

Modern Volunteerism in the Context of Community Work of CBOs¹: Is It another Form of Community Engagement?

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Abstract

Based on the author's² experience and field observations in community work and volunteering practice with Community-based Organisations (CBOs), the proposition that the new activism of modern volunteering is another form of community engagement is discussed in this paper. The author identifies task-centred and connection-centred volunteering as two forms of modern volunteering that the CBOs apply in their work in communities. The first form of volunteering does not promote active community connection and engagement because the volunteer action is very-much task-oriented, described, directed, controlled and supervised by the CBO. The latter however promotes a more versatile and reciprocity style connection in which all participants, volunteers, CBO and community, are actively, and almost equally, involved in all aspects of volunteering action. It generates an enabling community environment where everyone is closely connected among each other, and to internal and external community networks and institutional structures. It facilitates the work of CBOs to generate maximum positive outcomes of their work which benefit the wellbeing of entire community. Moreover, such a model of volunteerism also seems to be promoting an effective community engagement by which means the conditions are created for higher level of social capital to be accumulated within communities.

Keywords: Volunteering and Community Engagement, Task-centred Volunteering, Connection-centred Volunteering

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Introduction

The idea that modern volunteering is a form of community action, which connects people together and promotes and generates community benefits has already been widely recognised and documented. It has also been written that when the community members are closely connected with each other, communities are strengthened, individual and community benefits increase and people have better personal wellbeing outcomes. This understanding of the community benefits of volunteering informs the practices of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs). It seems to be guiding the actions of CBOs in the communities maximising the positive outcomes of their community actions for the benefits of individuals, families and communities. The practice experience of the author as a professional social worker with CBOs in community work is that, this new understanding of modern volunteerism has enabled many CBOs to move away from the traditional forms of volunteering, which focuses very much on involving volunteers in more direct service delivery-oriented tasks, to a form of community action oriented volunteering, which promotes community connection and engagement (Gamlath, 2017 and 2018). It seems that such a move enables transforming the work of CBOs and connecting communities into volunteering action alongside the volunteer and organisation.

This paper aims to discuss whether such an approach to volunteerism in the context of community work of the CBOs has become an effective form of community engagement. The proposition is that if CBOs apply volunteering in their work with a people centred meaning, moving away from traditional task-centred and service delivery orientation, volunteering itself simply becomes a successful strategy for an effective community connection and engagement. It will then, create conditions which promote healthy connections between CBOs and community, enable proactive community participation in local level community organising and development, and facilitate accumulation of higher level of social capital, which in turn produces better wellbeing outcomes for the entire community itself.

The discussion is undertaken as a “reflexive and reflective practice based narrative presentation”, for interpreting information and deducting inferences from practice, a widely applied technique in research-informed practice in professional social and community work (Payne, 2014; Yegidis, Weinback and Myers, 2012; Hardwick and Worsle, 2011; Gray and Webb, 2009; Trevithick, 2005). The information, which is qualitatively presented and interpreted, is drawn from the author’s extensive field practice experience with a range of CBOs of different scale as a professional social work practitioner. Some inferences are substantiated with the references to secondary sources. The key implication emerged in this discussion is that with the role of connection-centred volunteering applied by the CBOs in their community work, volunteering itself becomes another form of successful community engagement, which promotes higher level of social capital accumulation and enables proactive community participation in CBO activities from which the community itself benefits as a whole.

New thinking of community engagement

The wide-spread understanding of the key principle of community engagement is that, it guides community action to help people make connections, build and use skills, learn from other members of the community, and widen networks, (Ife, 2006; Kenny, 2006; Cox and Pawar, 2006; Pawar, 2014). From an organisation perspective, it describes how the organisation builds relationships with community members promoting connection, civil society and social capital so that the term ‘*community engagement*’ (emphasis added) itself suggests a two-way interaction on an ongoing basis (Hampshire and Healey, 2000).

From where have community engagement principles come? Is there a close connection between the empathic way of community engagement and social capital accumulation? The foundation of this thinking can be seen in the works of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1988) and Robert Putnam (2000, 2001). Bourdieu identifies capital under three different forms namely, economic capital, cultural capital and social capital, and defines social capital as the sum of the resources, actual or

virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In a different view, Colman (1988) sees social capital as a resource based on trust and shared values, and develops from the weaving-together of people in communities. Colman (1988) also saw social capital as a public good where the action of individuals benefits the whole, and conceptualised social capital as a collective asset of the group. According to Putnam (2000), which is widely regarded as the most popular confounded theoretical and methodological presentation that influenced much of the later work on the concept, social capital is a public good, the amount of participatory potential, civic orientation and trustworthy connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. It refers to features of social organisation and facilitates action and cooperation for mutual benefits. Putnam's work significantly differs from Bourdieu and Colman as his conceptualisation elevated the idea of social capital from a feature of individuals to a feature of large population aggregates as a collective trait functioning at the aggregate level.

The term social capital has however been widely used with slightly different interpretations (Woolcock, 1998). Yet, a few common references can be identified, for example, (1) the processes between people, established networks, norms and social trust, (2) coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit, (3) collective power of community bonds and networks, (4) building cohesive communities etc. (Cox, 1995, Ife, 2006; Kenny, 2006; Pawar, 2014; Pawar and Cox: 2006; Wilson and Mayer, 2006; Leong, 2008). Social capital implies promotion of the fundamentals of people's bonds in cohesive communities, which are, as Bauman says, merely unexplainable and inexpressible (Bauman, 2001). It is also about, again, as Berger and Luckmann (2011) explain in their classic treatise on knowledge construction, how the members of cohesive communities engage with each other and collectively define, construct, unquestionably share and continue the realities of such bonds, or in other words those unexplainable or inexpressible connections. Thus the

community bonds are a product of understandable human engaging, which accumulates as social capital in the form of broader social understanding, shared values and common consciousness of cohesive communities to which the members claim subjective attachment, identity and belonging even if they are sometimes geographically away (Ife, 2006).

Hampshire and Healey (2000) claim that, there has been a lack of sustained attention to the actual or potential application of social capital ideas in community work. Yet, our experience with many CBOs is that the endeavours of their activism in local communities seem to have converted the bonding, bridging and linking dimensions of social capital to workable framework of community work practice (Light, 2004; Kortan, 1990; Omoto and Snyder, 2009; Pawar, 2014; Gamlath, 2017 and 2018; Chanan and Miler, 2013; WCC, 2007). The basis of such endeavours is the recognition of community engagement as a value-based motivation in a situation of relatively high level of social capital embedded in community cultures and relationships in terms of norms, trust, reciprocity, sense of belonging, and mutual benefits. It is recognised as community strength, and CBO activism appreciates community strength as skills and knowledge of all people involved, and encourages volunteer participation to convert such strength to volunteering paying the way for new way of engaging, connecting and binding people and institutions together and working for a positive future of broadening knowledge, skills and experience through mutual benefits. This approach of CBOs to community work enables to look at different ways of interactions with volunteers, participants and target groups of the community-based activities. CBOs perceive new form of volunteering as sustained strategy of application and actual implementation of social capital ideas in community action. Potential outcomes, particularly in relation to bonding with family, close friends and networks, bridging both intra and inter community connections to wider networks within the community, immediate reference groups and to other local communities, and linking to institutions, businesses, different layers of government etc. are intended (Hampshire and Healey, 2000).

New way of volunteerism

The idea that modern volunteering is a form of community action, which connects people together and promotes and generates community benefits has already been already recognised and extensively documented. (Korten and Klauss, 1984; Korten, 1990; IAVE, 1990; Warburton and Oppenheimer 2000; United Nations, 2001; Omoto and Snyder, 2009; Leigh, 2011; UNV, 2020; Omoto, et al. 2012; Ahmadi, 2013); Eliasoph, 2013; Volunteering Australia, 2015; Gamlath, 2017 and 2018). It has also been written that when the community members are closely connected each other, communities are strengthened and individual and community benefits increase (Healy & Hampshire, 2000), and people have better personal wellbeing outcomes (Wilkinson, 1999). Therefore, the application of modern volunteering is possible to be seen as another form of effective community engagement and social capital accumulation. Central to the justification of this assertion is more comprehensive understanding of what modern volunteering is about.

What is the commonly agreed interpretation for modern volunteering action? Reaching a universal agreement on the interpretation of modern form of volunteering has not been an easy task. Leigh (2011) suggests that it is because the terms, which define volunteering, and the form of its expression vary in different languages and cultures, though the expressive values and norms could be common and universal. One of the earliest attempts to universalize the core meaning of volunteering can be found in the work of United Nations (UNO, 2001). They interpret that modern volunteering is an activity, which should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward, although the reimbursement of the out-of-pocket expenses of the volunteer is allowed, which is undertaken voluntarily, according to an individual's own free-will, and of benefit to someone other than the volunteer, or to society at large. This interpretation elaborates several aspects of volunteer action, yet implies the fact that volunteers may not benefit from volunteering. However, it is now widely recognised that volunteering brings significant benefits to the volunteer as well. For example, Volunteering Australia, an organisation which has successfully incorporated community volunteering into the

country's broad social and economic development, recognises volunteering as an activity which takes place through not-for-profit organisations or projects and is undertaken with volunteer's own free-will for the benefit of both community as well as volunteer (Volunteering Australia, 2015).

The Universal Declaration of Volunteering (IAVE, 1990) too interprets volunteering as a two-way process of benefits – to both community and the volunteer. In much broader context, they elucidate modern volunteering as a creative and mediating action. It enables building healthy and sustainable communities that respect the dignity of all people, empower people to exercise their rights as human beings and thus to improve their lives, help solve social, cultural, economic and environmental problems, and create a more humane and just society through worldwide cooperation. Furthermore, with an attempt to articulate universal nature and values of volunteering, UN Volunteers (UNV, 2020) perceived volunteering as a human activity, a basic expression of human relationships that occurs in every society in the world, recognising volunteers themselves as being an integral part of the very communities that they are supposed to contribute. While almost all of these interpretations of modern volunteering revolve more or less around an identical territory, broadly, all resonate that at the heart of volunteerism are the ideals of connection, solidarity and service and the belief that together the world can be made a much better place.

Volunteering and community engagement

In terms of the key purpose, the common position of the above interpretations of modern volunteering seems to be somewhat different from the way it had been seen in the past (Leigh, 2011). For example, traditionally, it was used to be seen as an act of charity, philanthropy or benevolence, and volunteer workforce as being part of the frontline workers helping organisations to achieve better outcomes of the task of service delivery. In that, the volunteer position was always described as a set of directed tasks so that, in many circumstances, it was the volunteer and the task that was viewed central, not the community. Contrary to that

understanding, the common position in modern volunteerism is that, it points towards community engagement with implications of reciprocity, connection, opportunities for establishment and expansion of networks, building of trust and participation (Omoto, et al. 2012; Etziony, 1993 and 1995; Huges et al. 2006).

Even in a very specific situation with very specific tasks where volunteering can take place, for example, a situation of crisis intervention in an incident of natural disaster, modern volunteering can lead to strengthen community connections and bonds (Omoto, et. al 2012). When the volunteers turn up for relief and recovery tasks in response to crisis, they not only help victims and repair physical damage, but also strengthen psychological intact of the community. Specifically, when volunteers turn out to show their empathic concerns, they provide visible evidence of the worth of victims and communities with solidarity, stronger bonds of connections and social capital. They help people realise the value of withdrawal from their investments in social capital in a situation of crisis. This positive impact seems especially likely when volunteers work to empower community members rather than simply providing for their needs (Omoto, et al. 2012; Omoto and Snyder, 2009).

Volunteering and connected communities

Some suggests that promoting volunteering is a powerful strategy to bring healthy community back into usual strength in circumstances where community connections and strength seem to be gradually depleting in modern societies (Etziony, 1993 and 1995; Huges et al. 2006). Omoto and Snyder (2009) explore who gets involved and why. They develop a three stage volunteer process model (VPM) and elucidate how effective the role of volunteering is in community action by which means community connections are strengthened. Once the connections are built up and strengthened, further generation of a process of ongoing reciprocal reactions between volunteering and healthy and connected communities is also identified. For example, having positive impacts on the (emotional) wellbeing of community members sets antecedents of promoting volunteerism which in turn enables experience the

consequences of volunteerism reiterating the wellbeing benefits of strong connections (Omoto and Snyder, 2009). In a broader sense, even the United Nations mission statement of volunteering echoes this process of reciprocal positive reactions of the link between volunteering and community connections as the power of modern volunteering which can create a better world through its contribution to build healthy and connected communities (UNV, 2020).

Volunteering and CBO action

Some writings on Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) highlight that the benefits of volunteering substantially inform and guide CBO practices in community work (Korten and Klauss, 1984; Light, 2004; Cox and Pawar, 2006; Leong, 2008; NAO, 2009; Pawar, 2014; Gamlath, 2017 and 2018). The fact that it maximises the positive outcomes of their actions for the benefits of individuals, families and communities has also been substantially discussed (Etzioni, 1993 and 1995; UNO, 2001; Principi et al., 2014; Volunteering Australia, 2012 and 2014; Rochester et al. 2016; UNV, 2020). Oppenheimer (2008) and Omoto and Snyder (2009) explain that, this understanding of modern volunteerism has enabled many CBOs to move away from the traditional, service delivery-oriented form of volunteering to modern community action and connection oriented volunteering. It seems that such a move enables transforming the work of CBOs and connecting communities into volunteering action alongside the volunteer and organisation (Hedley et al., 2005; WCC, 2007; Oppenheimer, 2008; Omoto and Snyder, 2009; Rochester et al., 2016; Chanan and Miller, 2013; Etzioni, 1993 and 1995). Therefore, CBOs can now be seen as being at the forefront of promoting community connections and collective strength through their strategic application of modern volunteerism in community action. The way in which CBOs apply modern volunteering is developmental and rights-based so that it brings engagement and connection into spontaneous action with no authoritative directions, charitable or benevolent provisions. Therefore, the role of volunteering in CBO functions always reflect the agenda of promoting rights, positive attitudes, values and principles. It is driven by the vision of the organisation, connects to its mission and culture and

remains throughout the community action. It recognises everyone involved as having needs, wants, skills and strengths so that the focus of employing volunteerism is broadened to be more open accepting all members of the community who would like to engage. This approach may not only strengthen connections, and hence social capital, but also help to include community members who need to be involved and help themselves.

It is however unrealistic to expect that every community-based organisation or programme applies modern form of volunteering in its true dimensions (Eliasoph, 2013). Realistically, it depends largely on the vision and culture of the organisation or programme which involve volunteers in community action. However, particular aspect of the tasks that volunteers perform may sometimes have different emphasis in different community work contexts. With this view, our experience suggests two different patterns of volunteering applications in community work, one still being much more conventional, directive and predominantly task-centred while the other being more modern, participatory and predominantly connection-centred. The community engagement principles driven volunteerism may therefore require intentional application, as it will not always be automatic. Often, it is very much situation and context specific, though some aspects of community engagement can happen without an intention of deliberately creating it.

Task - centred volunteering

If the reality is that, not every programme or CBO would promote community engagement principles through volunteering, it is important to know scenarios of programmes that may truly not make modern volunteering action another form of community engagement. In other words, culture of certain CBOs or community work programmes would not promote volunteering in terms of a new approach for the purpose of creating an enabling environment for peoples' active involvement in community action and connection among each other. Instead, they would demonstrate returning to traditional ways of volunteering,

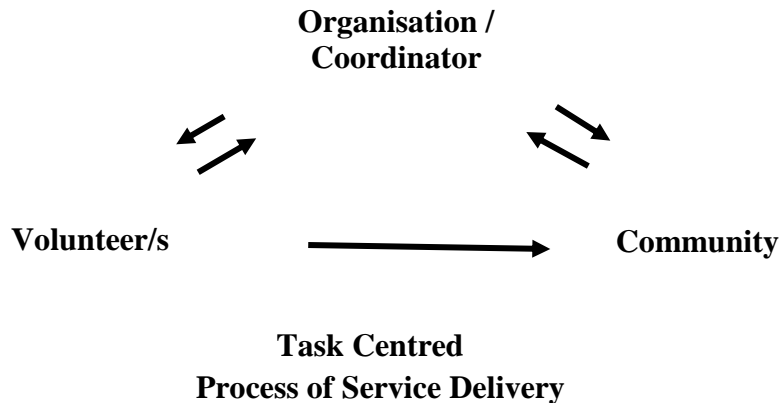
directing and focusing on the task, not the community, or perhaps even volunteer.

In such scenarios, volunteering in community action is highly likely to be applied making decisions not based on approaching potential clients to find out what they identify as their needs and not asking the community how they would best likely to be involved. In addition, having activities that set rigid directive role for volunteers and, as such, no individual strengths and initiative can flow from the volunteers or allow creative ideas to be used would not elevate volunteer action. Moreover, setting a dividing-line between who the volunteer is, who the client is, and who the staff member is, would fail all people involved in community action to see the norms that hold them together on the same level. It will also create no opportunity for community members to connect with each other and to the volunteer so that the volunteer role may function in isolation. Delivering a service to clients in the context of the volunteer being isolated and hence service delivery flow becomes unidirectional does not support or recognise reciprocity and community participation in volunteer action. This can be seen where no attributes are given to clients receiving a service, their strengths and skills are not recognized as important or a potential part of a reciprocal relationship. Besides, forming volunteer groups in such a manner may have barriers in the way in which different members of the community participate and develop no links established to internal or external structures which facilitates creating community networks.

The volunteering in community action with those characteristics emanates from organisational directives and the task is described, controlled and supervised by the organisation itself. Stimulation for volunteers to be involved in the task would, as most stories of the volunteers say, simply become only a subjective satisfaction they have by doing something in the community or contributing something back to the community (UNO, 200; UNV, 2020; IAVE 1990; Volunteering Australia, 2012, 2014 and 2015; Gamlath 2017). For many older volunteers, it is just for breaking a situation of loneliness during their

retirement, coming out of isolation and getting involved in something in the community (WCC, 2007; Volunteering Australia, 2012, 2014 and 2015; Princip et al., 2014). The evidence in some other situations shows that the reasons for volunteering involvement are some personal benefits (i.e., individual outcome of the rational action of the individual) from the task they perform, for example, work experience, job training, field practice of study programmes, requirement for welfare benefit entitlement etc. (Volunteering Australia, 2015). In such situations, the volunteer action is very much specific task-centred and the real motivation of the volunteer is not merely community-centred. Such scenarios of volunteering that might not reflect community engagement principles (i.e., collective community benefits of the accumulated social capital) could be depicted in a simple model presented below (Figure 1).

Figure 1



Source: Author

In this model, identified as task-centred model of volunteering, the organisation or programme coordinator is the expert directing what has to be done in accordance with the agenda, which sets just a service delivery orientation. The measurement of the service outcome is calculation of numbers, for example number of volunteers involved, how much time spent, how many clients served etc. The volunteer provides a set roles and services to the client that is seen as being more weighted in

the volunteer “giving” and client 'receiving' the service. The volunteer gives feedback to the coordinator in a structured format and the coordinator gains feedback from the client. There are several key implications of this pattern of volunteering. For example,

- Organisation holds the knowledge and gives knowledge to the volunteers and clients.
- Volunteer position is seen as the key element of the volunteer program operation and a specific role for the volunteer is prescribed in a structured position description.
- Volunteer becomes a person who needs to be trained, is willing to give time and contribution by performing the role that is set.
- Volunteer has little or no say in the progression of the role or review of the outcomes
- Client is the service receiver who is placed in a different group and receives all benefits of the volunteer service delivery

In these instances, the true principles of community engagement are not allowed to surface and thrive. The opportunities for points of community connection surface are missed out. The members of the community involved as a part of volunteering action are constrained to participate in the process and hence become unable to contribute with many of their own potentials and initiatives. Volunteers are directed to deliver a service and the engagement principles are missed out in the process of volunteer action resulting in fewer opportunities for stronger community participation and connection. Generating benefits in this form of volunteering process applied by CBOs may involve service delivery to the community which may otherwise have been delayed or inefficient due to the lack of adequate funds for CBOs to employ paid staff for the task (NAO, 2009; Dekker and Halman, 2012; Rochester et al., 2012; Chanan and Miller, 2013).

Connection-centred volunteering

The extreme opposite to the task-centred model of volunteering is connection-centred model of volunteerism. It promotes true community

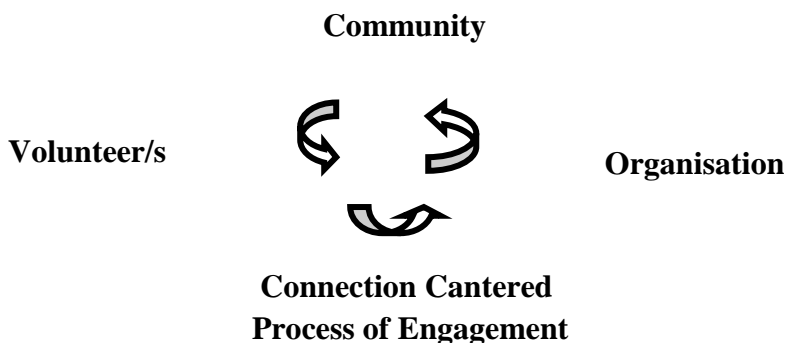
engagement principles, which enable a framework for inclusion of volunteers, organisation and the needs of all people that come into contact with and hence become involved. The volunteer groups sometimes emerge as homogeneous self-help groups in the community, involved and connected together for a collective purpose to achieve, through active performing of volunteering role without direction or coercion. In this way, the new approach to volunteering that would promote circumstances of engagement in the community action becomes culture of the organisation and community volunteering programmes (WCC, 2007; Oppenheimer and Warburton, 2014; Oppenheimer, 2008; Hardill and Baines, 2020; Chanan and Miller, 2013; Rochester et al, 2012; Gamlath, 2017 and 2018). It focuses on the volunteers, clients, participants, all as being community members, and all having skills and strengths to bring in.

The connection-centred model of volunteering can be seen as a paradigm shift in community volunteering with an orientation of reciprocity in relationships between volunteers and community members in the process. The organisation or programme form community groups based on the direct requests of the community members or thorough multi-faceted community needs assessment. The group creates opportunities for both volunteers and community participants to interact and engage in activities alongside each other. It facilitates an enabling environment for the group to become more inclusive, autonomous and empowered with a collective voice of common goals. The volunteers are recruited across different roles within the organisation or programme, informed of community connection oriented understanding of volunteerism, and resourced to participate in the entire process of planning and implementation. The entire group formulation process is planned to facilitate innovative ways of working in the groups where the role of volunteer becomes more or less a role of emphatic listener and facilitator. They are given opportunities with freedom to have ample time for assessing the needs and available resources within groups, making choices and decisions with careful concerns of not creating more isolation for community members participating in the programme

(Oppenheimer and Warburton, 2014; Oppenheimer, 2008). The entire volunteering process is made more flexible looking from a perspective of community opportunities to have their say and bring something to the group (Figure 2).

In this model, the individual is the expert on what they need and all community members involved have skills and strengths. The communication flow can happen across roles of volunteers, participants and clients involved in the growth of the group or volunteer role. The organisation is the facilitator or supporter. Key players and all aspects of the connection are inclusive and closely interconnected for interchangeable mobilisation of input contribution and benefit consumption (WCC, 2007; Chanan and Miller, 2013; Rochester et al., 2016). The key players of inclusive connection consist of individuals, community groups and the organisation. The reason why people will be involved in volunteering is valued and individual needs are recognised. They have an invitation to participate and contribute. This may reach community members who may not have realised that they become involved. Building relationships is supported. Relationships that already exist as well as strengths, skills and life experiences of each individual are recognised. Community groups share a common purpose, a shared goal. This may occur in varying degrees.

Figure 2



Source: Author

At one end, the group work directly together, set the purpose of group formation, and tries to achieve common goals. At the other end, a group of people meet and make networks (Gamlath, 2017). They do not come with a preconceived idea of what outcomes they would like to achieve. The organisation facilitates the role of people from the community working together, maybe to achieve a program outcome, and supports opportunities for a group to come together, maybe facilitating a social network between volunteers and clients and other service providers. The organisation is influenced by listening to, and facilitating what community members want. It supports opportunities while broadening choice and opportunity, seeks further backup and networks and, over time, changes due to the varying needs and wants of the community. It becomes flexible, allowing individuality of different people to come through their volunteer role and provides a link to debate and change. Further, it networks outside the community or amongst different communities.

When the people engage in collective community action, and become connected together through volunteering, it becomes another form of community engagement. It sets principles that guide CBO activism striving towards creating an enabling community environment (WCC, 2007). CBOs seek that it will be an environment where community action thrives with participation in aspects of the action (Gamlath, 2018). The community itself decides and prioritize the needs and the strategies for them to be achieved. CBOs may perform the role of facilitator at times and, as Ife says (2009), may be resource provider, trainer, technical expert, mediator, mentor, etc. at other times. In that community environment, CBOs are optimistic that new way of volunteering becomes the key strategy for reciprocity based community connections and engagement. The principles that promote and guide the CBO action are mainly identified along the following key areas of action (WCC, 2007).

1. Information - provision of information empowers local communities to make decision about how to be involved in their community and ensures people's access to appropriate

services and resources. Volunteering and community participation opportunities will be promoted broadly, so the community is informed of the ways that they can get involved.

2. Connection - connection with integrity of CBOs - there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of volunteering, that there is a willingness to trust the community's views, experiences and aspirations.
3. Inclusion - a diverse range of people in the community have a chance to be involved in the volunteering and have their say, and that community volunteering process seek to include and support those who may otherwise not be involved.
4. Cohesiveness - people have the opportunity to meet other people, form relationships with others when they get involved or have a say in the community. This will foster relationships between and within communities based on mutual understanding, trust and respect.
5. Influence - when people participate in the community or have a say, it makes a difference in the way things are done. Then the policies and services or the ways the organizations work in the community reflect the input and involvement of local people;
6. Accessibility - people who have difficulty to get involved and have a say are helped with cleared access to be involved;
7. Local - the opportunities to have a say and get involved in the community are available locally, and the resources available for community volunteering prioritize meeting the community participation needs, aspirations and interests of the local community, and

8. Sustainable - opportunities to get involved or have a say to have lasting community benefits, and the activities that meet current needs will have positive influence on community's ability to meet future needs.

These principles of connection-centred volunteering guide community action of the CBO and enables transformation of the new spirit of engagement of people. It gradually develops their capabilities and become empowered along the way of their own action, into pragmatic community benefits. In this way, the activities of involving community members in volunteering become another form of community engagement. Consequently, it generates enabling environment for bonding, bridging and linking which may in turn be seen as both an expression of an existing high level of accumulated social capital, and also way of increasing it further.

Conversely, this implies that the situations of lack of participation through volunteering may be seen as an expression of disconnection, lack of engagement and depleted social capital base. Moreover, it would demonstrate a community circumstance possibly where task-centred form of volunteering would be brought by the CBOs or programmes into community action as another way of providing for the needs of people. That volunteer action then simply becomes, instead of being another form of community engagement where people become capable of sustaining their own collective action for their own benefits, an alternative way of service provision, which is detached from the people, merely a one-way flow that is entirely task-centred, scripted, directed, controlled and supervised.

The connection-centred model (structure) of volunteering enables community members, including volunteers, become closely bonded and networked together, and develop obligations, expectations and trustworthiness. It creates a structure, which promotes close connection between and among people and enables community conditions for social capital accumulation, which, in conjunction with economic and human

capital, generates productive benefits to the participants in the community action through volunteering. Implication is that, higher the level of community engagement through the role of such a form of volunteering in community action, higher the level of proactive community participation in local level community organising and development, social capital accumulation, and overall community benefits being generated. One would not imagine receiving personal and community level benefits generated from a social structure, such as for example, task-centred model of volunteering, where close connection among the members through active participatory engagement is not promoted.

Conclusion

Reciprocal benefits between volunteer engaging in community, and the benefits it brings to both volunteer and the community have been widely recognised and documented. This understanding informs the approach and practice of Community-Based Organisations as they strive to maximise positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities, to re-think traditional approaches of volunteering, and make a paradigm shift to a new approach which promotes active and effective community engagement. In this way, modern volunteering has become a new way of community engagement. It promotes a set of principles guiding and helping the organisations to emerge with a community activism towards creating and sustaining connected communities and healthy social capital base.

Unlike the task-centred, traditional form of volunteerism, the new approach to volunteering, as a way of community engagement, provides a community connection-centred model of volunteering. It creates opportunities for local community to equally participate in a range of community activities and acquire capacities to achieve their own welfare and wellbeing, in partnership with CBOs but with much higher level of their own inputs. On one hand, it probably is an active involvement in local processes of community organising and development that affect their own lives, way of empowerment and capacity building, strategy for

sustained engagement and connection, contribution to building healthy civil society and higher level of social capital accumulation. On the other, the principles of connection-centred approach to volunteering guide bringing about a paradigm shift in CBO activism. It promotes moving away from the traditional task-centred approaches and structures, and looking at better ways to 'walk along side' communities. It enables a community environment where everyone is in close bonding, bridging and linking, not only among each other but also to the existing community networks and institutional structures as well. It makes CBOs striving for maximizing positive outcomes for individuals, families and community. The key implication of the overall process is then, the connection-centred model of volunteering becomes another form of more effective community engagement which enables strongly proactive community participation in local level community organising and development. Such a model of volunteerism seems to be promoting community conditions for higher level of social capital to be accumulated within communities.

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