

## Chapter 5

# Volunteer–state partnerships and co- production of services



## Key highlights

- Volunteers are often part of the communities in which they work and are experts on the issues faced by marginalized groups. Their expertise is therefore important in the co-production process.
- Volunteer and state authorities leverage partnerships for mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Volunteers' participation in the co-production of services helps orient government programmes to the needs of marginalized groups while enhancing the delivery of these services.
- Volunteers play the role of mediators and brokers of information. They help marginalized groups to navigate highly bureaucratic processes that are often difficult to access and to obtain services from state authorities.

### 5.1. Introduction

Globally, as countries and regions grapple with complex development challenges, the need for people and institutions to work together to address them has become even more vital. During crises, the demand for services rises and becomes urgent, and the need for co-production increases. As a result, without the participation of the wider community, public services may become more difficult to implement.

Often governments may need to decentralize their efforts and work with volunteers and other civil society actors to co-produce services.<sup>122</sup> Increasingly, volunteers are taking a more active role in the co-production of public services and are collaborating and building relationships<sup>123</sup> with state authorities at various levels. It is within this context that this chapter examines how volunteers and state authorities partner to co-produce services.

To do this, the chapter looks at case study research on volunteer–state partnerships in China, Lebanon, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan

and Senegal. While the role of volunteers in service delivery and programme implementation is well documented, the case studies presented in this report illustrate how volunteers also play an important role in the design, implementation and evaluation of public programmes and services alongside state authorities. In this way, volunteers are not only recipients of public services, but also vital partners in the delivery of such programmes.

This chapter is divided into four parts. Section 5.2 provides an overview of co-production as a concept and framework through which the specific model of volunteer–state co-production is investigated in the case studies. Section 5.3 provides an overview of the four case studies. Section 5.4 discusses the key features of co-production based on the case studies, highlighting their characteristics and the processes involved in the co-production of services in volunteer–state partnerships. Section 5.5 concludes by identifying the strengths of volunteer–state co-production models.

## 5.2. Volunteering: an essential component in the co-production of services

Co-production of services can broadly be understood to mean the engagement of people in the co-development of services that promote their inclusion (design, planning and evaluation). In co-production, diverse groups may engage in the processes in an effort to “fill the gap” in services, while adapting to changing circumstances in their communities and the changing capacities of state authorities.

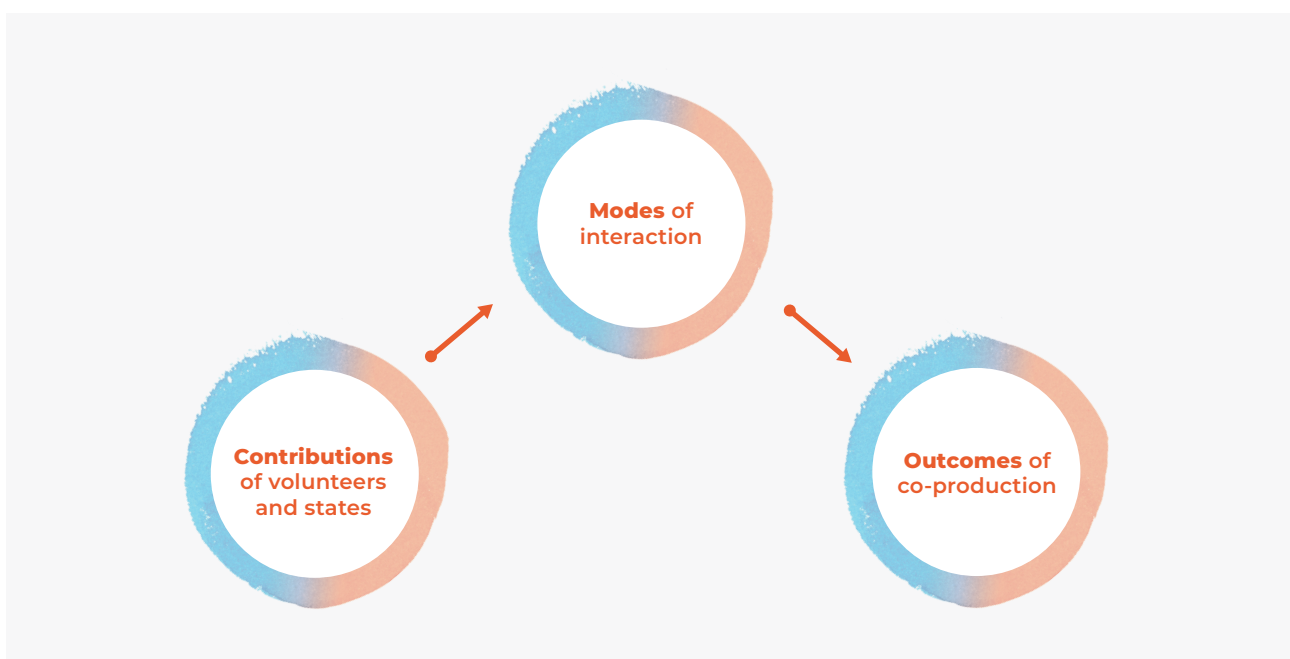
For the purpose of this report, co-production refers to the creative, innovative and collaborative ways<sup>124, 125</sup> in which volunteers and state authorities partner with volunteers to deliver services, thus departing from the “traditional” volunteer service delivery model in which volunteers passively implement pre-designed programmes. While examples of co-production vary and may include local groups in cooperatives and farmers’ groups, this report uses it as an “umbrella concept” to

capture the wide variety of activities that can be undertaken when volunteers and state authorities work together in any phase of the public service cycle.<sup>126</sup>

In co-production, volunteers choose to contribute their time, knowledge and effort to processes that were once exclusively occupied by “experts” and “professionals”. In doing this, these volunteers challenge hierarchies and dominant assumptions about who should participate. In this way, co-production is underpinned by empowerment and autonomy among participants, and fosters adaptability, particularly in response to emerging needs.

While volunteer–state relationships are at the core of co-production, the ways in which the process is approached, expressed and implemented varies. As Figure 5.1 shows, volunteer–state partnerships in co-production processes consist of three elements: the contributions of volunteers and states, modes of interaction, and outcomes of co-production.

**Figure 5.1.** Interrelated elements of co-production between volunteers and states



The first element of the co-production process is the **contribution of volunteers and states** when they work together. This could involve contributing time (e.g. attending planning meetings to help find the most effective way of distributing goods during lockdown), expertise/knowledge (e.g. medical doctors offering their public health expertise) or resources (e.g. local government council funding). Some contributions are vital but intangible, such as understanding and empathy, developing relationships and shaping work cultures. Also included in this element are the different reasons why volunteers choose to participate. These may include dissatisfaction with current services, or the sense of autonomy and active citizenship that comes with participation.<sup>127</sup>

The second element, **modes of interaction**, may be influenced by volunteers' level of participation ("to what extent") in the service delivery process and the stage ("when") of involvement. Co-production involves various stages and processes (e.g. co-commissioning, co-design, co-delivery, co-assessment) and volunteers can be involved throughout the entire cycle or only at specific stages. In some instances, volunteers may play a limited role in the redesign of well-established services. In other instances, state authorities may have limited organizational capacities to enable them to engage productively with volunteers.

The final element refers to the intended **outcomes of co-production**.

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**Collaboration between volunteers and state authorities may lead to enhanced public services that are more responsive to the needs of community members.**<sup>128</sup>

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While co-production is often framed as a good thing, it should be noted that co-production may result in unintended consequences<sup>129</sup> and can, in some instances, place too much burden on volunteers.

### 5.3. Introducing the case studies

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**The case studies discussed in this chapter focus on volunteer–state partnerships in co-production in five countries across diverse geographical regions in the Global South.**

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In terms of their structure, the case study organizations in China, Kazakhstan and Lebanon are more structured and formal while those in Kyrgyzstan and Senegal are loosely organized community-based volunteering structures.

As these case studies will show, volunteers from diverse marginalized groups engage in the co-production of services with state authorities in various contexts. In some cases, volunteers themselves are members of the "target group"—for example, students and international volunteers in Lebanon; people with disabilities and their families in China; specialist volunteers in vocational skills in Kazakhstan; and long-standing indigenous community-based volunteers in Kyrgyzstan and Senegal.

The case studies explore a variety of development issues: gender equality issues in Lebanon and Senegal; disability rights and employment in China and Kazakhstan; reproductive health in Senegal; migration in Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon. While the Lebanon case study is based on primary data (i.e. a maxi case study), the others are based largely on secondary data (i.e. mini case studies). The China and Senegal case studies also include interviews with representatives from the organizations.



### 5.3.1. Amel Association, Lebanon

**Founded in 1979, the Amel Association is a non-governmental non-sectarian organization with headquarters in Beirut.**

It has more than 25 centres all over Lebanon that engage with a variety of volunteers. Amel's volunteers are mostly young people and students, as well as international volunteers and a number of migrant development workers and outreach volunteers who are members of the vulnerable communities themselves (refugees or migrants). The organization also works with community-based volunteers who are recognized leaders in their communities. This case study focuses on Amel's project on the rights and welfare of migrant domestic workers who come from African and South-East Asian countries for economic migration. The project was co-designed and co-implemented by Amel's volunteer group.

Lebanon has over 250,000 migrant domestic workers, nearly 70,000 of whom have irregular status. These people are among the most vulnerable groups in the country, with many of them exposed to exploitation and abuse within Lebanon's Kafala system. This system allows a Lebanese citizen to sponsor a migrant worker, who in turn, is responsible for the worker's legal status and their official documentation. Under the system, migrant workers are excluded from Article 7 of the Lebanese labour law which regulates minimum wage, working hours and holiday pay, among other conditions. Moreover, migrant workers are not protected from abuse and can be deported at any time. Migrant workers' sponsors manage their residency and working permits (often keeping their passports) and determine their wages, working hours and holidays, often subjecting migrant domestic workers to unfair working conditions and human rights abuses.<sup>130</sup>



### 5.3.2. China Disabled Persons' Federation, China

**The China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) was established in 1988 and aims to represent people with disabilities by working directly with the government in public policymaking and the delivery of services for these groups.**

This case study focuses on a district in Shanghai<sup>131</sup> where CDPF is operated by over 1,300 volunteers. Over 130 of these volunteers are themselves people with disabilities. In CDPF's volunteer–state relationship model, both government concerns and those of people with disabilities are represented. This “half government–half public” (*banguan banmin*) approach is a hybrid model whereby CDPF functions as a network that engages volunteers, people with disabilities and governments in service delivery. While CDPF and its local branches exist across all levels of government, including the provincial, prefectural, county and township level, it also involves various organizational forms, from formal non-profit organizations to neighbourhood voluntary groups that are spontaneously organized by people with disabilities and their families and friends.



### 5.3.3. Bajenu Gox, Senegal

**The Bajenu Gox programme is a government initiative launched in 2010 in Senegal's 14 regions.**

The initiative, which centres on the well-respected figure of the *bajen*—a Wolof term meaning “godmother”—who has the role of a counsellor, engages over 8,600 women volunteers who serve as mediators between government health structures and local communities. These women volunteers, called Bajenu Gox, are appointed by a public health doctor to support in the delivery of health services in hard-to-reach areas. As recognized and respected leaders in their neighbourhood, the Bajenu Gox also raise awareness on maternal and child health and are integral to local health planning at the community and district level. The Bajenu Gox attend a series of training sessions organized by the district government on reproductive health to enable them to carry out this role effectively. Through the Bajenu Gox volunteer–state relationship model, the national health system was able to build on and leverage the expertise, practices, relationships and information provided by these traditional women leaders.



### 5.3.4. The Center for Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, Kazakhstan

**The Center for Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities was established as a joint pilot project, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of Kazakhstan.<sup>132</sup>**

The centre's main task is to help people with disabilities access permanent employment. To do this, local and national volunteers with expertise in career counselling, social work, psychology, legal issues and coaching (some of whom are supported by UN Volunteers) work in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population.<sup>133</sup> Built on partnership, the centre has been successful in its mission. As a result, the initiative has been replicated in 17 regions in Kazakhstan, with volunteers, local authorities and the Ministry working together.



### 5.3.5. Sairon, Kyrgyzstan

**Founded in 1999, Sairon (a Tajik term meaning “passage”) is a volunteer-based civil society organization (CSO) in Kyrgyzstan that aims to protect and integrate refugee and migrant populations from Tajikistan.<sup>134</sup>**

Its activities include providing legal defence and information sessions, obtaining citizenship, and fixing infrastructures in places where refugees live. Sairon works closely with the state administration, the State Committee on Migration and Employment, the Department of Internal Affairs, the passport offices and local self-governments in the concerned regions. The initiative with the local governments on this project has resulted in more than a thousand refugees gaining citizenship in the country.<sup>135</sup>

## 5.4. Key features of co-production

This section looks at the key features of the co-production process.

### 5.4.1. Collaborative structures

Collaborative structures are a key feature of volunteer–state partnerships that have enhanced co-production. With the exception of the Center for Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (Kazakhstan), volunteer–state partnerships are based on long-term collaborations, with deep-rooted volunteer–state relationships providing the basis for volunteer groups' strong reputation and track record. As part of China's pandemic response, CDPF's multi-governance structures at the provincial, prefectural, country and township level were activated to provide much-needed services to people with disabilities during lockdowns. CDPF relied on the volunteer network embedded in its governance systems to provide these services.

In Lebanon, Amel leveraged collaborations in which volunteers played an important role, ranging from consultative collaborations to the active co-creation of agendas and services. These collaborations helped consolidate Amel's reputation as a credible development organization among government institutions in Lebanon, giving student and youth volunteers a solid framework within which to conduct activities and share ideas during government consultations, including innovative and sometimes technology-related ideas.

### 5.4.2. Leveraging partnerships for mutual benefit

The importance of mutual respect and trust among partners has long been recognized. A key feature of co-production in volunteer–state partnerships is the leveraging of

collaboration for mutual benefit, with volunteers bringing innovative solutions inspired by their lived experiences in marginalized communities. Across the case studies, volunteers and state authorities leveraged partnerships for mutually beneficial outcomes in co-production. For instance, in Amel (Lebanon), volunteers sensitized state authorities to the plight of migrant workers, which led the government to provide services. In the case of the Center for Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Kazakhstan, volunteers' advocacy for dignified employment for people with disabilities alerted state authorities to the need to better integrate disadvantaged groups in society through the provision of services, culminating in the replication and scale-up of the programme in 17 other regions in the country. Similarly, community-based volunteers in Sairon, Krygyzstan, using their first-hand knowledge of citizenship-related government processes, were able to work with state authorities and help refugees to obtain citizenship. For the government, this meant that these individuals were residing in the country legally.

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**Together, these examples suggest that when volunteer–state partners work together to co-produce services, there is mutual reward.**

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In some cases, the outcomes resulted in long-term institutional support, as evidenced in Amel's domestic migrant workers initiative and their fight to abolish the Kafala system in Lebanon, and the Center for Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities' efforts to scale up employment for persons with disabilities throughout Kazakhstan.

### 5.4.3. Volunteers and service users as experts on their own needs

A common feature in several of the case



studies is the importance of volunteers' leadership and expertise. In Sairon (Kyrgyzstan), volunteers played an active role in government decision-making on which refugee facilities needed to be prioritized at any one time,<sup>136</sup> highlighting the issues that affect refugees and migrant populations the most. In the Bajenu Gox programme, the Senegalese government relied on the leadership of indigenous women volunteers—as well as the “community relays”, young girls who supported them—who were well respected in the local communities. The women's and girls' commitment was not only reflected in the delivery of reproductive health services, but also in ensuring that these services were responsive to what the women needed and their changing needs. Because volunteers were often part of the communities where they worked, they were experts on the strengths and weaknesses of these communities, which proved invaluable in the co-production of policies and programmes.

#### 5.4.4. Gaps in services as catalysts for volunteering

The case studies show that volunteers were motivated to engage in co-production activities in large part due to gaps in services, particularly among marginalized groups. Equally, they wanted to be part of the “real” change that they saw happening regarding the protection of these groups. In Amel (Lebanon) and Sairon (Kyrgyzstan), volunteers advocated for the provision of services for

migrants and refugees who operated in the margins of society. By co-producing services with state authorities, volunteers were able to enhance their capacity to advocate for the needs of marginalized groups and add the issues to state authorities' agenda. Meanwhile, state authorities gained valuable insights about the needs of these communities and how to better meet those needs.

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**This demonstrates how volunteers can play an active role in developing and maintaining reciprocal, long-term relationships with state authorities that lead to the co-creation and co-implementation of state programmes.**

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While the government's failure to meet the needs of marginalized groups may provide impetus for volunteer action, volunteers' expert knowledge on the needs and issues that these communities face is invaluable in the co-production process.

Together, volunteers and state authorities can help shape co-production processes that are effective and more responsive to communities' needs. As the case studies show, the roles played by volunteers and the expectations of state and volunteers in these partnerships are constantly changing.



### Box 5.1. Summary of mechanisms involved in volunteering for co-production

#### Who volunteers or participates?

For many volunteers in the case studies, their journey starts with a concern that their needs are not being prioritized and/or they see a need to improve how these services are delivered. Therefore, the volunteers who participate in, and are invited to, co-production processes tend to either experience inequalities themselves (e.g. people with disabilities, migrant workers, urban women) or be those who advocate for solutions (e.g. student and youth volunteers, international volunteers). There are cases where volunteers themselves are directly involved with state implementation (e.g. Sairon) or they participate via a volunteer organisation that already has strong links with state institutions (e.g. Amel).

#### What is the extent of participation?

Based on these case studies, volunteers and community members co-produce services at certain points of the project cycle. They are most visible in the co-design and co-implementation of programmes. Certain challenges have stopped volunteers and other community members from participating fully. Local volunteers may also experience similar vulnerabilities and face barriers in terms of finance and literacy. They may also find the bureaucracy and red tape difficult to understand and navigate.

#### For what outcome?

When volunteers co-produce services, they can make aspects of these government programmes more relevant to the needs of the marginalized groups. Co-production can also lead to better relationships between people and states, but this has to be nurtured over time.



A doctor coordinates volunteer activities for Amel Association in Beirut, Lebanon to facilitate migrants' access to COVID-19 vaccines. *Source:* UNV.

## 5.5. Strengths and challenges of the co-production models

These case studies highlight the successes and challenges in volunteer–state co-production.

### 5.5.1. Co-producing services that are responsive to marginalized communities' needs

Volunteers' most valuable contribution to the co-production process is the credibility they provide by working first-hand with local communities. In the case of CDPF in China, and Bajenu Gox in Senegal, volunteers were from the communities in which they worked, and their lived experiences—whether as women living in resource-poor contexts (Senegal) or as people with disabilities (China)—provided them with both expertise in their communities and insights into how to address issues.

In these case studies, state authorities engaged in partnerships with volunteers from marginalized groups and relied on volunteers' experiences to inform and shape aspects of their programmes to make them more responsive to these communities' needs. Volunteer experts in the Center for Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (Kazakhstan), for example, paved the way for a more holistic approach to helping people with disabilities access employment.<sup>137</sup> In addition to complementing state employment services with an individualized approach, a wider range of services, from psychological and legal support to career advice, contributed to better outcomes for these groups. After returning to work, personal coordinators are assigned to beneficiaries to help them to adapt to their new job over a period of six months and develop the necessary professional skills.

Amel's vaccination project, co-implemented by the Lebanese Ministry of Health and youth volunteers (see Box 5.2), illustrates how local volunteers helped steer the Ministry's focus towards the needs of migrant workers. Building on volunteers' efforts to provide information and assistance, the Ministry ensured that migrant workers received life-saving jobs. The partnership also formed the basis for youth volunteers, through Amel, to work with the Ministry to develop more service platforms to better respond to migrant domestic workers' needs. This highlighted how volunteer–state partnerships in co-production could respond to the needs of local communities while providing enduring solutions to their challenges.



A volunteer assists migrants queuing for COVID-19 vaccines at the Dora Roundabout in Beirut, Lebanon.  
Source: UNV.

### Box 5.2. Volunteers and local government working together to vaccinate migrant workers

When Lebanon started vaccinating its citizens against COVID-19, many migrant workers, especially those who did not have the legal documentation (“undocumented” migrant workers), did not receive vaccinations. Four Amel volunteers launched a campaign to raise awareness that migrant domestic workers also have a right to be vaccinated and be protected from COVID-19. The student volunteers provided the migrant workers with information on the vaccination, created application forms, supported the Amel team in coordinating the activities, and helped migrants complete the forms and locate vaccination centres. Through these efforts, 15 migrant domestic workers were vaccinated in the pilot phase, which later led to registration and access for hundreds of migrants (and counting). Amel's leadership team brought this volunteer-led initiative to the attention of the Ministry of Health, an institution with which Amel has partnered for over 40 years. One staff member said:

“The volunteers [who started this campaign] helped us to pressure the Ministry in understanding that there are big numbers of migrant workers who want to get the vaccine. Without the long-term cooperation between the state and Amel, we would not have been able to scale up the project and make a difference.”

As part of the partnership with the Ministry, volunteers are able to reach the government office directly, participate in decision-making alongside the Amel team, and liaise on behalf of migrant domestic workers, many of whom lack IDs, phone numbers and email addresses. Recognizing the challenges associated with contacting migrant workers, Amel worked with state authorities to develop an online health services platform for the many migrant workers who do not have access to a phone or emails. Amel is currently co-designing this platform with the Ministry of Health for migrant workers, many of whom do not have access to health insurance or even to the Lebanese public health system. Volunteers' enthusiasm and efforts have motivated Amel to allocate more time to this valuable cause.

Source: UNV primary research.

### Box 5.3. Making women's needs a priority

Every fifteenth of the month, a district meeting is held in communities in Senegal, bringing together the doctor, midwives and other agents, the Bajenu Gox, and community relays. The objective of these monthly meetings is to take stock of the month's activities, assess the results achieved, discuss the problems encountered and find possible solutions. This is an opportunity for the Bajenu Gox and their community relays to share the concerns of the women that they have worked with during the month. They renew their supply of vitamin A and deworming medicines, and communication and work aids such as activity report sheets.

*Source:* Interview with a Bajenu Gox in one district in Dakar.

The Bajenu Gox in Senegal address women's reproductive health concerns and help integrate them into decision-making spaces. Unlike Amel's initiative, Bajenu Gox, which comprises community volunteers, is a government-initiated health programme. Recognizing its inability to provide reproductive health services in hard-to-reach areas, Senegal's public health system authorities engaged Bajenu Gox women leaders to develop the women's reproductive health service in these areas. As the findings of the case study show, the district team consulted the Bajenu Gox intensively before making decisions.

According to a Bajenu Gox volunteer who was interviewed for the case study, "when there is a new programme, the doctor always asks the BGs [Bajenu Gox] for their opinion on the relevance of the strategy to be developed, or their perceptions on the buy-in of the populations of a new approach, etc."

She adds, "The people listen to us a lot; we are doing important work and there are no problems between the state authorities (at the district level) and the Bajenu Gox. The collaboration is going well. The work is easier now compared to the beginning when there were a lot of barriers and people were not listening to us."<sup>138</sup>

Through co-production, state authorities have been able to develop programmes that are relevant to the needs of the most marginalized groups. Included in this process are volunteers and states engaging in collaborative needs assessments. For example, Sairon (Krgyzstan) was instrumental in helping to identify the best possible approach for rebuilding shelter provisions for Tajik refugees.

**Volunteers at the Center for Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, alongside staff members, were able to design employment training programmes that were tailored to the capacities and priorities of people with disabilities in Kazakhstan.<sup>139</sup>**

Such partnerships can make projects more relevant and responsive to the communities' needs.

Volunteers were also able to provide new perspectives and approaches to address persistent problems. Amel's working relationship with the state, for instance, shows how volunteer groups can move beyond coordinating (and/or asking "permission") from state authorities and play key roles in co-designing and co-implementing social services for the most vulnerable. A key finding from the China case study was that mutual aid networks within CDPF played a significant role in increasing the resilience of the services for people living with disabilities during the pandemic.

Because many volunteers themselves may experience marginalization, addressing volunteers' own needs and safety remains a challenge. The Bajenu Gox receive no remuneration for their work: "there is no money, there is no salary for the BG, we work for our neighbourhood, we work for our country."<sup>140</sup> Volunteers are left with less time for themselves, for their families and for other economic activities.

A volunteer with a visual impairment in CDPF stated, "After participating in some programmes of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, we have changed. We participate

in various activities actively. We have a better life."

These examples highlight the importance of reciprocity in volunteer–state relationships.

### 5.5.2. Local volunteers as mediators of bureaucratic processes and information

State activities can often become very bureaucratic. As emphasized in the co-production model described in section 2, individuals need enough information on the issues and familiarity with the institutional processes to participate effectively.

#### Box 5.4. Empowerment through citizenship

Sairon (in Kyrgyzstan) has been involved in all stages of co-production for programmes that help Tajik refugees and migrant populations to obtain citizenship. Volunteers from Sairon organized a series of round table discussions with village communities and local self-government bodies. These included discussions with passport departments and representatives from international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A simplified citizenship process was agreed and Sairon volunteers were trained in this new process. Volunteers then acted as consultants and liaisons to ensure that the refugees they worked with satisfied these requirements. A chief officer in a passport office said, "Without the help of Sairon, we could not deal with the many documents for acquiring citizenship."<sup>141</sup>

Source: Burke and others (2007).

The case studies have shown that volunteers can play a key role across different stages of the co-production process, from co-development of ideas to co-implementation (as in the case of Sairon). In Amel, migrant domestic workers need to have a government ID (or a copy), a phone number and an email address to be able to register for a vaccination. These can all be denied to them by their employers.

A volunteer helps a migrant with his paperwork to access COVID-19 vaccines in Beirut, Lebanon. Source: UNV.



*We are trying to encourage access to vaccination for migrants but because lots of them don't have IDs, they are scared to go due to the risk of being detained. So, we need to "walk with them". This is where volunteers play a huge role. There is so much information required on the COVAX platform, whenever you want to register for the vaccine. So, we volunteers help the migrant workers deal with this information, helping them get hold of a phone number as some don't have mobile phones and this is a must for registration on the COVAX platform. We would give these directly to Amel, and Amel, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, deals with the issue.*

– Youth volunteer in Beirut

Amel volunteers have helped ensure that these groups can access government services, including the vaccination programme, during the pandemic. Volunteers help service users navigate bureaucratic processes and have designed platforms that take into account their specific needs. A similar approach was developed by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs to simplify the citizenship application process for Tajik refugees. This decision was facilitated and implemented through their working relationship with Sairon. The strength in the co-production of services with volunteers lies in its ability to bridge the gap between state authorities who provide services and the various marginalized groups who use these services, thereby improving service provision.

A key challenge in volunteer–state partnerships is some volunteers' difficulty navigating bureaucratic processes. In Senegal, many Bajenu Gox's low levels of literacy and education limit their ability to

produce sufficient-quality activity reports. To address this challenge, state authorities have recruited community relays to assist with report writing. In Lebanon, many youth volunteers have to learn more about the legal systems and understand the Kafala system before they can support others. As one youth volunteer stated, "I would probably say that Amel made me more conscious about some of the legal aspects to do with the service." Amel also works with short-term international volunteers, many of whom come from universities abroad. Over the summer, these volunteers stay in Lebanon as interns and receive training/orientation on local cultural practices. A member of Amel said, "... you can't just leave [volunteers] alone—you will need to guide them, you need to provide time for them, train them as much as we can."

As these case studies show, volunteers can help community members navigate complex bureaucratic processes in order to access state services. Yet sometimes, volunteers themselves also need support in understanding these processes so that they can be of assistance.

### **5.5.3. Volunteer–state co-production develops trust and accountability**

As discussed earlier, a key reason why volunteers want to work with state authorities is because they are dissatisfied with the way local authorities address important development problems such as migration, disabilities and reproductive health. This could be viewed as a deficit of trust between states, service users and volunteers. In the case of Amel, migrant workers were often reluctant to approach state authorities despite urgent needs such as shelter, or in cases of human rights abuses, due to fears of detention or deportation. By helping them navigate state processes under the leadership and guidance of Amel, youth volunteers were able to help restore migrants' trust and link them to the services that they needed.

*A lot of the migrant workers are undocumented and because they don't want to be identified by the government or their countries, they feel safer resorting to NGOs [non-governmental organizations] because they consider them to be safe spaces, and Amel's philosophy is based on dignity.<sup>142</sup>*

It is clear from this interviewee's statement that youth volunteers were able to create an environment where migrant workers felt safe and heard. As a consequence, they also had a positive impact on the partnership with state authorities, nurturing trust between themselves, state authorities and the recipients of these development programmes. Since 2011, Amel has adopted a holistic approach to the issue by establishing a programme for the support of migrant workers and victims of trafficking, working closely with government institutions such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labour. Amel's volunteers co-implemented emergency support programmes, distributing basic supplies during lockdown such as food parcels, hygiene kits and non-food items, and helped undocumented workers access support such as cash for rent and voluntarily return to their home countries. Amel also participated in stakeholder dialogues, provided up-to-date data and raised awareness of migrant domestic workers' rights and duties. These activities have been instrumental in helping the Lebanese government find alternatives to the Kafala system that will ensure dignified work and living for migrant domestic workers.

Working with the Bajenu Gox has helped the Senegalese health system become more responsive in its service delivery. Although the focus is on women and their

reproductive health, men were found to consult often with the Bajenu Gox on issues such as tuberculosis, smoking and sexually transmitted infections. The Bajenu Gox are so trusted in the communities that men ask for their help when they need to go to hospital to have their babies delivered.

Trust is fundamental for developing collaborative volunteer–state partnerships. Trust needs to be built and when it breaks down, it needs to be restored. The case studies show that volunteers can nurture communities' trust in the state authorities and vice versa.

## 5.6. Conclusion

Volunteerism plays an important role in the co-production of services. Volunteer–state partnerships that engage people from marginalized groups in co-production illustrate new ways of working that engage people from marginalized groups in co-production, thus fostering inclusion.

Volunteer–state partnerships in the co-creation and co-implementation of services often leverage volunteers' lived experiences, knowledge and expertise. As a result, they can help shape outcomes that are more responsive to the needs of marginalized communities. That said, the benefits from such partnerships accrue to both volunteers and state authorities.

Volunteer–state partnerships in co-production can lay the foundation for more equal and inclusive societies when their initiatives are aligned with communities' needs. What is more, given that many volunteer–state partnerships have existed for a long time, the viability and long-term prospects of such partnerships are promising.



## Volunteer voice: Florina Qupevaj from Kosovo<sup>iii</sup> on maintaining mental health and well-being during the pandemic

**During crisis, volunteers step in to address the need to respond swiftly to critical social issues in their communities. Florina Qupevaj, a volunteer for Kosovo's psychological helpline, shares her experience of co-implementing a COVID-19 mental health helpline during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

*I am Florina Qupevaj, I am 22 years old and I am at the end of my studies in the field of psychology at the University of Pristina. Since the main reason I chose to study psychology was to help myself and others, I did not hesitate to become part of the psychological helpline during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with volunteer psychologists, we provided psychological support to people who felt the need to share their concerns or problems with someone.*

*The psychological helpline was opened in April 2020 by the Ministry of Health, at a time when all people were locked in their homes and were trying to protect themselves and their families from the new virus that was spreading across the world.*

*The support we provided via the psychological helpline was motivated by desire and goodwill. We endangered ourselves, our families and many others around us to come to the aid of others.*

*Being a psychologist in Kosovo is not easy, as there is a great lack of awareness about mental health. For this reason, we have worked very carefully to convey accurate information to people. However, I think that the work done by the psychological helpline should be further supported by institutions, along with awareness of mental health and recognition of the importance of psychologists in Kosovan society.*

*I often remember those times when people were totally isolated and, after a long phone call, I heard them saying, "I feel much better, like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders." The feeling I experienced on the other side of the phone cannot be described in words.*

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<sup>iii</sup> Hereafter referred to in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

## **Special contribution: Reflections on a corporate volunteering initiative during a crisis – Leyla Perea, Head of Voluntarios Telefónica and Member of the volunteer corporate platform Empresas que Inspiran, Peru**

Voluntarios Telefónica [Telefónica Volunteers] is a corporate volunteering programme aiming to transform the lives of those less fortunate through time, effort, knowledge and resources, in accordance with social work, values and the strategy of the company.

We are, in turn, part of Empresas que Inspiran [Inspiring Enterprises], the first national corporate volunteering platform, developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The platform seeks to position the value of corporate volunteering and its strategic contribution to the company, collaborators, and society, as a means for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from its most precious asset: its collaborators.

Voluntarios Telefónica mobilizes more than 2,600 annually and leverages its partners to support the implementation of the SDGs. Since 2007, we have been supporting volunteers who provide help to vulnerable groups in 21 cities, and promoting their inclusion in local and community development.

Normally, we offer a wide variety of face-to-face volunteering opportunities to our collaborators, family and friends who often engage in aid campaigns, volunteer activities for a day, and more recently, in the transfer of knowledge and skills. Most of our partners not only become leaders of their own social initiatives, but also aspire to become agents of social change.

As a result of the pandemic, we have redesigned our entire programme and initiated virtual and easy-to-execute volunteering activities that allow our partners to participate while taking advantage of the programme's resources and strengthening its relationship with other strategic entities.

During the pandemic, we had to quickly reorganize the corporate volunteer programme's activities. Voluntarios Telefónica evolved from and in response to the emerging health needs of vulnerable groups during the pandemic. We pivoted and established a network that would allow us to mobilize our telephone volunteers without exposing them to health risks through face-to-face interactions.

Voluntarios Telefónica launched different calls for virtual volunteering nationwide to make possible donations of bespoke biosafety equipment for firefighters and medical personnel, deliveries of food and cleaning supplies to different shelters and reception centres, and digital

activities targeted at children through school programmes or digital literacy for the older ones.

A key achievement during the pandemic was Voluntarios Telefónica's "Maratón de Iniciativas Ágiles" [Agile Initiatives Marathon], a rapid pandemic response campaign that took place between June and August 2020. The initiative was so successful that we ran it twice, in June and August, in 22 cities as well as the capital, Lima and several provinces, with over 1,200 volunteers providing support to more than 5,300 people.

During the lockdown, we forged strategic partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), churches, municipalities and regional governments in an effort to better understand and respond to local communities' needs. With funding from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, we created opportunities that allowed volunteers to engage in social programmes. Besides helping us to better understand communities' needs and reach those most affected by the pandemic, these strategic partnerships have enabled us to operate more efficiently. Meanwhile, the private sector made great efforts to generate volunteer activities and the state, through the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, also created opportunities that allowed corporate volunteers to commit to various social programmes.

By working in partnership with others, we can achieve extraordinary things. In this regard, the Empresas que Inspiran platform has an essential role by helping to reactivate corporate volunteering in other companies. We want to continue forming alliances that allow the participation of the different actors of the corporate volunteering ecosystem, in line with the SDGs and citizenship empowerment.

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## Endnotes

**122** Steen and Brandsen (2020).

**123** Needham and Carr (2009).

**124** Governance International (n.d.).

**125** Sorrentino, Cicilia and Howlett (2018).

**126** Nabatchi, Sancino and Sicilia (2017).

**127** Alford (2014).

**128** Pestoff (2014).

**129** Nabatchi, Sancino and Sicilia (2017).

**130** Rak (2020).

**131** Reforms on services for people with disabilities in Shanghai began in 2010, five years before government regulations promoted the need to widely address the concerns of people with disabilities in the country. Shanghai is the most developed city in China and has led various social innovations in many areas, including volunteer and non-profit organization development. Shanghai is always selected by the central government to conduct policy experiments and pilots. Services for disabled people in W district Shanghai have undergone reform and development for almost 10 years. The local government has already recognized some improvements. During the pandemic, many self-organizations worked well, which also shows that the reforms in W district in Shanghai have had some positive outcomes. They have begun to promote the institutionalization of new service delivery models, involving the contracting of non-profit organizations and volunteer participation, and national organizations are now considering rolling out this approach. In this sense, this single district in Shanghai is representative of the national initiative that supports people with disabilities.

**132** UNDP Kazakhstan (2020).

**133** UNDP Kazakhstan (2020).

**134** Burke and others (2007).

**135** Burke and others (2007).

**136** Burke and others (2007).

**137** UNDP Kazakhstan (2020).

**138** Anon. (2021).

**139** UNDP Kazakhstan (2020).

**140** Anon. (2021). Telephone interview by SWVR researcher. Senegal, 12 July.

**141** Aga Khan Foundation (2017).

**142** Anon. (2021a). Interview by SWVR researcher. Lebanon, 3 June.