



International Association for Volunteer Effort

“Youth, Volunteering, and Employment”

Beginning the Dialogue to Seek Solutions
through Volunteering to the Global Crisis
of Youth Unemployment

“The world crisis is not treating young people well... We are running the risk of having a generation that does not work. From work comes a person’s dignity...”

– Pope Francis, July 22, 2013



International Association for Volunteer Effort

About IAVE

IAVE is the only global network of individual leaders, NGOs and businesses that exists for the sole purpose of promoting, strengthening and celebrating the myriad of ways volunteering happens throughout the world. It has members in 70+ countries, convenes the biennial World Volunteer Conference and regional conferences and is developing a global network of National Volunteer Centers and building an online platform to connect youth volunteers worldwide.

IAVE is a global knowledge leader for corporate volunteering, a role that began with its landmark global research project on corporate volunteering, Global Companies Volunteering Globally, completed in 2011. IAVE convenes the Global Corporate Volunteer Council, 45+ global companies that share a commitment to supporting the involvement of their employees as volunteers in the community.

For more information about IAVE, please visit www.iave.org.

Fundación Telefónica

About the Telefónica Foundation

Telefónica is one of the world's foremost telecommunications companies, currently with more than 132,000 employees in 24 countries in Europe and Latin America.

With the aim of structuring Telefónica's social action, Fundación Telefónica was created in 1998 to be the body that gives form and content to Telefónica's commitment to the different environments in which it operates. The Fundación's mission is to promote learning and expand knowledge by bringing together the people and institutions that will make up the society of the future.

The activities of Fundación Telefónica, which carries out projects in 20 countries in Europe and Latin America, focus on three main areas:

- Education and learning, with projects such as Proniño in Latin America and Think Big in Europe that directly benefit young people and children by helping them develop their life plans through learning and personal autonomy.
- In art and digital culture, we are creating a meeting point for the most innovative trends through events, publications and activities at our cultural centres in Madrid, Lima, Buenos Aires and Santiago.
- Corporate volunteering, with the Fundación being the body responsible for managing and coordinating the Telefónica Volunteers programme at a global level, a network of more than 24,000 active participants. The programme promotes and manages social action carried out by employees of Grupo Telefónica who wish to contribute some of their knowledge, time or resources to benefiting the community and those less fortunate.

For more information, please visit www.fundacion.telefonica.com/en/.

© 2013, IAVE - The International Association for Volunteer Effort

For permission to reprint or quote any portion of this report, please write to info@iave.org.



“The world crisis is not treating young people well...We are running the risk of having a generation that does not work. From work comes a person’s dignity...When we isolate the young...we strip them of the possibility of belonging and the young have to belong.”

– Pope Francis, July 22, 2013

There is a growing worldwide crisis of unemployment and underemployment of young people.

It is so critical that Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi told foreign firms convened at the World Economic Forum in 2012 that it was like “sitting on a social and economic time bomb.”

How can volunteering – by young people and in support of young people – address this crisis?



Preface

In its global leadership role for volunteering, IAVE has long been an advocate for the ways in which volunteering can enable all people to lead healthier, more fulfilling and more productive lives at the same time that they are addressing pressing community and global problems. We also have been a strong advocate for the inclusion of a “youth voice” in shaping the present and the future of volunteering. Through our Global Corporate Volunteer Council and our knowledge development about corporate volunteering, we have built strong relationships with a wide variety of major global companies.

As we approached planning for our 22nd World Volunteer Conference, we recognized the opportunity to bring these threads together in an organized effort to stimulate dialogue about the interface of volunteering and the challenge of youth unemployment.

We began with background research, through literature review and interviews, to gain a greater understanding of the realities of youth unemployment, the impact of unemployment on young people and the role volunteering now plays. We also reviewed examples of how businesses already are investing in finding solutions to youth employment, many of which involve their employees as volunteers.

Finally, we prepared for and convened special Dialogue sessions at our World Volunteer Conference in London, December 10-12, 2012, inviting participants, including youth, from businesses, NGOs and governments; and, we focused a plenary session and several forums and workshops on the topic.

The work we have done so far, including this report, is a first step for IAVE on this issue. We look forward, through both our regional and world volunteer conferences and in other forums, to stimulating further dialogue. Through our emerging Global Youth Volunteers initiative, we anticipate building partnerships to demonstrate to young people and to employers the power of volunteering to address the global challenge of youth unemployment.

We were pleased to undertake this work in partnership with the Telefonica Foundation. Reaching globally from its home in Madrid, Spain, the foundation has been a leader in both corporate volunteering and in addressing the challenges facing young people in today's world. Their vision helped frame our work; their collaborative leadership helped define it; their financial support made it possible. We are deeply grateful for their commitment. We look forward to our continued partnership.



Kang Hyun Lee, Ph.D.
World President
IAVE



The Global Crisis

The Economist, in its April 27, 2013 issue, described the reality of youth unemployment in two paragraphs:

Official figures assembled by the International Labor Organization say that 75m young people are unemployed, or 6% of all 15- to 24- year olds. But going by youth inactivity, which includes all those who are neither in work nor education, things look even worse. The OECD, an intergovernmental think-tank, counts 26m young people in the rich world as "NEETS": not in employment, education or training. A World Bank database compiled from households shows more than 260m young people in developing economies are similarly "inactive". The Economist calculates that, all told, almost 290m are neither working nor studying: almost a quarter of the planet's youth.

On the other hand, many of the "employed" young have only informal and intermittent jobs. In rich countries more than a third, on average, are on temporary contracts which make it hard to gain skills. In poorer ones, according to the World Bank, a fifth are unpaid family labourers or work in the informal economy. All in all, nearly half of the world's young people are either outside the formal economy or contributing less productively than they could.

The Impact on Youth and Their Communities



There is a strong correlation between the reality of having work to do and our self-image and self-esteem. It is what makes us feel productive and valued; as Pope Francis says, *"...from work comes a person's dignity."*

The absence of work, then, has far-reaching psychological, social and economic impacts.

Starting when a person is young, being employed contributes to their accumulation of the stock of competencies, knowledge and social and personality attributes that work helps build and that produces a person's economic value. Prolonged unemployment shortens and retards youth's chances to develop that

human capital. This leads to a loss of opportunity, income and fulfillment over a person's lifetime, affecting their quality of life.

A growing number of studies have concluded that young people who begin their adult lives without work have a greater likelihood of unemployment in the future, even after moving into the workforce, and lower wages when they are working. While the severity and length of this carry-over impact appears to vary from country to country, it is evidenced worldwide.

People who are unemployed often find themselves marginalized in their communities and socially isolated. They can lose much of their civic identity, becoming ones to be served rather than ones with recognized capacity to serve others.

In their search for employment, youth have had to find work in the informal economy, and the number of youth in part-time jobs has also grown at a faster rate than that of adults. Additionally, because of their youth, and particularly those most vulnerable, many are forced to work in dangerous, unsafe and even predatory conditions that include hazardous materials or being forced into the sex trade. According to youthpolicy.org, in 2009 there were an estimated 59 million young people between 15 and 17 years of age who are engaged in hazardous forms of work.

As young people migrate to find work, families and even whole communities are disrupted. Often those leaving are the most qualified, the most ambitious, thus robbing their home countries of a critically important asset around which the future can be built.

Prolonged and widespread unemployment of youth can lead to threats to social cohesion and political stability, as seen in growing unrest, demonstrations and even violence led by young people.

Imagine a whole generation whose chief engagement in society is from the standpoint of being unemployed and unvalued with no sense of opportunity. This is the edge of the cliff on which millions of young people - and their countries - now stand.



Telefónica's Think Big Program

Think Big is Telefónica's way of helping young people in Europe to be better prepared for their professional and personal futures by developing entrepreneurial and digital skills through "learning by doing".

The goal of the program is twofold –to promote the entrepreneurial spirit among young people, providing support to enable them to realize an idea; and, to give visibility to their endeavors and projects so that other young people may get inspired, thus creating a multiplier effect.

Think Big is one of the best examples of how Telefónica puts into practice its mission to open the possibilities of technology to everyone and to contribute to removing barriers between people and their possibilities.

This program, aimed at young people age 13-25, is about innovation and entrepreneurship. It seeks to contribute to the development of a more entrepreneurial and more digital Europe, with the idea that young people are the foundation of social change, through leadership and responsibility for their own projects.

Since 2010, the program has supported more than 6,500 projects and a total of 11,200 young people in six European countries (Spain, Germany, Slovakia, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic). Over 5,000 Telefónica employees are involved in the program every year.

Think Big is funded by the Telefónica Foundation and implemented with the support of the Telefónica company in each country, and more than 200 NGO partners thorough the European region.

The Causes

The Millennium Declaration, endorsed by leaders of 189 countries meeting together at United Nations headquarters in New York in September 2000, was translated into eight actionable goals. The first, to eradicate poverty and hunger, included this aspiration: *"Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people."*

Why, then, 13 years later is there a global crisis of youth unemployment? Contemporary observers consistently point to four key factors.

First, there has been a reduced demand for labor

due to the global economic slowdown. Many employers have found it easier to either fire or not hire young people than to fire older workers. As a result, the recession has had a disproportionately negative impact on the employment of young people.

This has been exacerbated by changes within the workplace. Whether it is called creative destruction, disruptive innovation or the redesign of work, the reality is that the way work gets done is changing, displacing old hiring practices with new approaches to securing and managing the human resources required.

Second, population growth, which results in a higher proportion of young people in the population, is highest in countries with the most dysfunctional labor markets. Those markets are characterized by heavy regulation, barriers to formation of new, small businesses, and other practices that discourage growth and hiring. There are not sufficient jobs available and those that are often are of low-quality and either part-time or temporary.

Third, employers point to their inability to find young people with the skills they need. To a great extent, this is directly due to the poor quality of basic education in much of the world. Too many young people are left without essential literacy and numeracy skills, let alone vocational and technical skills. This is made worse by a declining commitment by employers to do in-house training to compensate for what new employees may lack. Rather, there is an expectation that new hires should come with the skills they need, whether those be technical ones or the "soft" skills of flexibility, problem-solving, teamwork, etc.

Finally, because they have not had the opportunity to work or to be exposed to workplaces, young people may not be "work ready." They lack an actual structured work experience with formal expectations, management, assessment and feedback. They do not have the networks, the connections through which most people find employment. They don't understand what is expected of them - the behavior, language, dress, values and tacit rules that govern the workplace.

Thus, the paradox: young people cannot find jobs at the same time that employers cannot fill vacancies.





Moving Toward Solutions

Youth unemployment is a global problem of the highest urgency. It needs the attention of policy makers not only in government but in all sectors to address the underlying causes and to bring sustained, long-term systemic change – from potential deregulation of labor markets to improving education systems, from public sector assistance to help young people find employment to more innovative involvement by business.

But there is much that can be done locally to contribute to meaningful, impactful solutions. As we learned, volunteering has a critical role to play when it is appropriately focused and managed. However, as we heard from participants in the London Dialogue, there remain challenging barriers to be overcome for that to happen.

The London Dialogue

In December 2012, as part of its 22nd biennial World Volunteer Conference, IAVE convened a special Dialogue on Youth, Volunteering and Employment, referred to in this report as the “London Dialogue.” The invited participant group included NGOs, policy analysts, corporations and youth. Their task was to share their experiences and views on three topics – first, how volunteering *by* youth can help them prepare for and move into paid employment; second, how global companies can address, through corporate volunteering and other strategies, the broad problem of youth unemployment; and, third, the critical issues that must be addressed to increase the scope and impact of the relationship of volunteering and employment.

Engaging Unemployed People as Volunteers

For many people and organizations it is counter-intuitive that people who are involuntarily unemployed would volunteer to serve their communities. Thus, two threshold questions: Will unemployed people volunteer? If they will, what impact will it have in their lives?

Building on their experience and on documented examples, participants in the London Dialogue confirmed that unemployed people indeed are willing and often anxious to volunteer. They confirmed six clear benefits to unemployed people *of any age* who volunteer.

1. They feel better. People who volunteer report feeling better, both physically and emotionally. This tracked with what was then emerging research but is now well established – volunteering has a positive impact on physical and mental health.

2. They are motivated. Volunteers report increased feelings of self-worth and a sense of being of value to others. As one put it, *“It gave me a reason to get out of bed in the morning. It reminded me that I am competent, that I do know how to do things.”*

3. They sustain social connections. For many people, the workplace is a primary source of social connections. When they no longer have those work-based connections, many people feel isolated and miss the regular interaction with others. Volunteering gives them a new location and a new way to build and sustain social connections.

4. They develop employment-focused networks. Many people find their jobs through people they know, not through formal job search processes. For the newly unemployed, those existing networks either are abruptly cut off or may quickly wither. Volunteering gives many of them a new path to helpful networks.

5. They renew old skills and build new ones. For some, volunteering takes them back to skills they had once learned but had atrophied over time and offers them the opportunity to renew and refine them. For others, volunteering gives them the opportunity to understand and try out new skills that might prove beneficial to them in their search for paid work.

6. They learn about new workplaces. Many newly unemployed have never or, at best, only long before,





been in a workplace other than the one from which they were fired. Through their volunteering, they are able to learn about and explore different kinds of workplaces and vocations and to learn about what would be required to enter them as paid employees.

But because their focus was on youth, they added these *additional potential benefits*:

1. Initial exposure to the world of organized work.

Often, especially in emerging and depressed economies, most young people have never been exposed to organized work. They may never even have been in a factory or an office or a construction site or, except as a consumer, a restaurant or a store. They have no idea what it means to have a job, have never been formally supervised, have never been required to “meet expectations” or achieve work goals. Volunteering can offer them opportunities to gain exposure to all of that.

2. Development of “employability skills.” Along with exposure to the world of organized work, volunteering can help develop the tacit knowledge required to succeed in a job – an understanding of the attitudes and behaviors, the ways of talking and interacting, even the appropriate clothing. They observe and learn, both directly and indirectly the “rules of the road” for success in the workplace.

3. Documented work experience. Volunteering offers young people what often is their first opportunity for some kind of work experience that can be documented. It may simply be a formal acknowledgement of time of service and work done. Or it may be a documentation of training completed and skills gained. Ideally, it is a positive reference about what the youth volunteer achieved and their ability and willingness to work.

Youth themselves share a belief that their volunteering has benefits towards gainful employment. In a 2011 world-wide sample of youth participating in an UN-sponsored e-discussion on youth employment the majority expressed their belief that volunteering and internships are an important approach to securing a first job. They said

that volunteering enabled them to gain experience and to develop new skills and networks.

One survey of 200 leading UK businesses found some compelling data on the value of volunteering. Among the findings from employers were:

- 73% of businesses would recruit candidates with volunteer experience over ones without.
- 80% of businesses said they valued volunteering on a resume.
- 70% of businesses believed those who volunteer have a better chance of earning higher salary and gaining promotions.
- 84% of businesses agreed that volunteering is a way to help young people find work.

Other evidence that businesses recognize the value of volunteering can be found in their own efforts to encourage and support volunteering by their employees.

From the very emergence of corporate volunteering, almost forty years ago, employers have seen as a valued but unintended consequence the reality that employees gain knowledge, practice new skills, and build teamwork and leadership competencies while also exhibiting higher morale and greater pride in the company.

Now, an increasing number of companies are consciously designing programs that will produce those results as a primary outcome, not as a nice extra benefit. This trend has been particularly marked since the onset of the 2008 economic crisis as companies focus greater attention on “employee engagement” as a way to recruit, develop and retain the highest quality employees. This is one of the most important ways that volunteering has become a strategic asset to help achieve business goals.



Indeed, in a growing number of companies, “volunteering” has come to include mandated participation in leadership development, team building, professional development for “fast



It is not a large logical leap to see that corporate understanding of volunteering as a strategic method for employee engagement can lead to corporate support for efforts to engage their employees as volunteers to assist unemployed young people prepare for and enter the workforce.

engage their employees as volunteers to assist unemployed young people prepare for and enter the workforce.

Business, Volunteering and Youth Employment

Businesses long have had a vested interest in supporting programs to improve education and to serve young people, with their money, the volunteer efforts of their employees, and their institutional leadership.



It is, first, a reflection of the long-term perspective that businesses must have, even in an atmosphere dominated by short term results. If there is not a qualified workforce ten, twenty, thirty years from now, businesses will fail. Improving the performance of schools today; helping youth succeed academically; motivating and enabling more young people to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics; encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship by young people;

introducing young people to the world of work - all of these provide long-term benefits to businesses and, of course, to young people and to their communities as well.

track" employees and fulfillment of company commitments to their communities through seconded (loaned) staff. Increasingly, it is more appropriate to speak of "employee engagement in the community" as a way to recognize the growing breadth of these efforts.

It is not a large logical leap to see that corporate understanding of volunteering as a strategic method for employee engagement can lead to corporate support for efforts to

Second, such efforts are seen as valuable and logical ways in which businesses are fulfilling part of their commitments to behave in socially responsible ways. Aligning a business with youth and education makes a positive contribution to the business's brand, image and reputation.

Finally, this involvement is popular with employees. It is a direct contribution to their communities as well as to a global issue. It offers volunteer opportunities that often align with their interests and competencies and that are relatively easy to pursue.

Corporate investment in youth and education, then, aligns with the core rationale of corporate volunteering: good for the community, good for the employees who volunteer, good for the company.

It also is an excellent opportunity to do what many companies now say is their intention in their efforts to address critical human, social and environmental issues - to leverage all of the assets of the company to maximize impact.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs outlined in 2011 many of the ways that businesses can leverage their assets across all levels of the company to support economic and social development. They can:



- adopt a long-term perspective on investment and growth with business approaches that reach into the poorest population areas they serve and provide work;
- give in-kind and financial support and invest materially in promising programs.
- encourage and support their staff to donate their time and talents to address pressing needs bringing their expertise to various enterprises.
- be involved in public policy dialogue and political decision making.

In fact, companies with a significant commitment to addressing youth unemployment are bringing into





play multiple resources. Their investments tend to share three characteristics:

- NGOs are critically important partners. Companies have come to understand the essential value of NGOs, particularly those focused on youth development, in helping them achieve their goals.

NGOs are knowledgeable

about youth unemployment and about the on the ground realities in communities. They have proven models that can serve as the framework for multi-faceted corporate investment of people, money, and in-kind support. They also may have in place the validated metrics to help companies understand the impact their investment is having.

- Financial support is a critical component of the overall investment. Increasing successful programs requires sustained and growing financial support. Expanding the numbers of young people served and the number of volunteers engaged and increasing quality and impact require greater core capacity in the NGO partner. Companies with the greatest commitment understand the fundamental importance of financial support to building that capacity and the strength of the NGO infrastructure.
- Volunteering is an often relatively limited but important complementary part of much larger efforts. Employee volunteers bring a human dimension to broader institutional investments:
 - working directly with school administrators and teachers to improve the quality of core education;
 - mentoring young entrepreneurs and investing in their business concepts;
 - encouraging and supporting students as they prepare to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
 - building the capacity of “on the ground” NGOs to create and manage high impact projects.

As described in the sidebar, Salesforce has taken its program to its logical conclusion, not only preparing young people to join the workforce but training them specifically for jobs in their company and, through

an apprenticeship program, moving them into paid jobs. Thus, they are addressing one of the critical realities of youth unemployment, that there must be jobs available and a route that gives prepared young people access to them.

Salesforce: From Introduction to the Workplace to Training to Employment

The Salesforce commitment to youth development has evolved over time and now actually moves participating youth into paid jobs with the company.

Wishing to support underserved youth the Salesforce Foundation launched a program they called BizAcademy. For eight years, they offered an intensive one-week induction/simulation into the world of business. Teams of youth were coached by Salesforce volunteers to play significant corporate roles in leadership, product development, manufacturing and marketing of their own product and service designs. Teams then made sales pitches to Salesforce staff who served as a formal review panel.

Their UK office then took an ambitious step and together with a training partner, Skills for Growth Landmark, created an expanded program. No longer just simulation, the UK program provides youth with technical, IT, and employability skills.

The UK Biz Academy involves cohorts of youth, principally from low-income neighborhoods and backgrounds, in a five week technical training program, a formal two-year apprenticeship, and ultimately into full-time employment. Skills for Growth Landmark does the majority of the interfacing with youth and employers. Salesforce employees are involved in teaching the youth about the Salesforce product suite as well as providing employability support and mentoring.

Critical Issues

Participants in the London Dialogue highlighted five critical issues that must be confronted in order to increase the impact of volunteering on youth employment. Four are discussed here:



How Global Companies Are Responding through Volunteering to Youth Unemployment

Here are several examples drawn from global companies that are members of IAVE's Global Corporate Volunteer Council.

HSBC Latin America invests in training and capacity building in multiple ways. In partnership with Junior Achievement, they support the "More than Money" financial education program for sixth graders in public schools and "Climate Entrepreneurs" in public middle schools, to build understanding of climate change and new opportunities related to it such as recycling and handcrafts. Their "One Day at the Office" is an invitation to high school students to shadow company volunteers at their offices. They also offer short-term internships to help students build their resumes.

Recognizing that the ultimate goal is paid employment, the bank works in partnership with a specialized NGO in Mexico to train people with disabilities and then open employment opportunities in the bank to those who qualify. They now are the second highest employer of people with disabilities in the country.

In France, **AXA** has two mentoring programs in partnership with two different NGOs. The first targets high school students from low-income families. Those young people receive a fellowship for their studies and have an AXA mentor who spends time with them not in the academic environment but in a more "leisure space," taking them to museums and other places they otherwise might not experience.

The second program focuses on students, also from low-income families, already at universities. AXA's volunteers are chosen because they did the same areas of study as the students and thus can help prepare them for their professional future.

Amway's One by One campaign for children is built around country-specific programs rather than company-driven priorities like youth employment. As a result, they can cite a variety of approaches that fit specific countries. In Hyderabad, India, the focus is on empowering children by providing them with coaching and workshops that encourage students to plan for the future while learning practical skills like communication, personal development, time mastery, stress reduction and goal setting. In Ukraine, their distributors work with orphans transitioning out of school, helping teach teens the skills they need to succeed after graduation – how to independently organize and plan their time, express their opinions and earn and spend their money appropriately. In their corporate hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan in the U.S., Amway employees have been volunteering in public schools since 1989 – adopting a school, tutoring, organizing book drives and career days, and providing anti-bullying training.

- ◉ The social stigma of unemployment;
- ◉ Ensuring high quality volunteer experiences;
- ◉ Is it "volunteering" or is it "working for free;" and,
- ◉ Barriers to using volunteering to find a paid job.

The fifth – bringing the work to global scale – is of paramount importance and is discussed separately below.

The social stigma of unemployment. "A lot of youth tell us, 'I've always been treated like trash. I never thought anybody cared anything about me and I didn't think I had any opportunities, and now you're not just giving me an opportunity, but you're telling me that I can help others.'"

The speaker is a member of the staff of A Ganar, a 14-country Latin American program that uses sports as the entry point for youth into a sequenced program that can lead to paid employment.

The reality is that there is a social stigma attached to people who are unemployed, to those who have involuntarily lost paid employment, those who have never had paid employment and those who have become "long-term unemployed."

For those who have lost their paid employment, they often have been transformed, virtually overnight, at least in the eyes of others, from capable and independent contributing members of the community to people who now need "services"





and support. Thus it becomes logical to call into question their ability to participate in the life of the community. Why are they shopping? Going to a movie? Continuing their religious practices? Voting in an election? Helping a neighbor? Volunteering? Why aren't they doing something to help themselves?

Participants in the London Dialogue built on their recognition of the social stigma of unemployment to emphasize its particular impact on young

people. In many parts of the world, being young in and of itself can be stigmatizing. Being young and unemployed can turn one into a nameless, faceless social statistic, not only in one's home community but in the eyes of the world. Suddenly those on whose shoulders the future will be built are "a crisis." That is a heavy burden for young people to carry.

But, the counterbalance is that there now are examples from around the world of how volunteering has helped people who have been stigmatized - people with physical and psychological disabilities, people in poverty, refugees and internally displaced people, the very elderly, and youth. Through their volunteering involvement, these people may return from the margins of society, to which they have been forced, to lead productive, fulfilling lives.

"A lot of youth tell us, 'I've always been treated like trash. I never thought anybody cared anything about me and I didn't think I had any opportunities, and now you're not just giving me an opportunity, but you're telling me that I can help others.'"

The reality of this critical issue is that it is about both the self-perceptions of people who are unemployed and the perceptions of the broader society. The efforts discussed in this report can address the former very directly by offering young people opportunities to grow in confidence, self-respect and resilience through their volunteering.

It is critical that, over time, the stories of these

young people be told publicly - by NGOs managing youth programs, their corporate sponsors and the young people themselves - as a way to change individual and institutional attitudes towards people who are unemployed.

The participants recognized, as discussed below, that NGOs may remain unprepared, unable or even unwilling to provide high quality, high impact volunteer opportunities for young people, relying instead on routine "make work" projects that provide low satisfaction, little learning and no meaningful impact.

Ensuring high quality volunteer experiences.

Participants in the London Dialogue emphasized the need for youth volunteers to have high quality volunteer placements, intentionally designed to respond to their needs while offering them legitimate, reinforcing ways to serve others.



Neither youth, nor anyone else for that matter, benefit from ill-planned, ill-managed "make work" volunteer assignments. They benefit from meaningful work that is well organized, well managed and designed to meet real needs.

For youth, the opportunity for reflection about their experience and its meaning for them is particularly important. Sharing their stories with one another, challenging and being challenged, making meaning - all of these are essential elements of a high quality volunteer experience.

Sadly, the greatest barriers to high quality volunteer experiences for youth and unemployed people may come from the very organizations most in need of their time, talent and energy.

First, some organizations do not view volunteers as a strategic asset to help achieve their mission. Rather, volunteers are seen as people to take on routine, low-level support tasks. Staff in those organizations likely are resistant to volunteers and unwilling to open themselves to the possibilities volunteers bring.





Such organizations invest little in management of volunteers. They do not create environments that place high value on volunteers. They are not “volunteer friendly.”

Second, for some organizations people who are unemployed carry the same stigma discussed above. This may be intensified by negative perceptions of young people who may be seen as “problems” rather than valuable real and potential assets. They may be fearful that such volunteers will be disruptive, will be seeking only to benefit themselves, will have such a low commitment that they will quit volunteering if they do find a paid job.

It is not easy to solve these problems. Attitudes such as these - whether about volunteers generally or about youth or unemployed people - often are deeply rooted. The resistance of “paid helpers” to volunteers is well documented. Building awareness of and resolving that resistance can become complicated, time consuming organizational development tasks.

What can be done, however, is for an intermediary organization to identify NGOs and other agencies prepared to accept and appropriately support as volunteers youth and people who are unemployed. This might be done by an NGO that specializes in youth development or in seeking solutions for youth unemployment. Or it might be done by a local “volunteer center” or similar structure that exists to promote and strengthen volunteering.



Investment is needed in building the capacity of NGOs to manage volunteers effectively and to maximize the quality of the volunteer experience for young people. *Is it “volunteering” or is it “working for free?”* In Western Europe and North America, one of the responses of university graduates who cannot find jobs is to accept unpaid or very low paid internships in businesses, NGOs and even government

agencies. These are sought on the open market, outside the framework of an educational institution, after graduating or completing professional training.

Some may even accept multiple internships over several years. Their rationale is to make contacts that can lead to a job, to obtain work experience and references for their resumes, and to learn specific work skills. Unlike traditional apprenticeships, these do not provide any regularized path to employment or even ensure that they will be beneficial to the job search.

It would be stretching the definition of volunteering to label these as volunteer assignments. They are undertaken under the duress of unemployment and are not necessarily focused on contributing to “the social good.” Also, they are as much in the for-profit sector as not, an area in which, traditionally and in some countries by law, volunteering is not acceptable.

Recently, there has been the beginnings of rebellions against internships, a recognition of the high potential for exploitation of interns, that in truth internships are often simply a way for employers to get work done at little or no cost by people desperate to prove their worth in the workplace. In the United States, there have been lawsuits brought by interns to force employers to meet minimum wage requirements. Similar moves are underway, either through courts or legislatures, to offer basic employment protections and minimum wage to interns.



As reported in the *International Herald Tribune*, a 2012 European Commission report “suggested that a clear E.U.-wide definition of an intern, greater transparency in the internship recruitment process, and higher levels of compensation for interns would help protect young workers from exploitation.” How does this relate to the use of volunteering as a strategy to address youth employment?

First, it underscores that *participation must be voluntary*, as much as is possible for people under





duress and seeking some path to employment. It is an opportunity that can be accepted or rejected from one's free will. For some unemployed youth, it will be highly attractive. Others will choose different approaches.

Second, *volunteer assignments cannot be exploitative*. They are not full time jobs. They should be designed to provide

legitimate opportunities to develop skills and gain marketable experience. There must be opportunities for training and a commitment to document work done, skills learned and quality of performance. There must be adequate supervision and planned feedback on performance.

Third, *costs of participation should not be a burden to the volunteer*. Thus, for example, there should be reimbursement of transportation expenses. As appropriate, meals and uniforms should be provided at no cost. Volunteers, like all other workers, need to be ensured protection against workplace and environmental hazards. Working hours need to be defined and limited.

Fourth, *the work must be "to the social good."* There should be a clear distinction between volunteering and doing unpaid work in a for-profit enterprise. People volunteer for many complex reasons but "doing good" is an underlying motivation that must be honored and reinforced by legitimate opportunities to make it real.

Finally, there must be *absolute clarity about the potential relationship of the volunteer assignment to paid employment*. Does such a relationship exist? Is there an implied promise of future paid employment? It is unfair to volunteers, to the organizations they are serving and to those organizing the program not to be clear and totally transparent about this. Expectations must be managed from the outset.

Barriers to using volunteering to find a paid job.

Anyone, youth or older, who enters a volunteer program explicitly related to helping them prepare for employment, may reasonably have an expectation that the result of their participation will be a paid job, whether or not that expectation is realistic.

That is why, as discussed above, it is critical that there be clarity, at the beginning of involvement, about the relationship, real or potential, between volunteering and paid work.

Particularly, there must be a clear answer to this question: *Does volunteering in a particular organization have the potential to lead to paid work in that same organization?*

Volunteering offers tremendous opportunities and benefits for unemployed people of all ages. It may be the path to paid work - but it is not at all clear that it will lead to a job in the same place they volunteer.

For some organizations, this may be a philosophical or policy issue. Do they wish to have people take advantage of their work as volunteers to put themselves in a more favorable position for consideration for paid employment? Do they wish to risk the problems that might be encountered when their volunteers apply for paid positions? What happens if they are not offered the paid position? How will it affect other volunteers if they see one move into a paid position? Are there legal employment issues that need to be considered? All of these issues may be seen very differently in different cultures and legal systems.

For other organizations, it is a matter of attitude. There, volunteers likely are not seen as strategic assets to help achieve the organization's strategic mission but, rather, as relatively low-skilled assistance performing necessary but routine work and/or intruders on the turf of trained professionals. Thus, almost by definition, those organizations would not want their volunteers to move into paid positions.

For still other organizations, the answer may well be positive, but under circumscribed conditions and with no upfront commitment to transition volunteers into paid work.

The critical element of this discussion is not whether or not it might happen. Rather, it is about the essential need to be clear, from the beginning, about the reality of the situation in each organization where an unemployed person is volunteering.

Two other significant barriers exist - documentation





of the volunteer experience and translating that experience into terms that employers will understand and accept.

Documentation of the volunteer experience has these components:

- The work performed – what work the volunteers did, the nature and scope of their responsibilities, progression in responsibility and skills required;
- Skills learned and demonstrated – what training was completed directly related to the work being done, what additional training was voluntarily taken, what skills were developed and successfully mastered;
- Quality of the work performed and personal work-related attributes – perhaps most critical, this is the “letter of reference” to give an institutional stamp of approval to the volunteer for job-related personal behaviors (timeliness, commitment, interactions with paid staff and those being served, initiative, willingness to learn, etc.) and for quality of work performance.

As discussed above, it is the responsibility of the NGOs and other agencies where young people volunteer to ensure that this documentation is complete and is provided to the volunteer at the end of their assignment and to potential employers at the volunteer’s request.

But documentation is only part of the equation. There also must be *translation for potential employers* of the volunteer experience, the skills and behaviors learned and exhibited, and the relationship of those to paid work. It is not safe to assume that employers will automatically accept volunteer work as “real” experience related to their needs or that they will make the connection for themselves.

Many businesses now recognize that employee volunteering is a legitimate way for employees to learn and practice new skills. Some of those skills may be directly related to specific current or potential job responsibilities. Others, such as developing leadership skills, may be more appropriately termed professional development.

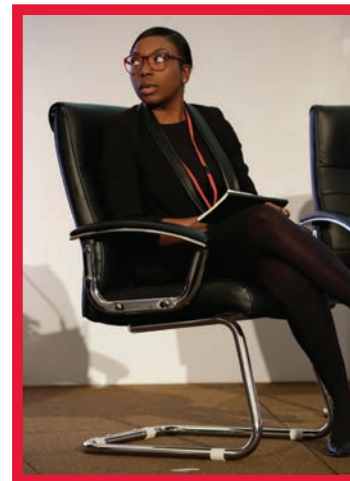
Some companies assist their employees to create logic chains that connect what they want or need to learn with specific volunteer opportunities – from personal assessment of learning needs to examples of the kinds of volunteering that may help meet those needs to precise volunteer assignments that are available to the documentation needed to demonstrate to the business what has been gained.

But it does not always logically follow that companies will incorporate employees’ volunteer experience into their perception of the employee. That requires conscious institutional policies and processes.

The same is true for employers seeking to hire new employees. *Employers must be educated about the value of volunteering in preparing people for the paid workforce.*

Decades ago, women’s organizations like the Association of Junior Leagues International led efforts that focused on both dimensions of this issue:

- creating tools to help people make the connection between volunteering and the skills needed for paid employment and to enable them to create their own “volunteer portfolios” to be used in their search for jobs; and,
- convincing businesses to recognize the value of volunteering, to include it on job application forms and to give it serious weight in their selection processes.



As a result, this issue has been settled in some countries, but far from all.

The reality is that a similar two-pronged global effort is required to ensure that volunteer experience will be accepted as a qualification for paid employment.

Moving to Global Scale

It would seem that the debate should now be closed on the two central focal points of the London Dialogue discussions:





- Volunteering by youth is an asset of proven value to help them deal with the realities of unemployment and to develop the behaviors, skills and experience required to move into paid work.
- There are valuable roles business can play in addressing the challenge of youth unemployment, many of which can involve employees as volunteers.

The reality is that we are nowhere near global scale on either of these. While much is happening, a great deal is unknown about

the dynamics and impact of the efforts. There is little coordination. To borrow a metaphor used to describe corporate volunteering, there is a “big tent” of activities, most valid, some achieving greater impact than others, all competing for attention.

So, if we “know” that the two focal points are valuable ways to address what has been described as a “worldwide crisis,” why is this the reality?

First and most important, *the crisis of youth employment is greatest where there is the least infrastructure* to support either youth volunteering or business engagement. To quote again from *The Economist*, as at the beginning of this report:

The OECD, an intergovernmental think-tank, counts 26m young people in the rich world as “NEETS”: not in employment, education or training. A World Bank database compiled from households shows more than 260m young people in developing economies are similarly “inactive”...All in all, nearly half of the world’s young people are either outside the formal economy or contributing less productively than they could.

...the crisis of youth employment is greatest where there is the least infrastructure to support either youth volunteering or business engagement.

A staggering 90% of the young people who are “inactive” are in developing economies. A formal assessment of the nature and scope of organized

youth volunteering, of the infrastructure in place to support it and of the engagement of business in the issue would reveal what participants in the London Dialogue know from experience - that in developing economies all of those are weaker than they are in developed economies.

Second, *there are great differences in the value given to volunteering from culture to culture, country to country*. While volunteering is a “universal” activity, occurring naturally in every community in the world, in more places than not, volunteering is not yet part of the mainstream of society, not seen as a critically valuable asset in building and maintaining strong civil society or as an effective, high impact way to address critical human, social and environmental challenges.

Thus, advocates for youth volunteering and business engagement must not only create the programs, build the infrastructure and recruit the participants. They also must continually make the case for why both are important, legitimate ways to address youth unemployment.

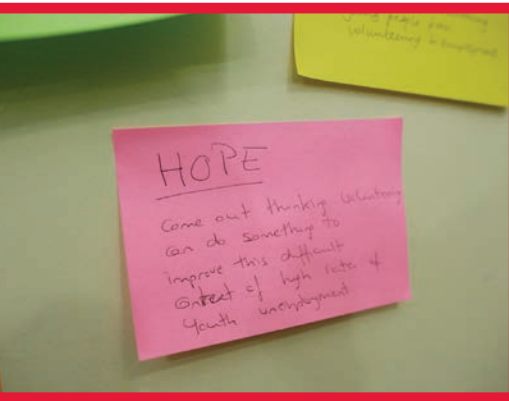


Third, *this is one “crisis” among many*. The world faces many crises. It is impossible for any institution, NGO or individual to comprehend, let alone respond, to all of them. The attention of leaders in government, business, NGOs, etc. and the resources they can bring to bear necessarily must be spread across all of those crises. Priorities must be set. Youth unemployment must “compete” with the broad range of human, social and environmental challenges for attention and resources.

Fourth, *there is no coherent, actionable global strategy and no strategically located, organized champions* to drive youth volunteering and business engagement forward as critically important, high impact assets to help solve the problems associated with prolonged youth unemployment.

Fifth, *proven models do not necessarily travel well*. What works in developed countries does not necessarily translate quickly or well to developing countries. Adjustments must be made for cultural differences, to fit the on the ground realities and to accommodate the lack of infrastructure. It is more





important to understand and build on indigenous models than to send “missionaries” to deliver products that cannot be effectively sold into local communities. Everything must be re-assessed and adapted.

There is a great example of this from IAVE’s Global Corporate Volunteering Research Project in its conclusion that there is an ongoing tension in global companies between the desire for global priorities, designed to maximize impact by narrowing efforts to specific problems or projects, and the reality of local needs and demands. The result typically is an uneasy compromise between efforts driven from the top down and the reality that there must be bottom up responsiveness to local and national expectations and needs.

Sixth, *each actor has its own agenda*. For businesses, it is important to be able to “brand” the activities in which they are engaged, thus maximizing the value of their participation. While some organizations have been able to transcend this expectation - Junior Achievement is an excellent example - in most cases companies prefer to have their own distinct models that appear to be unique to them and that seem to align with the nature of their business and their workforce.

The same, of course, is true of NGOs. When resources are scarce and competition is intense, it often is more desirable to sell one’s own approach as “better” than to invest in cooperative efforts that result in models adopted by many.

Finally, *little attention has been paid to the role of small and medium size businesses*, where the vast majority of employment happens. It is much easier to focus on global companies, particularly those with proven track records of commitment to community engagement and volunteering, than to learn about, seek to influence and pro-actively engage non-global enterprises - indigenous regional, national companies and local businesses. Yet all of those also require skilled, motivated workers. All of those have

workers who can be mobilized as volunteers. This is the “next frontier” for corporate volunteering.

Toward a Global Agenda for Action

From the threads of discussion at the London Dialogue and from the research that preceded and followed it, there is the basis to begin to articulate a global agenda for future action regarding both youth volunteering and business engagement related to youth unemployment.

Here are key elements of what that agenda might include.

1. Advocates for youth volunteering must work together to make their case to those who have as their primary focus the problem of youth unemployment. This will require global leadership and global cooperation. Perhaps it is time for a “global summit” on youth volunteering in response to youth unemployment.

2. New knowledge about the relationship of youth volunteering to employment must be developed. It must go beyond collection of program examples to analysis of what is working, what is not and why. It needs to focus most heavily on developing economies and on indigenous models.

3. Greater knowledge is needed about how business mobilizes its employee volunteers in ways that have direct, significant impact on youth unemployment. The greatest attention needs to be given to non-global enterprises - indigenous regional, national and local businesses. A threshold base of knowledge about what is now being done needs to be developed, followed by analysis of what works and what does not.



4. The existing infrastructure that promotes and supports volunteering - primarily those national and local leadership organizations for volunteering, known generically and specifically as “volunteer centers” - must be drawn into active participation.



Where they exist, their capacity to participate must be strengthened; where they do not, there must be a determined effort to develop them in ways that can be locally and nationally sustained. They can have a significant impact on both the quantity and quality of youth volunteering as it relates to employment and also can serve as primary resources to engage indigenous regional, national and local businesses.

5. There must be a coordinated, two part global campaign to help youth, NGOs and employers make the connection between volunteering and preparation for employment. For youth, this must include tools to help them build their own “volunteer portfolio” that becomes a living record of work done, skills learned and demonstrated and documentation of achievement from the organizations they serve. For NGOs, there must be exemplars for how to document and report on what youth volunteers have done, learned and achieved. With employers, there must be strong advocacy about the legitimacy of volunteering as a way for youth to build their work experience and skills, as well as about practical approaches about including volunteer experience on job applications and examples of how to consider that experience in hiring.

6. Global companies that recognize the critical importance of addressing youth unemployment must remain heavily and directly involved. Programmatically they can both expand and strengthen their own projects and work together to figure out how they can both respond to their own branding needs and learn from and build on one another’s work. Competitive instincts need to be put aside in favor of magnified impact on a problem that is of critical importance to their future success.

They also must remain in global leadership roles – as advocates, as investors and as active participants in refining, agreeing on and implementing a global agenda for action that will bring to scale the proven impact of youth volunteering and business engagement on what Pope Francis has called one of “the most serious of the evils that effect the world these days” – youth unemployment.

Imagine a whole generation whose chief engagement in society is from the standpoint of being unemployed and unvalued with no sense of opportunity. This is the edge of the cliff on which millions of young people – and their countries – now stand.



Footnotes

- Page 2. "Pope fears lost generation of young unemployed." *Reuters*, July 22, 2013. Online at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/22/us-pope-brazil-youth-idUSBRE96L0GM20130722>.
- Page 4. "Generation jobless." *The Economist*, April 27, 2013, pages 58-60.
- Page 4. From www.youthpolicy.org/mappings/international/youthsector/scope/.
- Page 7. "One survey of 200 leading UK businesses..." from *Today's Engineer*, online at <http://www.todaysengineer.org/2010/Aug/leadership.asp>.
- Page 7. "In a 2011 world-wide sample..." from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, online at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/onlinediscussion/index.html>.
- Page 8. Private Sector Toolkit for Working with Youth, Restless Development & UN Programme on Youth of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011). Online at <http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/PrivateSectorKit.pdf>.
- Page 12. "Interns resist working free." *International Herald Tribune*, September 29, 2013.
- Page 15. "Generation jobless." *The Economist*, April 27, 2013, pages 58-60.



The overall Youth, Volunteering and Employment Project is directed by Kathleen Dennis, Executive Director of IAVE.

Matthew Goldwasser, Ph.D did the research for this report through review of the literature and interviews, planned and facilitated the London Dialogue and wrote the first draft of this report. Dr. Goldwasser is an independent consultant, urban ethnographer and program evaluator whose expertise is in the areas of research on youth voice, youth advocacy, civic engagement and high school reform. He lives in Denver, Colorado.

This report was written by Dr. Kenn Allen, Senior Consultant to IAVE and President of the Civil Society Consulting Group, Washington DC.



International Association for Volunteer Effort

Telefónica

Fundación Telefónica