

Case Study on Volunteerism: ④ China

Background

Global South volunteer programmes now seek to internationalize their efforts but often lack international networks and overseas partners and are not well integrated into the international development ecosystem. Many are also not well integrated into their own country's broader overseas national development programming, with potential partnerships with official mechanisms, national strategies and development stakeholders (including the government, the private sector and the third sector) limited by a lack of trust and experience. Another challenge is the lack of capacity to assess development needs in other countries and effectively monitor and evaluate overseas projects. The programmes also lack experience in ensuring that their overseas projects have local ownership, remain needs-based and build a long-term relationship with the recipient community. Another core challenge relates to knowledge gaps that are an obstacle to creating a substantive knowledge base for South-South volunteering. These knowledge gaps impede advocacy efforts, hinder the development of more effective programming and diminish the potential for capacity development through sharing best practices and experiences among developing countries.

Volunteerism in China

The national volunteering system in China is a complex system of integration and coordination between party committees, government youth league, young volunteers associations, social organizations, community organizations, non-profit organizations, the philanthropic and business community at the national and local levels.

Since 2001, key national events in China involving millions of volunteers have reshaped

the public perceptions of volunteering and the recognition of its significant value in engaging people, particularly youths. Volunteer involvement in large-scale international events in China has provided a significant and crucial platform in the promotion of volunteerism nationally. Through such heightened public awareness, former volunteers have gone on to initiate, lead and pilot volunteer-involving activities to assist vulnerable groups in their own communities.

[Case Study 1: Volunteerism in 'Friends of Nature'](#)

The Chinese environmental NGO Friends of Nature works with local volunteers to map and monitor environmental risks at the community level. Friends of Nature has initiated more than 30 legal cases against polluting factories and industries. These legal challenges have built on evidence collected by volunteers that relies on their local knowledge, connections and flexibility and is coordinated through new mobile and smart technologies. This volunteer-led model has inspired other environmental NGOs and demonstrated to policymakers and local authorities the value of working with volunteers on environmental protection.

[Case Study 2: Volunteering as a driving force to support the SDGs and South-South cooperation](#)

United Nations Volunteers (UNV), with the support of the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF), launched a project aiming at strengthening engagement and capacities of Southern stakeholders in mobilizing, deploying and managing volunteers within the framework of South-South cooperation initiatives and in support of the SDGs. The project aims to explore new partnership-building opportunities by creating channels for the exchange of information and best practices for volunteers from the global South and supporting their

effective engagement and contribution to sustainable development.

New opportunities were created for Beijing youth to volunteer internationally as a model of South-South “people-to-people” cooperation that could serve as a template for future deployments from other Chinese and Southern volunteer organizations. The project assisted in developing new opportunities for Beijing volunteers. BVF partners with the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) in the Chinese Foreign Aid Volunteer Programme to send 10 Chinese representatives to Nepal and Myanmar for 6-12 months in support of local social and economic development. This is the first time that the Chinese Government and civil society have made joint efforts in international volunteer deployment and exploration for innovative cooperation of overseas assistance. A volunteer manual and project guidance were designed to support volunteer deployment.

Source: Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development – Vol. 2 (2018)

<https://www.unsouthsouth.org/2018/09/12/good-practices-in-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-for-sustainable-development-vol-2-2018/>