

## CHAPTER III

### 2.3. VOLUNTEERISM

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### 3.0. Objectives

This chapter defines and expands the idea of volunteerism and its role in building a sustainable human society as well as shaping individual character. Volunteering is service that consists of positive action by an individual or group of individuals that is beneficial to both individuals and society. Volunteerism transcends all barriers, tangible or intangible and stands for the noblest aspirations and deeds. It brings equity, inclusivity, and sustainability to the local and global environment. After going through this chapter, students would be able to:

- understand the basics of volunteerism
- have an idea of the history of volunteerism
- know the relationship between leadership and volunteerism
- will be able to identify common sectors for voluntary work for them and associated benefits

### 3.1. What is Volunteerism

Volunteerism is commonly defined as a positive action by an individual or group of individuals that has proved to be beneficial not only to the individual but also for society. Volunteering is a choice made freely by a person or an organization and transcends all caste and religious barriers. It is a mutually beneficial relationship not in terms of material benefit but definitely from an emotive perspective particularly for the volunteer. It is an act without any vested interest or any material benefits, not even expectations of financial benefit to oneself.

There are many examples of volunteering around us. Many fellow human beings living around us provide their time, expertise and effort by volunteering to work in public and private institutions for the underprivileged including children having no parental support, mentally challenged children, street children, the old age homes, the acting begging, people living in tribal areas. There are called volunteers whose time and resources are devoted to bettering the lives of their fellow human beings, other living beings including plants and animals. There are umpteen examples of volunteers providing cooked food to street children, teaching destitute children at makeshift shelters, providing much-needed healthcare to poor households, running placement centers in educational institutions, organizing structured sports and games for underprivileged children, providing food and psychological support to the elderly and women in institutions and the physically as well as the mentally challenged persons residing in institutions. All these are done without any expectation of financial or material gains.

Volunteerism can also be taken up by organizations in a targeted manner. India has many organizations that are registered as voluntary organizations. These are Non-Government bodies called NGOs. They work mostly in social service sectors. Some popular voluntary service organizations are CRY (Child Right and You), Missionaries of Charity, Salam Balak,

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Help Age India, Mobile Creches, Apanalaya, Akshara etc., Each of these work in a specific area like Help Age India working with senior citizens.

### **3.2. Volunteerism: Principles and Perspectives**

Volunteerism normally follows the following broad principles:

- Volunteering must benefit the community and the volunteer
- Volunteer work is mostly unpaid
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work. Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor do they constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- Volunteers must be aware of and respect the rights, dignity and culture of others

#### **3.2.1. Who is a Volunteer?**

A volunteer is a human being who, by virtue of his work makes a difference on the ground. Volunteers freely choose to devote a certain amount of their time and effort to provide help and support to another person, group/s of persons or to a cause. To summarise:

- A volunteer is a professional or non-professional person who willingly spares his/her time and effort for others,
- They are committed to the goals and principles of selfless service or social work
- They neither expect nor receive any remuneration for their work
- As a consequence of his work, emotional satisfaction and moral credit are always accrued to the volunteer

*History is full of inspiring stories of great volunteers. One that immediately comes to mind as a contemporary voluntary worker is Mother Teresa. This frail and compassionate Albanian nun arrived in India with the sisters of Loreto. As she toured the nooks and corners of Eastern India and particularly Kolkata, she was aghast at the pain and misery that was the constant companion of the homeless, the poor, the sick, the hungry and the destitute found on the streets of the city. She decided to start working for helping these people by simply finding a place for them, taking care of them, showering them with compassion and being on the whole non-judgmental about them. She continued this work with the group of nuns that came to be known as the Missionaries of Charity and established "Nirmal Hriday", a place the abandoned can call their own. As a true volunteer, Mother Teresa herself would bandage and dress the*

wounds of lepers, look after the sick, play with destitute children at *Nirmala Sishu Bhavan* and also liaison with the authorities for providing help. To her, "service to mankind is service to GOD". Her reward was the understanding that she was part of God's plans to help these people. That was the reason people of India called her "Mother Teresa" "one who, like a true mother, cared for the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, lepers, the unwanted, the unloved and the uncared for without asking for anything in return. In a sense, she was the ultimate volunteer, the universal mother.

We can perhaps digress for a moment here and think about people around us. Remember your mother toiling hard from morning to evening to make sure that you are provided with the best of everything. She takes no salary, listens to your complaints, never bothers you about her illness but still cares for your comforts. Can we then call our mothers volunteers in the family universe? Line up your reasons for and against.

### 3.2.2. Why should we volunteer?

Volunteers add to the quality and overall scope of various programmatic services of governments and NGOs involved in social work. They provide enthusiasm, additional resources, genuine interest and, many times, specialised skill sets not available otherwise. It is known that volunteers have often supplemented the regular workforce during times of crisis like natural or man-made disasters, especially when requirements peak. They often have the capacity to provide services outside the normal purview of government employees. For example, during the current COVID 19 pandemic we saw many individuals and organizations that worked incessantly with affected people providing food, health care, facilities like transporting them home, emotional support and funeral services. The world during the first and second waves of the pandemic without these volunteers would be unimaginable. Volunteers and volunteerism will always be an essential to bridging the multitude of divides created by developing societies.

There is also a tangible gain for the volunteer in the modern-day world. There are more than 1.2 billion young people (defined by the United Nations as between 15 and 24 years of age) in the world today, the largest group in history of human existence. Young people are key agents for social change and provide the energy, creative ideas, and determination needed to drive innovation and reform. Volunteerism is an important and increasingly popular mechanism for young people to bring about positive change in society, and it is becoming more and more relevant as a mechanism to engage young people in global peace and sustainable human development. For instance, as governments, United Nations entities and civil society organizations debate and articulate the post-2015 development agenda, there is a strong call for a bottom up-process in which young people's voices are included and the youths are actively engaged in the process, and volunteering is a viable mechanism for this.

Volunteering is also associated with a higher chance of employment, and the effect is especially strong for those without a high-school diploma or who live in rural areas. Many management and business school programmes require certain hours of dedicated voluntary social work as admission eligibility. However, young people increasingly feel that volunteerism complements formal education in teaching them skills that are required for the job market such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, planning, management, creativity, communication and negotiation. This is especially important given the current global economic downturn resulting in the tough competition for jobs.

In summary, there can be several driving forces in modern-day volunteering that go beyond altruism. Some of them are listed below:

- Influence of values, culture and tradition
- Empathy and compassion for fellow humans, animals and the environment around us
- A step towards professional advancement through gaining knowledge, new skills and experience
- Gaining social approval and forming new and rewarding relationships; to feel needed
- Advancing one's career in corporate bodies or engaging in advocacy for a cause
- Learning to look beyond one's own problems and sometimes as a therapy
- Ensuring personal growth gaining, self-esteem and leadership qualities
- Feeling the urge to reform Civic duties
- Respects for religious beliefs
- Religious belief and/or compulsion

### **3.2.3. What are the essential qualities that a volunteer must cultivate?**

*In the words of a few volunteers, their work is ever stimulating, challenging and sometimes tiring but always incredibly rewarding. The pro-social trait or tendency to help others regardless of motive is a broad expectation that sparks volunteerism. Altruism perhaps comes much closer to home as it defines help without any expectations. Altruists are happy doing a good deed but it is generally agreed that empathy and compassion are commonly identified personality traits in a majority of value-based volunteers. As a young man or woman, one is often faced with a doubt whether one is capable of being a volunteer. Becoming a volunteer is an evolving process. As one works with various target groups, s/he learns continuously and evolves into a good human being. We must constantly remember that volunteerism is an acquired attribute and is not inherited. Instead of being born as a volunteer, human beings grow into volunteerism through their own attitudes, a shared environment, cultural heritage, experiences and the value system of the world around him/her. A volunteer must develop the conviction that all humans are created equal and have a right to get equal treatment and opportunities. However, for a person to be an effective volunteer, it is necessary to develop a few desirable qualities that will make him/her successful in the field*

- Passion for the targeted voluntary sector is one of the critical qualities that must be part and parcel of a volunteer. Passion helps one overcome all other challenges that may be present in a volunteer's path. For example, some people love children and working for children is their prime passion. Similarly, people who are deeply religious at heart would work happily in the temple or with any other religious activities without any other consideration. Golden Temple is famous for the voluntary work "Kar Seva" that the members of many communities gladly perform there
- Empathetic nature is desirable while volunteering for the underprivileged. To understand the needs of the target group, one needs to internalize the issues developing they face. This eases the complexities of the problem
- Non-judgmental attitude is an essential a volunteer. Selfless work loses its shine if the mind continuously sits in judgement over the target group or individuals
- Clarity in thought and expression for which one needs good communication and interpersonal skills
- Patience, a proactive nature, a sense of commitment and reliability
- Teamwork and shared vision
- Humble, polite non-interfering and respectful nature
- A willingness to engage in Life-long learning
- Capacity and skill for conflict resolution

Needless to say, the inculcation of all the above traits in an individual not only promotes good citizenship values but provides a recipe for good leadership.

#### **3.2.4. A Brief History of Volunteering**

The earliest history of volunteering provide examples of religious volunteers tending to the sick and infirm as God's work in establishments/missionary. There were around 500 volunteer-run hospitals in England during 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The actual term "to volunteer" was used in the year 1755 as offering oneself for military service. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one saw the evolution of structured volunteering, through Young Man's Christian Association, (YMCA) involving its members in charitable activities for society at large. Madam Clara Barton's Red Cross did yeomen's service during the Civil War and afterwards. Internationally, The beginning of the twentieth century saw the evolution of voluntary organizations like "The Salvation Army", "The Rotary International", "The Lions Club", "The Peace Crops" with their members participating in a multitude of community help programmes.

The Post-Second World War period, through the latter half of the twentieth century, did indeed bring about a change in the approach towards volunteerism against the backdrop of diverse socio-economic changes happening across the globe. Apart from the post-war generation, the entire generation of Boomers, GenX and Millenials started viewing volunteerism as a necessity

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for developing society and as an exercise leading to self - realization and fulfilment. The youth volunteer base became very broad and one can identify many factors responsible for this attitudinal change. The awareness of the catastrophic effects of war, increased access to information leading to awareness regarding widespread human misery, inabilities of governments to reduce the increasing socioeconomic gap, rise of the new middle class for which the urge to practise altruism emerged as the new alternative to spiritualism, the rise of a strong mass-media and finally, the spread of a new sense of NGO achievements through UN-led organizations perhaps made more people realize the transience of life and the need to contribute more to the community. The voluntary sector of India is noted for its vibrancy, innovation, and research-based advocacy. It has played an important role in supporting the government as a partner in nation- building. Historically, Indian voluntary development organizations have played three significant roles: firstly, filling gaps in the government's welfare systems, such as delivering basic services like health care, education, water, and sanitation facility to the most remote locations in the country; secondly, conducting research-based advocacy, such as analyzing the efficacy and reach of various government projects to provide guidance to the government for policy change; and, finally, working on a rights-based approach and entitlements through protests, strikes and public interest litigations. For illustration purposes, a few examples voluntary organisations are given below.

### **3.2.5 Some Notable Voluntary Organisations :**

#### ***Committee for Legal Aid to the Poor (CLAP):***

*CLAP works through a rights-based approach in India to advance human rights through the use of the legal system. It is based in Cuttack. It works in various states of India with primary focus on Odisha. It renders legal services pro-bono to the marginalized, facilitation access to justice and undertakes advocacy for legal reform. The CLAP manages Legal Service Institute which serves t society especially the marginalized to enable them to assert their Right with Dignity. It also carry out various programmes like Legal Awareness, Legal Support for Capacity Building, Legal Empowerment of Marginalized Communities, Mediation and Juridical Advocacy.*

#### ***Vinimay Trust :***

*Vinimay is a public xharitable trust focusing on providing complementary services to underprivileged children and youth staying in institutions. It is a purely volunteer-based organization, where every functionary is a volunteer. They are guided by the philosophy that the volunteer provides a much-needed service but simultaneously benefits from sense of internal fulfilment that makes life worth living. The organization is based on the percept "we gain as much as we give". It is now more than 40 years old and its activities include child welfare and youth aftercare like sports, teaching, healthcare, employment, locating lost families, integration with society at large. The volunteers include people working in professional action as well as housewives.*

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*It also has created a band of young volunteers who have benefited from Vinimay's work at child welfare institutions.*

***Indian Institute of Education & Care (IIEC):***

*IIEC is a non-governmental social voluntary organization established in 1996 by a group of intellectuals, social workers and scientists, aiming to empower people to have access to all resources needed for their own development through eco-friendly technologies and participatory methods. It also works to protect the rights of children, women, tribals, farmers, persons/children with disabilities and for their holistic development. The organization visualizes a world where the poor, marginalized and the vulnerable are mainstreamed and take part in the development process with equity, dignity and liberty.*

**Chetna([www.chetna-india.org](http://www.chetna-india.org)):**

Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action. CHETNA is an NGO working towards empowering street and working children through a participatory approach. CHETNA provides education, counselling, recreational activities, and a framework to get organized. They are given a chance to understand their situation, their rights and opportunities.

**Smile Foundation (<http://smilefoundationindia.org>):**

Since 2002, Smile Foundation has been working on ensuring education for children, livelihood for the youth, healthcare in rural areas and urban slums, women empowerment and sensitization of the privileged. It is an NGO which applies successful business strategies to social ventures has achieved unprecedented popularity.

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Some pictures depicting volunteer-based activities taken from the Internet



ASHA India



Planting tree



Serving food to people in need



Helping injured and homeless animals



Helping local sports groups



Corporate volunteering



Age Well Foundation



Cleaning a beach

### 3.3. How does one become a volunteer: preparing oneself

#### a. Decide which causes you care about.

Everyone has a favourite cause and passion. Choosing to volunteer for an organization or cause that one feels passionate about can increase the chances that one really enjoys the opportunity. Before beginning to work as a volunteer, one must take time to determine what one really cares about. For example, if you're passionate about disability rights, you may enjoy volunteering at a special needs organisation. The more specific you get about your passions and interests, the more likely you are to find a volunteer position that is best suited for you. Some love to teach, some would like to work in middle-class social settings, some others would love to organize religious and semi-religious functions or to work with small children. Follow your passion, is the first mantra.

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**b. Identify the skills and knowledge you can offer.**

When one wants to work as a volunteer either alone or in a group it is necessary to recognize your area of expertise that would contribute to community welfare. Assess the skills you currently have to see if there are specific roles you could play as a volunteer. Most voluntary organizations also have entry-level opportunities that train you on the basic skills that are required in day-to-day volunteering.

**c. Create a volunteer resume**

Once one's passion and strengths are identified, it is necessary to prepare a brief resume that will help one to join the volunteer group of one's choice. A resume allows the organization to quickly see what you have to offer and helps it find the most appropriate volunteer position for you.

**d. Determine how often you can volunteer**

A volunteer must acquire efficient time-management skills since s/he must perform his/her normal activities and volunteer. It is often found that a new volunteer devotes a large portion of his/her time to volunteering. But the key component of effective volunteering is sustaining the activity a longer period of time. Therefore the frequency of volunteering and the per-day time period which one can devote must be carefully determined. As you start your work in the voluntary sector, do plan your schedule only a month or two into the future in the beginning with a few hours twice or thrice a week as a commitment. See if you enjoy the position and organization before you make a full commitment for more hours days. Once you know for sure that you want to continue volunteering in this capacity, consider giving more of your time and expertise to the organization

**e. Research volunteer opportunities in your community.**

Proximity and familiarity are two of the major facilitating factors in volunteerism. Therefore, one can take the help of using a volunteer site to get all the relevant details for the volunteer position. One interesting example is the work of student volunteers in university campuses.

**f. Acquire in the appropriate mindset as well as skills.**

For example, if one wants to work in old age homes, he/she should develop patience, understanding and some rudimentary skills in handling old people and their needs. If one is interested in advocacy, there is a need not only to acquire updated knowledge on the specific cause but also to acquire organizing skills, articulation skills and skills relating to team work.

**g. Inculcate Professionalism in yourself.**

In terms of seriousness of commitment, one must treat volunteer commitment at par or better than a paying job. Be punctual, show up on time, deliver on your commitments and be professional while performing voluntary work. Remember, the target group develops a heavy reliance on volunteers for many of their daily requirements. Therefore, being reliable

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and professional is very important.

**h. Regular assessment of one's volunteer experiences.**

A volunteering matures as he/she gathers more experiences. He/she is expected to improve on his/her performance so that the target groups 'benefit in a sustained manner. One must, therefore, continuously re-examine one's activities in this light. A volunteer renders his/her services in an unconditional manner and performs difficult tasks that are not attempted by common people. Patience, a non-judgmental attitude, rationality, compassion and professionalism in all our actions must be continuously evaluated and corrected. For example, sometimes we get irritated during teaching the alphabet to an underprivileged child if the child is not able to grasp our suggestions. The irritation however may be due to our own problems related to our family or office. But if we flare up, it hurts the child and he/she may be alienated and demotivated. Therefore, one needs to continuously assess one's performance.

**i. A volunteer must always be aware of the consequences of his/her work.**

For example, if one is working with the environment-conservation sector, sustainability must be one of the main priorities. All our efforts would fail if we generate more pollution than we benefit the environment. If one is working on a cleanliness campaign, the focus should be on how to clean the target area and then how to maintain it. One can organize a team of volunteers to regularly carry out the cleaning work or work persuade the local authorities to get regular cleaning done. One day of cleaning for publicity purposes does more harm than good. Similarly, during the recent COVID pandemic all health volunteers needed to be careful about not becoming spreaders themselves.

**3.4. Common sectors for voluntary work for students**

Though, in principle, one can take up volunteering activity in almost any sector of our social life, some sectors need greater volunteer intervention. This section enumerates a few of them, where students like you can contribute effectively and make a difference to society at large.

**3.4.1. Blood donation**

There are people always struggling to find blood or blood components. They include accident victims, people with thalassemia or other blood disorders like severe anemia, and patients undergoing major surgeries. The pre COVID-19 statistics show that around 11 million blood donations are collected in India every year against the required 13.5 million for 1.35 billion people living in the country, leaving a gap of nearly 2 million. Reportedly, 84 per cent of these blood donations are collected through voluntary non-remunerated donors. Blood saves lives. There are regular blood banks, hospitals and agencies who collect blood from volunteers. If we give this a thought, universities and colleges are perhaps the ideal places to promote a culture of blood donation. In Odisha, one can donate blood at blood banks of hospitals, the Red Cross, or at blood donation camps organized by NGOs and voluntary agencies. It is a safe

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process and our donated blood helps in saving another life.

There are many heroes among blood donors. It is worthwhile to recount the story of Shri Shabir Hussain Khan, a man from Srinagar, Kashmir who has become India's biggest blood donor. His journey started on 4 July 1980, when a friend in his area was injured while playing football. Shabir promptly went to the hospital by foot to donate his blood and help out his friend. **Shabir Hussain Khan**, who lives in Srinagar's Kamangarpora Kadi Kadal area, has donated 174 units of blood so far in 41 years.



Since blood donation is part of our health-care system, it is associated with some myths and wrong impressions that discourage donors from coming forward and taking part in this noble mission.

#### Facts and Fiction about Blood Donation

Sl.	Query	Facts
1.	Who can donate blood?	Any Individual between 18 to 65 years of age and weight above 45 kg with a haemoglobin count of above 12.5 gm %, systolic blood pressure between 120-100 mm Hg and Diastolic pressure 60-100 mm Hg. The body temperature should be 37.5 C or below.
2.	Is there any health-related benefit associated with regular blood donation?	Yes. Regular blood donation, cholesterol remains in control thereby reducing chances of heart ailments, diabetes and hypertension related diseases. The bone marrow regeneration becomes better. While donating blood, a person is automatically tested for diseases such as HIV, AIDS, hepatitis, syphilis and malaria. One also gets inner happiness in being able to save other human lives.

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3.	<b>How much blood is there in the human body and how much can be donated at a time?</b>	In males, per kilogram bodyweight, one has 76 ml blood and in females, the corresponding quantity is 66 ml/. Since human body needs about 50ml of blood for healthy circulation, there is excess blood of 26 ml/kg in males and 16ml/kg in females. At one time, one can therefore donate about 5-7 ml/kg of blood without any problem. With normal food, this blood is regenerated in about 15-20 days' time. At one time, only 350 ml of blood is collected per donor.
4.	<b>Who are prohibited from donating Blood?</b>	Persons suffering from HIV, AIDS, hepatitis, asthma, heart ailments, thyroid ailments, epilepsy will not be eligible to donate blood. Those who are afflicted with common ailments may donate after receiving treatment and on doctor's advice. Women are barred during their periods, pregnancy, within three months of a miscarriage and during the breast-feeding period. Persons having undergone major surgeries should not donate for six months. Those having undergone minor surgeries should not donate for 3 months.
5.	<b>What are the tests done before donating Blood?</b>	Normally, body temperature, weight, haemoglobin count, blood pressure, pulse rate, as well as conditions of liver, kidneys and lungs are examined before one donates blood.
6.	<b>What are the tests done on the blood collected in each blood collection pouch?</b>	Jaundice (hepa B and C, malaria, HIV AIDS, sex-related diseases, blood-group and cross-matching between the bloods of the donor and donee. Since these tests are time-taking, they are done in the post-collection period in the blood bank, prior to giving to the donee.
7.	<b>What should be the time interval for regular blood donation by a person?</b>	3 months in case of males and 4 months in case of females
8.	<b>Is it Safe?</b>	Blood donation is completely safe these days. Every instrument used is sterilised including the needle and its holder and are destroyed after one use. There is no fear of infection.

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9.	<b>What is AIDS. Does it transmit through Blood Donation?</b>	AIDS is a dangerous disease that spreads through bodily contact or contact with body fluids. It compromises the body immunity against external infections. It does not spread through blood donation.
10.	<b>For how long can the collected blood be stored safely</b>	Normally anti-coagulant like CPDA -1 is added and stored at temperature of 2-6 degrees centigrade up to 35 days safely.
11.	<b>After donating blood, how long should one's wait for going back to regular activities?</b>	30 minutes
12.	<b>Occasionally, people are seen to faint after donating blood. Is it Natural?</b>	Predominantly, these are effects of fear and consequent psychological stress. Sometimes, if one tries to stand up immediately following blood donation, this could happen. It could also happen if one donates blood on an empty stomach or after a sleepless night. A few minutes of rest is what is needed.. There is no need for extra rest or nutrition.
<b>DONATE BLOOD. SAVE LIVES</b>		

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### 3.4.2. Organ Donation:

Organ donation in India is regulated by the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994. The law allows both deceased and living donors to donate their organs. It also identifies brain death as a form of death. The National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) functions as the apex body for activities of relating to procurement, allotment and distribution of organs in the country.

Although India has performed the second largest number of transplants in the world in 2019 (after United States), it lags far behind western nations like Spain (35.1 pmp), United States (21.9 pmp) and United Kingdom (15.5 pmp) in national donation with a donation rate of only 0.65 per million population (PMP) (2019) due to its vast population. According to the World Health Organization, only around 0.01 percent of people in India donate their organs after death. Some of the reasons behind such poor performance are lack of public awareness, religious or superstitious beliefs among people, and strict laws.

In 2019, the Government of India implemented the National Organ Transplant Programme with a budget of ₹149.5 crore (US\$20 million) for promoting deceased organ donation.

Living donors are permitted to donate the following

- one of their kidneys
- portion of pancreas
- part of the liver

Living donors must be over 18 years of age and are limited to donating only to their immediate blood relatives or, in some special cases, out of affection and attachment towards the recipient.

Deceased donors may donate six life-saving organs: kidneys, liver, heart, lungs, pancreas, and intestine. Uterus transplant is also performed, but it is not a life-saving organ. Organs and tissues from a person declared legally dead can be donated after consent from the family has been obtained. Brain death is also recognized as a form of death in India, as in many other countries. After a natural cardiac death, organs donated are cornea, bone, skin, and blood vessels, whereas after brain death, about 37 different organs and tissues can be donated, including the above six life-saving organs. One can become a volunteer to donate and help spread awareness about organ donation that saves lives. In Odisha, Dr. Pravas Acharya, President Body and Organ Donation Society of India (BODI), Gopabandhu Bhavan, Buxibazar Cuttack is spearheading the organ donation campaign and interested students can get more information at [www.angadaan.com](http://www.angadaan.com).

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### 3.4.3. Cleanliness and save the environment campaigns

Across the globe, people and governments are collaborating on protecting the environment, greening the surroundings, fighting climate change, providing clean drinking water, transforming waste into useful materials and keeping their surroundings clean. This is perhaps the biggest movement since human beings inhabited planet earth, and volunteerism is the critical enabler in achieving this goal. In India, Swachha Bharat, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Plant a Tree, etc. are linked to protecting our environment. Every child, youth, and adult citizen must consider oneself an environment protection volunteer (warrior) and strive to realise the world's sustainability goals.

One of the easiest tasks each environmental warrior (volunteer) can do is to plant about six trees per month to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions we produce, taking into account the annual global average of around six tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per person. Some of the interesting stories related to environment conservation are given below:

One of the pioneers of environment conservation, Shri **Jadav Payeng**, also known as the 'forest man of India,' comes from the state of Assam. His contribution as an environmentalist entails creating a 550-hectare man-made forest all by. The forest of Muali Reserve lies in the Majuli Island, on the Brahmaputra in Assam. Sneha Shahi is a PhD student at Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru, studying conservation science and sustainability. She is a water conservationist and working to curb the use of single-use plastic that have choked India's water bodies and destroyed native diversity. Sneha manages to clear 700 kgs of waste, including plastic, thermocol, glass bottles and construction debris from an urban stream that helps mugger crocodiles to return to their natural habitats.

"At the end of the day, enthusiasm for the environment comes from within; a role model can just kindle the flame or help you navigate your way to a certain extent, your passion is what matters the most and is the true guiding light." Sneha Shahi says.

Heeta Lakhani is a climate educator and has developed the "Green Warriors" programme on climate education. She started engaging locally with school students and internationally with the official youth constituency of the UNFCCC, YOUNGO after attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris in 2015.

"We can plant a million trees but it would still be a garden - it takes ages to create natural biodiversity. Humans can't replicate the support services that ecosystems provide, which is essential for the survival of our species, too. The sooner we act, the better." Heeta says.

Sanju Soman has been working with vulnerable communities and wetland conservation and created the first model wetland village with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE). In 2011, when he was 19 he started Save a Rupee Spread a Smile (Sarsas), a volunteer-led NGO and organized fundraising marathons for Regional Cancer Centre and Kerala Network for Organ Sharing.

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"I strongly believe that the planet isn't in danger but we are, along with every other species. Change should happen now and at a very fast rate." Sanju Soman says.

Soumya Ranjan Biswal works for wildlife conservation activities with a focus on the protection of Olive Ridley sea turtles. Biswal managed to organize and participate in 230 beach clean-ups and also worked with the forest department, local communities, and youth volunteers across the state to restore wildlife and encourage long-term wildlife management.

"As a coastal village boy, I've always been affected by ocean and beach pollution, high mortality rates of the Olive Ridley sea turtles and mangrove destruction, which have resulted in the frequent occurrence of natural calamities. This made me feel more strongly about issues like environmental degradation, climate change and its impact on the marine ecosystem." Soumya says.

#### **3.4.4. Caring for senior citizens**

Help Age India is a secular, not-for-profit organization in India, registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. Set up in 1978, the organization works for *'the cause and care of disadvantaged older persons to improve their quality of life'* Help Age envisions a society where the elderly have the right to an active, healthy and dignified life. It recently became the first and only Indian organization to be honoured with the 'UN Population Award 2020' for its exemplary work in the field of ageing, relief efforts work during the Covid -19 pandemic and recognition of the organization's outstanding contribution to population issues and efforts in the realization of older persons' rights in India (extracted from Help Age India website).

Currently, there are about 138 million elderly person in India. Help Age India voices their concerns about leading secure and dignified lives. It works through 26 state offices across India, runs numerous programmes on the ground, addressing the needs of the elderly and advocating their rights such as their right to universal pension, quality healthcare, action against elder abuse and many more at national, state and societal levels. It advocates elder-friendly policies and their implementation.

Its focus areas are healthcare, age care helplines, senior citizen care homes and day care centers, physiotherapy, livelihoods (elder-self-help groups; linkages with government schemes, disaster response. They welcome volunteer help.

#### **3.4.5. Caring for street children:**

India has the maximum number of children living on streets. One estimate puts it at about 18 million though a number of them have living parents or relatives. These are minor children who live and survive on streets, who have grown up in public landfills, train stations, abandoned or half constructed buildings and under bridges or temporary shelters in many cities. Most of them do not want to return home due to conflict, abject poverty, or for having become part of a gang engaged in antisocial activities. According to UNICEF, there are four categories of street children. There are high-risk kids who stay with families, but labour on the streets for a living. Then there are children who mainly live on streets, but spend some time with their families. There are children who spend a good deal of time

on the streets and therefore do not live with or communicate with their families. Finally, orphaned children are left alone with no caring adults. Children who end up on the street are often subjected to neglect and physical and emotional abuse at home. Once on the street, children experience trafficking and/or heavy labor as they flee their families in hopes of leading a new life. Children as young as 6 years old skim through the litter in search of money to survive. Voluntary organizations in every city are working with these children to provide them shelter at night, food, education (sometimes on railway platforms at night), rescuing them from gangs and sexual/substance abuse and finally rehabilitate them. This is an area that can provide ample opportunities for voluntary work and a sense of inner fulfilment.

#### **3.4.6. Caring for the children of migrant workers**

The children of migrant workers are at a disadvantage due to their continuous movement and their parents searching for livelihood. It is also difficult for voluntary workers to follow them and help them in a sustainable manner. Like all underprivileged children, these children need security of food, education and protection of their rights. Though food that may not be nutritious may be available, implementation of rights to education and protection from child labour, sexual and substance abuse and finally from violence is a critical issue. Again, this is an area where the needs of marginalized children are served, and requires a large number of voluntary workers. NGOs like mobile creches, CRY, PeCuC, DISHA, and many small voluntary organizations are contributing to this effort.

#### **3.4.7. Caring for the children of slum dwellers**

According to a report by NBO about 7.6 million children are living in various slums in India and they constitute 13.1 per cent of the total child population of urban areas of the 26 states/ Union Territories. Children growing up in slums experience a childhood that often defies the imagination of both the 'innocent childhood' proponents and the 'universal childhood' advocates. The slums typically lack proper sanitation, safe drinking water, or systematic garbage collection; there is usually a severe shortage of space inside the children's houses and no public spaces dedicated to their use. But that does not mean that these children have no childhood; they experience only different kind of childhood that involves playing on rough, uneven ground, taking on multiple roles in everyday life, and sharing responsibilities with adults in domestic and public spaces in the community. Voluntary work in health care and assistance in academic activities leading to employment are the common tasks that are taken up normally for these children.

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#### **3.4.8. Caring for the children in childcare institutions**

As per the Ministry of Women and Child development's data, India has over 9,500 child welfare institutions where about 3,30,000 children reside up to the age of 18. Many children in this country do not have a secure home or family. These children include orphans, abandoned, surrendered, and trafficked children, as well as children whose families are unable to care for them. Children in need of care and protection are put in places like children's homes, open shelters, observation homes, special homes, places of safety, and specialized adoption agencies. The National Policy for Children 2013 reiterates India's commitment to such children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It states that "the state shall endeavour to secure the rights of children temporarily or permanently deprived of parental care, by ensuring family and community-based care arrangements including sponsorship, kinship, foster care, and adoption, with institutionalization as a measure of last resort, with due regard to the best interests of the child and guaranteeing quality standards of care and protection."

Though, in principle, the institutions are supposed to provide a home away from home, the massive numbers, the meagre grants and lack of training of the staff do not work in favour of the children. Therefore, most institutions depend on voluntary groups to support them both through donations and most importantly, by becoming a friend, philosopher and guide to these young children who badly need a little understanding and compassion. Volunteers need to understand the working of the institution and address issues like nutrition, education, sports, cultural activities and healthcare. Clean and used clothes are also required.

After children turn 18, they have to leave the institution, and most children have zero support available to them thereon. The absence of aftercare is a huge gap across all institutions and in most cases not even a focus area. Preparations should start at the age of 14 or 15, while the child is in the institution. Career awareness, life skills, and basic financial literacy are very important to prepare the child for the time when they have to leave and become independent. By the time the child turns 18, they should have a clear path towards a decent livelihood and receive support to achieve that objective. The support required includes financial help and mentoring and hand holding. It is like the support a parent extends to a child during these critical years.

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### 3.4.9. Volunteering with the police

Volunteers can be an important part of any organization and are proven to be a valuable asset to law-enforcement agencies. Volunteering in law-enforcement benefits the agency, the volunteer and the community. Many volunteers join law enforcement agencies to fulfil their civic responsibilities.

Volunteering with the police means citizens helping the community law enforcement agency in maintaining law and order. In this type of volunteerism, volunteers share information and resources with law enforcement agencies that want to expand their programs, increase the use of volunteers in existing programmes, help citizens learn about the law of the land. The ultimate goal of this kind of programme is to enhance the capacity of state, local, and territorial law-enforcement agencies to utilize volunteers.

One of the forms of volunteering with the police, which includes becoming special constables or traffic police will give volunteers useful insights into what it is like to be a police officer, without enrolling in a permanent paid role straight away. Special constables have full policing powers and do frontline policing, which involves duties like:

- Helping at the scene of accidents or fires
- Keeping town centers safe
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour
- Conducting house-to-house enquiries
- Arresting offenders and giving evidence in court
- Crowd control at events
- Educating children, communities and businesses on crime reduction
- Conducting traffic maintenance in cities and towns

The role of citizens in policing is vital. Volunteers increase the capacity of constabularies, bringing valuable skills and expertise to police teams, creating closer and more effective relationship with communities. These people give up their free time to volunteer in a variety of policing roles for various reasons. Volunteers play an important role within policing culture and the benefits they bring and can identify with all volunteers who generously give up their own time to support the police and their local communities. In our own cities, young boys and girls often perform traffic police duties. This is one of the best examples of volunteering.

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#### **3.4.10. Suicide watch volunteering**

Volunteers play a crucial role in suicide prevention. When implemented adequately, volunteers' engagement projects can be very effective in tackling mental health challenges in general and preventing suicide in particular. Such approaches are often relatively cost-effective and are therefore particularly appealing to low- and middle-income countries where stigma and taboo often limit access to quality care for suicidal behaviours.

Globally, over 8,00, 000 people die due to suicide every year, and it is the second leading cause of death in 15-29-year-olds (WHO, 2014). In India, the national mental health survey 2015-16 reveals that nearly 15% Indian adults need active interventions for one or more mental health issues and one in 20 Indians suffers from depression. However, since suicide is a sensitive issue, it is likely to be under-reported because of stigma, prevailing in some countries criminalization, and weak surveillance systems. About 75% of all cases of suicide globally occur in low- and middle-income countries. Globally, suicides account for 50% of all violent deaths in men, and 71% of such deaths in women (WHO, 2014).

Social, psychological, cultural and other factors can increase the risk of suicidal behaviour. Risk factors for suicide include, for instance, previous suicide attempt(s), mental health problems and disorders, problematic substance use, job loss or financial loss, trauma or abuse, and chronic pain or illness, including cancer, diabetes and HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, suicide prevention is a low priority for governments and policy-makers too often. Awareness of suicide as a public health issue needs to be raised through a multidimensional approach that takes account of the social, psychological and cultural impact.

The prevention of suicide is not only important for individuals and families but also benefits communities, the health-care system and society at large. Preventing suicide can positively impact communities by promoting community members' health and well-being, empowering communities to identify and facilitate interventions, and building the capacity of local healthcare providers and other gatekeepers.

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Samaritan movement was started in England to provide emotional support to persons attempting suicide. Gradually, it has spread to different parts of the world. In India there are many suicide watch volunteering organizations working at present. AASRA in Mumbai is an organization that believes that every life is precious and worth saving. It has access to an international network that includes Volunteer Emotional Support Helplines (VESH), Lifeline International and the International Federation of Telephone Emergency Services (IFOTES). AASRA aims to provide voluntary, professional and essentially confidential care and support to the depressed and the suicidal. Saath founded in 1998 is functioning from Ahmedabad and preventing suicide. It has now 401-member centers across 38 countries and 31000 trained volunteers. Befrienders India (National Associations of Suicide Prevention Centre) is also prevent suicides through its volunteers since 1974. Other prominent organizations such as Samaritans, Ilife, SNEHA, etc. prevent suicides across the country through volunteers through various activities such as:

- Offering telephonic helplines for counselling;
  - Staging street plays through volunteers to spread the message that suicide is an irreversible response to a reversible condition and that prevention of suicide is everybody's responsibility.
  - Organizing workshops in schools, because over-burdened students are often under family pressure to perform, especially during exams, making them more susceptible to drastic actions.
  - These volunteers provide emotional support to farmers and provide skill training to young adults.
  - They also conducted seminars for women, anti-tobacco campaigns, HIV/AIDS awareness programmes and health *melas* in colleges.
- Suicide watch volunteers selflessly offer helplines during examinations and on the eve of the declaration results of exam result across the nation to prevent suicides.

### 3.5. Let us sum up

Volunteering is an individual or collective trait that builds a sustainable foundation of society. Volunteerism stands for the noblest aspirations and deeds. Volunteering has the potential to transform the world into a much better place. Volunteerism is immensely beneficial to both the individual and society. Volunteering transcends all caste and religious barriers. It is also necessary that volunteerism accord its due social recognition in the conventional definition. Volunteerism is an act without any vested interests or any payment, not even expectations of financial benefit to oneself. From a historical perspective, volunteerism emerged in the late Middle Ages in Europe. Then its volunteerism was considered a religious duty. Altruism, passion for services, empathetic nature, non-judgmental attitude, clarity in thought and expression, patience, proactive personality, commitment and reliability, teamwork and shared vision, humility, lifelong learning and conflict resolution are essential traits of a volunteer. Volunteerism can be observed in the blood donation, organ donation, cleanliness and save the environment campaigns, caring for senior citizens, working with underprivileged children, volunteering with the police and suicide watch volunteering, etc.

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### 3.6. Key Words

- Volunteers:** A person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it
- Volunteerism:** A wide range of activities undertaken of free will, for the general public good, for which monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor
- Formal Volunteering:** Voluntary activity undertaken through an organization; typified by volunteers making an ongoing or sustained commitment to an organization and contributing their time on a regular basis
- NGO:** Non-governmental organization: An organization that tries to achieve social or political aims but is not controlled by a government
- Prevention:** The act of stopping something from happening or of stopping someone from doing something
- Salvation Army:** An international Christian organization whose members have ranks and uniforms like an army, hold meetings with music, and work to help poor people
- The Rotary Club:** Rotary International is an international service organization which brings together business, professional, and community leaders in order to provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance goodwill, peace, and understanding in the world. It is a non-political and non-religious organization
- The Lions Club:** The International Association of Lions Clubs, more commonly known as Lions Clubs International, is an international non-political service organization established originally in 1916 in Chicago, Illinois, by Melvin Jones to promote the principles of good government and good citizenship and to take an active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of the community

### 3.7. Check Your Learning

#### Q.1. Definitions

- a) Volunteer
- b) NGO
- c) Smile Foundation

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- d) Blood Donation
- e) Samaritan Movement
- f) Citizen Police
- g) Salvation Army
- h) Rotary Club International

**Q.2. Analytical**

- a) Describe the importance of the volunteerism.
- b) Why should we volunteer? Discuss in brief.
- c) What is organ donation and discuss the concept of volunteering organ donation.
- d) How volunteers can help old age people in need of caring?
- e) How volunteering can protect children from different challenges and problem?  
Discuss.

**Q.3. Narration**

- a) What is the importance of the volunteerism?
- b) In what way volunteerism is beneficial for society? Discuss.
- c) How do volunteers work for the protection of environment? Answer with examples.
- d) Explain the concept of volunteerism with suitable case study.
- e) Write an essay on the history of volunteerism in human society.

**3.8. Suggested Readings**

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