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A Rationale for the Application of the Gift-Exchange Paradigm to Volunteerism by a Nonprofit Organisation In A Melanesian Culture

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Abstract

A number of Australian non-profit organisations (NPOs) operate in both Australia and in developing countries and rely upon local volunteers in each situation. It is important for these organisations to know how volunteerism by local people in developing countries compares to volunteerism within Australia so that valid assumptions underlie the work in different cultural contexts. While a considerable amount of research has been done on formal volunteering within Australia, to date there have been no comparable studies conducted on formal volunteering in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Formal volunteering is a relatively new concept for PNG people even though informal volunteering embodied in 'caring and sharing', is recognised as the 'Melanesian way' (Kidu 2000).

This paper reports a pilot case study of an Australian NPO working in PNG that uses local PNG volunteers in a number of its programs. The results indicate that understanding of formal volunteering in PNG may be significantly different to that in Australia. PNG people who work as unpaid volunteers are regarded by community members in mixed ways. They may be perceived by some as extremely dedicated, but by others as humiliating both themselves and their communities. To be called a volunteer can even be considered insulting.

A review of the literature relating to Melanesian culture suggests that the gift-exchange paradigm (Gregory 1982; Carrier 1991) may be a fundamental influence on attitudes towards volunteerism by PNG people. This paper proposes a gift-exchange model for assisting an NPO to make formal volunteering culturally appropriate in PNG.

Keywords

melanesian, nonprofit, culture, rationale, paradigm, gift, application, organisation, volunteerism, exchange

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**A RATIONALE FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE 'GIFT-EXCHANGE' PARADIGM TO
VOLUNTEERISM BY A NONPROFIT ORGANISATION IN A MELANESIAN CULTURE**

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ABSTRACT

A number of Australian non-profit organisations (NPOs) operate in both Australia and in developing countries and rely upon local volunteers in each situation. It is important for these organisations to know how volunteerism by local people in developing countries compares to volunteerism within Australia so that valid assumptions underlie the work in different cultural contexts. While a considerable amount of research has been done on formal volunteering within Australia, to date there have been no comparable studies conducted on formal volunteering in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Formal volunteering is a relatively new concept for PNG people even though informal volunteering embodied in 'caring and sharing', is recognised as the 'Melanesian way' (Kidu 2000).

This paper reports a pilot case study of an Australian NPO working in PNG that uses local PNG volunteers in a number of its programs. The results indicate that understanding of formal volunteering in PNG may be significantly different to that in Australia. PNG people who work as unpaid volunteers are regarded by community members in mixed ways. They may be perceived by some as extremely dedicated, but by others as humiliating both themselves and their communities. To be called a volunteer can even be considered insulting.

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INTRODUCTION

Volunteerism is seen by many to be a significant component of a society's wellbeing. Oppenheimer (2000: 10) considers the voluntary principle to be 'an integral part of democratic society' and describes it as 'social glue', while it is seen by some to be 'at the core of civil society' (Zappala, Parker and Green 2001: 3) and by others as a core component of social capital (Onyx and Leonard 2000; Putnam 2000; Robinson and Williams 2001). Korten (1990) places volunteerism central to societal and global development transformation postulating that transformational development will come from the leadership of 'individual citizen volunteers whose values and sense of their own empowerment free them from dependence on conventional economic and political rewards' (Korten 1990: 172). Raising the consciousness of people globally and mobilizing their inherent capacity for voluntary action is considered by UN Volunteers (2000) to be the single most important task for professional development workers today. Wilkinson and Bittman (2002: 18) see volunteering as a 'rich source of institutional renewal... [which] has the potential to build friendly alliances and forge bonds of fraternity well beyond the private sphere of kin and personal companions, thereby bringing sociability to the realm of our public institutions.' They believe that volunteering has the capacity to 'build bridges between strangers' due to its capacity for 'compassion, kindness and caring' (Wilkinson and Bittman 2002: 19).

The commonly accepted definition of formal volunteering in Australia today consists of four core elements as shown in Table 1. As Australian non-profit organisations (NPOs) that engage volunteers extend their work internationally and across cultures, it will be helpful for them to understand the extent to which these four core elements have relevance in other cultures' understanding of volunteering.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The first section in this paper discusses the common characteristics of formal volunteering in Australia today. The second section provides insights into volunteerism within Māori and Melanesian cultures. The third and fourth sections of this paper discuss a pilot research project of volunteering within an Australian NPO operating in PNG. A model for effective volunteerism, developed from this study and based on gift-exchange is then described. The final section considers implications for international NPOs working in Melanesian society and suggests areas for further research.

AUSTRALIAN DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

In Australia, two broad distinctions are often made when defining volunteering: *informal* volunteer activity and *formal* volunteer activity (Fahey 2003). Informal volunteering refers to helping others and comprises a significant part of overall volunteer time. Formal volunteering is defined by Volunteering Australia, the national peak body of volunteering in Australia, as

an activity that takes place in not-for-profit organisations or projects and is of benefit to the community and undertaken of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion; for no financial payment; and in designated volunteer positions only (Cordingley 2000: 73).

It is from this definition that the four core elements of volunteering have been identified (Table 1). First, in terms of free choice, volunteers are free to withdraw from the activity in which they have chosen to participate without seriously harming their own interests (Ware 1989) and there is no coercion or obligation related to the work (Cordingley 2000). Secondly, the concept of community relates to 'a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and have a cultural and historical heritage' (Delbridge, Bernard, Blaire, Butler, Peters and Yallop

2001). Thirdly, NPOs in Australia are separate from both the state and the market sector and exist solely for social purposes. Finally, volunteering involves unpaid work.

A profile of formal volunteering in Australia, drawn from the results of a recent national survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001), indicated that during the period from 1995 to 2000, formal volunteer rates in Australia showed significant growth for both sexes and across all age with very little difference between men and women being observed. Figure 1 illustrates the motives people stated for volunteering. Almost 50% indicated altruistic motives for volunteering, while just over 40% identified personal satisfaction. For the 18-24 age group, volunteering was also seen as a way to learn new skills and to gain work experience (13% and 17% respectively).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Formal volunteers in Australia work in NPOs which are 'formed by people to provide a service or advance an interest for themselves or for others' (Lyons 2000: 170). For every NPO that employs people to carry out this work, fifteen organisations rely entirely on volunteers. NPOs that employ people contribute the bulk of the sector's economic impact to Australian society, although the many that rely on volunteers make the greatest contribution to the sector's social capital (Lyons 2000).

NON-AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL DEFINITIONS

The characteristics of formal volunteering identified in the previous section represent what could be considered the Australian 'lens' for viewing volunteering. However, it is possible that different cultures may be using different lenses to view volunteerism. This could have significance for organisations that use volunteers within Australia but, more importantly, for these same organisations that have international, cross-cultural development aid programs. A brief review of literature that considers volunteerism in different cultural contexts follows.

Volunteerism in Māori Society

Contrasting perspectives on volunteerism are seen in studies of customary Māori culture in New Zealand. Tuwhakairiora Williams, in a study of social capital and voluntary activity in the NZ context, states from his personal experience as a Māori that '[European] concepts of volunteering are not familiar in the Māori cultural perspective' (Robinson and Williams 2001: 65). To gain insight into these differences, the four core elements of the Australian definition of formal volunteering will be used to make a comparison with Māori perspectives.

First, actions that are commonly associated with volunteerism and free choice in western minds, such as giving, caring and sharing, are driven, for a Māori, by a sense of duty and obligation and linked to responsibilities and reciprocal arrangements (Williams and Robinson 2002). The common ancestry and associated cultural norms result in the sense of obligation that underpins a Māori concept of service indicating that social obligations, rather than personal choice, drive 'volunteerism' in Māori society.

Secondly, Māori understanding of community has different connotations to western perceptions. Kinship is central to relationships and sharing takes place readily within communities that are composed of both immediate and extended families within tribes, because 'the (extended) family becomes the community and the community is made up of the (extended) family' (Robinson and Williams 2001: 55). Thus, traditional Māori values and norms are rooted in the family and the sense of common ancestry. Giving and sharing within Māori society occurs primarily within this community context and such activities are undertaken based on cultural obligation, not mere choice. Consequently, describing community work as voluntary work does not make sense, even though it is unremunerated.

Thirdly, in respect to organisation, the weaker kinship linkages within western societies can be contrasted with the stronger institutional linkages within these same societies that bring people together on the basis of common function and interest. A formal organisation is one device for maintaining commitment of a large group of people to an ideology (Ware 1989: 149). Formal volunteering in Australia takes place in and through organisations that 'exist to fulfil a social purpose' (Cordingley 2000: 73). However, in Māori society, as relationships 'develop around informal association rather than formal organisations' (Robinson and Williams 2001: 56) and these informal associations are built around the family, it would be expected that voluntary activity is less likely to be expressed through formal organisations.

The final element, non-remunerated work, is possibly the most conspicuous element of volunteering for Australians generally. People who participate in formal volunteering usually have their economic needs met and they have the skills needed to perform the work (Ware 1989; Carrier 1991; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001). Motives could vary from altruism to personal self interest, such as career enhancement as seen in Figure 1. However, traditional Māori society, together with societies of eastern Melanesia and the Pacific Northwest, is based on 'gift-exchange' economic paradigms where the personal relationships associated with the transactions are the focus rather than the objects of exchange, such as money or goods (Gregory 1982; Carrier 1991). Reciprocal obligations are central to the gift-exchange economic system. When Māoris participate in community activities without being paid, they still have a sense of 'sharing' in the benefits of the activities and of also having underlying expectations that their 'gift' of service will be reciprocated. As people from different cultural and economic backgrounds observe the activities of people such as Māoris and Melanesians involved in gift-exchanges or voluntary activities, they can either seek to understand it on the basis of their own individualistic, rational economic perspective (Malinowski 1922), or seek to understand it from within the local communal, social paradigm (Mauss 1966).

Volunteerism in Melanesian Societies

Informal volunteering embodied in caring and sharing is recognised as a natural element of Melanesian culture where volunteerism 'is manifested in many ways like the simple act of sharing food, visits to relatives, helping in community activities like assisting in repair of houses of neighbours and others' (Kidu 2000).

As in Māori society, reciprocity is a fundamental value within Melanesian society and as Pollard (2003: 46) identifies, volunteerism amongst Solomon Islanders is 'built on the spirit of communal living and reciprocity in customary practice'. Personal free choice may therefore be blended with a sense of obligation to serve within the community. In addition to customary values, the Christian ethos is also now a major influence on the lives of these women. Obligations to meet expectations within their churches may influence the degree of personal choice these women exhibit in volunteerism (Goddard and Van Heekeren 2003).

Pollard (2003: 45) attributes the 'ethos of voluntarism and the strategy of self-financing' as the factors that enabled these women's groups to continue to function and even flourish during the recent civil and political instability in the Solomon Islands and it is the more than one thousand grass-roots community women's groups operating voluntarily across the country that in practice 'constitute the only organisations with effective networks which reach down to and make links between village women' (Scheyvens 2003: 29).

For the majority of these women, the voluntary work they do is not remunerated. Social relationships are central in their lives and they freely sacrifice time, energy and resources. While traditionally the work has been unremunerated and activities often self-financed, there are increasing pressures to accept external funding and there are also increasing demands that all

voluntary work should be remunerated - which poses as a significant threat to voluntarism (Scheyvens 2003).

Women who engage in these women's groups, even though they receive no financial rewards for the work they do, are being empowered. They have an increased self-esteem and an increased sense of dignity as well as increased capacity to manage their personal lives. In some situations, opportunities have opened for women to actively participate in civil governance (Scheyvens 2003).

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper reports a pilot case study of volunteerism within an Australian NPO working in PNG, (the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA PNG)) which focussed on volunteers and staff within three program areas in which ADRA PNG is involved: Literacy, Small Enterprise Development (SED) and HIV/AIDs, as well as staff managing the Water/Sanitation program. The study was undertaken to gain further insight into how other cultures perceive formal volunteering and thus to help NPOs working cross culturally to make more effective use of volunteers.

Research methods included surveys, interviews and document analysis. The core data was obtained through written questionnaires and followed up by personal and focus group interviews. Those involved included ADRA PNG volunteers, supervisors of volunteers, management staff and board members. Table 2 summarises details of the 54 volunteers who responded to written questionnaires. Additional data was gained through a review of ADRA PNG's documentation on their use of volunteers. External comparison of ADRA PNG's perspectives on volunteerism was gained through questions asked by email to personnel in other organisations who had experience with using local volunteers in PNG.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

In both the focus group and individual interviews, a core set of common questions was used as a framework, along with additional specific questions relevant to individual responses. These interviews were used as opportunities to cross check answers from written questionnaires.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The approach of this section is to first present findings related to broader issues relevant to volunteerism. This will be followed by findings relevant to each of the four core elements of volunteerism. The pilot case study found that *formal* volunteering, as identified in Table 1, is a relatively recent phenomenon in PNG and is influenced significantly by local cultural paradigms. PNG people who work as unpaid volunteers for NPOs are regarded by community members in mixed ways. They may be perceived as extremely dedicated, or alternatively, as humiliating both themselves and their communities. The volunteers interviewed were working long hours for extended periods under very difficult circumstances, without remuneration, for the direct benefit of underprivileged people in their communities, including the illiterate, the economically disadvantaged and those exposed to HIV/AIDs. Many openly expressed deep satisfaction and fulfilment amidst these challenges. Some of the volunteers enjoyed the moral and material support of their spouses, families and communities, while many did not.

The term 'volunteer' is often applied in PNG in ways that causes confusion and tension to the volunteers themselves. This may arise 'because the notion of being called a volunteer is seen as 'insulting' ... this applies in everything - people must be valued as 'workers' rather than volunteers otherwise the work is a humiliation' (Robinson 2004).

Further, 'volunteering is a foreign concept that has yet to find its place in PNG' because 'in the traditional context even though we give some time to help family members it is not 'free' service.

We know that there will come a time when I will be in need and these people will come to help me - reciprocity works well here' (Koian 2004). Thus, community members could relate well to informal volunteering concepts but showed limited understanding of formal volunteering. In respect to the former, they explained their understanding by referring to specific words in Tok Pisin or their local languages. Examples of this are shown in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Volunteers working with ADRA PNG collectively demonstrated a knowledge of the four core elements of formal volunteering as understood in Australia and summarised in Table 1. This is seen from definitions provided during a focus interview with a literacy group as recorded in Table 4.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The majority of ADRA PNG staff who were involved in some way with local volunteers considered the term 'volunteer' to mean something different in PNG to what they understand it to mean in Australia. Some staff considered the difference between expatriate and local volunteering was that volunteers from Australia and other countries are paid for the work they do, while PNG people who volunteer are not paid. This understanding is reinforced by the fact that all expatriate volunteers who work with ADRA PNG are paid a stipend (as are other expatriate volunteers working in PNG).

Two themes regularly emerged in discussions with community members: first, that volunteering was commonly associated with generalised reciprocity concepts in which one good deed would at some time in the future gain a good deed in return, and secondly, reference was often made by older community members as to how Christianity had influenced their views on volunteering. These two

themes will be seen further as the findings are now discussed more specifically in relation to the four core elements of formal volunteering as defined in Australian society.

Element 1: Free Choice

A large proportion (42%) of ADRA PNG volunteers approached the organisation by choice (refer to Table 5). Of the remainder, 57% had been specifically selected and invited by ADRA PNG personnel to work as volunteers, but there was no evidence of coercion in any form. Of those asked to volunteer, 7% had been asked by a church pastor, and 11% by a community leader.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Seventy percent of the volunteers stated that they were involved because of their desire to meet people's needs or serve others and thirty percent stated because they loved helping others (Table 6). Twenty percent saw volunteering as an opportunity to develop themselves personally.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

While the written responses indicated predominantly altruistic motives for volunteering, in-depth interviews revealed that self-interest factors were involved as well. The response to ranking 10 items on cards showed that the item that was considered to be of highest importance to the volunteers was actually gaining career- enhancing experience, not helping other people (see Table 7).

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

This response was reinforced in the individual interviews where a number of volunteers revealed that they had personal goals and desires significantly different from the work they were doing as

volunteers and their expectation were that volunteering would help them achieve these goals. In contrast, supervisors of volunteers did not recognise, to the same degree, that self-interest was a prominent motivation for volunteers. The response of four supervisors to the same set of cards as referred to in Table 7 was that all except one rated 'helping others to improved their lives' as the number one item.

Self-interest motives for volunteering were also observed in some of the responses of a religious nature, where Christian long term reciprocity perspectives were seen to impact some volunteer's motives for volunteering. While they stated that love of God motivates them to serve 'freely' they also expressed belief that God is the one who will finally reward the volunteer who willingly sacrifices now:

Even though [volunteering] means giving free service to others in the minds of many, it is only selected for those who really love God and serve the people through humanitarian work, thinking blessing from God in return (ADRA PNG supervisor 3– individual interview).

Generally, volunteers working for ADRA PNG served freely without coercion to volunteer. However, the findings indicate that for these volunteers, self-interest was an intimate part of that choice.

Element 2: Community-Focussed Work

ADRA PNG's programs are all inherently community focussed, consequently all volunteers can be said to be involved in work with and for communities. 'Community' in ADRA PNG's perception relates to people living in close proximity in villages, (or groups of villages) or urban areas irrespective of the clan to which they belong or religious group with which they are affiliated. The most common reason supervisors gave for using volunteers was that volunteers have good local

knowledge and consequently could act as intermediaries between communities and ADRA. (see Table 8). They also considered that volunteers helped to ensure that the impact of projects will be sustainable through building self-reliant communities.

INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

While volunteer self-interest has been shown to be a clear motivating factor for volunteering, the most common reasons given by the volunteers themselves for volunteering (as noted in Table 8), was to help people in need and serve others. No distinction was made between helping people they knew (in their own community) and helping people they did not know (beyond their own community).

Support by local communities, however, towards ADRA PNG volunteers was mixed with only 22% of volunteers stating that being appreciated by others, recognised by the community and receiving support from the community or their church was one aspect associated with their work that had provided them with strong encouragement during the past month. Lack of support from community and family was identified by 33% of volunteer respondents as a factor contributing to discouragement (Table 10).

One of the most positive volunteer-community relationships was found with the water/sanitation program. ADRA PNG staff working on community water supply projects found that despite increasing requirement for community resource contributions for the development and installation of their community water systems, strong support of local volunteers from within these communities is experienced on these projects.

In contrast, a number of the focus groups struggled to identify positive community attitudes towards people who worked without being paid with one villager describing the stigma associated with

formal volunteering this way: 'A secretary or an accountant has 'gat weight', but a volunteer, 'no gat weight' '. The general perception from community members interviewed was that if a person was not being paid then it was probably an indication of their lack of education and their lack of skills.

Volunteers engaged with ADRA PNG were carrying out their work beyond family and clan boundaries. While they might not initially know the people in these communities personally, they had knowledge and understanding of these communities that ADRA management considered to be a significant reason for involving them as volunteers. Volunteers generally were well appreciated by the people that their work directly influenced, such as the learners in literacy classes, the women in the solidarity micro-finance groups, and the water system users. Broader community support for volunteers came in situations where, a) communities clearly expressed a need for the work being undertaken by the volunteers; b) community leaders strongly supported the project related to the work the volunteers were engaged in, and c) when well planned awareness programs were undertaken amongst the community members.

Element 3: Work Through a Non-Profit Organisation

Even though ADRA PNG is an NPO there were indications in interviews with volunteers that the distinction between a for-profit and a not-for-profit organisation was unclear in their minds. They observed the facilities from which ADRA PNG worked, as well as the equipment and resources used on the projects and perceived little difference between this NPO and any for-profit business in PNG.

Nevertheless, volunteers had clear expectations of ADRA PNG as an organisation. Forty six percent desired improvements in both the facilities they worked in and the materials and resources that they were provided with to do their work (Table 9). Thirty three percent expressed desires for changes in

organisation leadership and management. This included better policies and procedures, better coordination, better planning and better communication.

INSERT TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

Element 4: Work Without Remuneration

As previously noted, many of the volunteers and supervisors recognised that working without remuneration was an integral element of the concept of volunteering (Table 4). However, in response to the written question ‘What things would you like to see changed in relation to your work as a volunteer with ADRA’, 44% expressed a desire for having their personal financial needs met either through full time employment, an allowance or an increased allowance, pay, and personal insurance. In a follow up question of a similar nature with literacy volunteers in group and personal interviews, 75% expressed a desire for financial allowances to be paid in relation to the work they did as volunteers. Underlying tension is revealed in these responses, especially when it is also noted that the second most common reason given by ADRA PNG management staff for using volunteers in their programs was ‘volunteers are cheap, cost effective, can work efficiently and get a lot of work done, making the workload of staff easier’ (Table 8). In contrast to the above, when volunteers were asked to identify the causes of discouragement for themselves, the highest area of concern was not remuneration (35%), but inadequate material resources and facilities (57%), followed by poor management support (43%) (Table 10).

INSERT TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE

ADRA PNG’s approach to remuneration for their personnel designated as ‘volunteers’ is inconsistent. All volunteer literacy teachers carry out their work without any remuneration. The coordinators and trainers of literacy teachers, also called ‘volunteers’, receive an allowance

depending on their level of responsibilities. 'Volunteer' HIV/AIDS village based peer educators receive a daily allowance based on reported work. 'Volunteer' supervisors and trainers in the small enterprise development program receive variable allowances based on reported work. While the amounts paid are not high (K300¹ per quarter for the highest paid coordinator and K5.00 per day for those on daily rates), and significantly less than those working on a full salary, it is significant for the people who carry out the work. All expatriate volunteers working for ADRA PNG are paid stipends, and these are higher than the full salaries received by many local staff. This practice is consistent with other international NPOs engaging expatriate volunteers in PNG.

The differential treatment of volunteers is possibly one of the most significant factors contributing to motivation (and possibly work performance) of volunteers and is most likely a factor influencing the high drop out rates of newly recruited volunteers within the literacy programs (rates as high as 50% within 30 days of initial training were reported in interviews with supervisors). This differential treatment was clearly demonstrated in an unsolicited letter from one worker. The letter is reproduced here exactly as it was written:

For these past years with ADRA literacy, I've sacrificed my valuable time and money to do what is required of me but hardly get any support from the ADRA. Below are some of the things that ADRA literacy doesn't help in:

No financial support.

..to assist us in transport to and for to attend meetings, workshop etc because we are distance away .

..to assist us in buying Teaching Materials, even just doing photocopying of materials for my students.

..hardly, no Refreshment during workshop lunch break because we are not next to our home etc.

¹ One Kina (K 1.00) is equivalent to A\$0.45 at time of writing

I believe ADRA saposed to support us teachers financially too, and not just the co-ordinators.

Why should I continue giving reports to ADRA and they get paid for and leaving me surfer?

How far is the ADRA support for Literacy should reach, is it with the co-ordinators only and forget me? (10 March 2004, Personal letter from a Literacy Teacher).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this case study reveal that there are significant differences between the ways volunteerism is perceived by local people in PNG compared within Australia and that approaches involving volunteers have not adequately taken into account these cultural differences in understanding core elements relating to volunteering. To overcome the stigma associated with volunteerism in PNG and increase its acceptance by community members, it is important that ways are found to incorporate concepts of volunteering so that they fit in with local cultural paradigms, in particular gift-exchange. It is proposed that approaching volunteering using gift-exchange concepts may make volunteering more appealing and also enhance the status of formal volunteering in PNG. A model of formal volunteering incorporating gift-exchange principles has been developed based on the findings of this study.

As formal volunteerism involves two primary parties, the volunteer and the organisation, establishing and maintaining an appropriate relationship between these two is fundamental to achieving maximum cooperation. It is accepted that this relationship will be most productive if developed freely and without coercion. However, while no financial remuneration will be offered to the volunteer for work undertaken within the relationship, gift-exchanges that meet the interests of both parties, yet maintain the spirit of volunteerism, will take place, in harmony with reciprocity principles within Melanesian society. Three reciprocal pairs of 'gifts' are proposed with the assumption that for effective formal volunteering to occur, the volunteer's 'gifts' need to be

matched by appropriately corresponding 'gifts' from the organisation. This model is shown in Figure 2. The volunteer's 'gifts': factors A_V , B_V and C_V are matched reciprocally with the organisation's 'gifts': factors A_O , B_O and C_O .

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Factor A: Commitment - Valid cause

One of the key gifts a volunteer brings to the exchange relationship is commitment. The volunteers in this study repeatedly identified humility, patience, dedication, honesty, perseverance and endurance as essential qualities an effective volunteer would possess. This commitment came from people whom they described as having a 'heart to help others', people with 'extra vision', people who possessed 'faith with a vision' and, as identified in Table 6, people with a 'desire to help the needs of others'. This commitment is to an external need, not the organisation. and the 'gift' is the commitment to complete the agreed task, despite challenges faced in the process.

The organisation can reciprocate by articulating a valid cause to which the commitment can be directed. Careful planning and preparation is needed by the organisation to ensure that the cause it is supporting, and to which the volunteer is committing, is one that is genuinely meeting community expressed needs and has the support of community leaders. This model assumes that the organisation has a responsibility as part of its exchange commitment to the volunteer to work with community leadership to identify and promote this cause. This would help to raise the current low status level that volunteering experiences in many places.

In a gift-exchange process, selecting and identifying an appropriate gift for specific purposes is essential (Kuchling 1998). The organisation has a responsibility to ensure that the specific cause is expressed explicitly so that both parties clearly understand their respective responsibilities. It must

also be accepted that volunteer commitment changes over time and is influenced by relationships between the volunteer and the organisation (Hibbert, Piacentini and Dajani 2003). Further, commitment may arise from a sense of obligation to the volunteer's immediate community (family), to an institution, or from a religious conviction (Robinson and Williams 2001; Barker 2003).

Factor B: Explicit Personal Need/Goal – Flexible Support

The findings of this study (Table 6) are consistent with other studies in demonstrating that volunteers have a variety of motives, both altruistic and self-motivated for volunteering (Cox 2000; Geroy, Wright and Jacoby 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001; Zappala and Burrell 2001; Zappala et al. 2001; Hibbert et al. 2003; Strigas and Jackson Jr 2003). The volunteer gift-exchange model considers that it will be beneficial to the volunteering experience for volunteers to explicitly identify their reasons for volunteering and turn these into clear personal goals, thus helping them to focus their energy and provide an appropriate gift to contribute in the exchange relationship with the organisation. As this study has indicated, the reasons people engage in volunteering may not necessarily be directly related to the immediate volunteering situation. It is assumed within this model that if the volunteer makes this goal clear early in the relationship building process with the organisation (such as during recruitment interviews), then both the volunteer and the organisation will be in a better position to decide whether or not a relationship should be entered into and if so, what is the most appropriate gift the organisation can give in reciprocation.

As its reciprocal gift to match the volunteer's personal goal, the organisation provides direct support to help meet, where possible, the volunteer's interests. To do its part, the organisation will need policies that are flexible enough to cope with meeting individual interests, yet delineated clearly so as to be sure that boundaries are known and understood and that promises are not made that cannot be fulfilled. As part of this gift-exchange commitment, the organisation will provide resources to ensure a certain level of support and recognition for the volunteer, with the understanding that doing

so would not compromise its mission, values and obligations to its stakeholders. An example of such support and recognition could be the provision of skills training with appropriate certification. Volunteers placed prime importance on receiving training and gaining experience that would build skills to help their career (Table 7).

Factor C: Relevant Capabilities – Appropriate Resources & Credible Recognition.

Volunteers in this study considered that a volunteer 'performs her task in her specific skilled areas' (Table 4). Supervisors of volunteers identified volunteer's capabilities in respect to 'knowledge of local communities' (Table 8) as being the most important reason why ADRA PNG uses volunteers. This leads to the final gift the volunteer brings to this gift-exchange relationship – relevant capabilities. One of the key reasons that volunteers in this study had little status was that the community did not recognise their capabilities. In many instances, volunteers clearly lacked qualifications and experience hence giving reason to the community's attitudes. This model assumes that for volunteers to be effective their talents will match their specific volunteer assignments so they will be working in areas of their strengths (Buckingham and Clifton 2002) and therefore capable of carrying out the work they commit to do in their communities.

The final gift from the organisation that reciprocates the volunteer's gift of relevant capabilities is the assurance to provide all the necessary resources for the volunteer's work. This gift includes suitable materials and equipment as well as appropriate management and capability enhancement support. Table 9 identifies that all these aspects were of significant interest to the volunteers in this study.

The prime factor identified as a cause of discouragement by 57% of the volunteers in the study was shortage of resources and materials and inadequate facilities (Table 10). Comments made during the personal interviews indicated that attention to this factor will help to increase the status of the

volunteers in the eyes of the communities in which they work and also minimise concerns of volunteers in not being remunerated.

Another resource within this third gift is management support. Almost 50% of the volunteers in the study cited poor management support as a cause of discouragement for them (Table 10). This was identified specifically in areas of communication, work planning and coordination, as well as perceptible interest in them as volunteers. The gift-exchange model assumes that the organisation's gift would include management support for volunteers of the same quality as would be given to full time employees of the organisation thus assuring volunteers of the genuine nature of the relationship. In view of the fact that volunteers are not being remunerated, attention to this gift would be critical in ensuring volunteers are motivated to excel in their work.

While this model assumes that volunteers will bring to the relationship relevant capabilities, it also assumes that there will also be need for ongoing development of the volunteers relative to work assignments as constant learning is needed to meet daily challenges. Further, it may be possible to find people who desire to volunteer and have talent but lack formal qualifications and specific skills needed to carry out required work. Enhancing volunteers' capabilities through increasing their knowledge and further developing their skills and emotional qualities relative to their work assignments is in harmony with this third gift of resource support which the organisation brings to the relationship.

Receiving some form of recognised certification for any training completed was seen as a high priority for volunteers in this study (Table 7). This would enhance their credibility in the eyes of their community and so as part of the organisation's third gift, finding some way to provide recognition would contribute to motivating volunteers to work effectively.

CONCLUSION

This pilot case study has provided a strong indication that people's understanding and acceptance of formal volunteerism is influenced by culture. This has important implications for the way NPOs manage volunteer programs cross culturally. In PNG, while people may choose to volunteer for an organisation and express altruistic reasons for doing so, self-motivated reasons are often present as well. This is being influenced by both basic survival needs and cultural factors.

The majority of volunteers interviewed in this study were located in urban or peri-urban² areas of PNG. A large proportion stated that they faced considerable financial challenges to meet basic needs. It is extremely difficult for people to work for communities without remuneration when they are struggling to meet their personal and family needs for food, housing, transport and education. Unemployment is high in PNG, especially in the urban areas, with many people lacking the education and experience to enable them to gain employment. Consequently, they are often willing to work in voluntary, unremunerated positions with NPOs with the hope that this will be a means of helping them improve their employability. Evidence gained from this study indicates that it will be rare to find people willing to volunteer for an NPO in PNG, especially in urban areas, who do not have significant unmet personal needs. Consequently there would be expectation of remuneration in some form or another for work undertaken.

In respect to culture, both the review of literature and the responses of informants in this pilot case study indicate that, as in Māori culture, reciprocity is a deeply rooted part of Melanesian culture. Through gift-exchange, relationships are made and maintained. It is by giving that status is achieved since the person who receives the gift is placed in a debt relationship with the giver. However, there are clear obligations to reciprocate, either immediately or over time. Within this cultural paradigm, there is little place for giving without expecting anything in return.

² Peri-urban refers to locations in the edges of urban centres or in villages close to urban centres.

Consequently, working voluntarily for an organisation that is not part of this gift-exchange system is of no benefit to the one giving time and labour. Work that does not bring immediate return (through wages) or the possibility of return over time (as gift-exchange normally provides) is not considered honourable and contributes nothing to the status of the giver (volunteer) in the eyes of the community.

This study suggests that for NPOs to work successfully with volunteers within a Melanesian cultural context, it will be important that the local practices of gift-exchange be understood and taken into account. The importance of this extends beyond mere economic considerations to include social and political factors because its significance to PNG people may be intimately linked to the basic needs for survival.

To help formal volunteerism to be more acceptable and effective within a Melanesian culture, this study proposes a gift-exchange model. The volunteer and the NPO are seen as the two exchange partners. Both bring separate 'gifts' into the exchange relationship in the form of three matched pairs. First, the NPO provides a valid, community identified cause to which a volunteer can in reciprocation freely commit. Secondly, the volunteer comes with personal needs and goals which have been made explicit in the recruitment interview process. In reciprocation, the NPO seeks ways to flexibly meet those needs within the restraints of the broader situation while meeting the work requirements of the voluntary assignment. Finally, the volunteer brings capabilities suitable to the work at hand and the NPO reciprocates by further enhancement of those capabilities while providing the essential resources to carry out the work with associated credible recognition.

Equality between the partners in the relationship is not necessary, as the volunteer and the organisation have different roles and responsibilities. Through the relationship, the volunteer will make significant contributions and in turn will be benefited extensively. As a result the volunteer

will remain indebted to the organisation and the organisation to the volunteer. Each will freely value the gift that the other brings to the relationship. Inappropriate dependency need not develop, as in the process of exchange, the volunteers' potential as individuals will be enhanced, and their ability to contribute to the community will be recognised.

Further research into the relationship between gift-exchange and the four core elements of volunteerism could investigate questions such as:

1. What part does free choice play, in respect to volunteering, in a context where gift-exchange obligations exist?
2. For people whose social relationships are dependent on gift-exchange, what would be the effect of working voluntarily to meet the needs of people with whom one has no prior relationship?
3. How can NPOs that are operating within gift-exchange based cultures effectively motivate people who are working for them without being paid when, as an organisation they appear like a for-profit business and clearly manage significant budgets?
4. If the voluntary principle is truly 'an integral part of democratic society' (Oppenheimer 2000: 10), what would be the best way to promote volunteerism in PNG so that current stigmas are overcome and people who volunteer are highly respected and valued by community members?

This study is limited in that only people already working as volunteers were interviewed and these only within one NPO. To add validity to these conclusions it would be necessary to extend the population to encompass other NPOs, as well as people who are not already working as volunteers, and to also cover a wider geographical area, including other countries in Melanesia. It may also be helpful to test this model, using an action based research approach, and make appropriate

adjustments that will enable wider application and increased effectiveness for NPOs working with volunteers in Melanesian societies.

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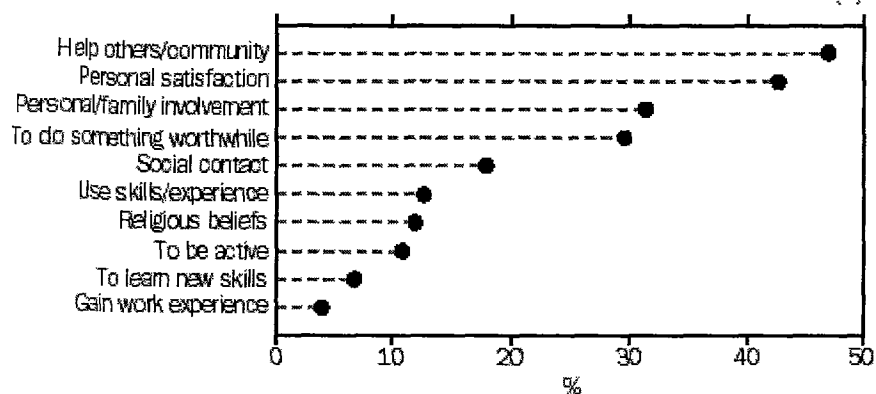
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Table 1: Core elements within the concept of formal volunteerism

-
1. A volunteer makes a free choice
 2. Work carried out is community focused
 3. Work is managed through a non-profit organisation
 4. There is no financial remuneration for the volunteer
-

Source: Cordingley 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001; Zappala et al. 2001.

Figure 1: Reasons for being a volunteer in Australia



(a) Volunteers may give more than one reason. Therefore figures for individual categories will not add to 100%.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001: 8)

Table 2: Summary of Volunteer respondents to written questionnaire.

Program	Location	Number Completing Survey				
		Provincial Coordinators	District Coord/ Supervisors	Trainers	Teachers/ Peer Educators	Total
Literacy	Central Province	1	2	2	14	19
Literacy	Morobe Province	0	2	0	9	12
SED	Morobe Province	5	10	0	0	15
HIV/AIDs	Morobe Province	0	0	0	8	8
Total		6	14	2	31	54

Table 3: Local expressions related to informal volunteering concepts

Expression in local language	Meaning of expression	Examples of usage
<i>'Pasin'</i>	'sharing'.	If you are eating food and another person doesn't have any then you feel obliged to 'share' your food with the other person.
<i>'Rimasib'</i>	'someone helping someone else'.	Such as helping older people to fetch water or firewood; helping a widow build her house; helping neighbours to build a fence around their garden. Traditional birth attendant's work was also expressed within this category. <i>Rimasib</i> relates to an individual or group context and has short or long term focus.
<i>'Geamsao'</i> or <i>'work helpim'</i> .	'helping others'	This is the name given to a women's community help group within the Lutheran church, and a boat owned by the church was named this to indicate the same.

Table 4: Definitions of formal volunteering given by volunteers during a focus group discussion*.

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- ‘A volunteer performs her task in her specific skilled area with her heart and is committed to meeting the community’s needs at anytime.’
 - ‘To do something without earning something or expecting to take.’
 - ‘A person who comes to help without charging you anything.’
 - ‘Somebody who works, but not expecting anything in return.’
-

* Focus group interview – Literacy volunteers, Central province.

Table 5: Extent of choice in decision to volunteer

Question:	Options:	Response
		%
1. How did you become a volunteer working with ADRA PNG?	a. It was my choice to be a volunteer and I approached ADRA PNG	42
	b. I was asked to be a volunteer	<u>58</u>
		<u>100</u>
2. If you were asked to be a volunteer, who asked you?	• Pastor	7
	• Village/community leader	11
	• Parent/relative	0
	• ADRA worker	57
	• Other Person	<u>25</u>
		<u>100</u>

Note: Responses from written questionnaire. Total respondents = 54.

Table 6: Reasons persons work as volunteers with ADRA PNG

Reason given:	Response
	%
1. To meet people's needs; to serve others	70
2. It is my desire to help others; I love helping people; I want to share the love of Jesus	30
3. An opportunity to develop personally – increase skills/knowledge	20
4. To help people to know Jesus Christ and the Bible	9

Note: Responses from written questionnaire. Total respondents = 54. Multiple answers were possible, therefore total does not add to 100%.

Table 7: Items associated with volunteering considered in mean rank order of importance
(Ranked by the volunteers themselves from most important (1) to least important (10)).

Rank	Item	Item	Item
		mean rank	stdv
1	Receiving training and doing work that will build skills to help my career	2.4	1.1
2	Receiving training to help me do my work better	3.0	1.5
3	Helping other people to improve their lives	3.9	3.0
4	Receiving certificates following training sessions	5.2	1.9
5	Being given all of the resources I need to do my work well	5.4	1.8
6	Being given a reference from ADRA	5.7	2.4
7	Receiving pay for the work I do	6.5	2.9
8	Receiving appreciation from my supervisor	6.7	2.2
9	Having a job that my family and friends think is good	6.9	3.1
10	Being praised by my pastor or some other important person	9.3	1.0

Note: Responses from personal interviews. Total respondents = 12. Highest rank score = 1. Lowest rank score = 10.

Table 8: Reasons given by ADRA PNG management staff as to why ADRA PNG uses volunteers*

Reason	Percentage of total responses [*]
1. Volunteers have good local knowledge of communities (custom, culture, language, lifestyle) and can thus act as a bridge between ADRA and communities.	28
2. Volunteers are cheap, cost effective, can work efficiently and get a lot of work done, making the workload of staff easier.	24
3. Volunteers help to ensure the impact of projects will be sustainable through building self-reliant communities.	8
4. Volunteers provide opportunity for people to help others and do good things for other without expecting anything in return.	6
5. Volunteers are able to demonstrate the love of God	4

*Total number of respondents was 11. Multiple open ended responses were requested. A total of 50 responses were obtained. These 50 responses were then consolidated into the above categories of reasons. Some singly reported responses are not reported.

Table 9: Areas in which volunteers desired ARA PNG to make changes

Area of desired change	Percentage stating change issue *
1. Increased opportunities for professional development	48
2. Improved facilities, materials and resources.	46
3. Personal needs met (especially financial).	44
4. Improved leadership/management.	33
5. Personal credibility	24

*Total number of respondents = 54. Questions were open ended. Answers were grouped into the above categories. Multiple answers were possible, therefore total does not add to 100%

Table 10: Factors contributing to discouragement of volunteers

Cause of discouragement	Percentage stating discouraging cause*
1. Inadequate material resources and facilities	57
2. Poor management support	43
3. Inadequate personal financial support	35
4. Lack of support from community and family	33
5. No sense of achievement	26
6. Poor relationships with co-volunteers	7

*Total number of respondents = 54. Questions were open ended. Answers were grouped into the above categories. Multiple answers were possible, therefore total does not add to 100%

Figure 2: Model for Effective Formal Volunteering Incorporating Gift Exchange.

