Photo: Lance Cash, Volunteer Service Abroad volunteer in Honiara, Solomon Islands, 2014. Source: Volunteer Service Abroad.

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BALANCING DONOR PRIORITIES AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY FUNCTION:
A CHALLENGE FOR MODERN IVCOS

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forum

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Foreword

This is the fifteenth in a series of discussion papers produced by the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum), which follows on from our research work on trends in international volunteering and cooperation in recent years.

The paper examines ways that modern donor practices may challenge the alignment of international volunteer cooperation organisations (IVCOs) with the interests of civil society in partner countries. Taking into account the history of IVCOs since the late 1950s, it discusses key challenges within this context and also offers recommendations on how modern IVCOs can balance donor priorities while maintaining alignment with the sometimes oppositional role of civil society as a transformational driver of social change.

The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of Forum or its members, or of the organisation for which the author works. The responsibility for these views rests with the author alone.

Chris Eaton
Chair of Forum

About Forum

The International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum) is the most significant global network of International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations (IVCOs). Forum exists to share information, develop good practice and enhance cooperation across the international volunteering and development sectors. It promotes the value of volunteering for development through policy engagement, mutual learning and by sharing innovative and good practices. Forum is a "virtual" network, with a global membership that includes a range of organisations involved in international development, including non-government and state organisations.

Abstract

This paper examines ways that modern donor practices may challenge IVCOs' alignment with the interests of civil society in partner countries—particularly in circumstances where a strong focus on service delivery and poverty eradication limit support for grassroots movements aimed at transformational structural and social change. This thesis is presented within a wider context of IVCOs' historic development beginning in the late 1950s. Discussion and recommendations focus on how modern IVCOs can balance donor priorities while maintaining alignment with the sometimes oppositional role of civil society as a transformational driver of social change[1].

Introduction

In 2014, the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme commissioned a study on *International Volunteering and Governance* [1]. A key method used to inform this study was a review of Forum member reports and other published literature—the majority of which were published between 2004 and 2014. Following the review of Forum member reports, a few key questions arose for further research and discussion including: What qualities of international volunteer cooperation organisations (IVCOs) and volunteers allow them to be effective at strengthening co-productive relationships between governments and civil society? Under what circumstances might IVCOs decide to take a confrontational role, in partnership with more localised civil society organisations, to promote social change?

Proponents of international volunteering have long argued that IVCOs provide a number of comparative advantages over technical approaches and strategies implemented by other mainstream development actors [2]–[4]. These proponents assert that IVCOs offer viable "development alternatives" based on assertions of close alignment with the goals and priorities of civil society—thereby refocusing the nature of development from strict economic growth to the enhancement of relational and human abilities [3]. While some critics assert that nearly all international organisations threaten the development of indigenous and grassroots civil society organisations [5], advocates rebut that IVCOs maintain deep roots in civil society via volunteers who live and work in partnership with local communities—operating within a relationship-oriented approach that recognises the importance of innovation through mutual communication

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1   Although IVCOs may originate from any country, the IVCOs referenced in the paper are from countries with net governmental outflows for international development, rather than countries with net aid inflows.

and idea-sharing [2]–[4], [6]. With their closer connections to civil society, IVCOs can hypothetically maintain greater accountability to community groups, and may be less subject to political capture and upward pressures than many other international development organisations [7], [8].

Despite IVCOs' theoretical advantages over other state and market actors in civic space, an analysis of the contemporary reports from Forum members raises questions about the extent to which IVCOs have the capacity to genuinely align with civil society interests. In some instances, donor practices that constrain the organisations' focus to service delivery and poverty eradication may inadvertently cause them to neglect broader support for grassroots civil society movements necessary to drive transformational structural and social change [9], [10]. This concern is especially poignant for government-funded IVCOs, which may deliberately divorce themselves from contentious politics between the state and civil society in order to maintain government funding. While this may make good market sense, engaging with contentious political movements is sometimes necessary for maintaining alignment with civil society interests and priorities.

This paper seeks to unpack IVCOs' relationships within contentious civic spaces by first discussing the various missions of IVCOs, with a particular emphasis on their compound accountabilities to donors and local actors in civil society. It situates these multiple missions and accountabilities in historical perspective, reviewing how these missions have changed over time in response to the interests and demands of multiple stakeholders. Within this historical context, contemporary examples are used to illustrate how an environment of results-based management, which has increasingly dominated foreign aid over the past two decades, often drives IVCOs to focus their agendas in areas that may not necessarily be in the best interests of civil society.

The final sections of this paper suggest implications and recommendations for navigating contemporary trends, including how IVCOs can maintain accountability to multiple stakeholders—supporting the needs of civil society and empowering marginalised groups, while still appealing to donor priorities, and being accountable to donor results [11]. These questions have important implications for IVCOs working on governance and other sustainable development priorities as they work to "...promote access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" [12, Para. 18], [13].

The Multiple Missions of IVCOs

IVCOs are a specialised type of development organisation that operate within a range of sectors, from corporate and non-governmental to governmental and quasi-governmental organisations [14]. Across these different forms, 90 percent of Forum-affiliated IVCOs have reported that national governments are their primary source of funding [15]. In fact, many of the largest IVCOs are operated and managed as state agencies and would technically qualify as public sector organisations—though many also have complex funding relationships in the private sector. Other IVCOs are technically private or voluntary sector organisations but have a long history of collaboration and core funding from the state. Still others receive minimal to no funding from the state but rely primarily on contributions from non-governmental sources. IVCOs' sectors of operation and sources of funding are significant factors in this discussion because these variables likely influence their missions and the flexibility of their relationships with civil society.

Compared to other development actors, both public and private IVCOs claim advantages of closer alignment with local civil society organisations, people-centredness, participation and partnership-building as their raison d'être [16], [17]. These advantages are theoretically more relevant to non-governmental IVCOs. One of the traditional functions ascribed to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is to act as a countervailing weight against powerful forces, including the hegemonic state and the unfettered marketplace [18]. While governmental IVCOs may not necessarily carry the same obligations to civil society as non-governmental IVCOs, the issues discussed in this paper are relevant to all IVCOs that claim alignment with civil society as an important added value or comparative advantage that they bring to development programs and projects.

Depending on the nature and type of IVCO, their activities will span a full gamut of missions and priorities from sector-specific service delivery to advocacy and campaigning [19]. In a 2011 report published by UNV and the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS), the authors pose the question: "Is it more effective for volunteers to focus on filling gaps (e.g. supplementing inadequate public social services) or should they concentrate their energies on holding governments accountable for inadequate service delivery and demanding improvements?" [20, p. 11]. In reality, there are many additional activities that volunteers can engage in beyond these two options. For instance, capacity building and supporting consensus movements are central to many IVCOs' missions. Consensus movements emphasise multi-sector institutional support, and cooperation rather than conflict [21], [22]. Indeed, the most functional approaches to mobilising civil society typically aim to work co-productively with the state to improve governance through collaboration and mutual accountability [23], [24]. In many circumstances, government

action supports mobilisation and civic action [24]–[26].

In broad terms, IVCOs have both political and developmental roles in relation to civil society [9]. Political roles often involve an element of conflict directed against powerful forces, and include activities such as lobbying and campaigning, mobilising social movements, helping to build coalitions and supporting activism. In contrast, IVCOs' developmental roles are typically consensus oriented and include activities such as service delivery, capacity building, and emergency/humanitarian aid and relief. These activities are not mutually exclusive but fall on a spectrum of overlapping priorities. For instance, IVCOs' political and developmental roles intersect when their activities and missions are focused on empowerment for marginal peoples and social change—such as combating corruption, promoting human rights and strengthening social justice for the politically disenfranchised (See Figure 1).
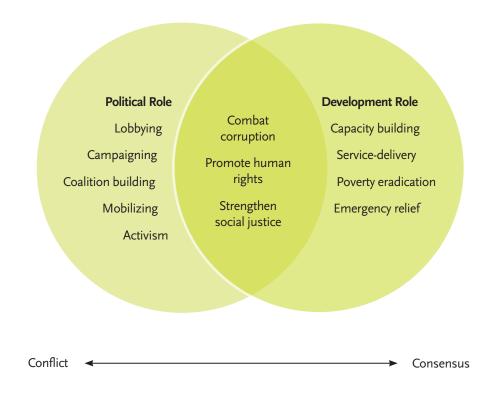

Political Role
Lobbying
Campaigning
Coalition building
Mobilizing
Activism

Combat corruption
Promote human rights
Strengthen social justice

Development Role
Capacity building
Service-delivery
Poverty eradication
Emergency relief

Conflict ⟷ Consensus

Figure 1: Spectrum of IVCOs' political and developmental missions

Scholars that research the various roles of development organisations often circumscribe political activities as fulfilling an organisation's "civil society" mission, while development activities are typically lumped with an organisation's "service delivery" mission [27]. This typology is somewhat problematic for IVCOs. For instance, capacity building—a

common development strategy among modern IVCOs—would not fit squarely within the typical definition of service delivery. Likewise, many IVCOs would consider their non-political activities as nonetheless supporting civil society. Despite the limitations of these broad categories, however, they are used in this paper to situate the discussion within the larger context of organisational theory as it relates to social and economic development.

The Civil Society Mission

The civil society mission defines an organisation's work to strengthen and support "the arena, outside of the family, the state and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests" [20, p. 8]. While both public and private organisations can ostensibly embrace a civil society mission, it is most commonly the mission of non-governmental organisations. Linkages between volunteers, ordinary citizens and larger social and political institutions fortify an organisation's position to help represent the voice of citizens, to protect their rights, to provide channels for citizen participation in governance, and to help hold the state and market accountable when the interests of vulnerable populations are compromised [1], [9], [20]. Because of this distinctive position, an organisation's civil society mission is seen as particularly important for promoting structural change, particularly when tackling issues of power and inequality.

As discussed above, the majority of IVCOs maintain a strong civil society mission—despite the fact that many are governmental or government-supported organisations. This focus is largely attributed to the role of volunteers along with their person-to-person approach and repeated engagement with individual citizens. This personal approach theoretically distinguishes the work of IVCOs from other governmental development programs that tend to focus on providing technical aid, delivering services and planning macro-structural interventions.

In their 2007 discussion paper, Plewes and Stuart listed the "civil society strengthening model" as one of the three key rationales for sending volunteers abroad—recognising that this goal is often overlooked or misrepresented [28]. Further characterising this model, the recent Valuing Volunteering research conducted by VSO and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) emphasised the importance of social reform as a core value of volunteers' contributions—beyond merely creating spaces for participation. As one example cited in this research, the secretary of the Philippine National Anti-Poverty Commission asserted that:

The most important of the areas for volunteering would be helping to organise the poor, providing intellectual resources and confidence for negotiating this new terrain. Helping the poor is not just helping them to participate effectively into invited spaces. It is about supporting the poor developing the capacity for collective action. The more capacity the better, especially because poverty reduction is not a picnic, there are many contentious issues. The poor have to have capacity in those contentious spaces [29, p. 35].

It is important to note, however, that the civil society mission does not always equate with contention, subversion or opposition to the state or market. Although IVCOs rarely take a direct political role in contentious spaces, some may work as advocates to enhance the political participation and activism of local civil society actors [19], [30]. Concerns about the civil society mission can arise in any situation where the Paris Declaration principles of ownership, alignment, harmonisation of donor actions and mutual accountability are not truly honoured [31]. In this regard, the civil society mission can also be neglected during partnership approaches whenever IVCOs are more concerned about meeting the interests of the state or donor than in meeting the interests and needs of civil society.

That said, contention is quite common in civil society movements, and marginalised populations do need capacity to engage effectively. The potential for IVCOs to strengthen civil society movements was highlighted in the most recent CIVICUS *State of Civil Society Report* [32], wherein UNV qualified that advocacy and campaigning are important modes of volunteer activity. This report cited a study of 843 diverse protests worldwide, which have increased in frequency each year from 2006 to 2013. The main grievances arising from these protests were economic injustice, denial of human rights, lack of true democracy, and failure of political representation, which validate the important role of social dissent in contexts when policymakers fail to prioritise the needs of their citizens [33, p. 14].

For many IVCOs, strengthening civil society to participate in advocacy and campaigning is a key strategic goal. However, it is rare for modern IVCOs to explicitly support potentially contentious movements that emerge as civil society priorities (e.g. activism, mobilising, coalition building etc.). More often, IVCOs' activities focus on encouraging participation, inclusion and dialogue in governance-related activities [30]. As one example, the Uniterra program "approaches governance from a perspective of strengthening civil society, both in terms of players working together and of the establishment of political dialogue" [34, Para. 1]. For other IVCOs, they may register governance as important, but do not explicitly work to strengthen civil society due to unsupportive political environments in the regions in which they are operating [1]. Still other IVCOs do not count strengthening civil society as an overt or important objective. For these and other reasons detailed below, service delivery

(construed broadly) remains the dominant mission for many contemporary IVCOs.

The Service Delivery Mission

It is now widely acknowledged that the state alone cannot address all social needs—particularly when the state is weak or under-resourced. Even in well-developed states, the increased flexibility, innovation, responsiveness and people-centred nature of voluntary and private sector organisations arguably carve a comparatively beneficial role in service delivery. A typical IVCO service delivery model uses volunteers to provide education, health care, humanitarian aid and other social and developmental services. IVCOs are also increasingly using volunteers to build greater capacity among local populations to more effectively deliver services. Service delivery is often viewed as an extension of the arm of governments that are unable or unwilling to provide services (via grant and contract mechanisms to the voluntary sector) [35].

While the work of volunteers in service delivery can certainly be highly beneficial to achieving development goals, critics have raised a number of concerns with focusing too exclusively on the service delivery mission. Common critiques assert that service delivery tends to reduce state obligations to provide services and has the potential to create dependency [36]. Less common critiques allege that providing temporary relief and social services tends to calm social unrest and discontent; however, this comes at the price of stifling social movements that are needed to stimulate true transformational social and political changes. Many examples in the literature highlight how voluntary sector organisations have explicitly misdirected or dampened social movements because of governmental and other donor agendas that aim to provide services at the expense of social change [36], [37]. According to these arguments, pressures from governments and other donors may enable IVCOs to excel in providing services but possibly at the expense of true alignment with civil society interests—particularly when activism is inconsistent with donor interests.

Even in situations where service delivery is not used to pacify social discontent, the focus on service delivery may counteract principles of ownership and mutual accountability, as objectives are often defined by donors' top-down priorities. As quoted in the summary report of the Valuing Volunteering research, "In Kenya, residents of Shanzu and Kongowea in Mombasa [Kenya] did not consider the possibility of taking collective action. They perceived development as something that was done to them rather than something they would direct themselves... [29, p. 42]." As this case example illustrates, because the residents did not feel a sense of ownership or control over the development

process—being recipients of services—they never legitimately entertained the idea of collective action as a viable method to meet their needs. As IVCOs negotiate the requirements and rules of the development marketplace, they need to carefully consider whether a focus on service delivery allows them to harmonise their activities with true civil society interests and needs [27].

Additional IVCO Missions

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the categorisation of IVCO missions into civil society and/or service delivery functions is not a comprehensive description of their actual work. For instance, while many IVCOs historically began with service delivery and humanitarian aid as primary objectives, they have increasingly moved toward capacity building activities, networking to enhance resources, and other innovative methods and interventions. In addition, not all IVCOs are secularly oriented; many have faith-based missions that are used to justify proselytising and aid activities that fall well outside of these two established categories. The typology presented above is not intended to be all-inclusive—but is used here as a heuristic tool to make a case for clearer alignment between IVCOs and civil society in situations where popular demands may not be fully compatible with donor priorities.

The Influence of Donor Priorities

It is not difficult to find historic and contemporary examples of development organisations that violate the Paris Declaration principles of ownership and mutual accountability—particularly when they follow donor agendas that are incompatible with the needs of civil society [37], [38]. Of particular interest to the thesis discussed in this paper, pressures from donors to engage in apolitical initiatives have the potential to significantly constrain the freedom of IVCOs, and to convert confrontational movements into consensus movements [9], [39]. This is especially true in political climates adverse to social activism, where laws are expressly created to repress civil society, or where threats to wealth and privilege are unlikely to support popular movements directed towards social change [40], [41]. While IVCOs typically aim to remain "compliant" with donor interests [42, Para. 873], they are often merely responding rationally to a system designed to support consensus movements.

On one hand, support for consensus movements is not an undesirable direction—in fact, a key message of the UN Development Group's strategy for delivering the post-2015

development agenda is to "proactively align multi-stakeholder priorities, including those of government, civil society, volunteers and private sector actors" [43, p. 18]. However, many stakeholders also note that a well-functioning civil society requires the freedom to express dissatisfaction through political activism and critical discourse in order to progress—particularly in contexts where poverty and inequality are rampant [9], [44].

While support for consensus movements is certainly appropriate in many circumstances, there are other circumstances where transformational social and political change is the most appropriate course of action. In these circumstances, we must consider whether IVCOs that consistently support the consensus model are truly able to meet the needs of the marginalised groups they claim to represent and empower. If IVCOs claim to align with civil society, they need to be markedly introspective, and critically appraise whether they are supporting donor agendas that may counter principles of ownership and mutual accountability.

Even when the needs of civil society are not politically confrontational, IVCOs may find it challenging to adapt and design programs to meet local needs when these needs are incompatible, or do not align well, with donor priorities. Scholars assert that modern funding decisions are de-incentivising the relationship-based and "people-centred" value base in international service; replacing it with managerial and technical rigidity [3]. With current conditions of results-based management, donors tend to focus on concrete measures of effectiveness or key performance indicators, which are largely relevant for short-term projects. These indicators are typically used to determine whether aid is perceived as effective. In such circumstances, IVCOs have a low incentive to focus activities on alternative development plans for long-term social change. The following section deepens the discussion of the potentially negative influences of managerialism and outcome measures on IVCOs' diverse development priorities.

New Managerialism

The environment of results-based management and new managerialism, which has dominated foreign aid since the late 1990s, has hypothetically been a significant driving force for IVCOs to focus their agendas on measurable service delivery activities [45], [46]. The term "new managerialism" refers to the management of the aid program and includes an array of donor activities that include a focus on measuring impact to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency, insistency on transparent and accountable records, and a reduction in core funding toward competitive contracting over traditional grant mechanisms [46]–[49].

While many donors, including national governments, seem to fully support the idea of a dynamic civil society, their emphasis on managed results sometimes makes it difficult for IVCOs to promote transformative development. To satisfy donor requirements, IVCOs are required to focus accountability on measurable outputs, outcomes and other functional targets, often overlooking less-easily measured but equally important goals such as empowerment, capabilities, livelihoods and well-being. Consistent with this view, many have argued that volunteering and other people-centred and process-oriented development strategies are incompatible with contemporary rational planning tools focused on outcomes over process – and thus should not be subject to managerialist measures and reporting requirements [10], [38], [50], [51]. As Georgeou has argued in her critique of neoliberal influence on development volunteering programs, in the late 1990s Australia moved its development aid focus further away from a rights-based, humanitarian understanding of development when it "instituted 'performance-based' programs, which made additional aid conditional on economic and public sector reform 'milestones' to be achieved by recipient countries". The new model required an increased emphasis on development through market liberalisation, thus taking aid delivery well away from its humanitarian origins [46, pp. 58, 62, 63]. Within the paradigm of new managerialism, there are concerns whether attempts to measure international volunteers' contributions against the MDGs (and the new SDGs) can ever accurately capture and convey the real practical and theoretical value of development approaches that are "people-centred" and "relationship-based" [4, 5].

Although accountability for results is certainly an important principle, a common assertion from both development organisations and hosting communities is that pre-specified outcomes and short-term donor requirements for measurable results often inhibit innovation and alternative development approaches [52]. Stakeholders express their concern that measuring progress according to pre-specified and depoliticised poverty indicators has significantly reduced the range of alternative development strategies that volunteer organisations might otherwise pioneer to tackle intractable problems [18], [53]. In addition, small organisations in particular have difficulty maintaining compliance with the high degree of paperwork required to sustain funding. For these and other reasons, many voluntary sector organisations remain open to audits to satisfy principles of accountability and transparency, but are increasingly opposed to the rigid documentation associated with contemporary donor requirements [42], [54].

Managerialism and results-based contracting have not always been the norm for IVCO-donor relations. The following section discusses historic changes in IVCOs' relationships with (primarily governmental) donors, and how these relationships have affected IVCOs' missions and activities in different historic eras.

Changes to the Civil Society Mission in Historical Perspective

Over the past sixty years, the relative merits of the state, civil society and market have greatly influenced the direction and priorities of the development agenda. Each decade seemed to bring with it new philosophies on the way to "do development". Donor policies are located in big historical movements, as are IVCOs' policies and priorities. While IVCOs' service delivery mission has always been a primary guiding force behind volunteers' activities, the relative emphasis placed on civic and political projects has changed over time—and has varied significantly across organisations. For instance, the goal of many early IVCOs included a strong emphasis on promoting and influencing peace and democracy, which is far less evident today.

During the early founding of most publically-financed IVCOs still in operation today, the global dialogue on international volunteer service focused heavily on its peace-related roles, and on establishing common interests and understandings among people of different cultures [55], [56]. The promotion of democratic governance and civic action were also commonly emphasised—particularly by the U.S. Peace Corps, which dominated the field through its sheer numbers in early years[2]. While it can be argued that Peace Corps' early focus on democracy was associated with Cold War politics [57], promoting democratic governance remains a priority for many modern IVCOs. However, their contemporary strategies typically include tactics such as heightening community-level engagement and participatory decision-making rather than initiating grassroots mobilisation and social action [1]. This section explores the evolution of philosophies underpinning IVCOs' development strategies as reflected in wider scholarship on development NGOs and the voluntary sector.

1950s-1960s

Many of the large publically-funded IVCOs (e.g. VSO, AVI, JOCV, Peace Corps, FK Norway, CUSO, etc.) emerged during the late 1950s and 1960s within a system of international cooperation that occurred alongside the growth of large transnational NGOs [14]. In

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2   Among the 17,000 international volunteers working in Africa, Asia and Latin America by the end of 1965, more than 12,000 were from the U.S. Peace Corps, followed by France (2,200) and Britain (900), and a combined 3,000 international volunteers from the other sixteen nations counted by ISVS [105, p. 137], [106]. Statistics published by Gillette (1968) also illustrate that other early IVCOs were relatively small in comparison with the Peace Corps [58, p. 184]. This proportion changed somewhat over the next decade. Despite the large number of international volunteers coming from North America (down to 10,000 in 1973), by the mid-1970s nearly 15,000 volunteers were represented by the combined European countries alone [81, p. 32].

the beginning, large-scale structural reform was not necessarily a priority for IVCOs; development was viewed primarily as a transfer of skills, and the newly-developed IVCOs provided opportunities for volunteers (predominantly university graduates) to staff and train social service agencies in the newly-independent countries [28, p. 2]. The prevailing development ideology in the 1960s assumed that economic growth was a technical issue, and that countries and communities following the "right" policies would experience growth. In this context, development volunteering had a straightforward, technical and skills-based role [46, p. 31].

As one of the first IVCOs to become formalised (in 1958), the UK's Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) focused almost exclusively on service delivery and skills transfer—with a priority placed on education, agricultural, industrial and medical services. The majority of other publicly-financed IVCOs that emerged over the next decade also held firmly to a service delivery mission, with some degree of specialisation by sector. For instance, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) and the German Development Service program focused primarily on agriculture, FK Norway focused largely on medical services, and VSO and the U.S. Peace Corps prioritised education [58, pp. 191, 193]. Volunteers were often discouraged from becoming actively involved in civic movements, even when these movements aimed to challenge open racial or religious discrimination. However, quite consistent with the approach of many contemporary IVCOs, volunteers were encouraged to help create an enabling environment for civic action. As an early VSO administrator described the organisation's philosophy:

> *Their [volunteers] work cannot and should not be thought of as a substitute for the action which needs to be taken at a political level. What they [volunteers] can do is help to create a climate of public opinion in which such action is seen to be right and necessary, and to reinforce it wherever possible [59, p. 209].*

Although the majority of mainstream IVCOs during this early decade focused heavily on service delivery, the U.S. Peace Corps maintained a clear secondary aim to promote democracy. The case examples in Box A showcase how Peace Corps administrators conceptualised their volunteers' roles in the promotion of democracy and political change. This view was originally quite distinct from the philosophy of many other IVCOs during the time, which focused on skills transfer. In Kouwenhoven's report to the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service (ISVS) comparing the policies of various international volunteer programs [60], Peace Corps volunteers were portrayed as much more likely to engage in the "activation of rural or urban communities and groups of people....and at the enhancement of the community members' participation in activities aimed at the raising of their standard of living in general" (pp. 8, 15).

According to the dominant development ideology, the tasks of community development and organising were viewed as distinctly different from technical assistance. During this era, Peace Corps administration frankly professed that economic growth and material gains were secondary to political gains [60, p. 15]. In the 1969 Evaluation of Volunteer Service Organisations published by the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service (ISVS), a senior Peace Corps executive, Ward Hower, described how their mission differed from many other IVCOs, including the German Development Service and Canadian University Service Overseas. Hower asserted that the "Peace Corps has as a basic aim the promotion of peace and friendship, and development is a very subordinated aim"; nonetheless, the connection between community organising and peace and friendship was not clearly articulated—particularly in connection with the U.S. political agenda at the time [61, p. 11], including a plausible state-driven political agenda to create civil society movements in Latin American as a way of making democracy more attractive— perhaps harnessing activism to advance U.S. national interests. In contrast, European and Asian agencies during this early era viewed their role as supplementing the work of governments, and applying their efforts to supply technically skilled manpower where needed to fill vacancies in organisations [59], [60].

Box A. The political mission of the U.S. Peace Corps in the 1960s

Embedded within the tensions of the Cold War, the U.S. Peace Corps had a meaningful focus on promoting democracy and social change during the 1960s [57], [107]. In 1965, the Peace Corps chief public relations officer, Robert Satin, stated that they aimed to recruit the kind of young people into the Corps who "can get thousands of demonstrators to turn out, because they have the kind of organisational skills that can make democracy work in underdeveloped nations" [108, p. 191]. Likewise, the early standardised training of the U.S. Peace Corps was composed of eight modules— two of which were focused on governance and civil rights including training volunteers on the "analysis of democratic institutions", and training on "World Affairs: to include contemporary international problems, Communist strategy and tactics, and America's role in the world scene" [60], [109, p. 33].

Although Peace Corps volunteers formally aimed to participate as neutral parties in politically-charged areas, many viewed the volunteers' teaching of community action as a significant ignitor of civic action. One example described volunteers' engagement with the civilian population of the Dominican Republic as "contributing to the political awakening of the Dominican people", which ultimately aided the rebellion to restore the constitutional government [105, p. 130], [110], [111]. This position was reinforced by other Peace Corps authorities. Harris Wofford, Associate Director of the Peace Corps in 1965, took pride in the notion that "young Americans teaching in their schools or working in their communities would be a real source of ferment, agents of change, if not of social revolution" [105, p. 130].

In his address to the U.S. State Department in 1965, the second Director of the Peace Corps discussed the importance of democratising institutions, asserting "This is also what the Peace Corps Volunteer is and does and lobbies for.... Everything about him, his reason for going there, his performance, his personality, what he's after, what he prays for, is revolution, is change, is democracy" [112, p. 8–A] as quoted in Wofford, 1966, p. 130. Although this statement is quite provocative, the concept of revolution may not be as radical as it seems. Frank Mankiewicz, who was regional director for the Peace Corps' Latin American programs in 1964, wrote a discussion paper on the community development philosophy practised by the Peace Corps in Latin America. In this paper, Mankiewicz explained:

> It may sound strange when I say that our mission is essentially revolutionary. The ultimate aim of community development is nothing less than a complete change, reversal – or a revolution if you wish – in the social and economic patterns of the countries to which we are accredited [110, p. 4].

Mankiewicz continued using an example of indigenous children oppressed in mainstream schools, and explained why a focus on service delivery in this context may be counterproductive:

> Where school children are insulted by their teachers and told that their own language is an ugly animal dialect, it is idle to build a school so that 20 more of those children can go through that experience and assume we've done Peace Corps work. That would simply be contributing to the preservation of a system that cannot last and must not last. That's why community development is essentially a revolutionary process, consisting of helping these outsiders to get in. Our job is to give them an awareness of where the tools are to enable them to assert their political power....if that situation is to change to one in which the great bulk of the outsiders become insiders, the non-participants become participants, and oppressed and forgotten become a functioning part of the country, then that is nothing less than revolution; and it is one that will be accomplished by political means [110, p. 7,9].

Although Cold War politics may diminish confidence in the agency promoting bottom-up social change, the activism agenda was also emphasised by its volunteers, who were perhaps less influenced by political manoeuvring. In a study conducted on the motives of 2,612 Peace Corps applicants in 1962, researchers reported that one of the volunteers' six primary motivations listed volunteer service as, "A laboratory in which the politically conscious can observe and take part in various kinds of social revolution" [113, p. 201] as quoted in Gillette, 1968.

1960s through the mid-1980s

For the next two decades, beginning in the late 1960s through the mid-1980s, supporting structural reform became a more explicit objective for many IVCOs. As with national voluntary sector organisations at the time, IVCOs sought a closer alignment with political struggles—seeking to demonstrate the relevance of civil society-centred strategies as an alternative to state-centred development strategies [18], [62]. Voluntary sector leaders were immersed in development theories and ideologies that aimed to empower communities by challenging the structures of oppression and elite control of resources [63], [64].

Although the terms of empowerment, equity and participation are still commonly used by many development organisations today, the meanings of these terms differ widely from how they were construed historically in practice and development theory [42]. International volunteers were described as arriving in countries with documented human rights abuses "to do battle" with offensive states [65, p. 259]. As external actors, voluntary sector organisations played an ostensibly important role as knowledge brokers to strengthen counter-hegemonic awareness or "critical consciousness" in civic and social movements [18], [66].

Resources officially budgeted for development projects were often diverted to support oppositional civic movements, and financing voluntary sector organisations was viewed as a way to distance governments from providing explicit support for these oppositional movements [18], [62], [67]. In other situations, IVCOs explicitly aligned with political agendas. As Dr Cliff Allum, CEO of Skillshare International, recalled:

> *At institutional level, the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR—now Progessio) consciously positioned itself as a radical wing of the Catholic church; International Voluntary Service (IVS—now Skillshare International) openly associated with the anti-apartheid struggle; United Nations Association International Service (UNAIS—now International Service) was rooted in the values and beliefs of the new world order as expressed by the values of the UN. [68]*

During the first international consultation held on volunteer service in 1970, participants from 14 countries from India and Zambia to Norway and Germany affirmed that many volunteers desired to serve abroad as a way of expressing their political sentiments. As the participants in this consultation summarised, young volunteers "should understand that for some, protest may be their service, while for others service may be their protest. By helping, they can develop the capacity for political unrest and social change" [55, p. 9]. As is subtly reflected in these comments, despite a broader acceptance of volunteers' support for movements in civil society, skills transfer and the delivery of services—particularly education—were often viewed as a way to artfully support these movements. This idea was more explicitly expressed by Peace Corps' Director Mankiewicz (1966):

> *The technical assistant has a vital role to play as well, because he is the man or woman who can string wire, train midwives, or lay those bricks and teach. His work will often mean that a community action project can get underway [110, p. 14].*

Although service delivery was still the primary aim and activity of international volunteers during this period, the provision of services was often an underlying activity that facilitated larger social movements rooted in civil society.

During the second ISVS international consultation on volunteer service, held in 1971, representatives of IVCOs from 12 nations (including the German Development Service, the Swedish International Development Cooperation, Peace Corps and CUSO among others) were even more explicit about the role of volunteering in civic movements—moving beyond a supportive role provided through skills transfer and service delivery:

> *We now accept the principle that volunteer service should no longer be preoccupied with industrialization, or introduce techniques for their own sakes, and that economic justice, and freedom from social and cultural domination are also goals toward which volunteers can and must work....We can boldly say that when a volunteer helps through animation to bring self-awareness to peasants or elites, or to develop 'intermediate' technologies, which limit alienation, he is engaged in a humanising process....If these are among the roles which volunteers can and do play, then continued submission to the view of volunteerism as merely the provision of technical expertise is unrealistic, and an intolerable wastage of voluntarism's real potential [56, pp. 16, 17].*

During this same consultation, the ISVS Secretary General, Chikh Sy from Ghana, asserted that volunteers promoted the expression of ferment and political voice in the African region, and that through the volunteers' mobilisation efforts, "peasants" were successful at speaking with the government about land ownership issues for the first time in many years. He asserted that these foreign volunteers "might be more easily accepted in the role as a catalyst than a native" [56, p. 11], and that working in collaboration with local volunteers they were eventually successful at organising over 35,000 peasants to speak about land reform and to participate in decisions about how to divide the land.

While some leaders at the ISVS conference insisted that sending organisations were to be neutral in political matters, others questioned the reality of this position, asking "Is it possible to be above politics in a local situation, since most of the host countries are in areas of great ferment, and are undergoing political and ideological struggle of wide consequence?" [56, p. 4]. Reflecting on his experiences during this era with International Voluntary Service in Mozambique, Dr Allum affirmed this position, asserting:

> *Whatever the formal position of the sending organisation, no-one could volunteer and be outside the political context. For example, international volunteers who went with IVS to Mozambique during the civil war would likely have been Frelimo supporters, whatever their technical role. [68]*

In politically-charged situations, volunteers supported by IVCOs formally valuing neutrality were often obliged to align with political movements.

Late-1980s to mid-1990s

By the late 1980s, neoliberal reforms and structural adjustment programming began to colour the aid landscape. These reforms resulted in a general reduction in the state's role, a strengthening of civil society and citizen participation, and the promotion of market mechanisms to advance liberal democratic values [46], [69]. Development organisations reported significant pressure from funders to ignore or avoid all political activity, and to focus on service delivery [70]. Scholars researching volunteer organisations noticed a "shift away from self-help, community development or campaigning work, towards the management of funded 'projects' or the direct provision of services" [71, p. 214].

While there were certainly exceptions, most IVCOs continued to support community development processes at the grassroots level, but became less willing to support local activism or advocacy efforts [18]. Due to governments' greater reliance on the voluntary sector during this period to provide services, including increased contracting of governmental activities to both domestic and international volunteer organisations, few activist and radically-oriented activities were supported [72]. As in earlier periods, however, IVCOs sometimes maintained a foot in service delivery, while also supporting oppositional civic movements. As one example in the late 1980s, despite the official closure of schools by the Israeli government, international volunteers were enlisted by women's groups in Israel to bypass official school closures and subversively taught classes in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank [73]. As another example, thousands of international volunteers in the 1980s were sent to Nicaragua to aid with agricultural development, engineering, teaching and other social programs. Many of these same volunteers later engaged in activism to support the Sandinista Revolution, and were supported by IVCOs such as Progressio [2], [74].

It was also during this period that many small, commercial and privately-supported international volunteer cooperation organisations emerged and began to grow in response to the neoliberal agenda and the consequent reduction of the state in service delivery [62]. As a result, the role of voluntary sector organisations in service delivery became far more explicit. As one example of the increasingly significant role that international volunteers began to play in service delivery in some countries, Slater [75] reported that, due to a shortage of physicians in Nicaraguan hospitals during the height of the conflict in 1986, more than 50% of the practising physicians in select areas were international volunteers, and more than 15% of health specialists in the country were international volunteers.

As both domestic and international voluntary sector organisations gradually began to move away from supporting popular movements, some scholars reflected on previous decades and argued that these organisations started to "lose their way" or "lose the volunteerism spirit" — becoming largely public service contractors, which ostensibly "compromised their innovativeness, autonomy, legitimacy, accountability, and ability to continue elaborating [development] alternatives" [18, p. 1707], [38], [76], [77], [78, p. 26]. Still other IVCOs moved away from both political activities and direct service delivery, refocusing their efforts on developmental strategies of skills transfer and capacity building.

Late-1990s to Today

Since the year 2000, the Millennium Development Goals and the associated poverty reduction framework have become the central orientation employed by most development organisations. State funding to voluntary sector organisations, including IVCOs, has largely turned to contracting for services—focused on delivering charitable and humanitarian goals over activist and social justice goals, thereby reducing the potential for volunteers to support movements designed to create systemic change. During this era, practitioners began to see a significantly diminished role for alternative development actors that had previously supported social and civic movements [10], [18], [70].

Despite this general trend, it is worth noting exceptions. For instance, in the early 2000s, volunteers with FK Norway worked with a left-wing political party and civil society groups in El Salvador to assist with party elections [79]. There are also a handful of contemporary examples of IVCOs that continued to explicitly support counter-hegemonic movements in civil society, such as Progressio's project designed to train activists in sexual diversity, and to increase awareness about the rights of LGTBI people in Nicaragua [80][3]. In addition, as will be illustrated later, many modern IVCOs continue to perform civil society objectives; however, these objectives are largely implemented as solidarity movements with local membership-based and popular organisations that can carry out activist agendas.

As early as 1978, nearly all large-scale IVCOs in U.S. and Europe were funded primarily by governments—with the exception of British and Canadian foreign volunteer services, which obtained around 50% of their funding from private sources [81, p. 28]. Despite the fact that these IVCOs were publically funded, most (perhaps with the exception of

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3   Progressio's funding scheme is far more diverse than many large-scale IVCOs: http://www.progressio.org.uk/content/how-we-are-funded, which likely helps to encourage closer alignment with civic movements.

German Volunteer Service under DED) still had "significant flexibility in their decision-making once the annual budget and program is approved" [81, p. 28]. Indeed, both IVCOs and their volunteers appeared to have greater flexibility to align with civil society group interests than they would in the modern context. While accountability to civil society is still a goal of many modern IVCOs, modern managerial approaches are contrasted with more flexible and independent experiences of international volunteers historically. As one example, scholars researching the Peace Corps program in rural Ecuador in 1985 concluded that these volunteers viewed themselves as largely independent from the interests and priorities of the U.S. government. This study described volunteers as:

> *Free agents, that is, their performance in the field is determined in greater measure by their own imaginations and value systems and by their own personal interpretations of what their roles should be than by the objectives of funding or supervisory agencies...far from promoting the particular interests of the U.S. administration [they] are more likely to pursue their own interests or the interests - as they see them - of their Ecuadorian communities [82, p. 545].*

Flexibility that IVCOs and volunteers often exercised over the spending of resources, and the self-determining control of their activities, started to change during the late 1990s when donors began to exert far more managerial conditionality and oversight over contracts [10]. Since the early 2000s, foreign aid budgets that support the work of IVCOs have often positioned the organisations as clients contracted to deliver services [46], and to advance MDG targets. While some aid streams also support projects aimed at promoting democracy, these projects are typically incremental rather than supporting deep transformational changes to politics and society—even when such changes are viewed as necessary for true progress [27].

Although research has found that one of the defining characteristics of volunteers' complementary contributions is a greater trust for international volunteers and IVCOs over other development actors [17], we might ask if such trust may be given too freely or misplaced when priorities may not necessarily represent the interests of civil society groups. While a number of contemporary IVCOs have reported contributions to governance that encourage the participation of marginalised people in decision-making processes as a means of representation [1], some have argued that this model is not truly able to fulfil the vision of democratic participation necessary to make genuine structural changes to processes that otherwise perpetuate inequality and oppression [19], [83].

Consensus and Confrontation Strategies

In reviewing the historical evolution of IVCO goals and priorities over the past half-century, it is important to emphasise that the dual goals of delivering services and supporting civil society were never polarised objectives for IVCOs. Supporting confrontational movements is not always, or even customarily, preferable to supporting consensus movements. As a matter of definition, confrontational movements (or conflict movements) have oppositional identities that campaign against groups with opposing views or objectives. On the other hand, consensus movements are "organized movements for change that find widespread support for their goals and little or no organized opposition" [84, pp. 273–74]. Rather than confronting or bypassing corrupt institutions in failed or weak states, cooperative collaboration between multiple actors in civil society, the market and the state is a common development strategy and a primary driving force to effectively deliver services [69]. This complementary role of volunteers as co-architects with other development actors was highlighted in the UN Development Group's strategy for delivering the post-2015 development agenda, which states "Volunteerism can be seen as a cross-cutting means of implementation, producing benefits such as capacity-building, empowerment and social integration" [43, p. 22]. Indeed, research that questions the value of confrontational tactics has found that securing funding for advocacy efforts is often more likely when proposals are approached with diplomacy and cooperation [8].

IVCOs' strategies to work in consensus with other development stakeholders, including the state and market actors, is likely preferable in most circumstances. The key challenge is that consensus-based strategies are not always the best solution to social change. It is important to ask whether IVCOs, which have historically been understood as having a distinctive role to play in development, may experience "mission drift" in situations where social mobilisation and confrontation may better reflect the true needs of civil society [18]. Likewise, regardless of the chosen tactic, it is important to consistently monitor how donor pressures to document measurable achievements to the poverty reduction agenda may be contributing to mission drift.

As illustrated above, services can be delivered across a spectrum of political to apolitical engagement [85]. Through capacity building, skills transfer and the provision of services to disenfranchised members of civil society, IVCOs can "neutrally" aid citizens as they work to hold state and market institutions accountable. In this sense, even if service delivery remains a primary focus over the coming decades in fulfilment of the post-2015 SDG agenda, IVCOs may still have a comparative advantage over other development organisations. Likewise, the contradiction that splits donors' and civil society's interests is often resolved in practice through the practical work of volunteers, who often have

their own motives and priorities regardless of the IVCOs' formal positions [86]. Through volunteers' personal relationships in communities, IVCOs can maintain their capacity to sustain a firmer grassroots orientation than most other development organisations. Through volunteers' hands on work with communities and relative independence in practice, IVCOs can maintain a distinctive and complementary role—regardless of donor demands and trends towards service delivery.

IVCOs and Membership-Based Organisations

Even with this comparative advantage, IVCOs are certainly not the most important actors in civil society. Individual citizens, community-based volunteer groups and membership-based organisations are far more fundamental actors when it comes to initiating and implementing structural social change. Membership-based organisations (MBOs), also called popular organisations, include political and religious volunteer organisations, self-help groups, cooperatives, citizen groups, and organisations formed during progressive social movements [87]. MBOs are largely composed of volunteer activists, whose work can be categorised under the general umbrella of non-formal and change-oriented volunteerism [20], [27].

Membership-based popular organisations can often respond better to the needs of civil society because they are financed by members, and are almost exclusively accountable to their membership [20, p. 26], [88]. Because MBOs are primarily accountable to local supporters, they have less pressure to remain politically neutral or to satisfy the interests of public donors [27]. Thus, civil society functions that aim to challenge or counterbalance state interests are often core to the activities of popular MBOs [49, p. 16].

Despite this potential advantage, it is rare for MBOs to survive long when they rely exclusively on membership or service fees without receiving external grants or other donor funding [89], [90]. However, few donors allow funds to be spent on activities that could be viewed as activism or advocacy—even when these are explicit goals for local civil society organisations [91]. Although MBOs often begin with downward accountability, this tends to change quickly as soon as they are subcontracted by funders to provide services [37], [92], [93]. As a consequence, local volunteer agencies and their umbrella groups report that they often feel captured by funders, lose their ability to engage in local struggles, and cannot maintain activities consistent with their original missions and priorities [38], [94].

This begs the question of how IVCOs might collaborate more effectively with MBOs—partnering to help them accomplish their goals. The virtues of collaborating with local volunteers and village-level workers have been stressed since the creation of international volunteer service programs in the 1960s [60]. In the modern context, such collaborations often operate at a surface level. To stealthily fulfill their civil society functions as an alternative development strategy, IVCOs may strengthen these partnerships by forming strategic alliances with popular MBOs, which are hypothetically far more liberated to act on civil society priorities [27]. Indeed, work with popular movements has the potential to greatly scale up IVCOs' civil society mission, as the energy and vitality that drives social change is typically concentrated in local civic groups [95].

With these partnerships in place, it is important not to conflate the priorities of IVCOs with the priorities of MBOs and popular civil society organisations. Although IVCOs often claim to represent the interests of civil society, the legitimacy of this claim needs to be critically considered when their funding comes primarily from state and private actors. In order to legitimately represent civil society, accountability should be focused downward toward members of civil society, rather than upward toward donors. Based on a 2011 survey of Forum member organisations, only 10% listed individual contributions as a significant funding source [15]. This reality suggests that the challenges inherent in MBO-donor relationships may also be extended to MBO-IVCO relationships. IVCOs that require their local partnerships to be structured along donor intervention plans also typically ask partner organisations to maintain reporting that conforms to their donors' conditions. This practice can easily distort MBOs' accountability to their members. In this sense, IVCOs may act as vectors of managerialism—essentially transferring managerialist practices to their local partner organisations [46], [96]. Considering the contemporary managerial approaches linked with funding and accountability, the limitations of IVCOs as "representatives" of civil society need to be openly acknowledged and carefully negotiated.

On a similar point, to the degree that IVCOs are present in volunteer-receiving countries, or are located in urban centres and capital cities, they may have relatively weak connection to popular movements in rural areas, which may also limit their ability to act as viable representatives [20], [97]. Despite these challenges, IVCOs, through person-to-person volunteer exchanges, still have a legitimate claim to closer alignment with civil society than many other development agencies—particularly in rural areas. In this realm, volunteers have long been viewed as a critical bridge between poor and indigenous communities in the South and national political institutions, based on the volunteer's greater access to Northern resources, and knowledge [82]. This bridging role is highlighted in the synthesis report of the UN Secretary-General on the post-2015 agenda:

Volunteerism can help to expand and mobilise constituencies, and to engage people in national planning and implementation for sustainable development goals. And volunteer groups can help to localise the new agenda by providing new spaces of interaction between governments and people for concrete and scalable actions [12, p. 36].

Recommendations

The following sections provide recommendations for IVCOs that may be concerned about mission drift due to complex relationships with donors. While there are likely many ways that IVCOs can improve their support to local civil society organisations, this section first considers how to work with funders unsupportive of reciprocal relationships, or whose goals are clearly at odds with the interests of civil society. In addition, other possible innovations are discussed as a means of building new relationships and partnerships, not only with grassroots organisations but also with larger networks that support marginalised groups.

Working with Funders

Research with "civil society strengthening" NGOs in the Global South has clearly identified a number of undesirable effects resulting from donor conditions and reporting requirements [38], [98]. In response, many have developed and implemented innovative strategies to work around these donor conditions. Some of these strategies include: carefully selecting only compatible donors to work with, offsetting donor resources with other discretionary funds, withholding or selectively releasing information to donors, misrepresenting the accuracy of information reported to donors, rejecting donor funding, and terminating donor relationships [38]. While some of these strategies would clearly not be considered ethical in practice, these strategies illustrate that IVCOs are not helpless in their relationships with donors.

Perhaps the most commonly used strategy is to innovate alternative ways to fund civic and advocacy projects that may not be compatible with donor goals. Elbers and Arts [38] found that Northern NGOs and their Southern partners typically fulfil their advocacy missions by offsetting donor resources with discretionary funds. Other research found that this is also a relatively common strategy among development NGOs in the UK [8]. In circumstances where advocacy is not supported by their mainstream funders, IVCOs can support civil society priorities by locating other small pots of money. As one example, 6% of Progressio's funding comes from individual supporters, along with an assorted set of donations from private funds and foundations [99]. Such diversity of

funding allows Progressio to engage in activities that are consistent with community-level governance and advocacy priorities to support "… civil society groups in order to equip people to successfully achieve greater rights from local governments" and "securing clear accountability and responsiveness from the European Union, member states and multi-lateral institutions in advocacy areas such as illegal logging and climate change" [100, Para. 8].

Another promising method of working with funders is to directly advocate for greater flexibility in spending. Michael [91] makes a convincing case for expressing concerns to donors, and lobbying for flexibility when the priorities of civil society are clearly at odds with donor priorities. By pitching principles embedded in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action—including the core principles of reciprocity, mutual accountability, ownership and close alignment with the goals of civil society [101]—funders may be willing to change core priorities and measures of accountability.

Finally, in circumstances when donor priorities remain at odds with the needs of community groups, IVCOs may need to carefully consider whether to accept donor funding. As a matter of practice, in situations when supporting confrontational popular movements rooted in civil society is seen as a progressive movement towards positive social change, IVCOs may need to consider whether the funding is diverting their efforts toward less relevant goals.

Working with Membership-Based Organisations

With a long history of partnership with the aid industry combined with a better understanding of donor and philanthropic terminology and processes, IVCOs and their "transnational civil society" networks (e.g. Forum, IAVE, CIVICUS) can act as intermediary bridges—connecting actors from different levels in the development ecosystem [102]. While popular organisations deeply rooted in civil society may have the passion and incentive to organise, they may lack the technical knowledge and the networks with other governance actors to effectively realise their action [103]. IVCOs are in a strong position to act as *intermediate activists* together with popular movements as they are "neither entirely elite nor subaltern" but somewhere in between [104, p. 659].

As discussed earlier, community-based and national volunteers are typically more flexible in their ability to support civic and social movements. They are also less likely than international volunteers to be challenged on questions of legitimacy. Although the priorities of MBOs and grassroots civil society organisations are not always benevolent, and

supporting these priorities may not always be the best strategy, IVCOs can strengthen their civil society missions as they establish supportive partnerships with community-based and local volunteer organisations. In practice, many IVCOs already appear to be following this strategy through capacity building initiatives. Indeed, capacity building can be an effective "middle ground" strategy that side-steps common critiques of service delivery while also not explicitly being delivered in a recognisable form of advocacy. However, in situations when IVCOs act as intermediary organisations in partnership with MBOs, they must be careful not to reproduce donor requirements in their relationships with local partner organisations.

Conclusion

This discussion paper began by posing key questions that emerged from prior research on international volunteering and governance: Despite IVCOs' perceived comparative advantages over state and market actors, to what extent do we see IVCOs aligning with civil society interests and needs? Under what circumstances might it be appropriate for IVCOs to support controversial movements and advocate for civil society interests? What qualities do IVCOs and volunteers possess that allow them to be effective at strengthening co-productive relationships between governments and civil society?

As with other development organisations, some argue that modern IVCOs ultimately follow the logic of the marketplace by aligning their priorities with donor interests, which may or may not be in the best interests of civil society. The political realities of IVCOs' funding environments and the pragmatic limitations they face with legitimately representing civil society as external entities are often overlooked. Consistent with findings from other studies, IVCOs as an institutional form of "organised civil society" supported by state donors face multiple barriers to effectively advancing their civil society mission—particularly in comparison with local volunteers and popular movements that comprise non-formal civil society [20].

While IVCOs will never be *the* major player in civic action, they nonetheless need to consider new strategies in their negotiations with donors if they hope to successfully develop or support enabling spaces for effective political action. Because non-formal volunteer advocacy efforts and popular movements are difficult to sustain long term without public funding, IVCOs can play a significant role as catalysts and bridges to help sustain local advocacy efforts and movements.

The work of IVCOs and their networks to provide added support to the efforts of civil society and local volunteers in their struggle to maintain autonomy and promote social

change is not of minor consequence. Individual citizens, community-based volunteers groups, popular membership-based organisations and other civil society actors are needed to complement, to balance, and occasionally to counteract, the interests of powerful state and market actors. As emphasised by the U.K. National Coalition for Independent Action:

> Voluntary services exist to do the things that Government cannot, will not, or should not do; to complement, not substitute for public services: to innovate, reach excluded groups...to act as commentator and critic of public services and State action. Once a voluntary group becomes a servant of the State this unique role is compromised [48, p. 1].

Within the IVCO-community partner relationship, advocates are needed to develop and maintain enabling spaces for citizen-state political action. Despite the modern challenges that often limit IVCOs in their support for civil society movements, they may yet have an upper hand on other development organisations—many of which have been highly criticised for becoming ever-more professionalised, less rooted in personal relationships with local citizens, and increasingly distant from the bona fide needs of civil society [27], [49], [54]. However, to the degree that IVCOs capitalise on their distinct strengths and embrace alternative strategies that support civil society, they can make significant contributions to sustainable social change.

Acknowledgements

List of Acronyms

AVI	Australian Volunteers International
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CUSO	Canadian University Service Overseas (now Cuso International)
DED/GIZ	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst / German Development Service – now GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
FK Norway	Fredskorpset / Norwegian Peace Corps
Forum	International Forum for Volunteering in Development
IAVE	International Association for Volunteer Effort
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
ISVS	International Secretariat for Volunteer Service
IVCO	International volunteer cooperation organisation
IVS	International Voluntary Service
JOCV	Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
LGTBI	Lesbian, gay, transexual, bisexual, intersex
MBO	Membership-based organisation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGDO	Non-governmental development organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIF	Singapore International Foundation
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

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