations. It is their lifeblood. They are dependent on these donations. But where do they really end up? What effects do they have on the places where they are supposed to bring relief?

As a prospective volunteer to an orphanage in Uganda, I hadn't considered any of these questions before my departure. I started my voluntary year with pocket money of 100 euros a month and my principle was: help and observe, don't judge. So it came as no surprise on my arrival when the children paid more attention to my presents than to me. As I unpacked my personal food supplies, I fulfilled the children's expectations and gave freely. In next to no time my MP3 player, my mobile phone, my camera, my torch and my penknife were common property and more often than not in the hands of the children and the project workers rather than my own. I just thought 'it's a question of culture' and shrugged it off.

When I first met the project leader, the main theme was the previous volunteers. The project leader went into great detail about all they had done: bought new bedclothes for the children, donated clothes, raised funds for a new house, written thank-you letters to sponsors, obtained school uniforms...

After listing all these charitable deeds, there was a pause and then came the question: “And what will you do?” I was ashamed of my comparative affluence. Considering my pocket money, which was three times the cook’s monthly salary, I bowed to expectations. My first tasks consisted in procuring necessary items for the project. I paid for additional food for the children (fruit, treats, fish) as the daily rations provided by the project leader were fairly unbalanced. I bought paint for painting the kitchen, repaired scythes and shovels and got hold of a new football for the children. When I sent my first report back to Germany, I mentioned – among other things – that I had searched the whole village for a hammer.

My field report was well-received and widely read. It was not long before the first donations were made and a ‘care’ parcel was on its way. But gradually I began to question this fixation on donations: Whenever I got back from the nearest town, I was instantly greeted with the words “What have you brought for me?”

Donations not only create dependency, but they also destroy traditional social structures.

For example, I let one of the children use my mobile phone. When he gave it back to me the little boy said in a commanding tone: “You give this to me, if you go back home!” At that time I was planning to stay another 11 months. Was this really the country’s culture? Or was it rather a case of spoilt children, who were always expecting more new things from me?

Week after week the footballs were lost or ruined, just like my penknife and my torch. All the parcels I received from Germany were stacked up in my room, under the bed. What use were four hammers? What were the children supposed to do with another jigsaw gathering dust in a corner? What was the point of Diddle notepads, biros and bicycle reflectors? Who would have wanted second-hand mini-skirts and bikinis? Quite apart from the fact that all these things were available in Uganda, the majority were entirely superfluous.

Eventually I refused to buy a new football – the neighbouring children made a ball last for months, so why not the children in the orphanage? I gradually fought off the disappointed expectations and the picture of us volunteers which prevailed in the orphanage: that of a money machine. I kept my mobile phone and playing on the iPod became an exception.

Spoilt, insatiable children may be the result of constant donations from a string of charitable volunteers. But a far worse result is the dependence of the entire project on such material support.

Our project leader always emphasised the fact that the orphanage was dependent on donations and sponsors. So the only work we did, which was really appreciated, revolved around money and material goods. We volunteers were responsible for contacts with sponsors, for new fund-raising, for replacing broken objects, for school equipment and a balanced diet for the children. Apart from these tasks, our work on site was barely defined. And yes, we even felt that it was considered unimportant or superfluous.



If something was missing, the children didn't tell the project leader or the orphanage mother – they came to us volunteers. We were the source of funds. What if they dried up?

Donations not only create dependency, but they also destroy traditional social structures. One day, a volunteer described to me how he had set up a football club. In an equally isolated village in Uganda he used his donations to buy football shoes, jerseys and professional balls for the team. As he was a very good football player, he trained the team regularly and prepared them for a tournament with prize money.

An outfit, a prize and a white football trainer – what more could you want? Within a short space of time, all the good players left the other local teams and joined the sponsored football team. The original teams broke up and instead of several small teams, there was only one privileged and well-equipped team. The donations had destroyed what many development workers dream of: self-organised, independent social institutions.

It took me a long time to find a use for the donations I had acquired in Uganda. In the end I did not leave them to my orphanage but to another initiative. Since I had not worked there, there was no fear of creating an atmosphere of expectation from future volunteers. And in any case, in

contrast to our orphanage, the project focused on using the donations on the road to independence.

Donations can destroy, donations can create dependency, donations can result in expectations. That is what I learnt in Uganda. These expectations are extremely unpleasant especially for volunteers, because after all they are already working in an honorary capacity. If volunteers collect donations, then – in my opinion – they should do so as intermediary, as fundraiser but should never appear visibly as collector or even donor. Otherwise they will become mascots of the aid industry¹. Volunteers will run the risk of being appreciated only for their connections to a rich country and not for their personal abilities and their willingness to work on a voluntary basis for a good cause. This would be a great shame – both for the volunteers and for their hosts. ☑

Samuel was in Uganda as an international volunteer from 2010 to 2011.

¹ This means internationally active charity and aid organisations. The term “industry” is intended as a criticism of the trend towards an economic rivalry for donations and public funding amongst the stakeholders.

Volunteers have become the main source of income for a Mozambique host family. It is hard to overcome this dependence.

Gesa Langhoop

Are donations triggered by pangs of conscience?

I did one year's voluntary service in Mozambique and lived during this time with a host family. I was the eighth volunteer that the family had accommodated. This made many things easier, but was sometimes also problematic.

Basically, I felt happy with the family at first. But after four weeks my host mother asked me whether I wouldn't like to contribute to a family party which was soon to take place. Of course, I didn't say no! As a new volunteer I obviously wanted to make a good impression. In any case, it seemed that previous volunteers had always contributed to such celebrations. Although I had been against giving my host family money in the beginning, I now did despite myself.

However, the host mother wasn't satisfied with the first sum that I suggested. We agreed on a little more. She talked me into believing that I should not think about the money but do it from the heart – and therefore I could give a little more. That worked: My conscience pricked. I gave her money for a crate of beer and another of soft drinks.

Shortly after the family party, my host mother told me about former volunteers who sent her money every so often. As her bank card didn't work, the money was transferred to the account of whichever volunteer was there. So would I please get in touch with them by e-mail. A few days later I went to the cash machine to collect the donations from the former volunteers. That happened many a time. At the beginning this puzzled me: I assumed that we shouldn't really make donations as volunteers. Especially as the family didn't seem to be particularly needy.

In the course of my twelve months, I learnt just how many of the family's possessions had been financed by volunteers. I had a room of my own with a small bathroom. The family had a well-equipped kitchen, a large refrigerator, a deep freezer and smart furniture.

My room, the kitchen and the communal dining room were in an extension, paid for by a former volunteer. The deep freezer had also been purchased by a volunteer. Originally my host mother had wanted to open a small butcher's and store fresh meat in the freezer. That didn't happen, so the freezer was used for private purposes.



Since my host mother was unemployed while I was there, the family lived on the whole from the money they received for accommodating me, as well as from the donations from former volunteers – as now from mine.

As time went on, there were other requests for donations at irregular intervals. Sometimes there was no money for rice, then for gas. Another time it was for a new broom. I realised that sometimes things were really short, but then I wondered where the money came from for the new bathroom, which my host family started building one day. Shortly before, I had given them money for a new bottle of gas. It also annoyed me that they used my money to buy things which I considered unnecessary – like a new tablecloth. But I never complained.

Of course, I could always have said 'no!' But then I would always have had a bad conscience as soon as I bought myself a new dress for example, at the same time as I refused to give my host mother money for food. I felt under pressure because of the former volunteers' donations.

Usually I only handed over small amounts. Sometimes my host mother promised to give me the money back later. At the end of my volunteer year,

she asked me how much she owed me. I answered that it was alright if she kept it. A little leaving present.

My grandparents even sent money to support my host family. On the other hand, when my parents visited me they brought many presents. They also had pangs of conscience: “We have so much of everything!”

After my parents’ visit, my host mother asked me whether we couldn’t help to find her a new job. Her idea was to sell Mozambique cloth wraps, so-called capulanas. For that she needed starting capital.

*I didn’t want to ruin her business,
so I gave her more money.*

In principle, this seemed to be a very good idea. Especially as the family would – to a certain degree – be able to escape from its dependency on volunteers. I discussed the idea with my parents. They said they were prepared to advance the money. Shortly after, my host mother opened her new business. It went brilliantly, she sold a lot – and asked me for more financial support.

I was amazed: if she had sold so much, then surely she must have the money for new stocks! However, many neighbours had bought on credit – promising to pay later. My host mother kept a list of those people who owed her money. She knew all the people and was sure that she would soon get the money, she said. I didn’t want to ruin her business, so I gave her more money.

At this time I was travelling around Mozambique quite a bit and was not with my family so much. When I was there, I asked my host mother about her sales’ figures. Usually she told me with pride and in good cheer what turnover she had made. Then one day she said that she couldn’t carry on as before. Too many people owed her money and didn’t pay. Shortly after that my voluntary service came to an end and not long afterwards she ended her cloth business.

In this way my donations mounted up in the course of time. Originally I had had qualms, but at some point giving became a habit.

Nowadays, when I get a call from my host family I am really pleased, even though I know that it will often be accompanied by a request for a donation. And so I too transferred money to the volunteers following on after me, although I found this so strange in the beginning. But now I have decided to transfer money only for birthdays. I think this is a better solution for my host family, for the volunteers and for me. I hope that my host mother will soon find a job and be able to stand on her own two feet. Despite all this, I had a fantastic year and am deeply grateful to my host family. ☺

Gesa was in Mozambique from 2012 to 2013 as an international volunteer.

Conclusion

Right from the outset – and not without irony – this booklet poses the question: “Meaning well. Doing good.?” Can well meaning donations by volunteers from the Global North to their assignment projects or host families in the Global South really be effective and wise? Or should they be rejected on principle, bearing in mind the various difficulties that may ensue? This booklet provides no final answer to this question – not even here in the conclusion. The different articles, interviews and reports reveal a wide range of viewpoints, arguments and proposals, in addition to diverse and in part conflicting answers as to how such volunteer donations should be assessed and how one should address the issue in practice.

Below, we have summarised the key messages of the individual contributions to this booklet.

Part I – Theoretical perspectives

In the first article, **Sudhi Seshadri** illustrates the conflict between the role of the volunteer and that of the donor or sponsor. If volunteers are simultaneously donors, people in the assignment project may be tempted to expose them to situations which encourage them to donate more (“poverty porn”).

Eckhard Röhm emphasises that giving and taking is a basic element in every human society. However, one-sided giving or taking of donations can present numerous problems. Within the context of voluntary service, the lack of experience of young volunteer who make a donation may result in envy, cause a shift in the status and positions of power of those involved and reinforce intercultural clichés.

Subsequently, in the interview with **Clara West**, the latter presents a typology which distinguishes between various types of motivation for making donations. She stresses how important but also how problematic emotions are as motivation for donating.

In her essay, **Preeti Purohit** describes the various connotations “giving” can have and what concepts of giving are problematic for a donor. For example,

giving out of pity often puts the donors on a higher level than the recipients.

Markus Savander writes about the psychological aspects of donating. Donations give rise to expectations and can help reinforce stereotypes. According to Savander, the motivation to make a donation can often be egoistic – for example, if one donates in order to be able to tolerate poverty better.

Shashi Rao highlights quite a different perspective. She examines the phenomenon of voluntary service, and the funds raised for this, in the light of the dependence or interdependence theory. For the volunteers, this means that they should base their decision to donate on whether the donation increases or decreases dependence between the Global North and the Global South.

In her interview, **Lucía Muriel** from the migrant umbrella association moveGLOBAL e.V., criticises that little or nothing in the lives of people living in the Global South is altered by donations. Particularly not on a social scale. She advocates that instead of making donations, people in the Global North should become aware of their privileges, which result in part from the unjust North/ South relationship. Furthermore, she proposes that people should assume an active role in their local communities in the Global North and seek a dialogue with migrants from the Global South.

Benjamin Haas describes in his essay how non-political and ill-considered donations can reproduce colonial patterns of thought. On the one hand, donations often give the volunteers the feeling that they are better situated than local people to participate in decision-making – and should in fact do so. On the other hand, they create a “donor image” with all the expectations that this conjures up in the minds of the recipients. As far as Benjamin Haas is concerned, donations distract from the fact that poverty is really a global, structural problem.

Thomas Gebauer and **Felix Speidel** also hold the view that charitable donations usually do not take the societal causes of social exclusion and need into account. Furthermore, they criticise that donations are arbitrarily made and therefore those who need help most urgently often do not receive it. In addition, charity in countries with pronounced social inequality

can release the political and social elite from the obligation to take action to redress social ills. Instead of making a donation, both authors recommend actively supporting an improvement in economic and social human rights on a global scale.

In the interview with **Nina Alff**, she reflects among other things on the effects of donations on a local level. Donations in kind are particularly likely to destroy local economies and upset the balance of power. Receiving donations – without giving anything in return – tends to demean the recipients and exalt the donors. Therefore a prerequisite for donating is a relationship on an equal footing, as well as – ideally – a balance between giving and taking.

Mustapha Machrafi stresses that project donations should fulfil the same criteria as investments. But in reality, volunteers have neither the resources required nor the necessary knowledge to organise sustainable project financing. Machrafi sees their key task not in “giving” material goods, but in “taking” in the sense of learning.

Finally, **Theo Rauch** analyses the potential economic and social consequences of donations. He weighs up the possible short and longer term positive effects of donations against any negative effects. Donations can create dependence, distort economic competition amongst different local stakeholders, force locally produced goods out of the market and discourage people from acting independently. In his conclusion, Theo Rauch lists ten “do no harm!” rules which are intended to help circumnavigate the negative results of donations.

Part II – Practical experience

Barbara Hege-Galle from the sending organisation Mennonite Voluntary Service e.V. – Christian Missions (MVS) takes a critical stance on donations from volunteers, partly because these encourage the assignment projects to expect future volunteers to donate as well. If a volunteer wants to make a donation, then this can be channelled via MVS or an aid organisation associated with the assignment project. In this way the donations are not directly linked to the volunteers.

Ravinder Singh from ICDE India also stresses the problem of some projects expecting their volunteers to make donations in kind. To counteract this, ICDE India contacts the assignment projects to impress on them that the volunteer's contribution consists of his*her work effort and his*her cultural exchange with those on the project, and should not take the form of financial or other handouts.

Kerubo Nyaribo from ICYE Kenya emphasises on the one hand the danger of colonial stereotypes being encouraged by donations, as people from the Global North are always typified as being rich givers and the people in the Global South as needy, passive takers. Furthermore, she criticises the position of power which the volunteers may assume in their role as donors. On the other hand, she also sees the opportunities which can stem from volunteer donations, as long as they are made after consultation with the recipients and are used for sustainable projects.

Omaira Olano from ICYE Colombia sees the benefit of selective voluntary donations for assignment projects. However, she is afraid that a relationship of dependence may arise between volunteers as donors and their projects as recipients. This results in the projects having material expectations of the volunteers, which can compromise the real purpose of international voluntary service, namely intercultural exchange.

Shashi Rao from the host project Ananya Trust, in India, emphasises the positive effect of having international volunteers in her project. This is enriching for all concerned, as well as helping to overcome prejudices. According to Rao, monetary donations can in no way offset these effects.

Sara Grossenbacher from the Swiss voluntary service organisation Cielo Azul in Ecuador does not reject voluntary donations per se. However, these should never be donated directly. At Cielo Azul, donations are channelled via the organisation, which forwards them to the schools where the volunteers work. The schools can then use the donations to carry out maintenance work for example. The school staff and pupils' parents are encouraged to contribute by volunteering their labour for the realisation of such projects.

Usha Venugopal from the assignment location Modern English Medium School, in India, reports on how volunteers to her project financed an extension and how technical delays in the construction process caused dramatic misunderstandings between the volunteer donors and the project.

John Ephraim from the project Living Hope, in Uganda, condemns the strong dependence of many projects on external sponsors. This should not be reinforced by volunteer donations, they should preferably flow into activities which enable the projects to develop their own capabilities and so overcome dependencies in the long-term.

Karuppu Samy, from the Indian organisation and volunteer assignment location READ, describes how volunteers support the organisation's fundraising activities as part of their work, but are never requested to collect donations themselves.

The former volunteer **Sophia Jungblut** describes in her article how she raised funds for her assignment project and used them for various activities and purchases. Her role as "giver" put an increasing strain on her relationship with the project.


Laszlo Kelemen takes a positive look at his own fundraising activities for the children's and young people's centre where he worked as a volunteer. However, he emphasises that he only started making donations after he had completed his voluntary service and that he made them as anonymously as possible.

In his report, **Bruno Gideon Bergheim**, a former volunteer in an orphanage, makes a critical assessment of the behaviour and attitudes of external sponsors and relates how he finally found a way to try and help the project in a sustainable manner.

Insa Weilage, likewise a former volunteer, describes a dilemma arising from the decision on how to use donation funds in a project. Many external sponsors apparently want to see the physical effects of their fundraising (for example the purchase of blackboards or wall paint). However, projects may have more pressing needs in areas where the effect of monetary aid is not so easily and instantly visible.

Samuel Flach reports on the expectations that his project had of him: doing the same as his predecessors and donating to his assignment location. He also tells of donations in kind from Germany, which were of no use whatsoever to his project nor the immediate surroundings, as well as of the potentially negative effects of donations on the social structures into which they are poured.

In her contribution, the former volunteer **Gesa Langhoop** describes her experiences with donations to her host family.

We hope that the various ideas, arguments and proposed solutions contained in these different contributions will help the reader – in particular volunteers, assignment projects and volunteer sending and hosting organisations – to make a well-considered decision on how to handle the issue of “volunteer donations” in any specific instance. 

The ICDE/ICJA editorial team

The Editorial Team

Ananth Nag M is a Project Associate of Divya Deepa Trust, which runs a school for rural children. He has been working with ICDE/ICYE volunteers at the project site since 2009. He lives in Mysore, India.

Esther Neitzel spent a year as an international volunteer in Brazil in 2010/11. Since then she has been doing voluntary Work at ICJA Seminars for international volunteers. She is also a part of the project GLOBE for Global Learning. She is studying in Berlin.

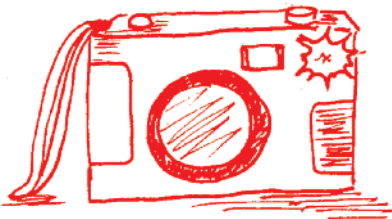
Felix Speidel was an ICJA/ICYE volunteer in Mexico 2001/2002. He holds a Master degree in Political Science and Geography and works for ICJA/ICYE-Germany as the coordinator of this publication project.

Insa Weilage was an ICJA/ICYE volunteer in 2009/2010 and went to South India. Afterwards she started studying Philosophy & Economics with a focus on development economics in Bayreuth, Germany and will finish her Bachelor studies this year.

Since her internship in 2011/12 at ICJA **Judith Scheer** has been working voluntarily for the organisation. At the moment she is finishing her Master's in Socio-Cultural Studies. The focus of her studies are social is power relations like racism and gender disparities in our society. She lives in Berlin, Germany.

Karuppu Samy is the director of the Indian organisation READ (Rights education and development centre). READ is working for Dalit scavenging community children and women since 2001 at Erode district, Tamilnadu, India.

It's Vision is "a society where every person has the right to life and dignity". The Organisation works with international volunteers from ICYE since 2009.



Laszlo Kelemen was an ICJA/ICYE volunteer for one year in 2012 in Columbia. Since his return to Germany in 2013, he has been doing voluntary work for ICJA in Germany. He is studying in Cologne, Germany.



Malte Legenhausen was an ICJA/ICYE volunteer in 2011/2012 in India. At the moment he is studying social work in Hamburg, Germany.


In 2012/2013 **Nora Scharffenberg** did voluntary service with ICJA/ICYE in Ghana. Since her return she has worked for ICJA in an honorary capacity and is studying Asian/African area studies in Berlin, Germany.

Nusrat Sheikh was working as Sending Coordinator Asia from 2011 to 2014 at ICJA e.V. She contributed conceptually up till half of the project duration.

Ravinder Singh is the Director of ICDE India. He holds a Master's in Public Relations. He participated in the ICYE programme in Switzerland (2003–2004) and Sweden (2005–2006).

Samuel Flach spent his civilian service as an ICJA/ICYE volunteer in Uganda. After his year abroad he started studying social anthropology and history at the Ludwig-Maximilian-University in Munich, Germany.

Shashi Rao is the founder and Managing Trustee of Ananya Trust that runs a school for first generation learners from the slums of Bangalore, India. She has a PhD in Education and has been an educator and teacher trainer. Her interests are empowerment of women and children through education.

Usha Venugopal is the Head Madam of the Modern English Medium School, a school that provides good English education to rural children in Andhra Pradesh, India. She has a Master's degree in Sociology from Mysore University. She started her dream school in 1998. 

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Stralauer Allee 20e
10245 Berlin
icja@icja.de
www.icja.de

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Editors

Samuel Flach, Laszlo Kelemen, Malte Legenhausen, Ananth Nag M.,
Esther Neitzel, Shashi Rao, Karuppu Samy, Nora Scharffenberg,
Judith Scheer, Nusrat Sheikh, Ravinder Singh, Felix Speidel,
Usha Venugopal, Insa Weilage

Illustrations

Malte Legenhausen (cover and comics), Nora Scharffenberg (text illustrations)

Translation

Andrew Darling, Wendy Streitparth

Proofreading

Thomas Wendel

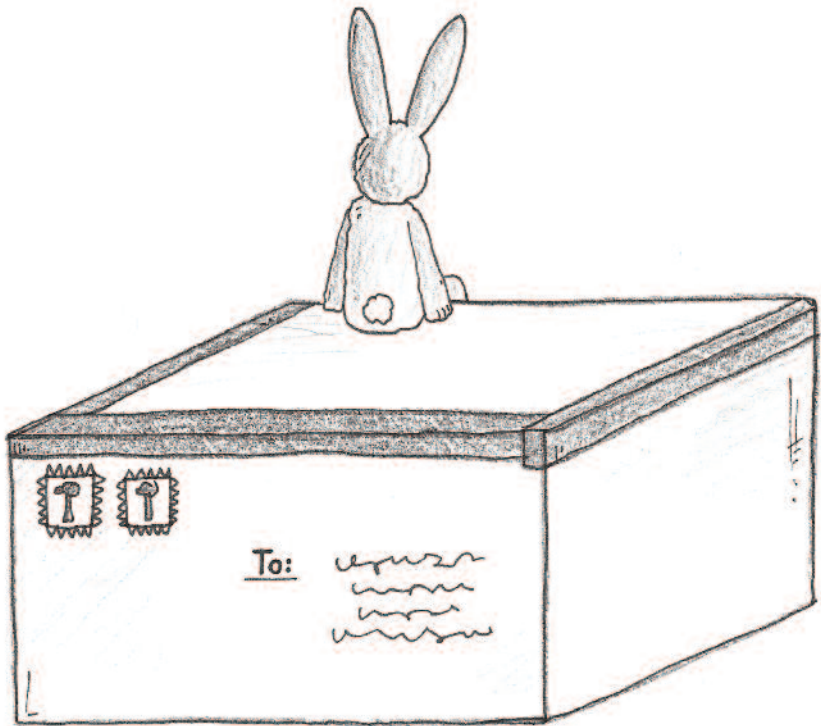
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