



## **Trends in International Cooperation and Volunteering**

**Over 2006 and the last 5 years**

A discussion paper for IVCO 2006

Rethinking International Volunteering and Cooperation



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## ***Introduction***

This years IVCO trends survey and annual report aim to present an overview of factors that have shaped the environment for development cooperation and international volunteering over the last year and also to look at trends over the last five years. It looks at the 2006 survey results as well as key trends emerging from earlier survey responses, plus reports from previous IVCO conferences.

The paper and results of the survey will be presented by Tony German from Development Initiatives at the IVCO conference in Bonn in October 2006 to promote discussion and lesson sharing on some of the key trends emerging.

We are very grateful to all the agencies who took part in this years survey. If there are any corrections or additional contributions that you or your organisation would like to make, please feel free to contact either Tony German or Lydia Baker from Development Initiatives [www.devinit.org](http://www.devinit.org) on [di@devinit.org](mailto:di@devinit.org).

## ***The international development context***

**At the outset it is worth underlining the fact that the environment on aid, development and poverty reduction has changed substantially over the last 5 years:**

- The MDG strategy has become a central focus for most official aid donors – and a factor, along with PRSPs, helping to shape national development strategies
- The post 9/11 agenda has resulted in a preoccupation with (military) security and instability and to a lesser extent, issues of identity and cohesion
- The decline in aid has been reversed and several major donors have set timetables to reach the UN 0.7% target
- Poverty issues now receive much more media coverage and political attention than they did 5 years ago (witness Make Poverty History/CGAP, the Tsunami coverage, public and political concern over Sudan and the focus on development at G8 summits in Evian, Sea Island and Gleneagles).
- Aspects of globalisation have become a reality: access (for some) to information and increased mobility, global trade, finance and employment.

As these rapid changes in the global environment impact on bilateral aid programmes and the international development context, IVCOs are having to adapt.

Some of the main issues are listed below:

**Aid increases – less pressure on aid budgets – potentially more** money available for development cooperation and international volunteer sending organisations – but aid modalities are changing and pressure to show results is ever present

**The Paris Declaration** - governments have signed up to this aid effectiveness agenda which is impacting on IVCOs through engaging with fewer programme countries and focus sectors. IVCOs are also feeling pressure to find their place in the debate.

**Engaging with alternative development approaches** – As donors use alternative development approaches such as SWAPs, PRSPs, budget support etc rather than focusing on projects and programmes, IVCOs have to demonstrate their relevance.

### **How IVCOs are responding to these changes in the international development context**

Donor coordination and concentration are themes which have emerged in the last five years of IVCO surveys as donors increasingly focus on:

- reinforcing developing country ownership and accountability,
- the need to increase the effectiveness of Technical Cooperation (TC)
- implementation of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness (which was agreed by donors, developing countries and multilateral agencies).

In response to these preoccupations, there are numerous examples of where IVCOs are aligning themselves with government priorities, focusing on fewer programme countries and also fewer sectoral interventions. But **IVCOs also note that they have to date been largely left out of discussions on how to implement the Paris Declaration and how to establish their niche in relation to the aid effectiveness debate and in particular the role of volunteers (CCI, CUSO, Uniterra). CCI suggest that there may be some fall out for NGOs as governments look at how to implement the Paris Declaration.**

**A key question seems to be how Forum/IVCOs can engage with this process and highlight the importance of responsive aid programmes that support civil society relationships in the north and south.**

**Capacity development is a central concern to IVCOs.** The 2005 DAC report observed the following on TC, to which donors allocated \$19 billion in 2004:

“TC and capacity development are by no means synonymous..... a good deal of what DAC scores as TC has little to do with capacity development.

Too often efforts have focussed on upgrading the skills of individuals without paying attention to improving the performance of the organisations in which they work, let alone the broader institutional context in which organisations themselves exist.

A more strategic and longer term approach to upgrading key institutions may be required, into which programmes to improve the skills of individuals would then be integrated.”

In early 2005 the World Bank Development Committee meetings noted the lack of transparency in TC and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel of South Africa, asked the DAC to provide a breakdown of how much TC was allocated to different activities including: Consultancies and advisory services; Institution and capacity building (“project-type” TC); volunteers and TC through multilaterals and NGOs. Figures on these allocations should be

available shortly – which will help inform further debate on how money spent on different kinds of TC can make an impact. This debate – which will clearly include spending on volunteer cooperation is clearly taking place. Just as IVCOs such as UNV have worked to show how volunteers can be used effectively to contribute towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, IVCOs should see the TC debate and Paris declaration process as important opportunities to again respond to the challenge of demonstrating their effectiveness. In the latter context, there is real concern on the quality of data being produced to monitor progress on the Paris declaration – and the indicators focus very much on easily measured aspects of effective aid. IVCOs could conceivably contribute some qualitative perspectives to the process.

In terms of working with alternative development approaches such as PRSPs and SWAPs, there remain concerns that these are not usually conducive to IVCO engagement. Nevertheless IVCOs have responded to these changes with some seeing PRSPs as offering increased potential for southern civil society participation. Furthermore, as more governments use direct budget support, IVCOs are now thinking about innovative funding schemes where Southern governments could potentially co-finance volunteer placements.

In the past, many NGOs have seen the budget support as potentially limiting their involvement, contribution and access to funds. In May 2006 a major evaluation focusing on partnership general budget support (PGBS) was published by the steering group of a donor consortium examining General Budget Support (GBS). It concluded inter alia that:

Moves to GBS have tended to be gradual

- GBS is ‘present as an intention before it is realised in practice’
- It is more significant in the eyes of donors than partner countries
- PGBS has supported significant changes toward partnership – but these should not be exaggerated
- PGBS is not a panacea and should be seen as an addition to an array of aid instruments (‘part of a family of programme-based approaches’)
- That technical assistance and capacity building have been the least well integrated inputs to PGBS.

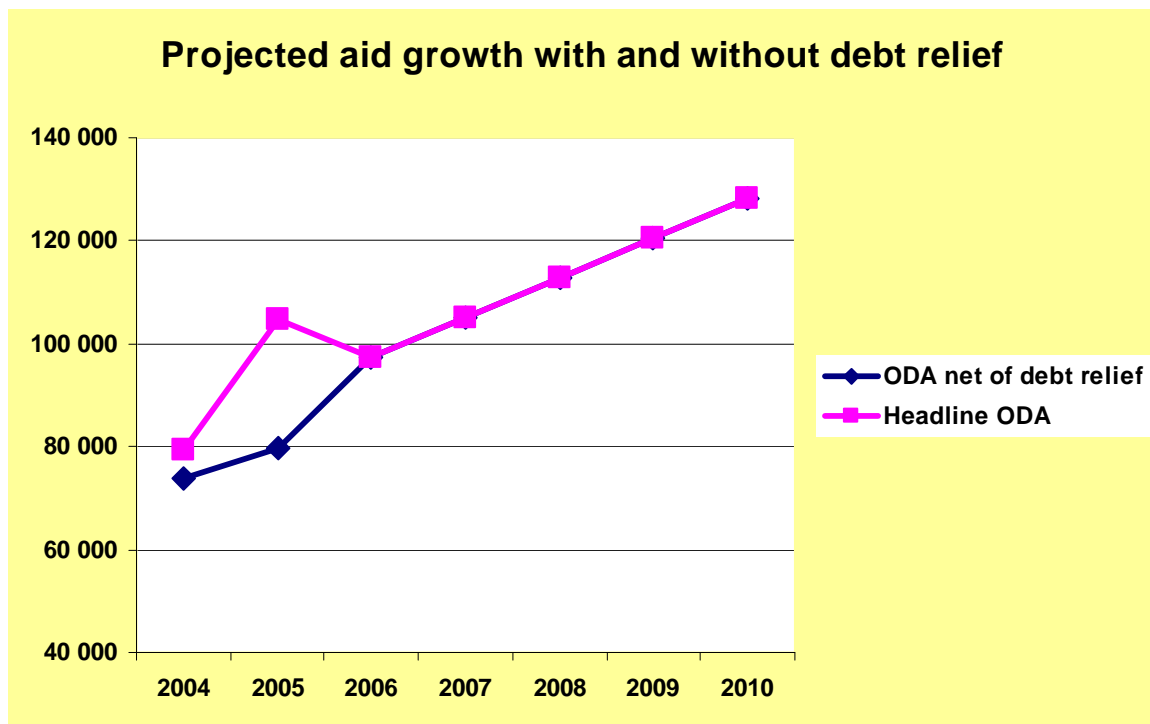
The implications here for IVCOs seem to be that there is room for engagement on how volunteer cooperation can enhance capacity building to make GBS more effective.

### **Growing aid volume**

For the first time global aid topped \$100 billion in 2005.

As noted last year, the squeeze on aid budgets, which meant IVCOs having to argue their case in very resource-constrained environments, has now eased and overall aid volumes predicted to rise to \$128 billion by 2010 – a rise of 61% compared to 2004, provided donors keep to their promises. In 2007 Germany, holding the Presidency of the EU and chairing the G8, plays a key role in holding the major donors to their commitments.

From the perspective of IVCOs, growing aid should mean increased resources. But the detail of the picture needs to be looked at carefully.



The headline rise for 2005 is misleading – because it includes over \$24 billion in debt relief for Nigeria and Iraq. There is a real net benefit of \$1 – 2 billion to Nigeria in interest saved, which should be available for development spending by government. But this figure is far less than the headlines suggest. Because of continued debt relief, global aid is certain to rise again in 2006. But beyond 2007 there are big questions about where governments will find the resources for the aid increases they have pledged. The big point here is that headline figures are not currently translating into substantially increased allocations for development spending at country level.

### Impact of the global security agenda

In 2003, IVCOs were asked in the annual survey how the global security agenda had impacted on their work. All of the agencies who responded stated this agenda had little impact with the exception of one agency who noted difficulty in gaining visas for Southern volunteers coming to the North as part of a south-north exchange programme. In 2006, the majority of agencies (nine in total) cited the global security situation and agenda as having the greatest impact on their work.

The effects of the security situation are manifold. Examples cited by agencies over the last five years include:

- Countries where volunteers are prepared to go;
- Increased importance placed on volunteer safety and security resulting in rising costs for volunteer placements;
- Dominance of global security on the development agenda;
- Suspension of volunteer programmes in countries affected by conflict;
- Militarization of development cooperation.

## **Increased access to communications**

Access to the internet and cheap travel have had a huge impact on IVCOs and volunteers in the past five years according to the 2006 survey. There are however positive and negative aspects to this which need to be explored.

On the positive side, access to the internet means that volunteers can 'shop around' for opportunities and gain a better understanding of the organisation and country before they embark on their placement. It also means that organisations such as UNV can harness the potential of 'virtual volunteering', enabling volunteers to share competencies in areas such as research, design, proposal writing and giving legal or environmental advice from their homes. UNV currently has 5,000 volunteers providing online assistance. Other IVCOs note that volunteers are able to continue staying involved in development upon returning from their placements.

There were however some negative points raised by IVCOs. Cheap and easy access to the internet can mean that volunteers don't integrate so well into their overseas placement. Furthermore, IVCOs are now receiving more enquiries than ever which is impacting on their ability to respond effectively and is placing a strain on their human resources.

## **Engaging with alternative actors**

Engaging with alternative actors is another issue which has risen up the agenda. The number of private sector providers for volunteer opportunities has substantially increased over the last five years. These providers present opportunities for potential volunteers to take part in short or long term placements in an area of interest to them. The extent to which IVCOs should engage with private sector providers remains an unresolved issue. A trend that has been observed in recent years however is the increased 'professionalisation' of IVCOs, in part as a step towards setting themselves clearly apart from organisations who help potential volunteers 'do a little bit more than tourism'. A challenge here is to present what IVCOs do for poverty reduction in a positive way, without denigrating alternative approaches (provided they are at worst neutral in their development impact).

In terms of relations with the corporate sector, there are numerous examples of IVCOs engaging. Uniterra for instance have developed their 'Congé Solidaire' programme and VSO (now in conjunction with BESO) are also operating partnership schemes with businesses such as Pricewaterhouse and Accenture. One point that was raised by VSO in this years survey was the fact that the private sector in Southern countries is often missed with more focus placed on Northern private sector organisations. Perhaps this could be an area for IVCOs to work on in the future.

A further alternative actor noted in this years survey was the military. Six agencies noted examples where development cooperation is becoming closer to forms of military engagement. For instance, CUSO point to an increase in funding for development programming linked to Canadian military engagement in Afghanistan. AKHLUE have also noted a tendency for the German government to move towards closer cooperation between military and volunteer programmes. PSO and FOCSIV also state what they see as the 'militarization of development cooperation'. This is certainly an issue which should be

watched closely and a possible question for next years survey to expand upon in more detail.

### **Private funders and vertical funds.**

The last 5 years has seen a growth in both major private funders of development work and international funding mechanisms outside the UN structure.

The Gates Foundation has provided \$6.6 billion for global health work since its inception and has recently pledged almost \$7 billion to WHO for its work over the next 5 years.

Since it was established in 2002, the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria has approved grants worth over \$5.5 billion - becoming an important actor helping to shape how aid is being spent – and therefore potential for dialogue with IVCOs. A quarter of this spending has been disbursed through NGOs and a further 25% through other non-governmental channels including affected communities.

### ***Major changes in the last five years for volunteer sending organisations: continuing preoccupations and newer issues***

#### **Short rather than long term placements**

This continues to be an issue and emerging trend in international volunteering. There are a number of factors at play here, volunteers are no longer always willing to go for two to three years due in some cases to economic constraints in their home country or improved job opportunities. Additionally, the sort of skills IVCOs want from volunteers mean that these people are often middle aged professionals, possibly with children, which restricts their desire to take up a volunteer placement.

Short term placements by contrast have increased as employers are often happy to allow their employees three weeks to a month of leave to take part in a volunteer programme. For IVCOs such as Mahitahi, this has had a positive effect and meant that they can draw upon a larger pool of expertise.

For NGOs in Hungary, the majority of people who are interested in volunteering are young people and they often want to take up short term placements of around two or three months.

#### **Increasing numbers of available volunteers?**

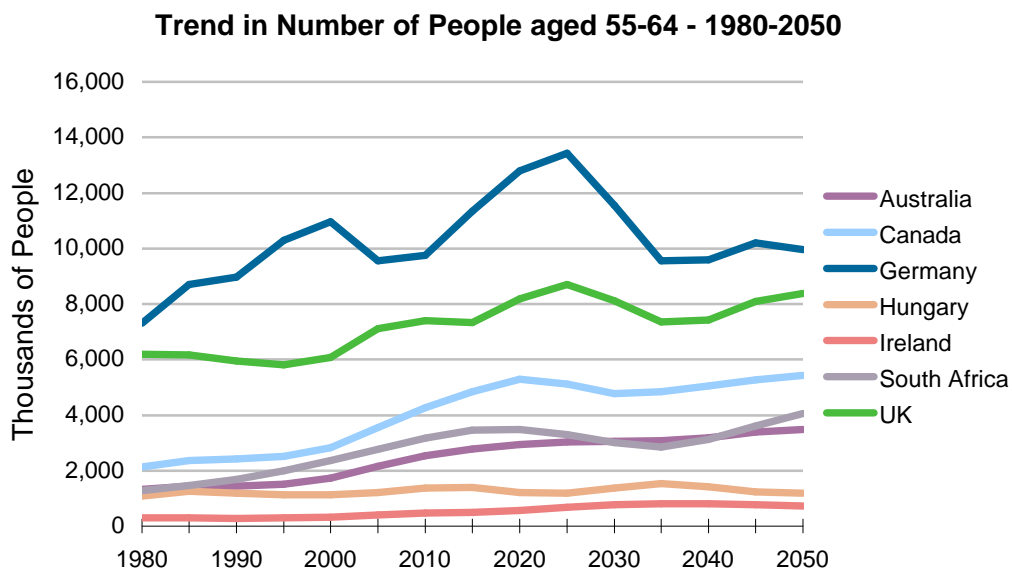
Whilst there may not be as many volunteers willing to take up a two year placement, there is evidence to suggest that more and more potential volunteers interested in working overseas. For instance, Peace Corps has 7,800 volunteers this year, the highest number for 30 years. Comhlámh have also noted an increased interest in volunteering from younger people who are keen to get into a career in development and see volunteering as a route to achieving their goal.

Older people are also noted as a group who are increasingly interested in pursuing volunteer placements overseas. AKHLUE state that discussing volunteerism has increased

within Germany and a possible contributing factor is the demography of Germany which is leading the government to become interested in getting all age groups involved in volunteering. Fredskorpset have developed FK Senior and AKHLUE are currently considering how best to respond to growing interest from older people.

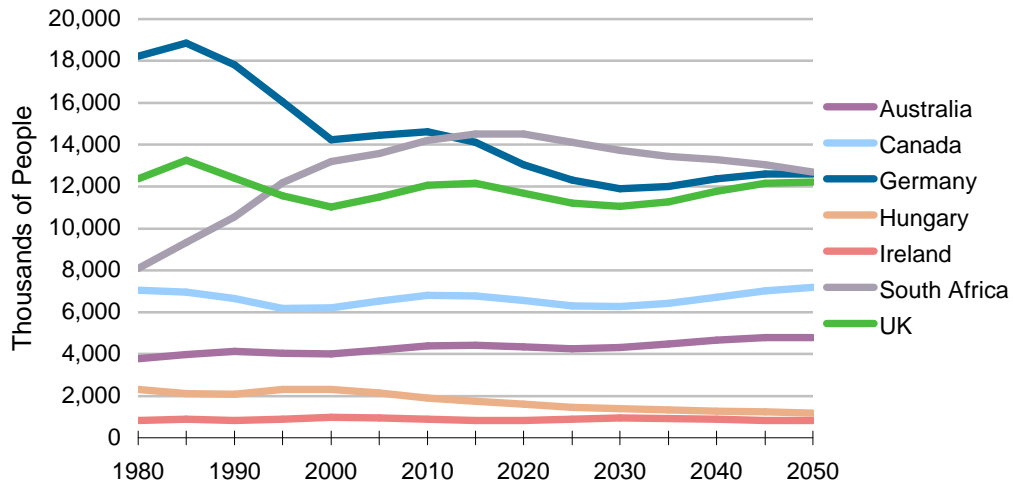
Looking ahead, demographic change may have significant consequences for IVCOs.

The graphs below show long term trends in 2 key age groups for volunteering: 15 to 29 and 55 to 64.



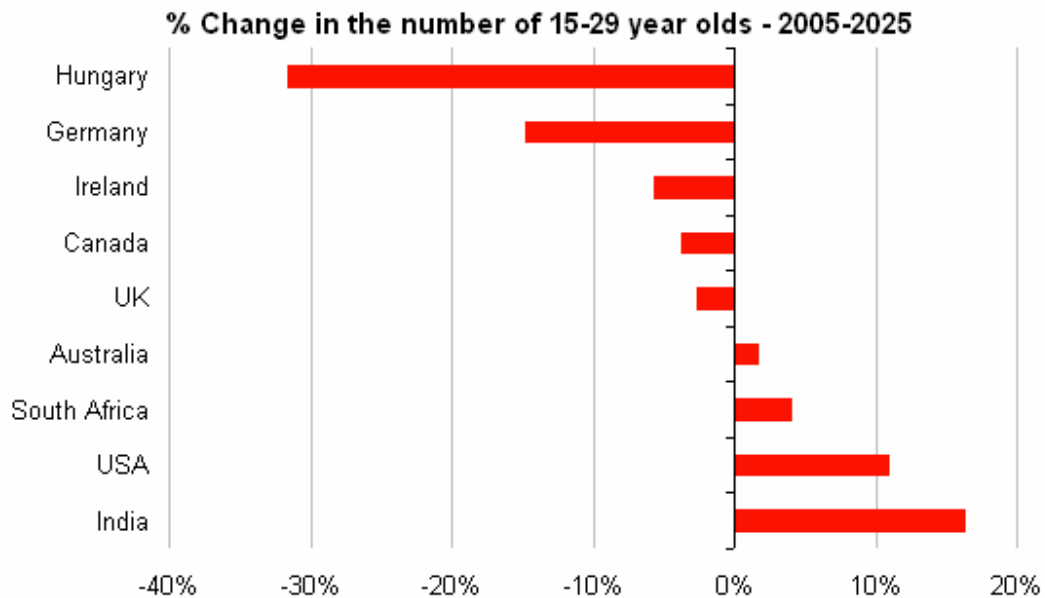
- The number of people aged 55-64 in Germany and the UK will peak in 2025 – when the ‘baby-boomer’ generation of the 1960’s reaches this age bracket
- The number of people aged 55-64 in Germany is forecast to stabilise at around 10m people by 2050
- Likewise, the number of people aged 55-64 in the UK will eventually stabilise at around 8m
- There will be some modest growth in the number of 55-64 year olds in the other countries shown
- In India (*not shown*) the number of 55-64 year olds was 38m in 1980, rising to 200m by 2050

### Trend in the Number of People aged 15-29 - 1980-2050

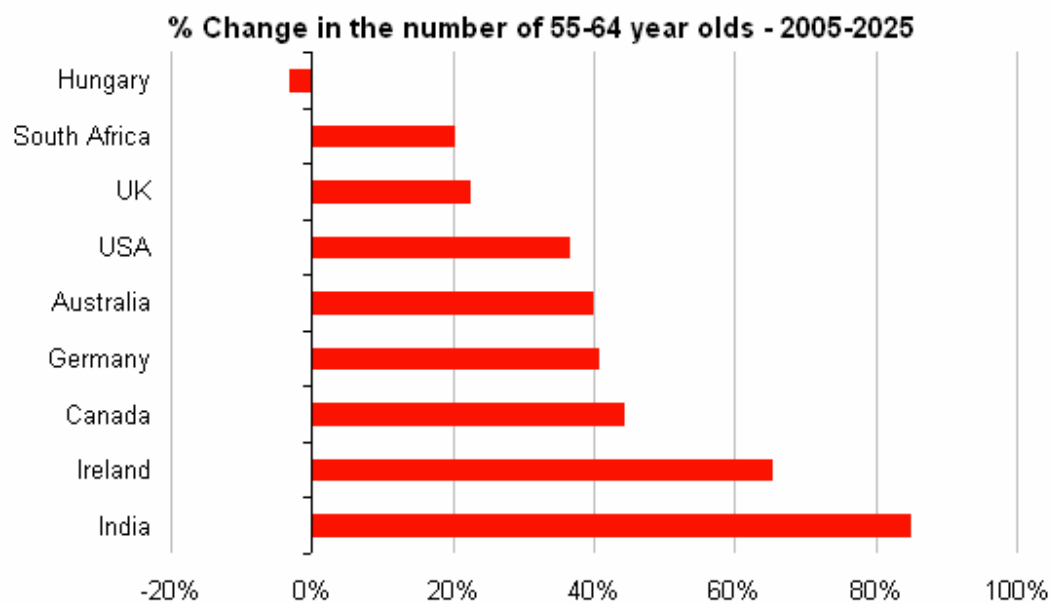


- In the countries shown, the number of people aged 15-29 will be either fairly stable or in decline in the period from now until 2050

Just looking at the shorter term over the next 20 years, it is clear to see in percentage terms what is expected to happen to these younger and older groups.



- In many European countries, the absolute number of people aged 15-29 will fall over the next 20 years
- For example, in Germany the number of people aged 15-29 is forecast to fall by 15% (from 14.4m to 12.3m)
- Developed regions as a whole will see their population of 15-29s decrease by around 15% in absolute terms over this period (*not shown*)
- In less developed countries, such as South Africa or India, there will still be modest growth in the number of people aged 15-29 for the foreseeable future.
- The number of people aged 15-29 in India is forecast to grow from 300m to nearly 350m (an increase of 16%)



- The number of people aged 55-64 is forecast to grow dramatically in all countries shown except Hungary
- The number of people aged 55-64 in India will grow from 66m to 122m (an increase of 85%)
- South Asia will see its population of over 55-64s almost double over the next 20 years (*not shown*)

Possible implications:

- Number of 15-29 year olds in decline in some (especially more developed) countries
- May need to increase emphasis on recruitment of younger volunteers from less developed regions
- Number of 55-64 year olds increasing in almost all countries (at least in the medium term) - more opportunities to recruit older volunteers

## **Southern partners**

The fact that Southern partners should be central in defining their skill requirements when selecting volunteers is not new. Changes have been reported however in the sort of skills requested by Southern partners. For instance, a move away from technical assistance and 'gap filling' towards concepts around exchange, capacity building and local skill development. Furthermore, AKHLUE note increased expectations from Southern organisations on the professional skills of volunteers. PSO also point towards a stronger possibility for South – North learning.

Promoting South to North exchange programmes was an issue discussed in 2002 and still remains a central concern in 2006. In 2006, IVCOs are still promoting South – North and South-South exchanges through working on relationships with Southern partners and as well encouraging and developing exchange programmes. CCI has been implementing a new model of volunteer cooperation over the past 4 years that builds partnerships between civil society organisations in Canada and civil society organisations in the South. Volunteer placements are based on the needs of the partners and the overall goals and can be north-south, south-north, and south-south.

## **Recruitment**

IVCOs are working on innovative recruitment processes in response to the changing environment. For example, VSO are now using NGOs in the Philippines and India to directly recruit skilled volunteers in addition to their usual recruitment methods. Skillshare also note that due to membership of the EU, they are not solely focused on recruiting British volunteers. This is also the case with other IVCOs who have found increased interest from potential volunteers from all over the world due to access to the internet and ICTs.

## **Working with Diaspora communities**

The implications of migrant and diaspora communities for international volunteering were raised by IVCOs in this years survey. VSO have recently set up a programme which targets diaspora communities and sets up volunteer placements in conjunction with partner organisations in the South. In 2006, VSO were able to place 100 volunteers under this programme.

## ***Relationships with donors***

## **Evaluation and impact assessment**

On the whole, over the past five years there has not been a significant change in how governments and the general public perceive international volunteering. They value IVCOs experience of working with grassroots organisations, the positive aspects of face to face engagement and harnessing the potential for individuals to contribute to society. But in line with general pressure to show the impact of aid spending, there is increased need to measure and demonstrate impact of individual volunteer placements and international volunteering as a whole. This is an area where many IVCOs are focusing their attention. In 2004, Development Initiatives conducted a study for FORUM drawing on experiences from IVCOs looking at the added value of volunteering using social capital as a way of explaining what it is that sets volunteering apart from other development activities. UNV have done a

lot of work in this area with Johns Hopkins University and other FORUM members to produce publications for assessing the impact of volunteering. The need to evaluate programmes and measure impact is an issue UNV says all agencies will have faced already, and if not, it is something they will have to deal with in the future.

### **Overcoming funding challenges**

Fundraising and funding remains a key preoccupation evident and has consistently been an issue over the last 5 years. Whilst a number of IVCOs receive funding directly through government, many have to rely on donations and other funding sources.

Several IVCOs now receive direct programmatic style funding from their governments, often in the form of partnership agreements that specify levels of funding for the next four to five years. The benefit of these partnerships is two-fold, with secure, predictable funding guaranteed, these agencies are able to plan their activities. Furthermore, these partnerships often enable agencies to develop close working relationships with their governments with the potential to influence development policy. Challenges do arise for those who receive funding in this way however. Organisations in Canada for example state that the funding levels are likely to remain the same throughout the period of their agreements which can limit their plans for expansion.

Many agencies however still do not benefit from such favourable funding agreements with their governments – some receive no funding support at all. For volunteer sending agencies in Hungary for example, this lack of financial support severely limits their ability to dispatch volunteers overseas. Further, a lack of political support for volunteering overseas and need for public education means that their programmes receive little support at all.

As mentioned earlier in this report, there is the potential in the future for Southern governments to co-finance volunteers as more development assistance is delivered direct to governments through direct budget support.

### ***Competition and partnerships***

Competition between IVCOs for funding support remains an issue. One respondent notes that this results in IVCOs looking like each other rather than focusing on responding and representing the needs of their Southern partners.

However, there are examples of IVCOs collaborating and joining together. For instance, Uniterra links two organisations CECI and WUSC and VSO have recently merged with BESO. There are further examples of the positive aspects of such cooperation – one IVCO notes how cooperation with other IVCOs enables them to develop partnerships and also undertake joint activities such as producing communications on aid volumes etc. Another IVCO notes that due to the very low level of funding to IVCOs in their country, strong partnerships with other IVCOs means they can work jointly on advocacy programmes and raise the profile of volunteering.

### ***Increasing professionalism of IVCOs***

A wide range of IVCOs have contributed their perspectives to IVCO surveys over the last 5 years: long established agencies and relatively young organisations; IVCOs focused strongly on international volunteer cooperation and exchange – and those for whom this is

only a part of a wider development remit; organisations with widely varying relationships with government

But despite these differences, there is a shared sense of movement in certain directions: towards greater professionalism, towards more clearly defined roles and contribution to the development process. Whilst IVCOs continue to have to account for their contribution to development – as one agency puts it, the danger of IVCOs becoming marginalised in relation to other development interventions is not as strong as it was five years ago.

### ***Other possible challenges for the future (key points)***

#### ***Gender***

In 2005 the world missed the first MDG. MDG 3 was to:

“Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by 2015”.

Despite commitment at policy level to closing the gender gap, mainstreaming gender appears to have dissipated attention. The modest aid (\$3.1 billion over the 5 years to 2003) earmarked to gender equality, has mostly focused on the social sectors – not recognising women’s contribution to productive economies or the benefits that accrue to women and families from infrastructure designed ‘as if gender mattered’.

Although gender is an organisational priority for some IVCOs, the issue has been barely mentioned in feedback for IVCO surveys over the last 5 years. Given that addressing gender is as much a matter of attitudes and relationships (where IVCOs have their forte) as spending money, it may be that Forum members can reflect on what they can contribute both in terms of more effective mainstreaming of gender concerns and initiatives specifically focused on the needs of women and girls.

#### ***Exclusion***

One well placed commentator on aid has written that by 2040 the world may have tackled \$1 a day poverty, but may have as many as 2 billion people who, for a variety of reasons, are excluded from the mainstreams of their societies – north and south. The debate on exclusion has much to do with the issue of identity and the forces that build the capacities of individuals and communities. IVCOs experiences in cross- cultural exchange should make it well placed to contribute to ongoing discussion in this area.

#### ***Beyond 2015 to poverty elimination***

The world is more than halfway from the 1995 Social Summit – which agreed the objective of eliminating absolute poverty, to 2015 – by which time the proportion of people in poverty should be halved. Few people are thinking beyond 2015, to completing the job. As the debate on mapping out a post-2015 agenda develops, can IVCOs conceive of a world without absolute poverty? If so what conditions would need to be in place to make it a reality and what role can international volunteer cooperation play in bringing this about?

How can or should IVCOs organise to contribute on this or other issues?