



# NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING

“VOLUNTEERING IS AN IMPORTANT EXPRESSION OF CITIZENSHIP AND IS ESSENTIAL FOR DEMOCRACY. THE COURSE TAUGHT ME THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO SUCCEED.” – ZAMBIAN PARTICIPANT

Cuso International and VSO have developed the concept of 'National Volunteering' to encourage people to understand, influence and own the development of their countries and communities. It's a powerful 21st century volunteering approach that puts local citizens at the heart of development of their communities by increasing their voice and participation in decision-making.

Cuso International is the North American strategic partner of VSO, a global alliance of Voluntary Service Organizations. Across the world, National Volunteering (NV) helps Cuso International develop exciting projects with young people who have so much to offer their communities.

For example, in Mindanao, an area of the Philippines facing ongoing conflict, our partner organization Kapamagogopa Incorporated is helping young Muslim volunteers work with peace organizations on emotional and economic resilience programs. Here, NV has been adopted as a strategy to forge peace.

We also help partner organizations talk to decision-makers and ensure that laws and policies support volunteering, so it can take place legally, safely and effectively.

For instance, a volunteering bill in Mozambique was ratified by parliament in December 2010. The VSO Mozambique office played a key role in this process, bringing together representatives from government and civil society to draft the bill. The law will support local volunteers – particularly women who provide home-based care to those living with HIV and AIDS – because it defines their rights and recognizes the contribution of volunteers to Mozambique's development.

Our experience shows us that National Volunteering is a cost-effective and creative way to deliver programs that have a major impact on alleviating poverty.



## HOW DOES NV WORK?

Cuso International uses its expertise to help overseas partner organizations run their own volunteering schemes. We don't directly recruit local volunteers but support more than 200 National Volunteering (NV) partners in more than 35 countries worldwide, helping them create and coordinate their programs. We provide technical support and training on volunteer program development and management.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Because National Volunteering (NV) works in step with international volunteering and other development initiatives, it can have an even greater impact in alleviating poverty.

NV has enabled Cuso International and VSO to continue to make an impact where international volunteering is no longer possible, for example, in Zimbabwe and Pakistan.

## CAMEROON

In Cameroon a Cuso International-backed education program is changing deep-seated attitudes towards the value of education for girls, with the result that many more girls are regularly attending school and continuing their education.

In collaboration with its partner, Réseau des animateurs pour l'éducation des communautés (RESAEC), the education program aims to widen access to high-quality education in the far north region. The program recruits, trains and supports national volunteers working alongside international volunteers.

National and international volunteers are creating Mothers and Teachers Associations (MTA) which go from village to village addressing barriers to girls' education within the community. Once an MTA is formed, volunteers undertake a range of activities to build capacity within the association. These include providing training in women/children's rights and leadership, helping MTAs to create income-generating activities, and organizing literacy classes.

The training provided by volunteers has several tangible results: communities are able to secure funds to pay school fees, ensure that birth certificates are issued so that girls can take part in tests to qualify for secondary school and continue their education beyond an elementary level, and promote advocacy of girls' education within the wider community.

By working together, national and international volunteers share their experiences and learn new skills. This collaborative approach ensures that national volunteers remain in the community and continue the work after their international counterparts have left. National volunteers who take part in the program are valued by the community.

As a result of the program, the number of girls enrolling and remaining in school continues to rise. But what's most satisfying is that parents are realizing the worth and potential benefits of educating their girls and this change in attitude is evident throughout the communities where volunteers are active.

## MOZAMBIQUE

The approach our partner group Kubatsirana takes with its volunteers has ensured a steady stream of new recruits for projects aimed at reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS among vulnerable people in communities around the city of Chimoio in central Mozambique.

Kubatsirana is an ecumenical association that takes a holistic approach to reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS, as well as mitigating the socio-economic effects of the disease. In local dialect, its name means "to help one another."

More than 700 volunteers are mobilized through their churches to support people living with HIV/AIDS. The volunteers are trained by a government-licensed home-based care trainer before they can engage in any support work. The training covers three main areas: understanding HIV/AIDS, primary health care, and providing emotional support.

The organization supports volunteers with farming equipment, seeds, and income-generating skills training. It also provides uniforms and first aid kits, as well as offering ongoing support and training. It is an approach that has ensured continued engagement from the community, with a surplus of people wanting to volunteer.

One of the ways in which Kubatsirana gets local people involved while fighting the stigma surrounding people with HIV/AIDS is to organize family sports events. This includes a girls' football team that regularly attracts young women and orphans. Gardens tended by the volunteers also provide food and even medicinal plants for people living with HIV/AIDS.



## ABOUT CUSO INTERNATIONAL

Cuso International is an international development organization that works through volunteers. We have 50 years of experience promoting volunteering as a tool to fight global poverty and disadvantage. By supporting people who share their skills, creativity and learning with people and communities around the world, we are contributing to a movement of volunteers for the world. Visit [www.cusointernational.org](http://www.cusointernational.org) for more information.



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