The Role of Volunteers in Ensuring the Right to Education for the Most Marginalised Children

Foreword

It is generally accepted that volunteerism is an intrinsic feature of societies and cultures, representing a source of community strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion (UN, 2009). Volunteers contribute to the development agenda in various countries. The United Nations (UN) declared 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers to increase recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism by highlighting the achievements of those volunteers who devote their time serving others. Every year one billion volunteers contribute to the advancement of the 2030 Sustainable Agenda (UNV, 2018). During the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of volunteers and their strategic positioning within the communities they serve has become even more remarkable amidst recent general lockdowns, movement restrictions and school closures.

As of November 2020, more than 55,400 volunteers were deployed within Educate A Child (EAC) projects with the aim to enrol and retain 3.7 million OOSC in countries including Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Syria[1]. In these projects, the volunteers activate communities around the importance of education, and serve in several capacities from identifying and enrolling OOSC, to supporting management and maintenance of schools. They also help in monitoring attendance and retention of children in school in the long term.

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[1] Data based on a review of EAC project documents (proposals, semi-annual technical reports, and end of project reports). The number of volunteers represents those deployed within ongoing EAC projects as of November 2020.

Executive Summary

Working in over 50 countries, Educate A Child, a global programme of the Education Above All Foundation (EAA), seeks to enhance access to quality primary education for the most marginalised out of school children (OOSC). EAC aims to reach the hardest to reach children, those living in poverty, who face social or cultural barriers and who are affected by crisis and conflict. Working in partnership, EAC emphasises innovation, scale and sustainability as core elements to bringing education to the most vulnerable children.

In several of the EAC supported projects, volunteers make significant contributions in advancing the education agenda. As of November 2020, more than 55,400 volunteers were deployed within EAC projects to enrol and retain over 3.7 million OOSC in countries including Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Syria. This Occasional Paper recognises the valuable contributions made by project volunteers to ensure the right to education for the hardest to reach and the most marginalised children. Volunteers assume remarkable roles in the implementation of EAC supported projects, including:

a. Promoting social change by addressing attitudes and social barriers to education, and actively advocating and championing for education and the enrolment of OOSC;

b. Sustaining change initiated with external assistance and building capacities of local communities by supporting school-based committees and parents-teachers associations;

c. Actively supporting the learning process by working as community teachers in complementary and non-formal education programmes for the most marginalised OOSC.

EAC partners draw on volunteers to support their work for different reasons, mainly because of resource constraints to hire an extensive workforce. More importantly, though, projects look at volunteers as valuable resources who are familiar with the local environment and culture, which in turn contributes to projects gaining community buy-in and ownership. Coming from the same communities the project intends to serve; volunteers feel accountable to their communities and are committed to the outcomes of the project and sustaining achievements over time. Several projects engage and train members from the community to serve as teachers for OOSC in some of the most remote and hardest to reach areas. Community teachers remain an asset regardless of the paths they take after the volunteering experience ends. Volunteer teachers provide their service receiving minimum compensation and/or food and lodging from the communities. Relying on volunteers is indeed often seen as a strategy towards the sustainability of interventions because they become embedded at community level and continue when the project ends.

Looking at volunteerism sheds light on how the education agenda and development issues at large are predicated upon broad partnerships, on a 'whole-of-society' approach where contributions of everyone, including volunteers, matter. Volunteerism, in this sense, can contribute to development that is more inclusive, by providing girls, women and youth greater opportunities for active participation, decision making and civic engagement. It decentres dominant development agendas and helps reframe partnerships with local communities as new social contracts, where the roles and responsibilities of all

actors are outlined. Communities are not seen simply as aid recipients, but are recognised as providing active participants who contribute to decision making, project implementation and sustainability. Benefits from engaging volunteers go beyond the cost-saving strategies of the organisations. The training and capacity building volunteers gain is both an investment for their livelihoods and for the future of millions of children who are out of school.

Overcoming the challenges that the most marginalised children face in accessing education requires concerted and sustained efforts and contributions from everyone. EAC continues to work with dedicated partners who are able to mobilise volunteers and additional resources to ensure access and participation in quality primary education for all children.

List of Acronyms

EAC	Educate A Child, a global programme of the Education Above All Foundation
CBE	Complementary Basic Education
OOSC	Out of School Children
SBMCs	School Based Management Committees
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers

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Introduction

"The Role of Volunteers in Ensuring the Right to Education for the Most Marginalised Children" Occasional Paper will further explore the role that volunteers have in EAC projects, and to recognise their contribution in ensuring the right to primary education for the most marginalised OOSC. It begins with a review of theoretical frameworks on volunteerism as found in different disciplines, followed by a review of 'volunteerism for development' and the working definition used in this paper. Section 2 examines the roles that volunteers assume in EAC projects and how they contribute in ensuring education for the most marginalised children. Section 3 presents a brief analysis of the reasons why EAC partners engage volunteers in their projects, the resulting benefits and some considerations around engaging volunteers. The final section draws threads together and summarises conclusions and implications for EAC projects.

1. Volunteerism and volunteerism for development

Different dimensions shape the definition of volunteerism. The boundaries between what constitutes volunteering and what does not are permeable (Cnaan *et al*, 1996; Hustinx *et al*, 2010) and this influences how people (and projects) discursively define volunteers and their roles. Culture and language impinge on the definition of volunteerism. In India, volunteerism' is generally referred to as social work, while in Russia, there are no words to refer to it (Aboramadan, 2019; Hustinx, *et al*, 2010). What counts as volunteering reveals associated assumptions, values, beliefs and expectations and its relation, if any, to human development.

The following section presents a summary of theoretical models and perspectives on volunteerism originated from different disciplines and sectors. While these models offer specific lenses to look at volunteerism, they are not mutually exclusive. The section introduces underpinning components or dimensions of volunteerism that seem common across different definitions, and leads to the introduction of volunteerism for development as the working definition used in this paper.

1.1. Volunteerism as a social construct: theories and working definition

As a complex social phenomenon, volunteerism is shaped differently across cultures, countries and disciplines. Any researcher in this field has to confront a broad range of views on what is valued as volunteerism. There are several theories on why people volunteer and these are usually divided between volunteering motivated by egoistic or altruistic desires. A review of the literature (Brudney, 1999; Cnaan et al, 1996; Hustinx et al, 2010) offers multiple conceptual frameworks and theories to define volunteerism and points to the lack of a universal definition. Traditionally, definitions have tended to focus more on what volunteering is not, rather than on what it is. For example, volunteerism may be defined as not biologically necessary, not paid or forced labour, not kinship care, nor spontaneous help (Aboramadan, 2019; Hustinx et al, 2010).

Theoretical frameworks

Different disciplines, including Economics, Sociology, Psychology and Political Science, offer theoretical frameworks and perspectives towards the definition of volunteerism.

The functional motivation theory addresses the personal and social processes, which initiate, direct and sustain action (Clary et al, 1998). According to the theory, people engage in volunteer activities for their

own motives such as values, understanding, social relationships, psychological growth, career experience and self-protection. In essence, volunteerism can be motivated by different considerations and volunteers are often engaged for several reasons. Thus, as volunteers are motivated to do good work for others, they could also experience it as a 'feel-good' factor for themselves.

Alternatively, the psychological empowerment theory states that people act through three important components, namely the intrapersonal, the interactional and the behavioural (Zimmerman, 1995). The intrapersonal concerns how people see and think about themselves. It is about perceived control, competence and efficiency. The interactional component refers to people's understanding of their community and related socio-political issues. The behavioural component refers to actions taken to directly influence outcomes, for example, taking part in activities, which could lead to empowerment outcomes. Thus, empowerment can be a process and an outcome.

Table 1 presents a summary of selected volunteerism models and perspectives that focus on factors such as motivation, volunteerism as a social bond or a form of civic engagement, or generated by personality traits (based on Hustinx et al, 2010 and Holte, 2016).

Table 1 Volunteerism models and perspectives from different disciplines

Discipline	Volunteerism models/perspectives
Economics	- Volunteering as a paradox: it is without apparent financial gains; - Investment: individuals exchange benefits from volunteering (for example, volunteers receive training and acquire skills through volunteering); - Consumption: individuals receive private benefits (such as joy, fulfilment) from the act of volunteering; - Public good: individuals donate their time to increase provision of public goods and services they value; - Impure altruists: individuals are interested both in private and public benefits of volunteering. The above models refer mainly to the demand side. The supply side seems to be less investigated (i.e. absorption capacity and management of volunteers by organisations).
Sociology	- Volunteerism as a unique type of social bond; - Volunteers as agents of social change, who detect unmet societal needs, fight against social injustice, and empower disadvantaged groups; - Volunteering as a prelude to a professional activity; - Volunteerism as an opportunity to engage with the excluded 'other'.
Psychology	- Personality traits associated with predisposition to volunteering (for example, agreeableness and extraversion); - Agreeableness triggered as a response to requests from significant others.
Political science	- Volunteering as a major requirement for active civic society and democracy; - Volunteers as an important form of social capital; - Volunteering as a way to promote civic values, political behaviour and improve democracy and society.

Underpinning components of volunteerism[2]

Based on an extensive review of the literature and of more than two hundred definitions of volunteerism, many scholars agree with Cnaan, Hany and Wadsworth (1996) in their identification of four underpinning components or dimensions to volunteerism (Hustinx et al, 2010 and Brudney, 1999):

i)   free will/choice
ii)   availability and nature of remuneration
iii)   proximity to the beneficiaries
iv)   context in which the volunteering takes place

Free will/choice defines volunteerism as based on an individual's decision that is not coerced. This dimension, however, is complicated when, for example, volunteering becomes a requirement in certain institutions (schools urging parents to volunteer or community-service experience required of students before they qualify for graduation); or is mandated by a court order as part of a legal sentence (for example, community service). Some scholars exclude from the definition of volunteering any degree of coercion.

Availability and nature of remuneration refers to the financial consideration around volunteering. Remuneration ranges from nothing to reimbursement of expenses incurred during an activity, such as a stipend for meals and/or transport or minimal pay. Some scholars tend to exclude any form of financial gain from the definition of volunteering, while others are more flexible and include reimbursement and stipends. At the opposite extreme, volunteers might be required to pay for a volunteering experience. This involves paying an organisation to host one as a volunteer working in one of their projects (e.g., volunteerism could be ascribed under this category).

Proximity to the beneficiaries points to the aim of volunteers to benefit strangers, friends, relatives, themselves or a combination of these beneficiaries. Some scholars exclude from the definition the volunteers/individuals helping family members and friends.

Finally, the context in which volunteering takes place refers to the fact that volunteering can take place in informal settings (i.e. outside of an organisation) or in formal organised settings (often non-profit or government organisations). Some scholars only count as volunteerism those experiences taking place in formal settings and mainly in non-profit organisations. Volunteering in profit-making organisations seems to have a legally debatable status and is less explored.

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[2] This section is based on Hustinx et al, 2010; Brudney, 1999; Butcher et al, 2017.

Volunteerism for development

Volunteerism for development is a discrete and well-studied area that builds on the models and theories advanced by other disciplines (especially political science and sociology) while making some clear distinctions (VSO, 2003; UNV, 2011; UNV 2015; UNV, 2018). The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) adopt a definition that underlines and selects specific components of volunteerism. In 1999, UNV adopted the following definition:

> Volunteerism for development is characterised by the lack of financial reward, should be undertaken voluntarily and should benefit someone other than the volunteer.
> (UNV, 1999)

There are three key defining characteristics of volunteering. First, the activity should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward, although the reimbursement of expenses and some token payment may be allowed. Second, the activity should be undertaken voluntarily, according to the individual's own free will, although there are grey areas here too, such as school community service schemes which encourage and, sometimes, require students to get involved in voluntary work and Food for Work programmes, where there is an explicit exchange between community involvement and assistance. Third, the activity should be of benefit to someone other than the volunteer, or to society at large, although it is recognised that volunteering brings significant benefit to the volunteer as well (UNV, 1999).

This definition includes three out of four underpinning components of volunteerism identified in the literature and drops the context in which volunteerism takes place, thus implying that volunteering could take place both in formal and informal settings (e.g., at the community level). In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed similar parameters to define volunteerism (i.e., not primarily for financial gains, moved by free will, and benefiting others). The following specific areas were added to the domain of volunteerism: mutual aid and self-help; formal service delivery; civic engagement and campaigning; recognising that these overlap with the various types of volunteering (UN, 2001).

This Occasional Paper adopts the UNV definition of volunteerism for development. In particular, the paper includes within the definition of volunteers, those who:

- Conduct their work according to their own free will,
- Are completely unpaid or receive token reimbursement or minimal pay (in the case of volunteer teachers, for example, who receive minimal pay compared to civil servant teachers),
- Benefit the society at large, although it is recognised that volunteers may gain some personal benefits from the act of volunteering (such as gaining training and experience for future professional careers or benefitting their own children as well as all children in the community).

2. Roles of volunteers in EAC projects

In many EAC projects, volunteers are often young people who not only see their volunteer work as the prelude to professional activity but also as a way to engage in civic duty and contribute to their societies. Communities in project locations also substantially contribute to advance the education agenda by volunteering skilled labour and sometimes offering land and materials to build and maintain schools and learning sites. Communities voluntarily offer their time in managing, running and maintaining schools. In

this way, not only do they show commitment to the goals of the project but also ensure sustainability in the long term.

The following section presents a description of the roles that volunteers have in EAC projects grouped around three main categories: volunteers acting as agents of social change (championing and inspiring change for OOSC), sustaining change (managing and maintaining additional schools and learning sites), and localising knowledge (by bringing education to children in the communities where they are located).

Volunteers as agents of social change

Volunteers raise awareness on specific issues and promote attitudinal change where social norms are a barrier to education. They fight against social injustice and empower disadvantaged groups. Several EAC partners identify key individuals within communities in which they work and engage them directly to become key agents of change in their communities. In particular, these volunteers ensure that OOSC are identified, enrolled in primary education levels, and support retention in the education programmes.

Volunteers in this category mostly mobilise parents and communities to develop a sense of opportunity and ownership of the challenges they are facing. In EAC projects, volunteers often take on the role of champions and advocates for change in their communities. Having overcome significant challenges themselves, some of these volunteers become champions for, and examples of, durable changes in mindsets and behaviours. They often become role models for young learners. Many of the volunteers are moved by a civic sense of responsibility and are or become active citizens working within civil society movements to ensure that social needs are identified and met.

Sustaining change

The sustainability of projects is a key EAC project design component. The investments in a project are substantial and the goal is for target communities to continue fostering the positive outcomes prompted by the project. Volunteers often play a pivotal role in sustaining change initiated during and after the implementation of the projects. For example, some of the volunteers may take the initiative to manage additional schools and classrooms, maintain school infrastructure, or work with parents to ensure that the enrolled (previously out of school) children do not drop out of school. Volunteers may also undertake advocacy roles, increasing awareness of OOSC on the local communities' agenda, bringing sustained attention to addressing their needs and barriers. In most of the EAC projects, the volunteer work force in sustaining change is typically organised around school-based management committees, parents-teachers' associations or mothers' associations.

Localising knowledge: community-based volunteer teachers

Volunteers often gain knowledge and skills from their role when working with development projects. The volunteers transfer some of this knowledge and experience to local and marginalised communities where they work. In addition, in some of the EAC projects, volunteers serve as locally trained teachers where complementary education is provided in underserved communities. Many of these volunteer teachers are high school leavers and recent college graduates. They help to contextualise knowledge for marginalised children, for example, using native languages or educational methodologies relevant to them. Generally, belonging to the same communities as the OOSC they serve, these volunteer teachers represent a large portion of teachers in complementary, non-formal, accelerated or community-based education. Local

volunteer teachers often are accepted by the local community and may provide a bridge for OOSC to access formal education.

Table 2 below presents a summary of the roles that volunteers have in EAC projects.

Table 2 Role of volunteers in EAC projects

Roles of volunteers in EAC projects	
Agents of social change	Volunteers raise awareness on specific issues, promote changes in attitudes and help enhance knowledge at the local level. They often ensure the identification, enrolment and retention of OOSC. Volunteers provide advocacy for the cause of OOSC, champion change and inspire others to facilitate lasting changes in attitudes and behaviours. Volunteers engage as active citizens to ensure that social needs in their communities (and beyond) are identified and met.
Sustaining change	Volunteers play a pivotal role in sustaining change by, for example, managing additional schools and classrooms established within EAC projects; making sure that OOSC do not drop out; maintaining the premises and ensuring sustained attention to the issue of OOSC. This role is often taken by volunteers in school committees and parent-teacher associations (PTAs).
Localising knowledge: volunteer teachers and facilitators	Volunteers transfer knowledge, experience, and skills while enhancing knowledge at the local level, and facilitating the dissemination of local expertise. A significant portion of this category is comprised of volunteer teachers and facilitators who work in complementary and non-formal education.

3. A shared responsibility

When the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated, they were envisioned as a collective effort, needing contributions from all stakeholders and duty bearers. In this sense, the SDGs call for a whole-of-society approach to development efforts, where all contributions count, including those made by volunteers. The recognition of volunteers at the global level underlie the commitment by the UN Member States to have volunteers support their national development agendas. To this end, a number of countries have also passed laws to accommodate volunteers in their national development plans, which provides a significant opportunity for those willing to participate as volunteers.

What moves EAC project teams to draw on volunteers? There is limited information on the rationale for why EAC partners engage volunteers. This is especially relevant when considering that organisations' absorption capacity and management of volunteers is an area that is generally not thoroughly investigated. An analysis of EAC project documents indicates that some projects draw on volunteers due to resource constraints in hiring an extensive workforce. More importantly, though, projects appear to

engage volunteers because they are familiar with the local environment and culture, which contributes to projects gaining community buy-in and ownership. As key members of the same communities the project intends to serve, volunteers feel accountable to their communities and committed to the outcomes of the project. Relying on volunteers is often one strategy towards ensuring sustainability so that actions and solutions initiated within projects and with external assistance become embedded at the community level.

The following section explores reasons for EAC partners to engage volunteers organised around the themes of inclusive development, community ownership, sustainability and cost effectiveness.

3.1 A new social contract

Inclusive development and civic engagement

The 2015 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) on Transforming Governance points out that there is potential for volunteers to act as catalysts for more inclusive development. The nature of volunteerism is usually a means of participation and inclusiveness enjoyed by all types of people in a community and this means everyone can significantly contribute to uplifting marginalised groups in society. The report also states that volunteerism can provide avenues for greater gender equity with women and girls. They have a chance to engage in spaces outside the traditional norms, hold authorities accountable, and ensure responsiveness to their needs and those of their communities. A case in point are the women volunteers working with Educate Girls (EG) in the Team Balika (a team for the girl child) in India who are trained to develop skills to engage community leaders and sensitise their communities on the need to enrol in school all children and particularly girls. On a similar account, UNICEF in Nigeria recognises that the work in School Based Management Committees (SBMCs), mothers' associations and other voluntary organisations has provided greater opportunities for women to participate in decision making on matters such as school governance and larger community development matters.

Volunteerism helps increase participation of young people. This creates a sense of belonging and contributes to the long-term stability of societies, as it strengthens social integration, while enhancing youth skills and capacities needed for their personal development and employability. The *ILM Ambassadors* (Education Ambassadors) mobilised by the British Council in Pakistan are a young volunteer workforce that focusses on active citizen engagement with the specific aim of promoting school enrolment and retention. Frequently, these are young people who see their volunteer work as the prelude to their professional activity.

Building Tomorrow in Uganda mobilises recent university graduates (the BT Fellows) to serve in remote rural communities to identify and enrol additional OOSC and train teachers and communities, while also monitoring project progress. This gives enthusiastic young people the opportunity to engage with those who are excluded and use their time and skills to serve marginalised communities, as well as trigger and nurture long-term local volunteerism and civic engagement. Volunteers learn about rights, responsibilities, civic structures and democratic processes and become active and effective members of their societies. Volunteers often work with others to make their communities and the world a more just and sustainable place. The investment in their training, skills development and active citizenship has an impact that goes well beyond their volunteering experience and engagement with individual projects. Several EAC projects suggest this as an investment into long-term socio-economic results.

Community ownership and sustainability

In most EAC projects, there are partnerships with the communities in the project target areas. These partnerships frame the relationship with target communities as not simply aid recipients but active participants who contribute and commit to the goals of the project. A good example is the organisation buildOn, which mobilised participation of more than 81,000 volunteers in school construction across Mali, Malawi, Senegal, Haiti, Nepal, and Burkina Faso[3]. The organisation establishes covenants with the villages where they intend to work, which are solemn promises that outline the roles and contributions of buildOn, the community and the local government. This approach seems to address some systemic design flaws in aid architecture, by including affected populations in the project design, implementation and sharing of costs. It also helps to empower communities and break social stereotypes. For many of the women in the villages where buildOn establishes schools, this is often the first time they are asked to contribute to decision making. Communities provide a lead team of six men and six women, and they contribute to the school building with land, locally found materials, unskilled volunteer labour, and housing for the buildOn staff. Community members pledge to send all children in the village to school, regardless of gender, ethnic group, or caste. Several other projects actively seek community voluntary participation and contribution to the projects, in providing land for the schools and in supporting the day-to-day school management.

In Kenya, the Girl Child Network (GCN) reports that the improved linkages between the schools and the communities led to communities taking up responsibility for developing their schools. They also gained a deeper understanding of the education structures and systems that allowed them to advocate for children's rights.

> With enhanced community and school linkages, communities have taken up the responsibility of developing their schools and employing teachers in areas with few teachers. The community owns the schools and provides a safe environment for children to learn.
> *- Girl Child Network, Kenya (End of Project report)*

3.2 Beyond cost effectiveness

An interview with Educate Girls senior leadership notes that investing in the *Team Balika* has immediate returns in enrolling and retaining girls in rural villages. It also has long-term returns in creating "an army of motivated, educated young people" whose leadership will improve girls' education in the long run (EAC, 2019). The *Team Balika* volunteers are young, passionate men and women, who are amongst the most educated individuals in their own villages. They serve as champions for girls' education and school reform in their areas.   As a completely unpaid workforce, the thousands of *Team Balika* members represent a cost-effective solution to achieve enrolment, retention and achievement of learning outcomes, especially considering the significant number of engaged volunteers. The cost-effectiveness of the model is not only

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[3] This number is not included in the 55,400 volunteers as the latter only count volunteers mobilized in EAC ongoing projects as of November 2020.

evidenced in the low monetary investment in volunteers. Volunteers also mobilise children and families to enrol in existing government schools. They work with School Management Committees to submit School Improvement Plans (SIP) and secure funds the government has set aside for school improvement (EAC, 2019). In other words, the volunteers complement the work of education structures at the central level and help unlock existing resources for education.

In a number of EAC projects, community-based teachers represent the bulk of teachers in community schools, non-formal education, and accelerated learning programmes. Community teachers are generally less qualified than their peers in the public sector and receive no compensation or minimal pay for their service. Other costs (such as food and lodge) are often shared between the projects and the local communities. Projects generally provide in-service training and follow up with community teachers so that they can effectively improve student learning outcomes. Plan International in Ghana engages facilitators to teach in the alternative learning programme known as the Complementary Based Education (CBE) programme. Facilitators are community-based volunteers "who appear to be more motivated by professional gains with the potential for opportunities of becoming a teacher than the meagre financial rewards"[4]. The volunteering experience seems to be a valuable step in the professional development of recent graduates mainly from teacher training institutions (but also from other disciplines), who often receive additional and specific training by the NGOs who engage them. The cost-effectiveness of the model seems to lay in the reduced outlay for teacher salaries (although provision of additional training does have a cost). Having community-based volunteer teachers, however, seems to be associated with other benefits, beyond cost effectiveness. Plan International in Ghana reports a very minimal attrition rate for facilitators teaching in the CBE programme because of the community ownership of the process and the accountability that teachers feel towards their communities. This resonates with research conducted in the field of community teachers, which points to the fact that despite being less qualified, community teachers have some critical advantages. For example, they are known to children and families and therefore feel directly accountable to them and, recognising their pedagogical limits, they seem to be more receptive to training and support (Zafeirakou, 2007; Bennel et al, 2007). Choosing the appropriate qualifications for volunteer teachers is an important factor for their retention. Plan International in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger noticed that overqualified volunteer teachers recruited for the accelerated learning programme tended to leave service earlier than expected after having obtained some training and experience.

Finally, in countries where there is teacher shortage, training community-based teachers/facilitators ensures there are qualified people who can teach primary level education, even in the most remote communities. This is the approach taken by EAC partners such as Building Tomorrow in Uganda, Education Development Centre (EDC) in Mali, Plan International in Ghana, and the United World Schools (UWS) in South East Asia. When the volunteering experience ends, these facilitators are often recruited into the public primary schools because they have received extensive in-service training and have substantial experience.

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[4] Plan International REACH project proposal.

3.3 Considerations in engaging volunteers

While volunteering seems to bring positive contributions to EAC projects and children in remote and marginalised communities, there is a need to ensure that volunteers' expectations are addressed. A first set of challenges pertain to the motivation behind volunteering and expectations that this could culminate in a permanent job. UNICEF in Comoros reported difficulties in retaining volunteer teachers after the government failed to meet the commitment to recruit them into the public service at the end of the two years of volunteer service. About 40 per cent of the volunteer teachers declined to continue volunteering at the beginning of the third project year, bringing disruption to the project. Similarly, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in the Ivory Coast faced difficulties in ensuring integration of trained volunteer teachers within the Ministry of Education cadre. The Ministry changed its recruitment procedures and required primary school teachers to have higher diplomas than those held by the volunteer teachers.

Management of volunteers and their organisations, as well as Ministry of Education absorption capacity, are areas that have not received adequate attention, due to the informal way development partners engage them. Little seems to be recorded in EAC project documents on what happens to volunteer forces established and trained within projects, and what trajectories are expected for them. Careful consideration needs to be given to this matter to make sure that volunteers are adequately protected and safeguarded against exploitation and disempowerment in the long term.

Given the fact that EAC projects generally operate in the hardest to reach and the most underserved areas, volunteer activities should aim to complement actions by governments. They are not an escape route for authorities to diminish their commitment and responsibilities as duty-bearers towards the welfare of *all* citizens, including marginalised communities such as minority ethnic groups, refugees and those in remote areas. This is the case, for example, of volunteer teachers replacing government teachers who are not willing to serve in remote areas, refugee camps or marginalised communities. In this sense, strong advocacy with governments needs to run parallel to voluntary provision of services.

Finally, careful selection of volunteers needs to assure that patterns of social exclusion or gender bias is not replicated. Women and girls' participation, for example, may be encouraged, and needs to be carefully balanced against becoming an extension of women's domestic and caregiver's duties, therefore potentially disempowering them (UNV, 2019). Educate Girls in India advocates for more girls to become part of their volunteer workforce and challenges some of the local socio-cultural traditions that restrict mobility for girls outside of their residence villages, thereby restricting women from exploring opportunities more broadly.

Similarly, volunteering opportunities need to be inclusive of men (who may feel social expectations of making money instead of dedicating time to voluntary actions); and populations with high levels of poverty who may not be able to dedicate free time to voluntary work (UNV, 2019). UNICEF in Nigeria reported a high level of turnover in the members of the School Based Management Committees (SBMCs). SBMCs operate in the poorest regions on a voluntary basis. This can be problematic given the high level of poverty and the social norms and expectations around stipends.

4. Conclusions

This paper sought to explore and recognise the valuable contributions of volunteers in advancing the right to education for the hardest to reach and most marginalised children. Volunteers assume remarkable roles in the implementation of EAC supported projects, including acting as agents of social change, sustaining change and localising knowledge for the most marginalised OOSC.

Based on a review of project documents, a number of EAC projects draw on volunteers because of resource constraints to hire an extensive workforce. More importantly, though, they engage volunteers due to their familiarity with the local environment and culture, thus contributing to community buy-in and ownership. Coming from the same communities the project intends to serve; volunteers feel accountable to their communities and are committed to the outcomes of the project. Several projects engage and train members from the community to teach OOSC in some of the most remote and hardest to reach areas. They provide their service voluntarily, receiving minimum compensation and/or food and lodging from the communities. Several projects report low attrition rates for community volunteer teachers because they are known to the children and families and feel directly accountable to them. Even in cases when they leave service earlier than expected, although bringing disruption to the project, community teachers remain an asset to their communities as they have gained experience and training in primary level education. Relying on volunteers is one strategy towards ensuring sustainability so that actions and solutions initiated within the projects become embedded at the community level and continue when the project ends.

Examining volunteerism sheds light on how education agendas and development issues rely on broad partnerships, on a whole-of-society approach - a shared responsibility - where contributions of everyone, including volunteers, matter. Volunteerism, in this sense, can contribute to more inclusive development by providing girls, women and youth greater opportunities for active participation. Benefits from engaging volunteers seem to go beyond the cost-reduction strategies of organisations. The training and capacity building they are afforded is both an investment for their immediate livelihoods and for the future of millions of children who are not in school. Many of the volunteers are moved by a strong civic sense towards unmet needs in their communities. Volunteering gives them the opportunity to learn about rights, responsibilities, and collaboration to make their communities and, by extension, the world a more just and sustainable place. The investment in active citizens has an impact that goes well beyond the volunteering experience and the engagement with projects. Going forward, including project indicators and data collection on volunteers would ensure that their contribution is systematically captured and these additional resources and benefits are adequately documented and attributed.

While volunteering seems to bring positive contributions to EAC projects and the advancement of the education agenda for the most marginalised children, specific attention needs to be given to challenges, especially on the part of volunteers. A first consideration pertains to motivation and expectations by the volunteers that volunteering could culminate in a permanent job. When expectations do not materialise, this could result in volunteers leaving service earlier than expected. While this brings immediate disruption to the project, it could also create a sense of disempowerment on the part of the volunteers. This calls for careful management of volunteers and their long term goals. There is scarce information on volunteers' management and absorption capacity by EAC partners or ministries of education, which is an

area that requires further research. If projects recruit volunteers with the understanding that they will transit to paid employment, transition needs to be tracked and monitored so that mitigation strategies can be put in place early on in case of disruption to those plans.

The way volunteers complement governments and authorities' action is an area to consider. Projects need to carefully weigh mobilising volunteers who complement action by governments, against the risk of replacing the commitment and responsibilities of governments as ultimate duty bearers towards the most marginalised communities. In this sense, strong advocacy with governments should run parallel to voluntary provision of services.

Finally, careful consideration needs to be given to patterns of participation in the volunteering domain. Volunteer participation ought to avoid replicating patterns of exclusion or dominant gender roles and norms. Participation of women needs to be guard against becoming an extension of women's domestic and caregiver's duties and potentially disempowering them. Similarly, equal chances need to be given to men, as well as the poorest, who may not be able to dedicate free time to voluntary work.

Removing the barriers to education for children who are out of school requires concerted and sustained efforts and contributions from everyone. EAC continues to work with dedicated partners who are able to mobilise volunteers and additional resources to ensure access and participation in quality primary education for all children.

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