



**UNECE Volunteer Standardization Task Force
Status Report and Recommendation**

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FINAL

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Table of Contents

.....	2
BACKGROUND	2
WHY MEASURE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES?	5
WHY DEVELOP A STANDARD APPROACH?	5
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING STANDARDIZATION TASK FORCE	5
1. SURVEY MEASUREMENT OBJECTIVES.....	5
2. DEFINING VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES.....	7
3. MEASURING VOLUNTEERING	10
i. <i>Direct question</i>	10
ii) <i>Questions that prompt on volunteer activities or organization</i>	11
iii) <i>Time Use Diaries</i>	14
4. INSTRUMENT DESIGN.....	14
APPENDIX I. INVENTORY OF MEASUREMENT APPROACHES USING HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS	17
APPENDIX II. SUMMARY OF MEASURING VOLUNTEERING WORKSHOP	20
A. PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP	20
B. WORKSHOP AGENDA	21
C. WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	21
1. <i>Greater collaboration and sharing of expertise on survey approaches.</i>	21
2. <i>Common definition for volunteer activity.</i>	22
3. <i>Recommended collection approach through prompting on activities.</i>	22
4. <i>Core variables to be measured</i>	23
5. <i>Survey Platform Opportunities</i>	23
6. <i>Instrument design issues that need to be addressed</i>	23
7. <i>Low response rates introduces a bias that can over estimate volunteer activity</i>	24
8. <i>Estimating the economic value of volunteering.</i>	24
APPENDIX III. VOLUNTEER WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS	25

Background

A major challenge in household survey research is the ability to compare estimates from one survey to another. Comparing findings from one survey to another is important for validation and interpretation. Comparisons are possible when common definitions and measurement approaches are applied and when survey methodology is well documented. Question wording, sample design, collection mode, and even respondent relation information can complicate the ability to compare estimates across surveys. This complexity is further enhanced when attempting to harmonize across countries.

A 2005 fall ECE/EUROSTAT sponsored meeting of Heads of Social Statistics identified the importance of comparability across the social statistics domain and agreed to further study the issue. As a result, five countries agreed to participate in an experiment where the concept of volunteer activity would be used to evaluate the feasibility of achieving comparability. Participants for this working group include Canada, U.S.,

Denmark, Australia and Italy. The International Volunteering Standardization Task Force was created and the scope of the project was defined as intelligence gathering with the ultimate deliverable of recommended approaches for defining and measuring volunteering.

The first year was spent collecting information from participating countries and an inventory of some of the survey work being done is found in *Appendix I*. During the second year, the Task Force was expanded to include research being done outside the realm of statistical agencies. A major realization was that achieving a comparable measurement would be better achieved through collaboration with other organizations such as Points of Light Foundation (U.S.), Imagine Canada, Giving Australia, Johns Hopkins Centre for Civil Society Studies¹ and others. Combining expertise from Statistical Agencies as well as the non-profit, government and academic perspectives enriches the intelligence gathering and ensures final recommendations more accurately address the breadth of information needs.

The Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies (JHU/CCSS) is partnering with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to formulate a *Manual* and model survey module designed to capture volunteer work in official labour force surveys. These materials are scheduled to be submitted to the forthcoming 18th Conference of Labour Statisticians scheduled for December 2008. This activity builds on the extensive previous work of JHU/CCSS to put the non-profit sector and volunteering on the economic map of countries, work that involved extensive surveying of volunteer activity in more than 40 countries. More recently, with the support of the UN Statistics Division, JHU/CCSS developed a guide for statistical agencies in portraying non-profit institutions, philanthropy and volunteering more explicitly in national economic accounts. Called the United Nations (UN) *Handbook on Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts*, this guide, approved by the UN Statistical Commission in 2002, has been adopted by many statistical agencies around the world including Canada, Australia and 25 other countries. Although major progress has been made in capturing the non-profit sector through this *Handbook*, Johns Hopkins found that few countries regularly measure the extent of volunteer work. The Johns Hopkins partnership with the ILO is designed to remedy this remaining gap in data by suggesting concrete approaches that can be used to

¹ The Johns Hopkins University Centre for Civil Society Studies (JHU/CCSS) is partnering with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to formulate a *Manual* and accompanying model survey module to capture volunteer work in labour force surveys. This *Manual* will be presented to the forthcoming 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians scheduled for December 2008. This work follows JHU/CCSS' development of the UN *Non-profit Handbook* adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2002.

measure volunteer work through labor force surveys. Johns Hopkins, the ILO, and the Task Force thus share a common objective of exploring ways to measure volunteering through household surveys.

The Task Force joined efforts with Johns Hopkins to organize a workshop for experts on volunteering from around the world. The discussions included the practical concerns related to the measurement of volunteer work, conceptualization and definition of volunteering, target measures of volunteering, survey platforms, instrument design, and accuracy of measurement. The Workshop was held in July 2007 in Geneva and a summary of the Workshop recommendations is found in *Appendix II*. This Workshop concluded the intelligence gathering phase of the International Volunteering Standardization Task Force. Presentation material prepared for the Workshop has been loaded to the UNECE Website.

The summary of findings and resulting recommendations found in this report capture the input received from Task Force members as well as the other stakeholders consulted. Thanks to all of the participants for their valuable input². A list of Task Force Members and Workshop participants is found in *Appendix III*.

² Human Resources Social Development Canada supported the workshop through a financial contribution.

Why measure volunteer activities?

“Putting civil society and volunteering on the economic map of the world”³ is a strong and powerful statement from Lester Salamon, Johns Hopkins University, as he describes their latest initiative in valuing volunteer work. In prior work conducted under its Comparative Nonprofit Sector, Johns Hopkins found that volunteers accounted for over 20 million of the 47.6 million full-time equivalent jobs that civil society organizations generated in the 37 countries for which data could be assembled. The 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating reported 45% of the population aged 15 years and older volunteered. This is equivalent to 1 million full-time Canadian jobs and two billion hours of work. The U.S. has reported a volunteering participation rate variously estimated at 29% and close to 50 percent and estimates from Australia, Denmark and Mexico vary from the mid-30% to 50%. Increasingly citizens around the world rely on programs and services provided by non-profit organizations and volunteers.

Why develop a standard approach?

As the data above show, few countries measure volunteer activities and the methodologies used vary a great deal from one country to another. However there is an opportunity to build on some of the more advanced research and support new initiatives by providing a standard definition, a well tested survey measurement tool and documentation about the survey design pitfalls such as non response bias, recall error and preferred reference period.

Recommendations from International Volunteering Standardization Task Force

1. Survey Measurement objectives

One of the benefits for using volunteering as the concept for an experiment on developing approaches for greater standardization is that it is early days in the world of measuring volunteer. There are very few countries entrenched in one specific approach and so there are opportunities to develop best practices and influence researchers to adopt a tested reliable methodology.

It is imperative that the harmonization efforts build on the following objectives. The definition must be measurable and operationally feasible in a variety of survey settings around the world. The measurement

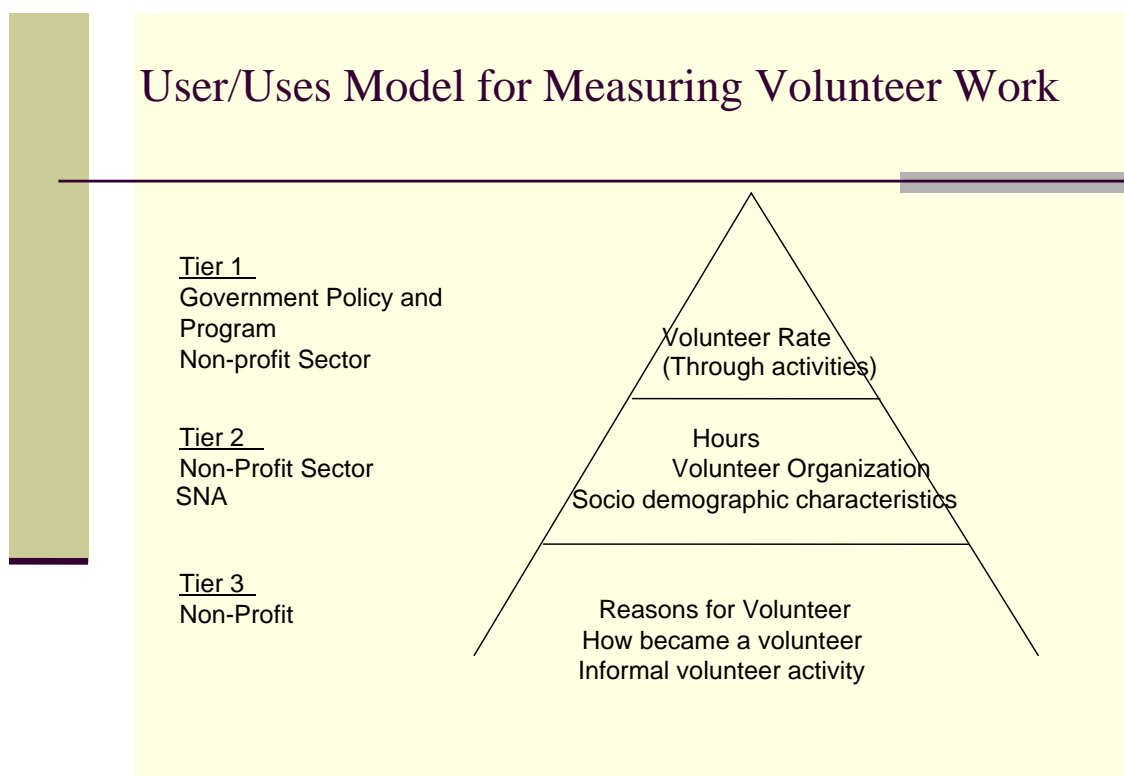
³ Statistics Newsletter OECD, February 2006, Issue No. 30, Lester M. Salamon, Johns Hopkins.

approach must be efficient and affordable with respect to survey time, cost and respondent burden. Finally the measurement approach must yield reliable estimates and allow for assigning an economic value to volunteer work in terms of replacement cost.

A recommended approach would build on the Practical Toolkit for measuring volunteering generated by United Nations Volunteers as part of the 2001 International Year of the Volunteer. The Tool Kit is a practical guide for survey developers. The work would also build on the United Nations Non-profit Institution Handbook which sets out a standard way to classify non-profit institutions and value volunteer work.

The ideal would be a recommended definition of volunteer work and collection modules that fit the practical realities of survey funding and respondent burden. The library would include survey methodology, research and data quality recommendations that could influence countries around the world. Whether organizations are launching their first study or fine tuning existing research, this information would improve the intelligence and resulting comparability of volunteer activities.

The following model describes a conceptual framework of survey content in accordance with the notion of uses and users needs.



Critical to the success of any harmonized approach will be the offering of flexibility and options. Finding the appropriate balance between

prescriptive “must be adopted” approach and a more flexible guideline offering is difficult. Developing a menu of minimal, medium and maximum information options will allow countries to select an approach that they can implement and afford. Given the broad spectrum of users and uses, this is extremely critical.

2. Defining volunteer activities

There is no internationally recognized standard to define volunteering. When one compares volunteer rates across countries, one is comparing estimates that have not been defined nor measured in the same way.

One key component in the definition of volunteer activities is the need to distinguish informal help given directly to individuals from formal volunteer activities. Canada, Australia, EUROSTAT and others identify formal volunteering as unpaid activities done on behalf of organizations. However, it is important to clarify that the term “organization” here includes more than charitable or non-profit organizations. Australia specifies unpaid activities willingly done on behalf of any type of organization (84% of which are non-profit organizations). A considerable amount of volunteering occurs in schools and other public institutions such as hospitals, and this is captured in the notion of formal volunteer work through an organization.

This differs from informal volunteer activities where help is provided directly to an individual. An example of this would be helping an elderly neighbour directly (informal) rather than working through a community social support organization to provide care to a senior (formal). Most definitions do exclude help given to members of one’s own household. Adopting a narrow definition that focused on volunteering through organizations would not fit the realities in many parts of world and so a broader scope of volunteer activities should be measured. For example in Mexico, voluntary organizations of the sort that have flourished in Canada and the U.S. were actively suppressed by a one-party political regime for decades. However the absence of voluntary organizations did not result in an absence of active volunteering. Restricting volunteering to activities done through an organization will systematically understate the extent of volunteering in particular kinds of social circumstances. Definitions of volunteering should not exclude activities that benefit volunteers but do, however need to include as a key criterion that the activity benefits others.

The research suggests we are not far from a common understanding on the definition of formal volunteer activities – the notion of unpaid work, on behalf of an organization, benefiting someone.

The UK definition “ ***Any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment***”.

Canada’s definition of volunteers is “***people who perform service without pay, on behalf of a charitable or other non-profit organization. This includes any unpaid help provided to schools, religious organizations, sports or community associations***”.

Denmark’s approach is scoped more by the organization characteristics

- sector consists of organizations “institutional reality”, not adhoc groups
- organization is private non government
- not for profit
- self governed
- participation is non compulsory

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics measures only formal volunteering, defined as volunteering for or through an organization. Others in the US have a broader view, including other government agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, but they do not produce official volunteering statistics.

The informal dimension is a bit more difficult to clearly articulate as one tries to extract the normal unpaid activities done within the household from those who invest their time willingly to help others in their community. In 2005 Mexico conducted its first every dedicated study of volunteering (*The Cemefi Mexican Volunteer Study Survey*). Their definition of a volunteer is... “a person who out of free will, reaches out investing time and service to a not-for profit cause that goes beyond family, for the community at large”⁴ .

Similarly the points of Light Foundation broadly defines volunteering as a” set of behaviours that are done without pay, which is done freely, and for which there are identifiable recipient groups, either individuals or organizations”.⁵

The Estonia definition of voluntary activity is: "Voluntary activity is the commitment of time, energy or skills, out of one’s free will and without getting paid. Volunteers help others or undertake activities mainly for the

⁴ Butcher, Myths and Realities of Citizen participation in Mexico: The volunteer Effect; Universidad Iberoamericana/Mexican Centre for Philanthropy (Cemefi).

⁵Toppe, Christopher. What is Volunteering and How Can It Be Measured. Paper prepared and presented at the Workshop on Volunteer Measurement, Geneva, 2007.

public benefit and the benefit of society. Helping one's family members is not considered to be voluntary activity."

The General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/38 (Recommendations on support for volunteering), adopted on 5 December 2001 by the United Nations that includes the following: "...the terms volunteering, volunteerism and voluntary activities refer to a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor".⁶

It is important to capture the magnitude of both formal and informal volunteering because both support the non profit sector needs and leaving informal volunteering out would severely underestimate the overall contribution of others. In fact, not asking about informal activities may offend survey respondents by suggesting that this type of activity does not matter enough to be counted. Canada and other countries have been able to collect data on both types of activities successfully by clearly delineating the differences. However it is worth noting that the questions about informal activities certainly add to the length of the survey as well as the cost. In the interest of finding a minimal set of questions to measure volunteer activity, this is one area where a module could be developed but left to the discretion of the survey takers as optional or required.

⁶ Reference by Robert Leigh – UNV Headquarters, Bonn, Germany

3. *Measuring volunteering*

In establishing the parameters for an acceptable definition and measurement it is important to consider the users and uses of the information. These are: a) to measure uncompensated help that was of benefit to the community; and b) to measure the extent of unpaid labour utilized by nonprofit organizations. Based on this need, a recommended set of core variables has been established. They include volunteer participation (measured through activity prompts), number of hours, and the organization for which volunteered. These critical sets of information need to be interpreted in terms of socio demographic details such as age, gender, education, marital status (children present). A second tier of information relates to more detailed sector information to attribute value and more details on work completed and motivations.

There are three fundamental approaches to measuring volunteer work with some variation. Many countries have adopted one direct question where the respondent determines his or herself what they consider to be volunteering. An example is “In the past 12 months did you do unpaid voluntary work for any organization?” A second approach is to clarify for the respondent what is considered to be volunteer work through prompts on type of activity or type of organization. An example of this would be asking about fundraising, coaching etc. A final approach is the time use diary reporting of activities done in the past 24 hours.

The recommended approach in terms of greater accuracy is the use of prompts that clearly delineate what is meant by volunteering. The prompts for activities then lead to follow-up questions about hours spent and the organization for which work was done. The resulting data quality is very good and sufficient information is collected to allow for valuing volunteer work. The following paragraphs provide more details as to the strengths and weaknesses of the three collection approaches.

i. Direct Question

A number of countries and survey platforms have adopted one direct question capturing the essence of unpaid volunteer work (whether directly, or for or through an organization, for a specific reference period). However a major problem with this approach is that it is left to the respondent to determine what is meant by volunteer activities and this varies greatly from one individual to another.

Canada 2005 Time Use Direct Question

In the past 12 months did you do unpaid voluntary work for any organization? (36% volunteer participation)

European Time Use Direct Question

Have you done any volunteer work through or on behalf of a group or an organization at any time during the last 4 weeks? (5% - 15% volunteer participation)

U.S. supplement to the Continuous Population Survey

Since September 1 of last year, have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization? (28.8% volunteer participation)

Obviously one stand alone question is a very inexpensive option and places minimum burden on the respondent. However research has shown data quality problems arise using a direct question. Based on the work of Christopher Toppe, Points of Light Foundation, who conducted an experiment where additional prompts were asked after the basic volunteer question, he found that "... a non-trivial percentage of people did things they did not consider volunteering, but which should be considered volunteering using the definition"⁷. Evidence of this under reporting is also found in Canada and other countries when comparing results from a direct question to results from using more detailed prompts. For example in Canada the direct question asked as part of the General Social Survey in 2005 yielded a volunteer rate of 33% whereas the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, using a prompt approach, yielded a volunteer rate of 45%. Obviously different survey methodologies could also affect the rate but in both cases it was a representative sample of Canadians.

ii) Questions that prompt on volunteer activities or organization

An advantage of the prompts over a direct question is that there is more control on defining for the respondent what is meant by volunteering. For example there are fourteen specific prompts (questions) asked in the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, and a positive response to one or more defines a volunteer. This approach yielded a 2004 volunteer rate of 45%. Some examples of the prompts are organizing or supervising events; fundraising; sitting on committees or boards; teaching, educating or mentoring; driving; providing health care or support; canvassing.

Australia adopts a similar approach with prompts on unpaid voluntary work.

"Since this time last year did you do any unpaid voluntary work for any of these types of organizations -- sports and recreation, hobby, religious, etc? The Australian rate in 2005 using this approach in a telephone survey was 41%, which is similar to that of Canada.

⁷ Toppe, Christopher. What is Volunteering and How Can It Be Measured. Paper prepared and presented at the Workshop on Volunteer Measurement, Geneva, 2007.

Another approach in Australia, as part of their Adult Literacy and Life Skills, is to ask about participation in five specific activities. These include fundraising; serving as an unpaid member or board member; coaching, teaching or counselling; assisting with sorting and selling donated goods; and then any other activities such as organizing events, office work or providing information on behalf of an organization.

Asking about volunteer work through prompts of either activities or organizations allows for valuation. One also has to collect information about hours volunteered in order to accurately estimate the economic contribution.

We know there are cultural variations on the interpretation and meaning of help and volunteering. However another benefit of using prompts would be the ability to customize the list according to what is meaningful for each specific country. Not every activity has to be mentioned, the prompts are used as a guide to help respondents associate with the definition of volunteering. As with survey best practices there is always an “other” category to ensure comprehensive coverage.

A slight variation to specific prompt questions is found in the Mexican survey, where definitions or the scope of what is meant by volunteering is articulated as part of the question. Their question reads “I’m going to ask you about the aid in time or services that you are giving (or that you gave) to other people not related to you and that you have not received any payment for that activity and that you have accomplished by your own will. This aid can be of any kind: to teach others how to read; to organize a meeting among neighbours; or an activity to get funds for a school or the church; ...”. The question continues with many more examples of volunteer activity. One issue with this approach is in terms of the collection mode. A telephone collection calls for short easy to understand questions so that the respondent can quickly grasp the question and answer. Having long questions with many components that need to be repeated would be more difficult to administer in a telephone survey environment. However the main point here is that this is again another example of the importance of clarifying for the respondent what is meant by volunteer activity.

Although information to measure and track volunteering is important, not all countries can justify nor afford the costly in-depth studies. Prompting on fourteen activities takes 1.5 minutes of interviewing time for non-volunteers and 2 minutes for volunteers. It is not necessarily the fourteen activities that add to the length and cost of the survey, but the follow-up questions based on these responses. The organizations for which the respondent volunteered the most hours⁸ (maximum 3) are

⁸ CSGVP reports approximately 50% of respondents identify only one volunteer organization.

identified and the total hours volunteered for each organization are collected. Respondents are asked about number of hours spent on each reported activity for the main organization only. Being able to prompt on fewer activities is one way to reduce burden and cost – as long as key volunteer activities are not lost. Perhaps a compromise of the top four or five activities could be sufficient to capture the majority of volunteer work being done around the world. One recommendation is to look at the types of prompts being used around the world, identify the most frequently reported and adopt a suggested list. This exercise was completed for the 2004 Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating. The following table illustrates how four prompts capture almost 80% of the reported volunteer participation.

Question: “In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following activities without pay on behalf of a group or an organization? This includes any unpaid help you provided to schools, religious organizations, sports or community associations.”	Cumulative percent of volunteers
Did you organize, supervise or coordinate activities or events?	47
Did you do any fundraising?	67
Did you do any teaching, educating or mentoring?	74
Did you collect, serve or deliver food or other goods?	79

One of the most difficult tasks will be to achieve a consensus on what the prompts should be. In addition to the issue of variations in wording depending on culture and language, it is clear that the prompts must be closely related to classification systems that yield reliable valuation data. Whether it is activities that can be classified through occupational classification or activities done for organizations that can be classified by industry, there must be some frame that provides a comparable structure for estimating volume and value.

iii) Time Use Diaries

For many years, there has been a strong contingent of countries conducting Time Use studies using diaries. These countries are interested in unpaid work. Respondents are asked to complete a 24 hour diary of their activities. Using a harmonized activity classification list, volunteer work can be reported. The diary approach has been adopted by many countries and so standard measurement has been achieved. However data quality concerns arise because diaries could underestimate volunteer activities because they are often rare or occasional events. Despite this, time use diaries do have the benefit of having a standard approach to classifying activities. The Harmonized European Time Use Survey guidelines provide standards to classifying specific activities as volunteer work. The last wave of HETUS was conducted in 15 countries as well as Canada.

4. Instrument Design

The final set of recommendations build on the research of many countries who have been conducting volunteer surveys. There is no prescriptive approach to survey design however there are a number of design effects that are well documented. The intent of this set of recommendation is to document for survey developers some of the known difficulties.

i) Response rates affect volunteer rates

An important advantage of sharing intelligence is to learn from others' mistakes. Many of us have had to learn the hard way about the bias around self selection favouring participation of those who actually volunteer. We have seen first hand in Canada and U.S. that a major collection woe is overcoming this perfectly reasonable reaction on the part of the respondent to believe..."I do not volunteer therefore I do not need to respond." Isolating non response from non volunteering is tricky. Certainly respondent relation approaches are critical to overcoming some of these issues. The Danish for example communicate their survey as "Danish view on society" and so there is no mention, at least up front,

about volunteering. Both Canada and the U.S. have experienced this first hand and in-depth papers are available describing the magnitude of this issue.⁹

ii) Coverage and universe

There are a host of coverage and universe issues. For example in Canada we do capture volunteering to international organizations that took place both inside and outside the country. However we cannot survey people who are working outside the country at the time of the survey collection. In the case of Australia, volunteer work done for international organizations in Australia is included however work done outside Australia is excluded. This distinction is important when thinking about the satellite accounts where unpaid work done in the country would be included -- but unpaid work for another country is not.

The motivation behind volunteering can complicate the decision as to what should be considered in scope. The definition of formal volunteering is somewhat blurred when you take into account mutual obligation activities. The Australia research explicitly excludes these activities by asking specific questions. The rationale is that these cases are compulsory actions and are not activities given willingly in support of others.

Meaningful country to country comparisons can really only be achieved when the universe has similar characteristics. Most countries do select a representative sample of individuals living in private dwellings. Although the age range of eligible respondents does vary, most of the surveying begins at either age 15 or 18 years and is not capped.

Proxy reporting is another consideration. The 1995 Australia experience of asking one member of the household to answer on behalf of the household resulted in under reporting. Their research found that people are unaware of voluntary activities done by others. In 2000 they changed their approach to a random selection of one member of the household and revised their 1995 estimates accordingly.

Reference period is another critical decision in designing a survey. It is important to have a reference period in which respondents can reasonably recall their volunteer activities. This can be difficult when the period is a long time. Many surveys use a reference of the past 12 months mainly due to short collection windows, however further work

⁹ Evidenced referenced in two documents -- Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians, Special note on data quality, Catalogue no. 71-542-XPE, Statistics Canada, June 2006. The effects of Survey Nonresponse on Inferences About Volunteer Work in the United States, Katharine G. Abraham, University of Maryland and NBER, Sara Helms, University of Alabama, Stanley Presser, University of Maryland.

needs to be done to better understand how respondents with infrequent volunteer activities should be prompted.

Volunteer rates are known to fluctuate depending on different survey approaches. Decisions about mode of collection (telephone, paper, face to face), reference period, collection duration (seasonality) and whether it is a targeted study or part of an omnibus survey will impact the resulting rate. Achieving one standard methodology for collection around the world is not realistic, however just raising awareness as to the different methodologies being used will go a long way to untangling factors influencing outcome measures. Improving intelligence on how to interpret the results based on known methodology influences is important. This calls for comprehensive survey documentation that would describe specific approaches being adopted in each country.

Appendix I. Inventory of Measurement Approaches using Household Surveys

Survey	Collection Mode	Collection approach	Response Rate	Volunteer Rate
Australia Volunteer Work Survey (part of the General Social Survey 2006, Bureau of Statistics)	Face to face 13,500 sample of 18 years + Reliable detailed state data and national data 12 month reference	Unpaid voluntary work using prompt cards describing non-profit type of organizations	89.7%	35.4% (34.1% after exclusions applied)
Australia Volunteer Work Survey (part of the General Social Survey 2002)	Same as above with sample of 15,000	Same as above	88%	34.4%
Survey of Volunteer Work Survey (part of the Population Survey Monitoring) 2000	Face to face Collected over 4 quarters 18+	Same as above		32%
Survey of Volunteer Work (supplement to Monthly Population Survey) 1995	Face to face 18+	Same as above		24% (adjusted to correspond with 2000 methodology, original rate by proxy was 19.4%)
Giving Australia 2005 Australia Government	Telephone survey of 6,209 respondents	Similar approach except by telephone	40%	41%
Australia has other sources of information. The Census of Population and Housing 2006 included four questions about voluntary/unpaid work. Their Time Use Surveys include a self-completed diary and a				

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Task Force

Survey	Collection Mode	Collection approach	Response Rate	Volunteer Rate
single question defining voluntary work and multiple response categories by organizations types. Their Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey asks about active involvement in types of groups and specific volunteer activities				
Canada Survey of Giving Volunteering, and Participating 2004 (Statistics Canada)	Random Digit Dialling, sample size of 20,832 respondents	15 questions based on behavioural prompts asking about certain activities that are defined as volunteering	57%	45%
Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating 2000	Labour Force Survey supplement with a sample size of 14,724 individuals	Same as above (minor revisions to prompts)	63%	27%
Canada collects volunteer information through the General Social Survey Time Use 2005. This is a random digit dialling telephone survey of approximately 20,000 households with respondents selected aged 15+. Direct questions “in the past 12 months did you do unpaid work for an organization?” yielded a volunteer rate of 34%. The 24 hour diary information is coded by volunteer activities and resulted in a volunteer rate of 15%.				
Danish 2004 Giving and Volunteering Survey (Survey View on Society)	Telephone and personal visit Sample of 4,200 persons Aged 16-85	Direct question on volunteer work in last 12 months and field of voluntary activity	75%	35%
EU Statistics on Income Living Conditions, 2006	Modules relating to formal and informal participation.			

UNECE Experiment Group – International Volunteering Standardization
Task Force

Survey	Collection Mode	Collection approach	Response Rate	Volunteer Rate
U.S. Current Population Survey, 2006	Telephone and person interview supplement Persons aged 15+	Direct question, “Have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?” Follow-up questions specific to religious organizations, mentoring, coaching, help, community.		26.7%
U.S. Current Population Survey, 2005	Telephone and person interview supplement Persons aged 15+	Direct question, “Have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?” Follow-up questions specific to religious organizations, mentoring, coaching, help, community.	87.4	28.8%
U.S. Current Population survey, 2004	Same as above		86.9	28.8%
U.S. Current Population survey, 2003	Same as above		86.5	28.8%
American Time Use Survey , 2003, 2004	Sample from the Current Population Survey Persons aged 15+ Telephone	Some direct questions on volunteering	53.2	

European Time Use Surveys are conducted by 15 countries (Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, and Norway) and comparable data is available for volunteer work. A 24 hour diary is completed by a random sample and direct questions on voluntary work. The reported volunteer rates range from 6% - 17% depending on the participating countries

Appendix II. Summary of Measuring Volunteering Workshop

The following provides a brief summary of discussions at the Measuring Volunteering Workshop that was organized jointly by the UN Economic Commission for Europe Special Task Force on Volunteer Measurement and the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. The Workshop was held in Geneva, Switzerland from July 2-4, 2007. The meeting gathered together a group of technical experts on the study of volunteering, including Task Force Members, to discuss issues associated with the measurement of volunteering. The ultimate goal was to determine the feasibility of establishing a common strategy for measuring volunteer activity in surveys around the world.

A. Purpose of the Workshop

The purpose of this Workshop was to survey international experience in measuring volunteer work in order to advance two important initiatives under way to improve techniques for measuring volunteer effort at the present time.

- First, a special project launched by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in 2005 to explore ways to promote common approaches among statistical agencies to measure important social phenomena. The Task Force on Emerging Issues in Social Statistics in charge of this project, chaired by Statistics Canada, has selected volunteer work as the initial focus of this effort; and
- Second, a joint effort recently launched by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies to develop a *Manual on Measurement of Volunteer Work* to guide labor force statisticians in measuring volunteer work as part of official labour force surveys throughout the world. This Manual will be presented for review and potential adoption to the International Conference of Labour Statisticians scheduled to convene in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2008.

The Workshop brought together members of the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Volunteer Work and experts on volunteering from around the world to discuss the practical concerns related to the measurement of volunteer work. This included conceptualization and definition of volunteering, target measures of volunteering, survey platforms, instrument design, and accuracy of measurement. The Workshop helped to clarify some of the conceptual and methodological issues involved in measuring volunteer work and identified a number of recommendations.

B. Workshop Agenda

Why Measure Volunteering?

Presentation: *Robert Leigh, UNV*

Lessons of Recent Experience: UNECE Experiment Group

Presenters: UNECE Experiment Group Members
Chris Toppe, USA

Issues in Volunteer Measurement: An Overview

Presentation: *Lorna Bailie, Statistics Canada*

Issue I: Conceptual and Definitional Challenges—Toward a Common
Operational Definition

Presentation: *Wojciech Sokolowski, Johns Hopkins*
Tae Kyu Park, Yonsei University, Korea
Gustavo Verduzco, El Colegio de México, Mexico

Issue II: Key Aspects of Volunteer Work to Measure

Presentation: *Helen Tice, Johns Hopkins*

Issue III: Alternative Survey Platforms and Methods: Advantages and
Disadvantages for Volunteer Measurement

Presentation: *Meta Zimmeck, Volunteering England*

Issue IV: Instrument Design (Survey Content)

Presentation: *Michael Hall, Imagine Canada*

Issue V: Correcting Bias

Overview of Issue: *Tom Dufour, Statistics Canada*

C. Workshop Recommendations and Conclusions

1. Greater collaboration and sharing of expertise on survey approaches.

There are a number of volunteer studies being conducted around the world and yet there are no adopted standards to define and measure volunteer activities. Attempts to compare volunteer rates from one

country to another or within countries are problematic. An agreed upon definition and measurement approach should be established to ensure not only comparable estimates but also to improve the quality of these estimates. There was agreement that the standards should be established through a leadership framework rather than through a directorship approach.

There are a few countries with extensive expertise in measuring volunteer activities and there are others who are only beginning to develop it. There is now an opportunity to build on the existing knowledge and influence new research by generating a set of recommendations. There was interest in establishing an informal expert group towards this end. Given the synergy between the Task Force work and the Johns Hopkins / ILO initiative, it was felt that the development of standards could be shared across the two projects. A final point was one of awareness of the degrees of work already taking place. Using the Labour Force Survey as a vehicle to collect volunteer activities can be opportune for those countries who have not invested in extensive volunteer measurement. However for other countries already measuring volunteering, it is important to compliment this research rather than compete.

The ideal would be a recommended definition of volunteer work and modular collection approaches that fit the practical realities of survey funding and respondent burden. The library would include survey methodology, research and data quality recommendations that could influence countries around the world whether they are starting out to measure volunteer work or fine tuning their existing research.

2. Common definition for volunteer activity.

The definition of volunteer activity includes the concept of uncompensated activities done for the public good. A broad definition needs to be adopted that distinguishes formal volunteer activities (through an organization) from informal activities (activities benefiting the community done by an individual but exclude helping immediate family in the household). While including both formal and informal volunteering, countries may nevertheless wish to differentiate them. The term “household” will be problematic for some countries as it will be too narrow to capture the role of kin and more extended networks of relatives in many parts of the world. The definitions of volunteering should not exclude activities that benefit volunteers but do, however need to include as a key criterion that the activity benefits others. The issue of how to treat compulsory community service was not resolved.

3. Recommended collection approach through prompting on activities.

The direct question currently being used by many countries underestimates the volunteer rate. The question often worded “...in the past 12 months have you done any volunteer activities?” leaves it

up to the respondent to determine what activities are volunteer. Research has demonstrated that many respondents do not include activities that should be considered volunteering. Collecting the information through activity prompts provides control by defining for the respondent what is meant by volunteering.

4. Core variables to be measured

Surveys on volunteering should focus on the following topics and should allow for flexibility in terms of information needs, survey budget and respondent burden. A suggested order of priority is: Tier 1 -- Socioeconomic characteristics, volunteer rates, activities; Tier II -- institution, formal or informal, sector; Tier III -- motivation, barriers, and impact. It is recognized not every country will have unlimited funds to support the research and not all information needs are the same. Therefore an offering of a modular questionnaire design is recommended.

5. Survey Platform Opportunities

Survey platforms do vary however there was no specific recommendation for any one approach. There are opportunities in using the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) as a platform given that LFS are conducted frequently in many countries and are already collecting socio-economic data. Some disadvantages are the issue of respondent burden and the restrictions likely to be imposed on interview time, collection periods and sample size. General Social Surveys which many countries conduct frequently could also provide a common platform. Finally, Time Use Studies are especially frequent in European countries and could also be used as a platform to insert a set of established questions to prompt volunteer activity. This would be in addition to using the diary reported activities.

6. Instrument design issues that need to be addressed.

There are many instrument design decisions that can impact data quality. Although more research needs to be done to fully understand the impact, the following issues should be considered:

- a. How will volunteering be defined in the survey (e.g. work without pay? for an organization?)
- b. What recall cues will be employed (none, area, activities, activities-area)?
- c. How do number of cues and social desirability interact?
- d. How do number of cues and response / refusal rate interact (i.e. what is the optimum length of the survey)?
- e. What information is required about type of organization that people volunteered for?
- f. What is the appropriate unit of measurement?
- g. What is the appropriate recall period (a week, a month, six months, a year)?

7. Low response rates introduces a bias that can over estimate volunteer activity

There is demonstrated evidence that lower response rates introduce a bias and this appears to be a key issue for surveys of volunteering. The salience of the topic (i.e. the title of the survey) could have an impact on the ability to recruit non-volunteers to participate in the study. High rates of non response can reduce the accuracy of the number of non volunteers thus inflating the volunteer participation rate. One proposal is to begin surveys with questions about helping or informal volunteering because respondents would be more likely to report having participated in such activity and would become more engaged with the survey.

8. Estimating the economic value of volunteering.

Through collecting data on activities and hours one can calculate a replacement cost, or the costs that an organization would incur to find someone in the marketplace to provide the services. A range of approaches to costing were identified that include applying a general average wage rate to a specific rate by looking at each individual service performed. Another approach was trying to determine the wage rate for an occupation that would provide that service in the marketplace. A suggested approach was to value the volunteer activity according to the industry in which the nonprofit organization operates using North American Industry Classification System wage rates (e.g., health, religious, social assistance). This approach helps take into account the diversity of non-profit organizations. One can also include the cost of fringe benefits in the calculation of estimates. Valuing volunteering is important but in the interest of respondent burden and survey costs, it is important to design the questions and other parts of the survey so as to facilitate the calculation of the economic valuation of activities. Burden is increased when extra information such as sector or industry information has to be collected in order to assign a value.

Appendix III. Volunteer Workshop Participants

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UNECE Experiment Group – International Volunteering Standardization
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International Volunteering Standardization Task Force - Participants
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