

VOLUNTEER MEASUREMENT project



AN UNDERVALUED RESOURCE

Volunteering is a crucial renewable resource for social and environmental problem-solving the world over, but its effective management requires better information and an enabling policy environment. However, in most countries, no reliable data exist to gauge the extent and character of volunteering, and what data do exist are not comparable. **As a result, volunteering is often overlooked, invisible, and under-funded.**

NEW MEASUREMENT STANDARDS FOR STATISTICS AGENCIES

The International Labour Organization's new *ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*¹ represents the first-ever internationally sanctioned approach for gathering official data on the amount, character, and contributions of volunteers. National governments now have the information needed to measure volunteering according to the same level of standards used to measure other forms of work.

The *ILO Manual* advises countries to add a short survey module to their existing labour force or other household surveys to answer questions such as these:

- **How many people** volunteer?
- What are their **demographic characteristics**?
- What **type of work** do volunteers perform?
- **How much time** do volunteers contribute?
- What portion of this time is provided **directly to individuals** and what portion is provided **through organizations** (e.g., nonprofits, business, government)?
- In **what fields** is volunteer effort focused (e.g., health, education, social services, environmental causes, legal services)?
- **How does volunteering in your country compare** to that in other countries along all these dimensions?

BY ENCOURAGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ILO *MANUAL* IN YOUR COUNTRY, YOU CAN HELP TO:

- **Boost the visibility and credibility** of volunteer work.
- **Improve the management** of volunteering.
- **Assess effectiveness** of volunteer promotion efforts.
- **Document the enormous economic impact** of volunteer effort, including the contributions they make to the UN's post-2015 **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- **Promote a more enabling policy environment** for volunteering.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Implementation of this new *Manual* is not automatic. Government agencies must be persuaded to direct their national statistics offices to adopt the *Manual* and follow its guidelines. To help achieve this, the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, along with IAVE and other partners, have launched the **Volunteer Measurement Project**. We need your help to:

COMMUNICATE. Get the word out about the *ILO Manual*. Bring this new tool to the attention of your networks and to the statistical agency in your country through newsletters, blogs, emails, conferences, and personal visits to the labour force survey team in your country's statistical office.

MOBILIZE. Get friends, contacts, and colleagues involved. **Convene meetings of key stakeholders.** Engage key foundation leaders, senior government leaders or legislators, nonprofit association leaders, and any others who can attract the key officials within the labour statistics department and other government agencies. Help generate financial support for training and dissemination efforts. Email volunteermesurement@jhu.edu to coordinate actions.

CONTACT. Begin a conversation with **labour force statisticians** and with key decision-makers.

PARTNER. Work in partnership with **labour statistics officials**. Statistics offices are often short on staff and funds—offer your expertise and technical assistance from Johns Hopkins.

DISSEMINATE. Make the results **widely known**. Once the data are available, it is important to disseminate them widely so that they can be used—the more feedback they receive, the more likely it is that statistical agencies will update the data in future years.

¹ Produced by the **Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies** in cooperation with the ILO and an international Technical Experts Group.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do we need to measure volunteer work?

Volunteer work is a crucial renewable resource for social, economic, and environmental problem-solving. However, despite its enormous contributions, volunteering has long been marginalized in policy circles and public debates. One reason for this has been the lack of solid and reliable information on the scope, scale, distribution, and economic value of volunteer work. Solid data will demonstrate the value of volunteer effort, allow countries to make better use of volunteer energies, and put volunteering on the policy map of countries.

What is the ILO *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*?

The *ILO Manual* offers the first official, permanent system for the collection of data on volunteer work. Issued by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2011, it provides national statistical agencies with a common definition and methodology for measuring the amount and economic value of volunteer work through regular labour force or other household surveys.

Some surveys have already been done on volunteering. Why a new approach?

While a significant amount of data has been gathered on volunteering in some countries, there has been no common definition, methodology or approach utilized. Most existing data have been assembled through one-time surveys utilizing diverse definitions, or through large general purpose surveys that often use small samples and only one or two questions about volunteering. As a result, findings are inconsistent, no systematic comparisons are possible either across countries or over time, and opportunities to assess approaches to volunteer management and promotion are being lost.

What is the advantage of using the ILO *Manual*?

The *ILO Manual* represents the first-ever internationally sanctioned approach for gathering official data on the amount, character, and value of volunteering. It is cost-effective, efficient, reliable, and feasible to implement in a wide variety of countries. It will generate cross-nationally comparable data on the number of volunteers, the volunteering rate, the demographic characteristics of volunteers, the work that volunteers do, and the contribution that volunteers make to local, national, regional, and global economies.

How will implementing the ILO *Manual* help our country?

Measuring volunteer work in a systematic and comparable way will boost the visibility of volunteer work, encourage more volunteer involvement, provide a basis to gauge the effectiveness of volunteer promotion efforts, and create a more enabling policy environment for volunteer activity, all of which will allow volunteers to expand the already notable contributions they make to improving health, expanding educational opportunities, promoting economic growth, and responding to disasters.

The **Volunteer Measurement Project** is a coalition of volunteer promotion and nonprofit organizations, the authors of the *ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*, and statistical agencies which aims to disseminate this *Manual* and promote its implementation around the world.

BENEFITS OF THE ILO *MANUAL*

COMPARABLE. A common approach to data collection, definitions, key concepts, classification, and variables will allow comparison between countries and over time.

FEASIBLE. The *ILO Manual* is designed to be workable in the widest possible range of countries, minimally burdensome to implement, and sensitive to cultural traditions and language differences.

COST-EFFECTIVE. The *ILO Manual* utilizes existing household surveys, reducing costs and taking advantage of existing classification systems and structures.

EFFICIENT. The *ILO Manual* is designed to maximize the information gathered using the minimum number of questions.

RELIABLE. All aspects of the *ILO Manual* are based on extensive input from an international Technical Experts Group, and careful field testing of key terms and design decisions.

COMPREHENSIVE. Implementation of the *ILO Manual* will bring into view the sizeable part of the actual labour force that is currently invisible, clarifying the economic impact of these unpaid workers and helping policy-makers understand their great potential.

For more information, please visit ccss.jhu.edu or email volunteermesurement@jhu.edu.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT THE USE OF THE ILO *MANUAL*

- 18th International Conference of Labor Statisticians
- International Association of Volunteer Effort (IAVE)
- European Volunteer Centre (CEV)
- Associazione Promozione e Solidarietà (SPES)
- Global Service Leaders (GSL)
- Post-2015 Volunteering Working Group
- European Economic and Social Committee
- United Nations Volunteers
- United Nations Statistics Division
- IYV 2011 Alliance

HOW YOU CAN HELP GET THE ILO *MANUAL* IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR COUNTRY

COMMUNICATE – Get the word out about the ILO *Manual*.

MOBILIZE – Get friends, contacts, and colleagues involved.

CONTACT – Begin a conversation with labour force statisticians.

PARTNER – Work in partnership with labour statistics officials.

DISSEMINATE – After implementation, make sure the results are widely known.

SUPPORT – Provide financial or other support to the VMP.

For more information, please visit ccss.jhu.edu or email volunteermeasurement@jhu.edu.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How was the ILO *Manual* prepared?

The ILO *Manual* was prepared under the auspices of the International Labour Organization by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies in cooperation with an international Technical Experts Group of volunteering researchers and statisticians from 13 countries. It was field tested in five countries, approved in concept by the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in November 2008, and published by the ILO in August 2011.

How does the ILO *Manual* define volunteer work?

“Unpaid non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for others *outside the household of the volunteer worker or of related family members.*” Volunteering is thus:

- **A form of work**; i.e., it produces something of value.
- **Non-compulsory**; i.e., it is undertaken willingly.
- **Not paid**, though some forms of expense reimbursement may be permitted.
- **Conducted either through organizations or directly for other individuals**, as long as they are not part of the volunteer’s household or related family members.

Is the survey module going to gather as much information as we need?

The ILO *Manual* is very efficient. It will generate an enormous amount of data on who volunteers, what work they do, what organizations they work through, and how all of this varies among countries and over time. If funding is available, the GVMP plans to develop additional model questions that countries can use to tap other facets of volunteer work, such as motivations, impact on volunteers, and factors associated with successful engagements.

What is the cost of implementing the ILO *Manual*?

The ILO *Manual* was designed to minimize costs. It does not require a new survey. Instead, it makes use of existing labour force or other household surveys, and takes advantage of existing national classification systems and structures. The volunteering module is only two pages long. This should not add substantially to costs and can be handled with existing, trained staff.