

The Contribution of the South African Volunteering Sector To Sustainable Development

A paper commissioned by the UNDP

November 2002

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that volunteerism contributes significantly to sustainable development in South Africa, as it does throughout the world. Much has been documented on the importance of volunteering actions during South Africa's political transition. Not only was volunteerism a mobiliser of social capital in the struggle against Apartheid and a safety net through which marginalized communities supported each other, but it was also an important economic generator. Since South Africa's democratic elections in 1994, the face of volunteering has changed substantially. Unfortunately, too few resources have been geared towards understanding, nurturing and growing volunteering as an essential tool in our sustainable development toolkit during the last decade.

Sustainable development is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and potential. True development therefore expands peoples' choices, which in turn allows them to lead lives they value, in a way that does not compromise the future potential of the planet. Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capacities. This paper looks at how volunteering in South Africa helps to unlock the creativity of people to contribute to helping themselves and society in general in sustainable human development.

1.1 Defining Sustainable Development

As a starting point, it is important to define sustainable development. For consistency purposes the United Nations definition of sustainable development from the *Brundtland Report* (Virchow, 2002) is used: "... *meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". The underlying elements of sustainable development are "...*social and economic development within bio-physical environmental constraints...*" (WSSD, 2002), or economic development and equity social development and conserving natural resources and the environment.

Previously the main emphasis of development activity was on economic growth as this was believed to ultimately improve living standards. Since human development became the cornerstone of the United Nation's development strategy in the early 1990s increased emphasis has been placed on social development. This does not belittle the role that economic growth plays, it is imperative if the welfare of people is to be sustained, but rather that the improvement of people's lives is just as important and intrinsically linked to economic growth. As the 1992 Human Development Report (UNDP, 1992) states, "*people contribute to growth, and growth contributes to human well-being*". that social development increases the capabilities of people, how those capabilities are used and whether they have the political, economic and social freedom to make decisions. This in turn provides the basis for people to engage in development-oriented work. This is the area where volunteering actions in South Africa make the greatest contribution towards sustainable development.

The importance of environmental protection and environmentally sustainable development should also not be underestimated. It is the very important third dimension of sustainable development. As sustainable development is not possible without economic growth and social development so it is also not possible without environmental protection. Nowhere is this more evident than in sub-Saharan Africa where communities face an environmental crisis due to deforestation, erosion and degradation of productive soils that hamper any development efforts (UN Volunteers, 2001)

1.2 Defining Volunteering

The definition of volunteering used in this paper is taken from a United Nations Volunteers publication "*On Volunteering and Social Development*" This publication is based on the work of an Expert Group Meeting in November 1999 in New York, which for the first time attempted to define the concept volunteerism, its main characteristics and typologies:

"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 an individual's own free will. Third, the activity should be of benefit to someone other than the volunteer, or to society at large, although it is recognized that volunteering brings significant benefit to the volunteer as well" (UN Volunteers, Expert Working Group Meeting (1999)

Volunteering takes on different modes and meanings in different settings. These are strongly influenced by the history, economics, politics, religion and culture of a region. UN Volunteers (1999) classifies four modes of volunteering: mutual help and self-help, where the volunteer or a close group are the beneficiaries of the volunteering actions; philanthropy or service to

others, where the focus of volunteering actions are on those in a less fortunate situation than the volunteer themselves; participation or civic engagement, through which the volunteer aims to change the lot of specific target groups and advocacy or campaigning, whereby volunteers lobby on behalf of their focus groups.

1.3 Volunteering and Volunteer-Based Organisations

This paper considers all forms of volunteerism in South Africa. Volunteering occurs through the actions of individuals, informal and formal non-profit volunteer-based organisations, and through the actions of some commercial organisations. Like in so many other countries, the contribution of volunteering is not yet fully recognised, or supported in South Africa (see for instance IPID, 2001 and UN Volunteers, 2002). Therefore it is not surprising that the findings of the first major study that determines the size and profile of all types of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) involved in volunteering in South Africa has only recently been released¹. This paper uses the findings from the South African Comparative Study designed and conducted by Social Surveys on behalf of the School of Public and Development Management to highlight the contribution of volunteers, working primarily through Volunteer-Based Organisations, towards sustainable development in South Africa.

The following structural definition was used to select the types of organisations to be included in the study: they must be organised, private (not governmental), self-governing, non-profit distributing and must engage volunteers who donate non-compulsory contributions and membership to the organisation². By using this definition a full spectrum of organisational types was included in the study:

- **Informal volunteering organisations** (these organisations tend to be community based organisations and are not registered. These types of organisations are what is generally referred to as traditional forms of volunteering)
- **Section 21 organisations** (these organisations tend to be more formal and institutionalised and are registered under Section 21 of the Income Tax Act for tax exemption purposes)
- **Trusts and Foundations**
- **Political Parties**
- **Unions**
- **Religious Groups and**
- **Other Organisations**

¹ South African Comparative Study conducted by Social Surveys, on behalf of The School of Public and Development Management (P&DM) at The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) as part of The Johns Hopkins University (JHU) International Comparative Study on xxxxx

As the study for which this data was collected formed part of the South African Comparative Study commissioned by Johns Hopkins University, this definition was determined by Johns Hopkins University. To some extent this is limiting when addressing all aspects of volunteering in South Africa as individual volunteers and corporate organisations contributing funds or time towards volunteering activities are excluded. However, the definition of Non-Profit Organisations in this study correlates closely with what are referred to as 'volunteer-based organisations' by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV, 2001 p8). The term 'volunteer-based organisation' is therefore used to refer to these types of organisations in this paper.

2. THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

Volunteerism has evolved to serve every sector of South Africa society. Specifically, volunteering actions are focused on meeting the particular needs of marginalized communities and special interest groups. Volunteerism often fills niches in the country's institutional framework where market and public sector resources fail to reach. Nearly a quarter of volunteer-based organisations are located in low-income communities, and a further 17% operate in communities that are below the breadline.

Currently, no reliable statistics exist on the size and value of individual volunteerism and volunteering actions undertaken by corporations in South Africa. Fortunately, volunteer-based organisations are the primary conduits through which most volunteers are able to contribute to sustainable development in South Africa. Therefore, the data from the South African Comparative Study provides a good starting point for assessing the nature of volunteering in South Africa.

2.1 Individual Volunteering

The foundation of volunteerism in South Africa is the cumulative effect of the many individual volunteering actions that occur every day. These individual acts of support and assistance between family, members of communities and strangers generally go un-recorded and are difficult to quantify. The concept of 'Ubuntu' (helping each other) is deeply entrenched in South African Society and often results in person-to-person assistance.

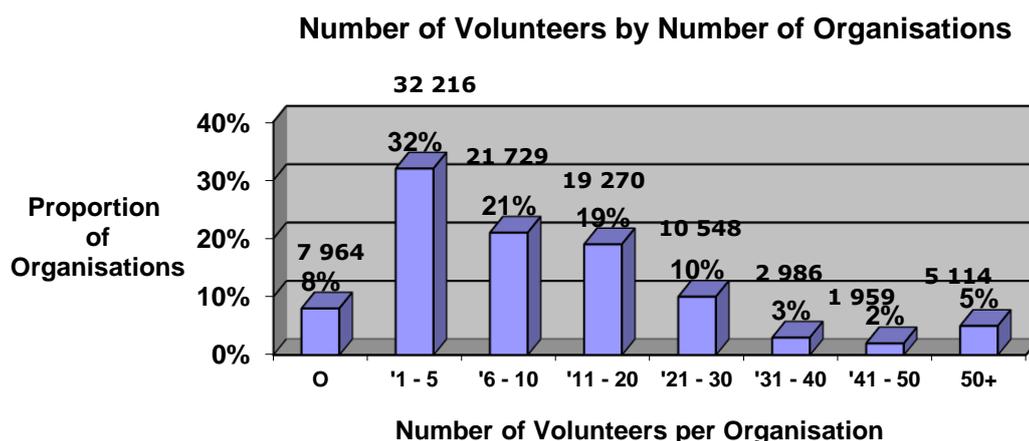
Greater recognition of the enormous potential reservoir of individual volunteers is also only recently being recognised by both the Government as well as the private sector. This was seen for the first time at the WSSD in Johannesburg where 3000 volunteers were utilised. A substantial number of individual volunteers will also be recruited to assist with the Cricket World Cup to be held in South Africa in 2003 further demonstrating the importance of volunteering toward the development of the country. The skills, experience, networking

opportunities etc. that help to capacitate individuals that otherwise would find it difficult to obtain these opportunities elsewhere, also greatly benefit from the experience of volunteering

2.2 Impact of Volunteer-based Organisations in South Africa

According to the South African Comparative Study, in 2000 it was estimated that there were between 90 000 and 101 000 volunteer-based organisations in South Africa. These organisations together comprised the equivalent of 645 316 full time staff of which 49% (1.5 million people) are volunteers. This represents 9% of the formal, non-agricultural workforce in South Africa. This makes full time equivalent (FTE³) employment in volunteer-based organisations larger than the mining industry or than the number of public servants in national departments and more than twice the size of the electricity, gas and water sector employment (Swilling & Russell, 2002). ⁴

The figure below indicates that only 8% of all organisations that comprise South Africa’s volunteering sector do not have any “unpaid” volunteers in their organisations.⁵



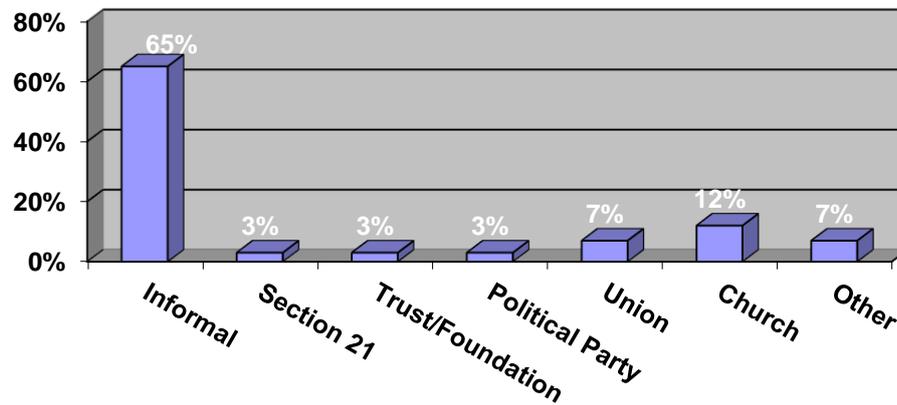
This demonstrates the extent to which volunteers drive volunteer-based organisations in South Africa: 51% (51 765) of the estimated 101 786 organisations in the country do not have any paid employees at all and are fully reliant on volunteers. This is even more significant when looking at the community- based or informal organisations of which almost two thirds (33 705 organisations) do not have any paid staff and are therefore completely reliant on volunteers for their existence.

³ FTE refers to the number of full-time, part-time and volunteer employees multiplied by the number of hours they work on average divided by 7.5 – thus getting full time equivalent figures.

⁴ The 28 country comparative table was developed by Johns Hopkins University, and for comparative purposes excludes religious organizations. If these were to be included the figure for South Africa would be 49%

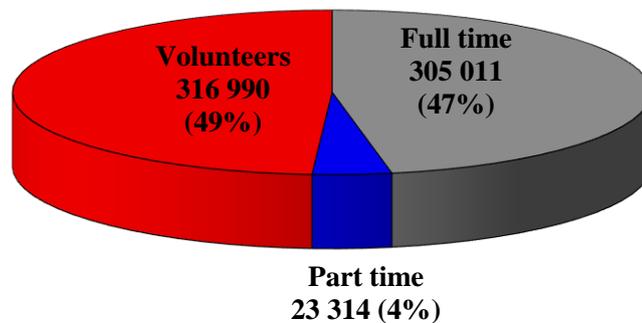
⁵ The data from the Johns Hopkins Study used hereafter is based on the 92% or 93 822 organisations in the South African NPO sector that do make use of volunteering inputs.

Organisations With No Paid Employees Only Volunteers



In terms of actual working hours, the Figure below shows that the time commitments from the approximately 1.5 million volunteers working through volunteer-based organisations translates into a full-time equivalent workforce of 316 990 people, a contribution of 49% to the total full-time equivalent workforce of these organisations in South Africa. If we take the average wage of full-time employees working in volunteer-based organisations as R16000 per annum in 1999 and multiple the number of full-time equivalents, the value of volunteer work in the sector is conservatively worth R5.1 billion.

Proportion of employee types in the volunteer based organisations (weighted) FTEs



It was found that volunteer-based organisations in different sectors of operation rely on volunteer assistance to varying degrees, ranging from 46% in the case of the Social Services sub-sector, to 100% in the case of the international organisations sub-sector.

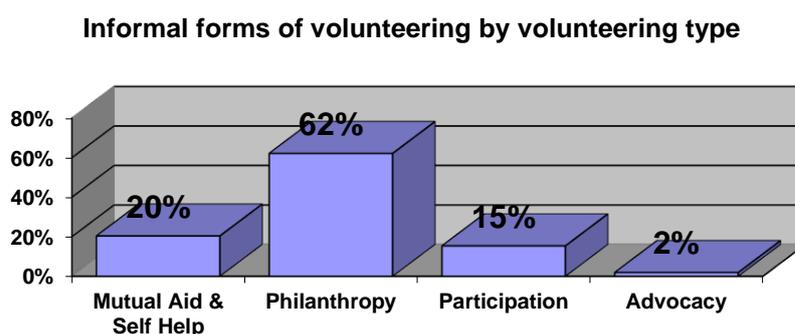
2.3 Corporate Volunteerism

A number of South African corporations have instituted volunteerism programmes as a way of assisting with South Africa’s development task. For example, African Oxygen’s Community Involvement Programme through which employees engage with communities in need in

surrounding areas. The Old Mutual Staff Community Builder Programme recognises and supports staff that help to uplift their communities through volunteering actions, while the Board of Executors' outreach programme establishes community outreach committees through which staff identify and implement projects on an area or common interest basis. (Anon, ??, Corporate Volunteering in South Africa, pp1-5).

2.4 Volunteering Prospects in South Africa

One of the most important findings to come out of the South African Comparative Study was that by far the largest proportion of volunteer-based organisations in South Africa were the informal community based organisations primarily working at a grassroots community level. As so little is known about these organisations that comprise the largest form of volunteering in the country this aspect of volunteering has been expanded further. These organisations primarily undertake self-help, mutual aid and philanthropic work, much of which is based on the concept of Ubuntu, a philosophy that translates loosely as "caring for each other". Based on kinship linkages, they tend to be more community and neighbourhood focused but play a significant role in sustainable development.



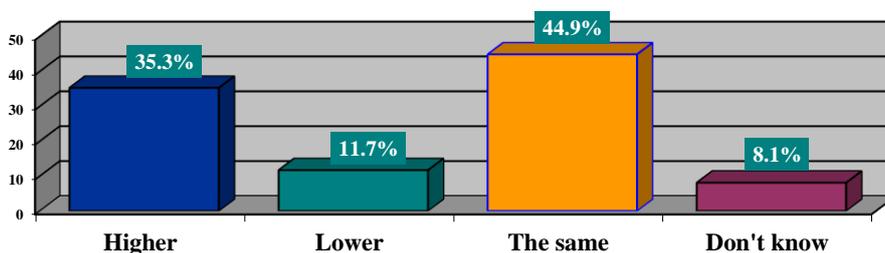
This form of volunteering is at the heart of the social fibre of South African society and needs to be explored in unlocking people's creativity in development. Apart from say material poverty, poverty can be expressed in terms of situations where a poor person or household has no friends or neighbours to whom to turn for help to mitigate risks and to cope with the effects of shocks. The traditional form of volunteerism which supports the poor despite its informal nature make up 53% of the South Africa's volunteer-based organisations and are extensively involved in alleviating poverty and contributing to human development at a grassroots level, particularly in areas such as HIV/Aids. Informal voluntary-based organisations are made up of the largest proportion of volunteers as compared to other volunteer-based organisations and due to their previous anonymity they have enjoyed a very small slice of the funding pie. In a recent study exploring the relationships between international funding agencies and local volunteer-based organisations it was found that few partnerships existed with informal organisations as a result of international organisations

finding it very difficult to access these highly localised community based structures. Yet they are the part of the volunteering sector that perhaps has demonstrated the greatest potential in terms of long-term sustainable development, and certainly have been able to attract the largest proportion of volunteers.

The South African Comparative study indicates a growth in volunteering in South Africa, which is antithetical to the experience in other parts of the world. A year-on-year trend analysis shows that 35% of volunteer-based organisations indicate an increase in volunteering, and only 12% indicated that the proportion of volunteers had decreased.

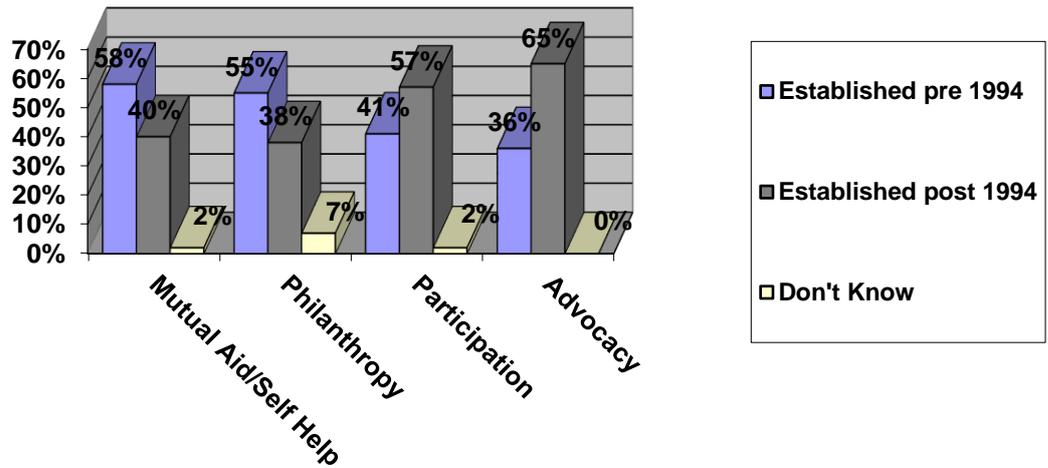
This positive trend is due to a number of factors. Firstly, the increased opportunities for civic

Volunteer assistance compared to previous years (unweighted)



engagement that have resulted from political and social change over the last decade. After a long period of exclusionary politics, civic engagement through volunteerism is likely to continue to increase into the future. A significantly higher proportion of mutual aid / self help and philanthropic volunteer-based organisations were in existence prior to the democratic elections in 1994. In contrast the participation and advocacy types of volunteering became considerably more established only after the 1994 elections. The culture of formal political participation only really became formally entrenched in South Africa after the elections, which accounts for the disproportionately high percent of organisations that established themselves during this period.

**Types of Volunteering
by
Year in Which Organisation was Established**

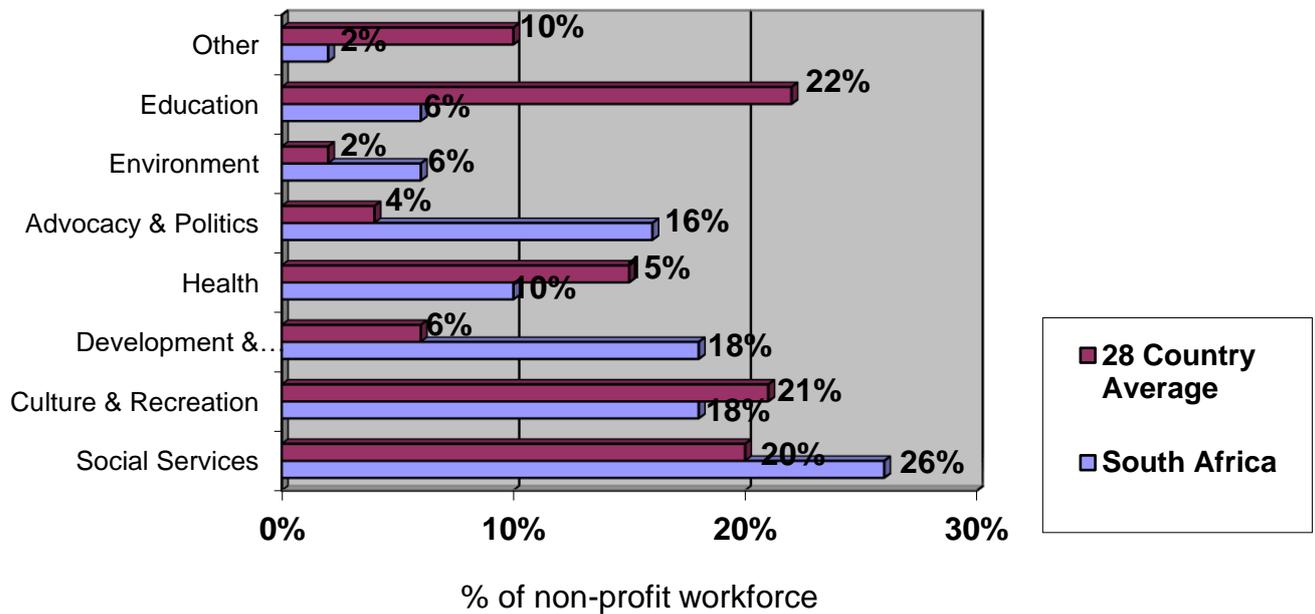


Secondly, there are more opportunities for, and an increasing awareness of volunteerism. For example, large international events such as the Rugby World Cup in 1995, the African Union Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 as well as the forthcoming Cricket World Cup in 2003 have raised the profile of volunteering in South Africa. It is estimated that the WSSD in 2002 used the services of 3 000 volunteers who were instrumental in its success, and the Cricket World Cup in 2003 will rely on a similar number (UNV South Africa, personal communication).

Thirdly, it is likely that South Africa's human development performance (as measured by a decreasing Human Development Index) over the last decade will place an increased emphasis on the role of volunteerism in sustainable development. Marias (1997, p6) makes reference to the government's political pressure to hasten the delivery of tangible goods and services to the poor, and the conservative fiscal context in which such delivery has to take place. He argues that voluntary sector organisations are sometimes providing social services in tandem with government, and sometimes as a substitute for government provision. The Figure below outlines the current proportion of volunteers as a proportion of sectoral employment in South Africa in comparison to a 28-country average.

⁶ Marias, 1997

No. of volunteers as proportion of sector

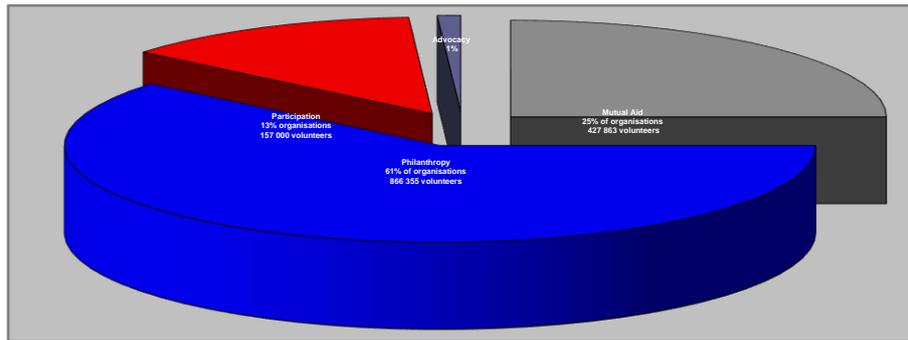


Before even looking at the more detailed profile of volunteering in South Africa in order to assess its specific contributions to sustainable development, these figures already more than hint at a sector that the government critically needs to be recognising and nurturing.

3. TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING IN SOUTH AFRICA

If the contribution made by volunteers to sustainable development in South Africa is to be fully understood it is necessary to look at the different types of volunteering activity. In terms of this conceptual framework South African volunteering organisations are distributed as follows:

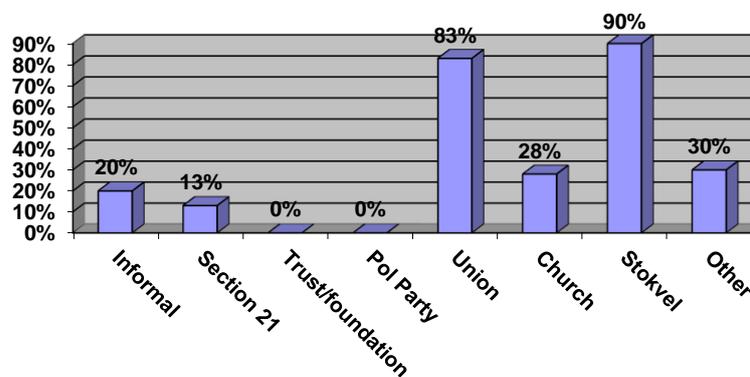
UN Classification of Volunteering Types by Percent of Organisations



3.1 Mutual Aid or Self-Help

The key distinguishing factor of mutual aid or self-help organisations is that the volunteers or members are the main recipients of the volunteering themselves. These groups comprise 25% of volunteer-based organisations. They take many forms, but are predominantly kinship groups such as burial societies, rotating credit associations such as stokvels, religious groups, health groups such as HIV/AIDS, cancer and disability support groups and sports and cultural groups whose members join for purposes of networking, social interaction or development of their sporting and artistic skills⁷

Proportion of each Organisational Form by Mutual Aid / Self Help



Although almost 50% of all Mutual Aid /Self Help volunteering is found in informal types of organisations, in terms of the proportion of the actual form of the organization 83% of

⁷ It should be noted that the number of HIV/AIDS support groups and other related organisations are likely to be substantially undercounted in this study, which was undertaken in 2000 before communities had had the opportunity to respond to the visible effects of the pandemic.

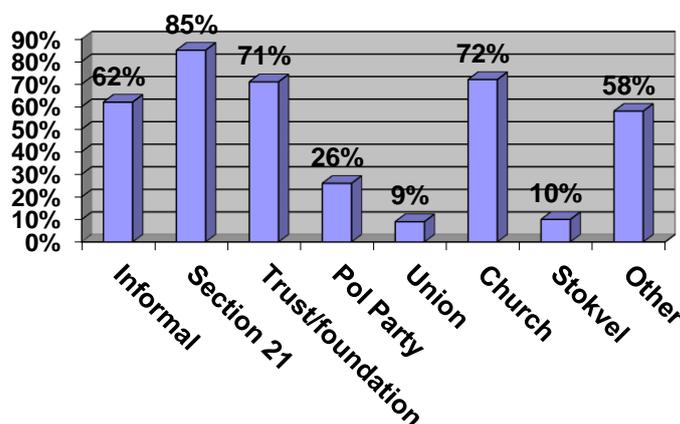
Unions/professional organisations and 90% of stokvels/burial societies are involved in Mutual Aid / Self help volunteering activities.

This type of volunteering is a major catalyst to the growth and maintenance of social cohesion as well as capital in the country through the development of strong community values, maintaining and furthering cultural norms and pursuits, empowering marginalized groups (such as women and children) and developing the infrastructure for the growth of economic capital through access to financial services, collective employment endeavours and employment opportunities within the most under-developed communities in urban and rural South Africa.

3.2 Philanthropy or Service to Others

Philanthropy is by far the largest type of volunteering in South Africa. It comprises 58% of all 1.5 million volunteers and 61% of all volunteer-based organisations.

Proportion of Each Organisational Form by Philanthropy or Service to Others



The majority of different forms of volunteering organisations are involved in philanthropy or service to others with Section 21 organisations, religious organisations, Trusts and Foundations and Informal organisations being the most significant.

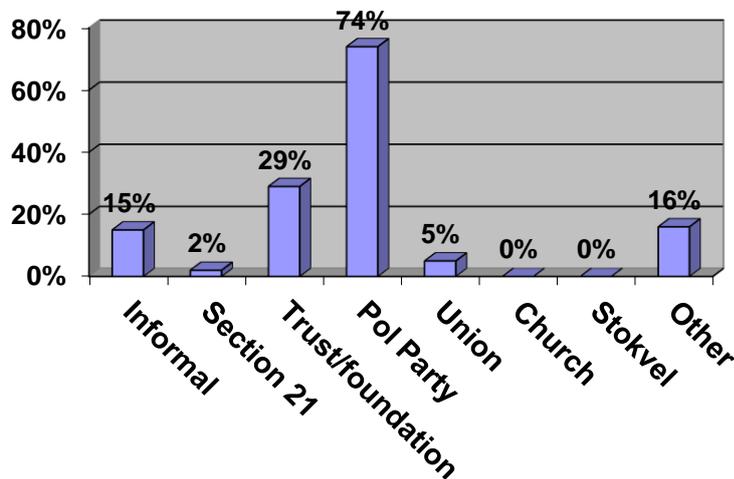
The contribution of philanthropic activities to sustainable development in South Africa is based on both supporting and developing the social and economic fabric of communities through assisting marginalized groups, aiding in the fight against poverty and hunger and increasing the economic survival prospects of many thousands of people. For instance, Southern African Students Volunteer Organisation (VOLSA) mobilises graduate students to partner with community initiatives. A wide range of activity is undertaken, including human rights support, the construction of community facilities and even gardening assistance. There are also a growing number of AIDS-based philanthropic groups such as the Tchabane Youth Initiative, The Township Aids Project, the Macassar HIV Aids Home Care Project and the

Browns farm HIV Aids Organisation whose sole aim is to educate communities about AIDS and to assist families who have a household member suffering from AIDS. In addition, many communities in South Africa have individuals or groups that assist to distribute clothes and food to the needy such as the Khotsong House Shelter Project, the Salvation Army and the Red Cross Society.

3.3 Participation

By participation we refer to those organisations that are involved in the governance process⁸ either through representation on government bodies or through representation on other consultative bodies.

Proportion of each Organisational Form by Participation



In the absence of democratic local government during Apartheid, every disenfranchised community in the country had a civic association, which was acknowledged by the members of that community to be the true representative leaders. After the 1994 elections the capacity within these civic associations generally transferred to the official local authorities, leaving community participation vacuums, as the civic leadership was elected into the now official local councils. As the transformation process that South Africa went through to achieve democracy was highly consultative in nature, to some extent this has created an emerging culture of participation. This is particularly true in areas of physical development where community participation is a pre-requisite for being awarded a contract or tender, specifically with respect to community housing and infrastructure projects. Current participative organisations include school governing bodies, parents associations and ratepayers associations. There is perhaps a need to build an on-going culture of civic responsibility to increase participation from civil society in governance as South Africa moves towards the end of the first decade of democratic government, and new lines emerge between governmental and the interests of volunteer-based organisations. One area where such organisations have flourished is that of community policing, where local crime prevention and safety forums include both formal peacekeeping structures as well as voluntary community participation.

⁸ Expert Working Group meeting on Volunteering and Social Development Expert Working Group meeting 1999.

3.4 Advocacy and Campaigning

Advocacy and campaigning tends to refer to the lobbying of government for purposes of changing policy and legislation. Advocacy and campaigning can be national or international in its lobbying objectives, although for the most part it tends to be more localised in South Africa with few organisations specialising in the activity of advocacy per se.

Although advocacy and campaigning is undertaken by a range of different organisations it is often not classified as such as this is not the main activity of these organisations. The South African Comparative Study supports this finding. Most organisations conduct a wide range of activities and do not develop enough expertise or networking capability to generate any real lobbying or advocacy capacity. For example there are a relatively large number of organisations that fall under the participation activity due to their main function being concerned with governance such as civic associations, rate payers associations etc, although part of their function is lobbying. There are also a growing number of influential organisations that are concerned with issues of human rights or sectoral policy concerns such as those of business, labour or the environment. These include HIV / AIDS lobby groups, business lobby groups, prisoners' rights organisations, workers unions, environmental and animal rights lobbies and educational groups. However as the main activities of many of these organisations are focused on the education of people concerning their rights and provision of legal representation with only a small amount of time being spent on campaigning they tend to be categorised under philanthropy and service to others. It is for this reason that only 1% of organisations are specifically involved in this type of activity.

Advocacy activities are still relatively new in South Africa. This form of volunteering requires a greater degree of specialization and cooperation between organisations for this type of volunteering to flourish as it has done in more western counties. One of the oldest volunteer-based advocacy organisations is the Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA). It uses its substantial membership base and national presence to lobby for environmental rights and to fight environmentally damaging developments. Furthermore, it has an extensive education programme operating across South Africa. Other advocacy groups include, for instance, the Disabled People of South Africa, Women Against Women Abuse, the South African National Civic Organisations and workers unions.

4. BUILDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: UNLOCKING PEOPLE'S CREATIVITY

"The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long healthy and creative lives". In sustainable development one goes beyond development per se to ensure that one is able to fulfil the needs of today without compromising the needs of tomorrow. Just as the improvement of the livelihood of the individual is crucial to sustainable development. The same individual has a potential through the volunteering medium that could be explored to contribute to sustainable development.

This section now turns to a brief review of the contribution volunteerism makes to sustainable development in South Africa. Specific aspects of volunteering activity in South Africa that contribute to social, economic and environmental capital are outlined here.

4.1 The Contribution of Volunteering to Social Development

Volunteers continue to play a significant role in mobilising and building South Africa's social capital. According to the World Bank *"...social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's interactions."* During the apartheid era many grassroots community structures developed in response to the need to mobilise common interest and shared values within a society in conflict, and to develop informal interactive networks at a local level in order to compensate for the lack of formal social and political structures. Many of these volunteer actions continued to grow and mobilise social capital by empowering citizens to participate in forums at the community levels in the political struggles as well provide an avenue for future community and political leadership. The unlocking of the potential in people to actively participate through volunteering gained through the apartheid era is assisting some communities to engage in various programmes such as networks of organised sports and recreational activities organised for youth "to keep them off the street and away from crime"⁹. There will not be sustainable development without a disciplined youth population to support development into the next generation.

Volunteering also builds social capital amongst marginalized communities and demographic groups, by empowering them to set their priorities and shape their destiny. Many unemployed people have immersed themselves in the volunteer sector and in so doing gained important social recognition, skills, networking, improved self-image and often the opportunity to move into more formal, paid positions. The sustainable development benefits of this process are vast. People who have first hand experience of the problems being faced at a community level then move up into either government or the private sector, imbuing these organisations with a greater sense of social responsibility and social understanding. Alternatively, this

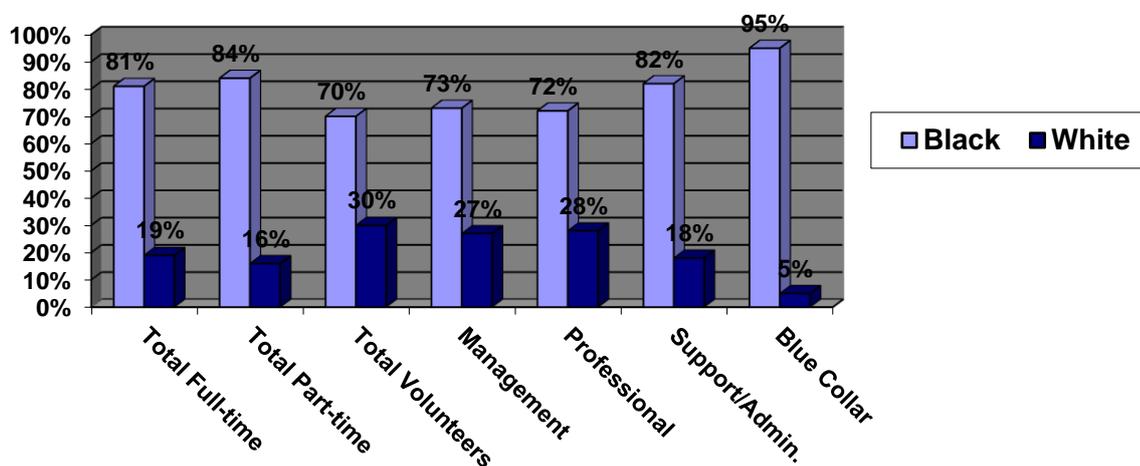
⁹ The specific objective as specified by a range of similar type recreational, sport, art, choir etc. volunteer based organizations interviewed in the South African Comparative Study

capacity could remain within volunteer-based organisations, potentially in leadership positions, and enhancing the sustainability prospects of the organisation. (Source: anecdotal evidence from AIDS studies conducted with the help of organisations operating in this sector). This 'skills incubator' effect bodes well for South Africa, given the demographic profile of volunteer-based organisations, and if supplemented with much needed funding and skills development would provide important, socially responsible future leadership to all sectors of society.

Volunteer-based organisations are an important source of employment for black people and for women, both of whom have been historically socially and economically marginalized in South Africa. Women make up 59% of the total full-time employees, and 81% of full-time employees are black. Interestingly however there does appear to be slightly more male than female volunteers with the large majority of this group also being black (70%).

In terms of managerial staff there are considerably more women leading volunteer-based organisations with 59% consisting of women and 41% consisting of men. When it comes to race it is also encouraging that 73% of all managers are black and 70% of all volunteers are black.

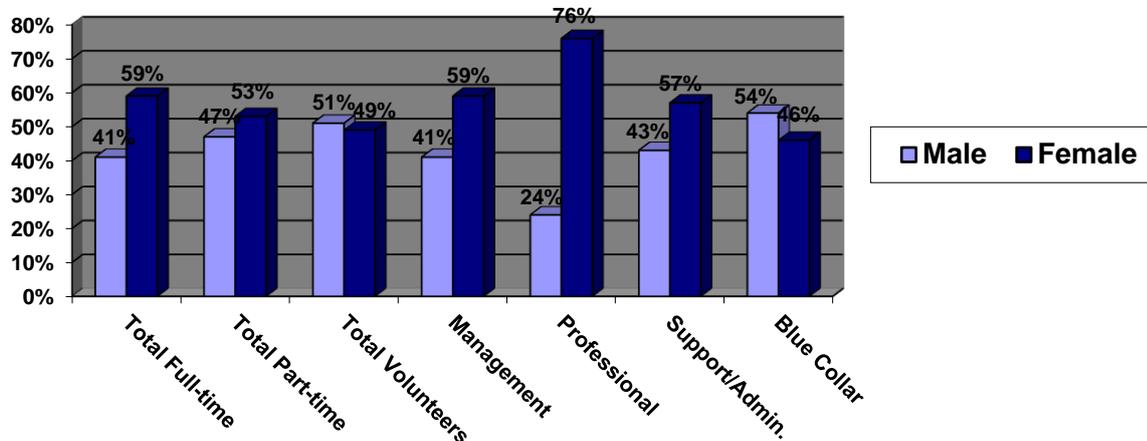
Type of Volunteer by Race



White women dominate management in the Health sub-sector, whereas the other largely formal sub-sector, Environment, has a preponderance of white males. On the other hand, Social Services and Development and Housing are examples of sub-sectors where black women dominate management. This is thought to be partly due to the high proportion of community-based organisations in this sub-sector, which the Health and Environment sub-sectors don't have. Sub-sectors that are characterised by a more formal profile appear to

have whites at the helm; whereas the volunteer-based organisations consisting of large numbers of community based organisations have a stronger black leadership.

Type of Volunteer by Gender



4.2 The Contribution of Volunteering to Economic Growth

Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically. The volunteering act of bringing people and communities together or to contribute their time to address their needs and that of society as a whole is an important economic input. In South Africa, volunteering is an important economic force, with total operating expenditure of volunteer-based organisations alone estimated to be R9,3-billion in 1998 (Swilling & Russell, 2002 p15). This equates to 1.2% of the 1998 GDP, excluding the contributions made by individual and corporate volunteering. The economic value of volunteerism within this sector is substantial, with almost 1,5-million volunteers contributing just less than half of all time committed to these organisations. It is conservatively estimated that the value of this volunteerism was worth R5,1-billion in 1998¹⁰. What is most significant is that the majority of this economic value is focused on those sectors of South Africa's society that are most marginalized, and those special needs groups that are most overlooked by government and the private sector. It is difficult to do more than speculate on the economic capital created by the past and present beneficiaries of volunteering actions. In addition, many such volunteering actions create new economic opportunities for marginalized communities, such as the Vulamehlo Women's Club that creates skills and employment creation through food production. Another example is the Siyakhula Development Project. Unemployed people are given basic skills training in fields as diverse as plumbing, carpentry,

¹⁰ This only includes volunteers who commit time through volunteer-based organisations. Individual actions are not included in this estimation.

mechanics, welding, gardening and security services. Thereafter, Siyakhula supports and encourages them to contract on small jobs to under-serviced communities at minimum cost.

The 'stokvel' and 'burial society' structures characterised under the self-help and mutual aid type of volunteering are widespread and significant players in the economic life of South African communities. These structures assist members with credit requirements or special financial needs such as to cover the costs of traditional funerals. Many of these voluntary associations use revolving credit mechanisms although some have become established enough to be able to secure credit through more formal channels. In addition, social coping mechanisms assist to improve the ability of individuals or groups to enhance their economic potential such as support for single mothers and school aftercare groups.

A wide range of development and housing organisations have evolved that create employment opportunities by facilitating the physical development of infrastructure and housing. A number of very successful women's housing development groups have made important inroads into the drastic housing shortage in South Africa. For example, the Ilingeleyu Homeless Initiative assists people to build their houses, while the Sheredon Park Community Housing Initiative helps to build housing for those still living in shacks. .

Certain volunteering activities impart skills or assist with access to capital, equipment and information technology for people in specific circumstances, such as small to medium scale business enterprises, rural development initiatives and infrastructure provision to marginalized communities. These provide marginalized groups with opportunities to access resources for the growth of economic entities through which their standard of living can be improved. One such organisation, KhulaStart, was established and is partially operated by UNV-arranged volunteers in 2000. KhulaStart provides group loans without personal collateral security, which are aimed at kick-starting small and medium-scale business ventures. Volunteers were used to establish the organisation, to train the 80-plus staff members and to provide field support (UN Volunteers, 2001 p9).

4.3 The Contribution of Volunteering to Environmental Protection

The environmental protection sector is the youngest, and most incomplete, type of volunteering in South Africa. The South African Comparative Study data shows that only 3.5% of volunteer-based organisations have a primary focus on environmental issues, and of these, the majority (80%) deal mainly with animal welfare or veterinary services. The contribution of volunteering to improving environmental capital in South Africa, and hence completing the sustainable development triangle, will need to form a 'third wave' in the maturation and growth of South African volunteerism.

Volunteerism aimed exclusively at environmental ends tends to be clustered within the higher income communities. However, the growing move toward awareness of sustainable development through correct use of soil, water, vegetation and other natural resources is raising the importance of environment as an essential component of both rural and urban development projects in South Africa. These projects include rural food production and water conservation initiatives and youth orientated projects which are, amongst other things, involved in cleaning up rivers, disaster abatement (such as the recent spate of oil spills affecting coastal marine life and resources and flood and drought relief) the provision of services to the poor as well as through the betterment of the housing environment. Increasingly, local environmental awareness groups are starting up in communities. The Macassar and District Environmental Project promotes environmental awareness and conducts educational excursions, while the Community Environment Network undertakes educational and tree planting activities.

5. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the major challenges facing volunteerism in South Africa are discussed below. In addition, broad recommendations that would develop volunteering in South Africa are outlined. Many of the recommendations contained here are in line with the UN General Assembly resolution RES/56/38 on *"Recommendations on support for volunteering"*.

5.1 Recognition of the Contribution of Volunteerism

The lack of recognition of volunteerism in development takes different forms. At the national level despite the significant economic contribution of volunteers and the volunteering sector in terms of GDP, this input continues to be reflected in "invisible" ink below the public visibility of both Government and the people of South Africa.

Although it is recognised the ultimate safety net for the social cohesion and capital is through volunteering, often during the design and implementation of policies, the volunteering factor is neglected. The potential of volunteering continues to be underestimated and not fully recognised at both the national and local level. The President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in recognition of the significant contribution that could be made through volunteering has declared the year 2002, as National Year of Volunteers. However, there needs to be translation of the President's declaration into a turning point to change the phase of volunteerism in South Africa.

5.2 Enabling Environment for Volunteering

In order to unlock the creativity of people through the volunteering medium there is the need for Government to create an enabling environment through fiscal, legislative and other frameworks. Enabling frameworks must focus on the needs of both the formal and informal organisations involved in volunteering. To neglect to factor volunteering into the design and implementation of policies and funding frameworks in South Africa could entail the risk of overlooking a valuable asset that enables people to unlock their creativity and contribute to sustainable development.

The Government should introduce enabling legislation aimed at encouraging citizens to volunteer but allowing the choice to rest with that individual or organisation. It can also facilitate civil servant and public sector employees to volunteer as displayed during the WSSD in September.

Government can also provide tax incentives and subsidies for volunteer groups and organisations, as well as coverage and protection against risks in the South Africa context.

5.3 Research and Information

Volunteering activities are not only under funded but also under researched. Volunteer-based organisations, also referred to as the "third sector", has not been adequately researched to provide valuable information on its structure, size and requirements. The lack of research on the subject is also directly linked to the lack of recognition of the importance of volunteering, particularly the large proportion of informal community based volunteer-based organisations. It is recognised that as a result of the UN declaring the year 2001 as international Year of Volunteers (IYV), there has been interest in research work on the concept and its contribution to socio-economic development. Research has been conducted in Botswana, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and Laos. It would be valuable for similar research to be undertaken in South Africa to assist with the development of volunteering. It would also be useful for the official government statistics agency to undertake the South African Comparative study on a regular basis. This would ensure that the statistics were "official" and thereby more likely to be taken up by policy makers at the highest level.

Public and private institutions, such as statistical bodies, universities and independent research organisations should be encouraged to study the volunteering sector based on a sound appreciation of its contribution in providing opportunities to citizens to be involved in the development process. This increasing body of knowledge would be valuable for the development and implementation of facilitative frameworks for supporting and growing volunteerism in South Africa. By feeding this information into policy formulation, a finer-grained enabling framework for volunteering in South Africa will result.

5.4 Volunteer Management Skills and Coordination

For volunteers to realise their potential as individuals and for volunteer-based organisations to maximise their impacts there should be a well functioning and coordinated body to support and provide volunteer management expertise. Volunteer-based organisations and managers therefore need to face these challenges and address them to attract and equip more people to volunteer at different levels. As most volunteering in South Africa occurs through volunteer-based organisations, better management will hone the effectiveness of volunteering generally.

The volunteering sector in South Africa should consider the establishment of a stable co-ordination body under the Volunteer South Africa (VOLSA) and tap into availability of experience within indigenous volunteer organisations such as the Southern African Student Volunteers Organisation (SASVO) to assist other volunteer groups at the different levels. Through the assistance of the United Nations Volunteers Programme, which is responsible for the promotion of volunteerism and mobilisation of volunteers for sustainable development globally the indigenous volunteer organisation's management capacity could be further strengthened to provide opportunities for effective participation and management of volunteers in South Africa. The valuable inputs from international expertise through organisations such as UN Volunteers and Skillshare International should be fostered and extended.

Additionally, management training aimed at volunteer-based organisations in South Africa would improve the effectiveness of the sector generally. Given the high proportion of previously disadvantaged groups within the management echelon of South Africa's volunteer-based organisations, such training should be given high priority in order to assist with redressing the imbalances of apartheid.

5.5 Volunteering Opportunities

One major challenge facing volunteering in South Africa is the information gap between the formal and informal volunteer-based organisations and individuals interested in volunteering. Often citizens are not aware and not informed as to how and where they could contribute to sustainable development through volunteering. In most of the poor black communities the lack of accessibility to information on the formal sector of volunteering is common. However, the same not necessarily apply to the informal volunteering, such as mutual aid and self-help groups, which are closely knitted around kinship, the extended family and the community.

The indigenous volunteer groups in conjunction with the Department of Social Development in South Africa based on the experience of the mobilisation of the WSSD volunteers should facilitate the establishment of a national database on volunteer opportunities with collaboration with community-based organisations and non-profit organisations. Information on volunteering should be disseminated through the media, schools, and other channels with particular attention given to ensuring that information is also accessible to disadvantaged segments of the population. In addition, suggestions for fostering volunteerism within the corporate sector might also help to trigger an increase in volunteer-based programmes.

Formal programmes to disseminate information on the different modes of volunteering may also be beneficial in assisting more volunteer-based organisations in South Africa to move into more sophisticated forms of volunteering with potentially greater impacts, such as advocacy and lobbying.

Partnerships between volunteering organisations should also be fostered nationally and internationally, to improve the support network and growth in the knowledge base relating to volunteers. This is especially necessary with respect to the more informal volunteering structures in South Africa's marginalized communities. It is imperative however that this be undertaken with the priorities of the indigenous organisations in mind, ensuring that these partnerships are mindful of the Southern African context in which they are working.

5.6 Integrating Volunteerism into National Development Planning

Volunteerism makes significant contributions both socially and economically, however it continues to be reflected in the "invisible" ink in terms of GDP. To avoid this problem the notion of volunteerism should be extended as an additional valuable component of national development-to-development cooperation policy. This should be based on the recognition of the immense contribution of the rich, local traditions of voluntary self-help, mutual aid and philanthropy expressed by such words as "*ubuntu*" and "*lestema*" can open the way to building up a new constituency in support of sustainable development.

This section of the paper has looked into how through the volunteering sector people creativity could be unlocked to make a contribution to sustainable development. In fact, the informal sector of volunteering makes up more than half of all volunteer-based organisations in the country and which has hitherto gone unrecognised, is embedded in the South Africa culture and social values is the glue that hold society together that creates the social capital. The volunteering medium therefore presents a very important mechanism through which the citizens of South African can unlock their creativity to contribute to sustainable development.

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APPENDIX ONE

Mutual Aid and Self-help Organisations

23 193 (25%)

Sector	% of total organisations 23 193	Sub-sector	% of Sector	% of total organisations 23 193	Examples of the most commonly identified organisations (only detailed those with 1500+ organisations)
Social Services	1 588 (7%)	Social Services	1 396 (88%)	6%	Self-help and support groups for people who are - HIV+/battered women/Spina Bifida parents /Downs syndrome/single parents /AA/cancer
		Income, support & maintenance	192 (12%)	1%	
Culture & Recreation	8 315 (36%)	Sports	5 019 (60%)	22%	Foster netball in our community /netball, football, rugby, swimming, angling, cycling etc. clubs or teams /social league /training / tournaments / take part in competition / develop our future in sport Jazz club, social gatherings to bring community together/book club To help community by providing cultural projects/ to make sure us youth know about our culture /choir /staging traditional dance & music to promote our culture
		Other recreation & social clubs	2 052 (25%)	9%	
		Culture and art	1 244 (15%)	5%	
Development & Housing	4 386 (19%)	Employment & training	528 (12%)	12%	Social: Burial societies / to solve problems in our community / to uplift our community Economic: women's club to keep our local women employed /socio-economic development of our community /stokvels
		Economic, social & community	3 858 (88%)	17%	
Religious & Congregation	4 712 (20%)	Religious & congregational associations	4 712 (100%)	20%	To prey together /to spread the word /strengthen us spiritually /youth ministry
Advocacy & Politics	884 (4%)	Civic & advocacy associations	541 (61%)	2%	
		Law & legal services	343 (39%)	2%	
Business & Professional	2 974 (13%)	Unions	2 974 (100%)	13%	Unions
Education & Research	142 (1%)	Primary & secondary education	142 (100%)	1%	
Philanthropic intermediaries	192 (1%)	Promotion of volunteerism	192 (100%)	1%	

Philanthropy or Service to Others

57 838 (62%)

Sector	% of total organisations 57 838	Sub-sector	% of Sector	% of total organ- 57 838	Examples of the most commonly identified organisations (only detailed those with 1500+ organisations)
Social Services	18 882 (33%)	Social Services	10 366 (64%)	18%	<p>Children: Child welfare /day care / pre-primary /prevent child abuse /help street children /provide clothes, food, shelter, education for needy children /teach lifeskills, leadership</p> <p>Family services: Counselling women, children, family development /fight women, child abuse /marriage counselling</p> <p>Assisting disabled</p> <p>Assisting elderly</p> <p>Provide financial & emotional aid to disadvantaged: financial assistance to help community / provide assistance for rent, electricity etc. /soup kitchen /provide clothing for needy /wash & distribute clothes /feeding scheme /help families of prisoners /uplift society by helping needy</p>
		Income, support & maintenance	8 121 (43%)	14%	
		Emergency relief	395 (2%)	1%	
Culture & Recreation	10 129 (18%)	Sports	5 264 (52%)	9%	<p>Nurture the future of sport /develop young professionals /nurture young players /to keep the youth off the street, away from crime /keep youth drug free</p> <p>Rotary, Lions, Roundtable, Moths clubs</p> <p>Choir - to take youth off the streets, Gospel music so stop community dealing, taking drugs /Kwaito music to show off our youth talent /to integrate youth through music /teach young stars /for practice and performance</p>
		Other recreation & social clubs	2 447 (34%)	4%	
		Culture and art	2 418 (24%)	4%	
Development & Housing	8 855 (15%)	Economic, social & community	4 563 (52%)	8%	<p>Economic development: Create employment for jobless /Improve living standards of farm workers /assist rural communities with development /build educational facilities for rural communities /Assist small producers by marketing their products /Run a fishery, chicken farm, market garden etc. to provide employment & food / job creation through micro enterprise</p> <p>Social development: Facilitate upliftment of the community /Provide capacity building services /build family and community life /counselling for reconciliation /Improve life for the poorest in our community through projects</p> <p>Training to empower women economically /skills training to the disadvantaged /empowering underprivileged by providing skills; sewing, knitting, dance, dressmaking etc. /vocational rehabilitation</p>
		Employment & training	4 058 (46%)	7%	

		Housing	214 (2%)	4%	
Religious & Congregation	5 922 (10%)	Religious & congregational associations	5 922 (100%)	10%	Feeding scheme for the needy in the community /educate people about Islamic law /preach the word of God / To evangelise /to provide a service though home prey, funerals etc.
Advocacy & Politics	923 (2%)	Civic & advocacy associations	584 (63%)	1%	To protect learners' , students' rights /look after the interests of teachers /to help women know their rights /look after the rights and interests of soccer veterans, horse riders, sports people /look after the rights of children /rights of home owners /rights of the visually impaired , autism, TB sufferers /building a united country / create a situation where the society lives in harmony
		Law & legal services	316 (34%)	1%	
		Political organisations	21 (3%)	.04%	
Health	4 888 (8%)	Nursing homes	2 138 (44%)	4%	To treat frail and elderly /patients with cancer /terminally ill
		Other health services	1 381 (28%)	2%	
		Mental health & crisis intervention	1 369 (28%)	2%	
Education & Research	5 066 (9%)	Primary & secondary education	4 042 (80%)	7%	Develop skills of: pre-school children /homeless children /disabled children /to provide affordable quality education /Remove kids from the streets and help them tackle high school /Formal teaching of Islam children /Teach disadvantaged children English /Improve standard of education
		Other education	1024 (20%)	2%	
Environment	2 868 (5%)	Animal protection	2 618 (91%)	5%	Animal protection & welfare /wildlife protection /veterinary services
		Environment	250 (9%)	0.4%	
Philanthropic Intermediaries	113 (.2%)	Volunteerism promotion	113 (100%)	0.2%	
International Activities	192 (.3%)		192 (100%)	0.3%	

Participation
11 705 (13%)

Sector	% of total Organisations 11 705	Sub-sector	% on Sector	% of total organisations 11 705	Examples of the most commonly identified organisations (only detailed those with 1500+ organisations)
Social Services	45 (0.4%)	Social Services	45 (100%)	.4%	
Culture & Recreation	1 051 (9%)	Sports	152 (15%)	1%	
		Culture and art	899 (86%)	8%	
Development & Housing	5 641 (48%)	Economic, social & community	4 915 (87%)	42%	School governing bodies /Help run the library for the community /neighbourhood watches /PTA associations / rate payers associations /civic associations
		Employment & training	437 (8%)	4%	
		Housing	187 (5%)	2%	
Advocacy & Politics	4 177 (36%)	Civic & advocacy associations	1 663 (40%)	14%	Crime prevention and public safety to enhance democracy in SA through training / some labour unions ANC local and provincial offices/SA Communist Party /PAC /New National Party /
		Law & legal services	840 (20%)	7%	
		Political organisations	1 674 (40%)	14%	
Health	275 (2%)	Other health services	275 (100%)	2%	
Environment	374 (1%)	Environment	374 (100%)	3%	
Business & professional associations	142 (1%)	Business & professional / unions	142 (100%)	1%	

Advocacy & Campaigning
1 086 (1%)

Sector	% of total organisations 1 086	Sub-sector	% on Sector	% of total organisations 1 086	Examples of the most commonly identified organisations (only detailed those with 1500+ organisations)
Social Services	386 (36%)	Social Services	386 (100%)	36%	
Advocacy & Politics	386 (36%)	Civic & advocacy associations	386 (100%)	36%	
Health	192 (18%)	Other health services	192 (100%)	18%	
Business & Professional Associations	122 (11%)	Business & professional Associations	122 (100%)	11%	