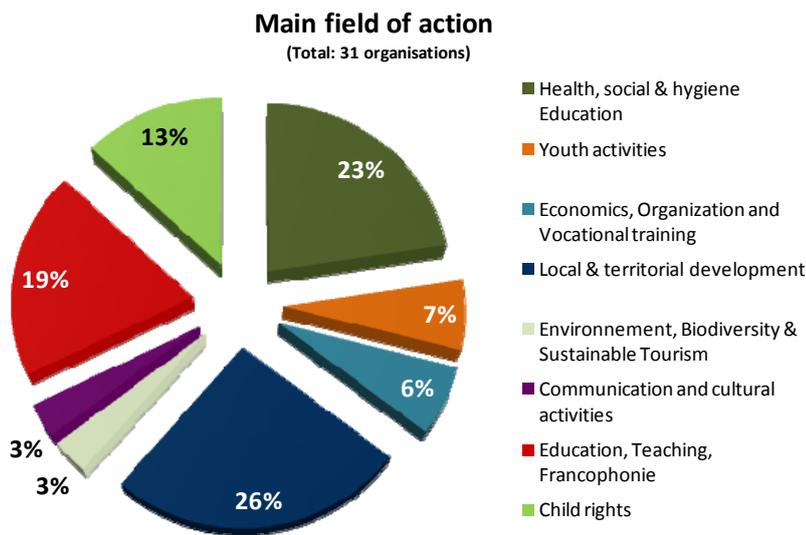


The study on VIES in India has focused on three primary objectives : To draw up a qualitative and quantitative panorama of the French practices of voluntary and solidarity commitments in India, to start a network dynamic for the implementation of the Volunteer Space and to understand the needs and expectations of host organisations. However, taking into account the specificity of India, European volunteerism was also included in the ambit of the research to provide a more holistic picture of French volunteerism in the sector of International volunteerism. This study, conducted between November 2012 and March 2013, interviewed 31 organisations hosting 517 French and European volunteers (36% representing French volunteers and 64% European volunteers).

For better understanding, this summary has been divided into three major parts: Part I throws light on host structures in India briefly, Part II draws attention towards the status of French and European Volunteerism and Part III ends with recommendations for the implementation of the Volunteer Space in India.

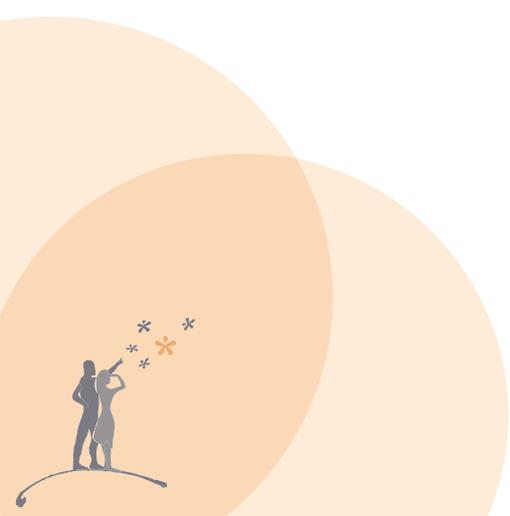
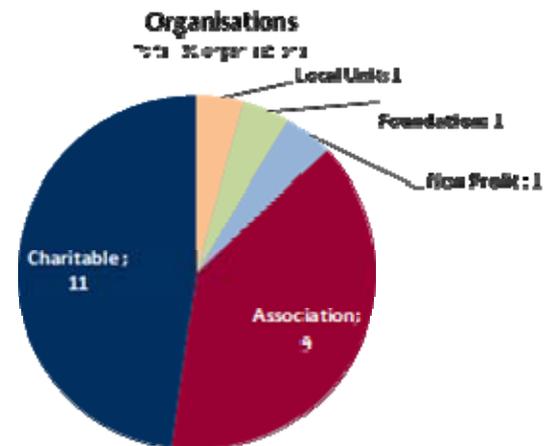
PART I HOST STRUCTURES: TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT & HEALTH PREDOMINANT AMONG DIVERSE SECTORS



In the 31 organisations interviewed in this sample, most of them identified themselves as charitable organisations or associations.

Amongst them, 8 of the 31 host organisations (HO) are involved in local and territorial development followed by health, social and hygiene education. Local and territorial development includes a whole range of issues including ecological security, community development and provision of various income-generating schemes for the local public. Naturally, it remains an important domain of intervention for organisations working at grass-root level. Health, social and hygiene

education followed next, which were involved in training health workers from the community. These health workers were women selected from the community who helped to disburse information about AIDS, sexual diseases, female foeticide, and tuberculosis amongst many other health-related issues.



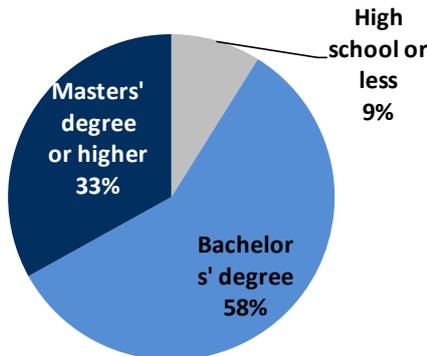
PART II FRENCH VOLUNTEERISM: YOUNG, QUALIFIED & COMMITTED

In the survey, **71 % (367) of the French and European volunteers were between 18 to 26 years**. The age group of 27-55 is far behind and represents 18 % (93) of the sample. Youth clearly play an important role as catalysts of volunteerism, in contradiction with the myth that the young do not care about social issues as before.

Possibly, they choose to travel at the end of their studies or during a sabbatical year to broaden their experience. Besides, working with NGOs would require people to be capable of taking risks. Young people between 27 to 35 years old are often prime candidates for these challenging positions. Furthermore, this general trend of youth commitment in the world can be explained by the greater availability of age group 18-26 who do not hesitate to leave during their studies or before finding their first job.

Educational Qualifications

(Total: 517 volunteers)



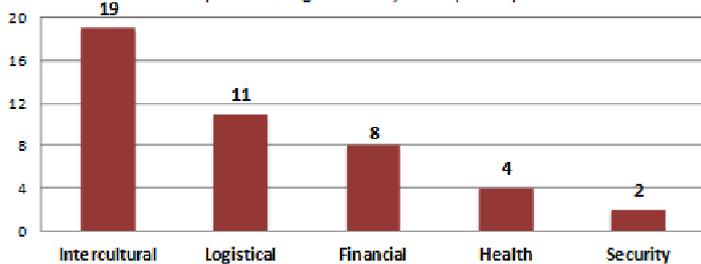
Consistent with the previous observation, organisations welcome young but qualified volunteers. Thus, **58 % of volunteers have completed college education** prior to their placement, with nearly one third of them who hold a master's degree (33%). This also reflects the growing trend of 'professionalization' of the development sector- that more persons with higher qualifications are entering the sector. It can also be a criterion of selection when candidates are too many. However, it needs to be mentioned that most of the organisations were unsure about the education levels and did not consider it a very important criterion. Partly, due to the fact that persons who volunteer internationally already possess a certain level of education, as deemed fit by the host structures. Also, it reflects a supply affecting demand model. Over the years, as more

educated persons have begun entering the sector, the organisations in return have begun demanding for volunteers with higher levels of education.

INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES : AN IMPORTANT DIFFICULTY

What are the kind of difficulties faced with volunteers?

(Total: 31 organisations, 44 responses)



and interactions with French volunteers working presently have pointed that India has been the most difficult yet fulfilling experience.

As established before, it cannot be emphasized enough that India is considered one of the most difficult countries to adjust by the community of international volunteers. From food, gender relations, clothing, to alcohol consumption, there are many facets to understand. Alongside, language plays an important role in the context of India. India has 22 main languages recognized by the Constitution and 22,000 dialects. In this vast array of languages, some knowledge of the local language is a real advantage according to host structures. Also, it is important to highlight that interviews

The main difficulties were pivoted on intercultural matters. **19 out of the 31 organisations responded that they had faced certain issues due to intercultural differences**. Eleven organisations stated that they had faced logistical issues in terms of accommodation or lack of electricity etc. This was followed by financing issues. 8 organisations felt that the stipend amount they were provided by the volunteer sending organisation to support the French or European volunteer had not been sufficient to cover all the expenses. Hence, sometimes they had utilized some funds earmarked for other activities.

The language barrier is a reality that particularly French volunteers encounter in India. The majority of the host organisations stated that lower English speaking abilities of French volunteers as compared to other international volunteers had posed as the biggest problem during the mission. Moreover, many NGOs wanted to use the expertise of international

volunteers in proposal writing and documentation. As a result, there have been cases of communication gaps between host organisations and volunteers.

PART III RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VOLUNTEER SPACE

How do NGOs play a role?

- 1) Important delivery agents for support services to the marginalized communities and covers a large scale.
- 2) Competent repositories of knowledge due to closer access at grassroots level.
- 3) Innovative, vibrant and supports different forms of volunteerism.
- 4) Government has begun to recognize NGOs an important part of the development model.

Why the NGOs are unable to play a role?

- 1) Unorganized sector. Urgent requirement for an independent, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector.
- 2) Has not been properly utilized at the policy making level.
- 3) No proper mechanism for monitoring and accountability, leads to unverified perceptions of being corrupt and unprofessional.
- 4) Has limited autonomy, does not have the space to take up political issues.

France Volontaires started its operations in India since 2004, without any formalized space. From April 2013, it has commenced to propose actions and services to the host organisations and French volunteers present in India through a physical space. By forming a strategic partnership with Skillshare (International) India Trust, a Volunteer Space has been opened to welcome both French and also European volunteers. In this sense, the Volunteer Space in India shall continue to provide services in the same manner as has been conducted in other countries but it shall also move to new grounds. The strategic partnership will allow France Volontaires to utilize the expertise developed by Skillshare during the last 20 years in India.

The following recommendations result directly from the present survey and from more informal discussions with the managers of the organisations, volunteers and significant persons from France Volontaires during the Asia meeting in Vietnam, March 2013.

** Creating a virtual space, inclusive of all the volunteers*

The physical space, while essential for creating a hub for volunteers, has its limitations in terms of accessing the volunteers spread across the length and breadth of this large country. Hence, a virtual platform will support it, which shall hope to grow beyond a physical space in India. The virtual platform shall look at providing a platform for interaction, questioning, information dissemination, and information management. It would be a space for periodic and defined web-based activities on a schedule that would find resonance in physical activities on same themes harnessed in the physical space. There should thus be a clear relation between the physical and virtual activities. This format would allow in accessing interactions between various cities and regions.

It would also allow volunteers to share their experiences through blogs, forms and social media, thereby documenting their experiences, sharing knowledge and creating links and support groups.

Hence, all forms of social media such as Facebook, Twitter will be utilized to promote the activities of the voluntary space.

** Forming two physical spaces, taking into account the vastness of India*

The primary physical space shall be formed in New Delhi. Following it, a satellite branch shall be opened in Pondicherry, allowing the Volunteer Space to form strategic offices in north and south of India.

** Identifying NGOs and designing assignments that require specific and high skill expertise from volunteers*



The research reflected that Indian organisations are seeking volunteers with specific and technical expertise. The international development sector has become competitive and the Volunteer Space should play a critical role in creating a database of NGOs and facilitating them to recognize their needs in terms of European volunteers.

✧ *Utilising the expertise of the French institutions in India such as the French embassy, the French research centres, the Alliance Française network, Sciences Po network.*

The research has gained largely from harnessing the French contacts at various institutions. The Volunteer Space should hence act as a catalyst and facilitate all the French institutions to interact with each other. It should also allow the French institutions to be connected with the NGOs and hence form a mutual beneficial relationship.

✧ *Utilising the expertise of Skillshare in identifying NGOs which are transparent and follow fair practices in volunteerism.*

4 As established, the NGO sector in India is large and unorganized. Skillshare shall play a critical role in facilitating the Volunteer Space to identify NGOs that follow all the legal formalities, as established by the Indian government and the law. It shall also facilitate in 'Service Civique' assessments which shall act as a safeguard for the well-being of the volunteers.

✧ *Developing links with other voluntary organisations*

American (Peace Corps), British (VSO), Australian, Japanese (JICA), Korean volunteerisms are relatively well developed in India. It may be interesting to approach these structures to share experiences and establish formal channels of communication. Importantly, the International Volunteer's day (IVD) should be organized together to allow further interaction of volunteers amongst the organisations.

✧ *Providing administrative support*

The Volunteer Space shall disseminate information and facilitate linkages between the volunteers and the Embassy or Consulate. Similarly, all the volunteers shall be encouraged to register with the Embassy upon arrival, whatever maybe the length of their volunteering. This shall allow volunteers to obtain information from the Embassy, and conversely, the Embassy will get a better knowledge of the work being done by NGOs, which should generate a multidimensional partnership.

Finally, the structures expect from the Volunteer Space to obtain clear information on laws, administrative duties, etc. to be implemented in the country by NGOs.

Acronymes & definitions

FVHO: French Volunteer Hosting organisation

EVHO: European Volunteer Hosting organisation

VIES: Volunteers of International solidarity and exchange

VSI : Volunteers of International Solidarity

Sources: Research centres (CSH & IFP), Academic papers, newspapers, interviews. Please find detailed bibliography and contact points in the full report.

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