

The Role of Youth Volunteerism in the Achievement of Local Development Initiatives in Iringa region, Tanzania

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Abstract

The concept of volunteerism is increasingly becoming a popular phenomenon in the contemporary world as it unveils how community members at local, national, or international levels support their respective societies, nations, and the world at large to achieve various development targets. The role of the youth—being an active and energetic cohort—in accelerating local development projects through volunteerism cannot be overemphasized. This paper explores the contribution of the youth cohort in Iringa region, Tanzania, in supporting various local development initiatives that have significant positive impact to their respective societies in the achievement of development initiatives in various projects. Primary data were collected through focused group discussions and key informant interviews techniques. The data were analysed using qualitative approach through the NVivo software. Findings demonstrate a clear and direct relationship between active youth participation in volunteerism activities and effective accomplishment of local development projects. Religious, school and community institutions were found to play a significant role to nurture the spirit of youth volunteerism. Notwithstanding challenges, youth volunteerism significantly facilitated the constructions of public infrastructures like hospitals, classrooms, and roads; as well as supporting the provision of various emergency services in their respective areas.

Keywords: *youth, volunteerism, local development initiatives, Iringa, Tanzania*

1. Introduction

Effective undertakings and achievements of community development works and volunteerism are closely related, and studies show that adolescent volunteerism is a common phenomenon around the world (Catalano et al., 2012; Flanagan et al., 1999; Hodgkin, 1995; Independent Sector, 2013). Youth involvement in development programmes is crucial to empower their communities; as well as to make them lifelong participants in development projects by inculcating in them a sense of ownership in development initiatives (Brennan et al., 2007). It is further argued that the more youth take part in civic roles like volunteering in community work, the more they participate in local decision-making; which further leads to skill improvement, confidence building, and ownership that prepares them into responsible adulthood. According to Enemu (1990, 2001) and Isichei (1977), in Patel and Wilson (2004), the significance of youth engagement in community activities in Africa can be traced to pre-colonial times when many societies organised themselves into age-set systems that mobilized for the defence of the community, as well as undertaking community activities like the

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construction of infrastructures such as roads and bridges. Among various societies in Africa this has been a commonly practiced phenomenon. Recognising the importance of youth, the Igbo community of Nigeria, as well as the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, have been applying an age-set system as a foundation of group formation for the allocation of tasks and distribution of responsibilities.

Apparently, the contemporary world is facing diverse socio-economic and cultural challenges that make it difficult to rely on previous traditional practices of arranging obligatory duties and responsibilities among various age groups. Coupled with new socio-economic dynamics of free market economy—where everybody is focusing on individual or self-interests for development—the need to lay emphasis on both compulsory and voluntary participation is relevant to realize multiple community interests. Mobilising youth voluntary participation in community works is assumed to ensure that a significant number of youths actively engage in development activities in their respective societies. Individuals and their respective societies in the modern world—particularly in developing countries—face several development challenges; some of which need collective actions. It is an undeniable fact that the most important age group to make this feasible is the youth. The youth in Africa (aged 15–25) represent more than 60 percent of the continent's total population, and account for 45 percent of the total labour force (AEO, 2015). According to the national population census of 2012 in Tanzania, this age-set constituted more than 70 percent of the population (URT, 2013).

According to Budlender (2017), in 2014 youth unemployment rate in Tanzania was 7.5%–4.5% for males, and more than double (10.4%) for females. In the light of such a state of unemployment, coupled with the fact that Tanzania is one of the developing countries that has significant number of an energetic population, the youth cohort is critical to stimulate development activities if it is mobilized to take part in voluntary activities. Given the importance of youth and its relatively high proportion size in relation to other age-groups in the country, this study is premised on the assumption that active youth volunteerism is crucial to support local development activities. The youth cohort is expected to contribute relatively more given that it is more energetic, easily available, and flexible to fit into various challenging situations. This expectation is based on several previous studies that unveil youth solid experience and active role in engaging in various community activities, hence contributing to the development of their respective societies. To date, however, little is known regarding the extent to which the youth in Tanzania have contributed to development initiatives in their localities through volunteerism. Therefore, this study intends to fill that gap by exploring the role of the youth in enabling various development initiatives that need collective actions; and whose efforts have been motivated by individual desire to contribute to the development of their society by using Iringa region as the case study.

The concept of volunteerism can be understood as engaging in any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organization (Wilson, 2000).

There are other several definitions relating to the concept, but for the purpose of this paper volunteerism refers to active youth engagement in various community development activities and projects by contributing their resources such as money or labour power without expecting any payment from their fellow residents or development stakeholders (like institutions and individuals supporting development projects), but solely with an intention of accomplishing development targets set by their respective societies. These activities include—but are not limited to—construction and renovation of public buildings like classrooms, dispensaries, and roads. Others include caring for the sick and vulnerable groups in a society. It is assumed that these are some of the most relevant issues that require active people's participation to facilitate development in their respective societies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Youth Volunteerism in Development Initiatives

Several studies explain youth engagement in civic services through volunteerism as well as through compulsory participation in community activities by the virtue of being members of a society. As pointed out earlier, the youth is an energetic and flexible cohort whose energy and time can be used, through volunteerism, to undertake and accomplish various development projects. According to Van Villegen (2000), volunteerism activity differs across the life course in terms of a person who is undertaking a volunteering role, how much time one dedicates to such activity, as well as the type of an organisation that benefits from volunteering work. Marrow-Howel and Tang (2003) claim that in several occasions youth tend to volunteer to engage in community development in infrastructure construction, educational and youth service organizations. Volunteer service is defined as an activity within an organizational context that is not undertaken for financial gain, but out of one's own free will, and arranged by a formal agency (Law, et al., 2013). Due to the decline in civic engagement among contemporary adults, volunteerism has become a critical component of public policy (Music & Wilson, 2008). The term 'volunteer' connotes positive social action (Ellis & Noyes, 1990), whereby individual citizen leaders mobilize, motivate, and enlist others in working towards a shared and derived outcome (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). In this regard, efforts are needed to be carried out by members of a particular community as key development stakeholders through mobilising, motivating, and training both youth and other cohorts to understand the role volunteerism and internalise volunteerism spirit for the benefit of the whole society.

According to Steinberg and Morris (2001) and Viner et al. (2012), youth development stakeholders that are critical in inculcating the spirit of volunteerisms are the family, schools, and peers. These are considered to be important agents to nurture the spirit of volunteerism among the youth for the benefits to the youth themselves and their respective communities at large. As mentioned earlier, there are multiple benefits that both the society and individual participants gain in taking active part in communal activities. For instance, when youth take part in building

and/or renovating public buildings like hospitals or schools, this helps to accomplish development targets of a particular society as well as develop youthful potential in terms of acquiring relevant skills for their self-growth. In this respect families need to take into account the derived benefits for their respective members by encouraging them to participate in both family and community activities. Tolan et al. (2003) advocate that at the family level, a pro-social family atmosphere is instrumental in encouraging adolescents to volunteer. Indeed, family and school values for volunteerism expressed in adolescence have an influence in promoting social integration in the years following adulthood (Oesterle et al., 2004). Parental involvement facilitates youth involvement in various civic activities. According to Chan & Elder (2001), youth whose parents are actively involved in communal activities are more likely to become active themselves in future collective actions. Parents can shape children's social choices through their social and economic actions, whereby social connections that parents possess can develop and inspire children to a civic culture, and consequently involvement in civic activities. Fletcher et al. (2000) emphasize that a supportive environment, like a better parental relationship, greatly contributes to a greater participation of their children in voluntary activities. In other words, parents have a great role to play in creating awareness of the advantages their children accrue through volunteerism, and hence play an important role in linking their children to the world around them (Parke & Ladd, 2016).

Apart from the family, educational institutions such as schools have a significant role in nurturing the spirit of volunteerism both directly and indirectly. For instance, daily and periodic school tasks and responsibilities given to students help them develop attitude towards adolescent volunteerism, which directly affects their subsequent participation in voluntary activities (IVR, 2013; Takashi & Hartanto, 1999). Further, educational institutions provide youth a forum for volunteering as part of curriculum through civic engagement in community organizations (Rotolo & Wilson, 2004). Also, volunteerism influences youth to become more involved in important activities that shape their lives, such as increasing academic performance due to effective school and college attendance (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Ishiwaza (2014) argues that while family income provides the basic economic resources to allow youth to at least volunteer occasionally, higher levels of education attainment among parents may provide an environment that promotes and encourages more consistent or intense civic engagement. In other words, a better knowledge and experience of parents regarding the benefits of volunteerism and its positive impacts to life ensures the transmission of knowledge to their children.

Furthermore, religious institutions have been among the key stakeholders in inculcating the value of volunteerism among the youth. In turn, volunteerism can result to several positive outcomes regarding the development of individuals and their respective communities. Scholars posit that the role of religious institutions in developing volunteerism spirit is also significant. According to Herzog and

Morgan (1993) and Wuthnow (1990), volunteerism, as an act of altruism or desire to help others, has traditionally been related to religious involvement. Indeed, religious organizations have been providing institutional and philosophical bases for volunteering participation (Putnam, 2000). For example, religious members engage in various volunteer works through such activities as outreach ministries, social charitable events, celebrations, and the promotion of community services. In addition, it is argued that religious involvement is positively associated with various forms of civic behaviour, such as volunteerism (Greeley, 1997), political activity (Verba et al., 1995), and giving charity. Curtis et al. (1992) and Lam (2002) argue that church members are generally more involved in voluntary work than non-members.

Furthermore, neighbourhood composition has also a stake in instilling positive civic engagement values that foster volunteerism (Atkins, 2003; Hart & Kirsher, 2009). In this regard, Youniss and Levire (2009) contend that the more youth are exposed to various civic engagement opportunities—through religious institutions, schools, and surroundings—the more they are conditioned to be interested, and actively participate, in volunteerism. This is why it is important for development stakeholders to promote civic engagement forums and opportunities to invite youth into civic life (Flanagan, 2009; Youniss & Levire, 2009).

Moreover, various forms of capital are crucial actors in ensuring the existence and sustainability of volunteerism. Wilson and Musick (1997) posit that human and social capital are necessary for individuals to volunteer. Whereas human capital is enhanced through education attainment, income level, as well as the health status of an individual (Wilson, 2000), social capital constitutes of a dense stock of social connections that can increase volunteerism opportunities (Oesterle et al., 2004; Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Musick and Wilson (ibid.) further state that volunteerism may help to counter a decline of social capital as it creates networks of social relationships that facilitate social activism.

Apart from tangible development projects like the construction of public buildings, volunteerism may also serve as an important contributor in fuelling the development of other sectors like sports, as well as improving people's life in various dimensions. The Canadian Volunteerism Initiatives (CVI) (2001) and Curtis et al. (2004), for example, indicate that sports and games activities in some countries, like Canada, are facilitated from grassroots to upper levels through volunteerism. On the other side, volunteering also plays a significant role in nurturing a sense of civic responsibility by consolidating social cohesion, citizenship, and civil identity. Involvement in volunteer activities also builds social attitudes (such as the feeling that one belongs to his/her community), thus endorsing social responsibility and empathy for others (Penner, 2003); and enhances feeling of civic obligation (Matsuba et al., 2007; Penner, 2003; Cemalcilar, 2009). Therefore, active engagement of youth in volunteering work

helps to develop a sense of civic responsibility, increases networks that provide opportunities, and hence increases chances of getting more involved to contribute to the development of their communities.

Also, the youth accrue multiple benefits through volunteerism, including the shaping of positive behaviours such as helping them improve feelings of efficacy, which in turn enables them to feel more valued and taken seriously by others in a community (Sherrod et al., 2002). Volunteerism also increases youth's self-esteem, as well as making them become more responsible towards society by performing public duties (Independent Sector, 2001). Youniss et al. (1997) have shown that greater school engagement and reinforcing of positive social values are significant factors that facilitates the development of positive individuals in various dimensions. Volunteerism also helps the youth to have areas to work in that can help them enhance their skills. Similarly, interaction in various associations and organizations during volunteering promotes awareness of the availability of alternatives to paid employment (Clary et al., 1992; Independent Sector, 2001).

Despite the various advantages that individuals get from active engagement in volunteerism, there are obstacles that may hinder youth from engaging in volunteer work. These include the lack of communication and awareness of the available opportunities for volunteering (Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014), the lack of transportation (Scales et al., 2000), lack of time (Sherrod et al., 2002), not being sure of the benefits of their contributions (Israel et al., 1993), and the lack of interesting programmes such as regular and structured programmes with more predictable schedules for youth to volunteer (Scales & Leffert, 1999). We should note here that apart from obstacles that hinder volunteers to actively take part in civic engagement, dedicated volunteers are not immune to negative consequences of their participation. According to Withers et al. (2013) volunteers in health sectors—and AIDS organizations in particular—are stigmatized and in danger of being infected with diseases.

2.2 Youth Volunteerism on Local Development Initiatives in Tanzania

It is a fact that active engagement in various development initiatives contributes towards the development of societies in various dimensions. In Tanzania, there is a lack of adequate literature on volunteerism. However, the few that exist provide a clue on how youth volunteerism has been embraced in the country. Historically, the spirit of volunteerism in Tanzania can be traced back to the great work of the country's founding father, the late Mwl. J. K. Nyerere, when he introduced the ideology of socialism and self-reliance (ICYE, 2011). The idea of self-reliance embraced several critical issues, which were essential in nurturing the spirit of autonomy among young people, as well as volunteering in community service to support development efforts of their country (Nyerere, 1974; 1968). Another national initiative to inculcate the spirit of volunteerism among the youth can be seen in formulation of the national youth development policy (NYDP) of 2007, which

recognises the importance of youth volunteerism for the wellbeing of their neighbours, community, as well as national development (URT, 2007). However, despite the past and ongoing initiatives through ideology, policies, strategies and programmes towards inspiring youth volunteerism, there has been several challenges confronting active youth participation in volunteering activities. As a result, communities have been facing difficulties in responding to some challenges that would have been easily addressed by the youth, who constitute a large part of the active labour force in the country. It is in this regard that this study is significant to explore the extent of the achievements and failures of youth volunteerism so as to improve available mechanisms and ensure that the youth take active participation in voluntary activities. This is in line with the United Nations ambition to ensure that volunteerism helps youth to have experiences and skills relevant to contributing to the development of their respective societies, as well as to change their world for the better (UN, 2007).

Several examples unveil the manifestation and benefits of volunteerism among different sections of the population in the country that are useful to study and help understand achievements made, and gaps for further studies. One, is the provision of moral and material support—such as financial resources and food—to the sick and underprivileged groups in many areas in Tanzania, which has been achieved through the actions of volunteers. In this regard, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as institutions that provide forums for individual members and non-members in terms of motivating and mobilizing individuals to volunteer, has been critical. For instance, in Kilimanjaro region a local NGO known as Kikundi cha Wanawake Kilimanjaro Kupambana na UKIMWI (KIWAKKUKI)—which was founded and run by women with the support from local grassroots volunteers—is cited as one of the best examples of community volunteerism (Itemba, 2007; Corbin et al., 2015). This NGO provides community voluntary actions such as counselling, and home-based care support for orphans in the delivery of HIV and AIDs related services. These services have brought about several benefits not only to the supported group, but also among volunteers, who are the service providers. In turn, it has facilitated further the spirit of civic service provision in many other areas among the community members. For instance, it has been unveiled that having felt more a sense of belonging to their respective communities and a sense of pride by engaging in such volunteer activities, the volunteers have engaged in other activities that help those in needy (Itemba, 2007).

A similar example is that of the Umoja wa Vijana wa Kikristo Tanzania (UVIKIUTA), a non-profit youth development organization that mobilises youth all over the country to take part in exchanging views through established work camps. This NGO has established various external networks that offer exchange programmes that receive volunteers across the world to provide various community services. Participants of such programmes have admitted to have learned several skills through such activities (ICYE, 2011). These include on how to work with fellow youth in groups to complete

community works, as well as to solve conflicts. The youth confessed to have gained more self-confidence to deal with their own problems, as well as to contribute more towards addressing community problems through volunteerism (ibid.).

Furthermore, some empirical literatures regarding youth volunteerism in Tanzania have unveiled the impact of youth volunteerism on health service. For instance, there are several literatures about voluntary counselling and testing initiatives mobilized and facilitated by various institutions in supporting the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic in the country. An example is the study by Reynolds et al. (2010) that examined behavioural risks for both HIV and unintended pregnancy among sexually active youth attending voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) in developing countries, using the case studies of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

3. Methodology

The study area was Iringa region, which is located in central Tanzania, on the Southern Highlands zone. The region has three districts: Kilolo, Iringa, and Mufindi. The focus of this study was in rural areas, from where key informants (government officials and community residents) were purposively selected based on their roles in, and understanding of, youth volunteerism and practices in their respective areas. The study selected government officials who were ward executive officers (WEOs), village executive officers (VEOs) and community development officers (CDOs). Community residents selected to participate in the interviews were those who had lived in the respective villages for a relatively longer period: those that had lived there for more than ten years. Youth was the target group of the study, and thus it specifically involved both male and female youth, aged between 18 to 35 years, working in individual businesses, and/or in groups.

The study used two types of data sources: primary and secondary. Primary data sources were interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), while secondary data were from unpublished and published materials such as books, reports, and articles relevant to the study subject. The study involved holding FGDs with youth working in groups, and conducting interviews with government officials (WEOs, VEOs and CDOs) and community residents. It was necessary to extract information from existing youth groups through FGDs to gain experiences of members of groups who participate in voluntary activities on one side, and experiences of the youth who participated in voluntary works as individuals. The study analysed data using qualitative approach, and employed the NVivo software in the discussion of the findings according to the identified themes. Hence, the analysis was based on the themes of the study in relation to the data collected. All interviews and discussions were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and translated into English for analysis. The researcher obtained permission from relevant authorities—the Mkwawa University College of Education and regional and district officers in Iringa region—before undertaking data collection. Verbal and written consent was also sought from the participants.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the main objective of this study is to explore the role of youth volunteerism in local development initiatives in Iringa region, Tanzania. Three main themes emerged from the interviews and FGDs, which guide the discussion of the major study findings: (i) the main activities that youth tend to volunteer and best practice cited of youth volunteerism; (ii) factors motivating youth to volunteer; and (iii) the challenges that hinder youth from volunteering effectively. All these were found to be relevant for a better understanding of the role of youth volunteerism in development initiatives in the region, and finding ways to rectify hindrances of effective volunteerism.

4.2 Activities that Youth Volunteer and Best Practices

Youth engagement in various development activities in Iringa region through volunteerism was found to be helpful and providing critical contribution to enable effective implementations of various local development plans. Respondents revealed that the youth have been participating in various development activities that could not have been realised without their involvement. The following statements by Community Development Officers in two different wards demonstrate how youth participation in volunteerism enabled the implementation of various local development initiatives in their respective villages:

Normally there are several development activities in the village, for instance the construction of schools or dispensaries, in which the youth do participate like other community members. They participate in the collection of bricks, sand, or stones. There are other successful and relatively wealthy youth who have trucks; these provide building materials needed for various projects (MF KII CDO NY 09).

The main development activities that youth volunteer in are like construction and in making bricks. In most cases the youth are in the forefront with energetic work, which motivates other community members. So, you will find that when the youth see older people wanting also to participate, they tell them to leave the work to youth themselves (IR KII CDO ND 03).

The above extracts show the role of the youth of various income categories—from low to relatively high-income levels—of feeling responsible to contribute to the development of their communities materially. In other circumstances, critical needs of youth volunteerism are apparent in emergency services. The following extract from a youth development officer substantiates this:

The youth volunteer in the construction of public buildings, like classrooms in primary and secondary schools, building teachers' houses and offices. Even in situation where there is an emergency like a building being burnt, the youth get in the frontline to rescue the situation and renovate the buildings (IR KII YDO 02).

The above extracts show the importance of youth volunteerism in various activities to ensure that community activities are done as promptly as the need arises. It should be noted that the essence of youth activeness, longevity and quickness to engage themselves in various civic activities as demonstrated in the above extract

is in line with previous studies in both developing and developed countries (Marrow-Howel & Tang, 2003; Enemu, 1990, 2001; Isichei, 1977 in Patel & Wilson, 2004). Active and readiness shown by youth to participate in community activities owes mainly to their energetic conditions. Being the most energetic cohort than other age groups in a community, the youth have often been involved in labour-intensive activities such as making bricks, construction of public buildings, and repairing roads. The youth can use a part of their free time to contribute to the development efforts of their societies and are readily available when called upon in emergencies such as putting out fires or renovating damaged buildings like classrooms and dispensaries. In addition, they can take an active part in burial ceremonies by fetching firewood, digging graves, etc.

Moreover, the study findings unveiled that, in addition to physically participating in such activities as brick-making, construction of buildings, road-repair, etc., the youth also rendered volunteering services through donating their private resources to the needy. The participants reported that, either individually or through groups, the youth have helped vulnerable and underprivileged groups such as orphans, elders, and people with disabilities. Youth working in groups—e.g., youth economic groups (YEG)—in the rural areas have shown an exemplary case of volunteerism in offering contributions in the form of cash or by providing items such as clothes and food as attested by this statement from the ward CDO of Ilore ward, Kilolo district:

What they (youth) do is that they contribute and set aside funds to support children whose parents have died. So, in December, every year, they usually make contributions to support them (KL KII CDO IL 12).

It is clear from the above statement that the contribution that the youth provide to the orphans was in multiple forms, and significantly facilitated development initiatives in the respective villages. The study found out that it was relatively easier for the youth to organise and mobilise themselves in a group and make financial contributions. However, in situations where there was no consensus from members of a group on the amount to contribute, or where there was insufficient money for contribution, members confirmed that they regularly donated from their own private pockets.

In the face of hardships facing most people in rural areas, coupled with challenges faced by several orphanage centres in terms of lacking formal and regular support from donors, the relevance of donations from the youth was so critical. In terms of building and repairing civil infrastructures, individual youths who were relatively wealthy donated cash and bought building materials such as sand, stones, and cement, while those who could not afford paying cash contributed in terms of their labour power. All this support played a significant role in facilitating effective and efficient undertaking and accomplishment of projects intended to support disadvantaged people such as orphans and the sick in the community. Previous studies by Steinberg and Morris (2001) and Viner et al. (2012) have indicated that

youth development stakeholders like families, schools, and peers have play a critical role in instilling volunteerism values into people. This means that the support which orphans received from the youth would not have been possible without prior initiatives by individuals as institutions to nurture a volunteerism spirit among the youth. Hence, the support that various vulnerable groups like orphans got from youth is an indication of the role played by various agents to develop the spirit of volunteerism among the youth.

As stated earlier, the findings revealed several achievements in terms of projects completed successfully because of active youth volunteerism in those projects. Most of the mentioned achievements are vividly shown in the construction of public buildings and infrastructures like dispensaries and health centres, schools, and roads. The extract below of one community residents substantiates this:

For instance, currently we are undertaking the construction of a dispensary, and a ward secondary school in Mazombe village. In Lugalo village we have finished building village offices, and we are in the process of building a dispensary in the village. We have another project of constructing a library facility. In all these activities the youth are expected to participate, which of course they often actively do (KL KII CR RM 04).

Just like in the construction of public buildings, road maintenance in most parts of the villages involve energetic cohorts like the youth. The statement below validates how community members rely on the youth in most development activities:

... there are village development activities, for instance, let me take an example of Msosa village. When they wanted to repair the road, there were place that needed to be cleared before the grader/bulldozer came in. The main people who were involved in doing the activity were the youth ... since they are energetic, they were able to cut and uproot trees (KL CDO RM 11).

We see from the above the significance of the youth cohort in undertaking activities that would have not been easily undertaken by other age groups in society in rural Iringa. This finding corroborates those of previous studies regarding the significance of youth volunteerism in ensuring that various community development works are undertaken and successfully accomplished (see, e.g., Catalano et al., 2012; Flanagan et al., 1999; Hodgkin, 1995; Independent Sector, 2013). Therefore, it implies that mobilizing active youth participation in community development projects is crucial to mobilise collective actions and accelerate effective accomplishments of community projects.

4.3 Factors Motivating Youth Volunteerism in Iringa

Several issues were unveiled regarding what motivates youth to volunteer in development activities in the region. The focus of this subsection is to explain how various institutions influence the youth to develop volunteerism spirit in Iringa. As mentioned earlier, individual behaviours are shaped by institutions surrounding them. An examination of these institutions is critical in unveiling the core values and norms each institution embrace, and their influence in developing and instilling volunteerism

spirit in the youth. For the purpose of this paper the focus will be on religious, family, community as well as school institutions. Each of these was found to be relevant due to the day-to-day roles they play in shaping individual behaviours and interests.

As regards religious institutions and the influence they have in nurturing volunteerism spirit among the youth in rural Iringa, interviews and FGDs unveiled that religious institutions play a significant role in shaping positive youth behaviours that were potential in cultivating the spirit of volunteerism. Participants stated that the youth who actively engaged in religious activities (in churches or mosques)—through various associations and groups such as choirs and bible/spiritual study clubs—were the ones who mostly volunteered in various community activities. These results corroborate those of a previous study in Canada that examined the relationship between religious background and adult-level community participation. The study found that youth involvement in religious organisations positively predicts adults' participation in community activities in the form of informal and formal volunteering, voluntary organizations, and community associations (Youniss et al., 1997). Studies by Herzog and Morgan (1993) and Wuthnow (1990) also revealed similar results: that religious organisations have positive impacts in shaping individual spirit of volunteerism.

This implies that the spirit of volunteerism is influenced out of altruism or the desire to help others; values that are traditionally and directly connected with religious activities. In other words, religious institutions are critical in making the youth develop the spirit of civic services by virtue of the values cherished in their teachings. Putnam (2000) cements this idea by arguing that churches and religious organizations provides institutional and philosophical base for volunteerism. Through community service activities, such as charitable actions of giving food and clothes to the poor, members of particular religious denominations get involved in volunteering activities. This is to say, civic behaviour such as volunteerism spirit is positively associated with active religious involvement (Greeley, 1997; Law, 2002). Boraas (2003) came out with the same observation when he noted that over one-third of all people who are active volunteers are equally active members of religious organisations.

In addition to religious institutions, the study findings similarly found that community and family institutions contribute greatly in nurturing the spirit of volunteerism among the youth. For instance, through various forums that make the youth meet with their peers and other community members—such as funerals, village meetings, or in non-traditional games and sports such as football and netball, as well as in traditional ones like playing and dancing—the youth are mobilized to take part in various community development activities. Interviews and FGDs revealed that these forums created spaces for both recreations as well as significant avenue for village leaders (e.g., VEOs) to meet the youth and educate them on various positive self-development activities, and mobilise the youth to be

committed into various community development issues. As a result of active engagement in compulsory community activities, the youth are directly and positively influenced to participate in voluntary community services individually or through groups. In this regard, the presence of village bylaws—which are enforced by village community leaders—make youth find themselves accustomed to undertaking both compulsory and voluntary community activities as the following statement substantiates:

To a large extent youth do volunteer, but it depends on the mobilization and encouragement they receive from their respective leaders in the village to take part in development activities. But compulsory community works need youth labour power to be accomplished. So, every youth who is above 18 years of age who is healthy should comply with village bylaws to take part in village development activities (MF FGD VEO KN 01).

The above statement explains the extent to which youth volunteer as well as participate in compulsory works given village bylaws that make them participate in community development activities. From the views expressed by youth participants in the FGDs, it is evident that village bylaws contributed to a large extent in instilling hardworking spirit in the youth. For instances, village bylaws helped to ensure that all able-bodied individuals work, and the community needed to know what every individual was doing in the village in terms of productive work. Government officers like CDOs and VEOs confirmed that the bylaws enforced participation in public community works, and banished laziness and idleness among the youth. As one participant put it:

There are bylaws in this village. No one must be seen roaming around: everyone must have work. You can even find that in other villages there are bylaws which state that every youth should have at least two acres of land to prove that s/he works (IR KII CDO ND 03).

The above extract demonstrates how community institutions influence youth to develop hardworking spirit. It should be noted that once hardworking spirit is instilled into a youth's mind, it stimulates her/him to get further involved in other voluntary works upon mobilization. In this regard, youth were compelled to rethink further on how to take active part in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities towards themselves, their families, and their communities at large. Generally, village residents and officials assisted parents and guardians at the family level to instruct their children (youth) on positive behaviours, which are potential in developing the spirit of volunteerism among them. In this way, parenting being a lifetime responsibility of training a child from being a dependent individual to an independent one, is an instrumental training process that also helps youth to actively take part in community services.

In the courses of abiding to village bylaws to ensure that all able-bodied people work, it was observed that parents in rural Iringa have been providing youth with land to farm, or premises and capital to start businesses. The support that youth received from parents has been instrumental not only in empowering them

economically, but also in instilling in them a sense of responsibility to their communities. From the FGDs, youth participants disclosed that observing parents' involvement in various civic activities—both voluntary and compulsory—since their childhood had influenced them to take part in similar activities when they matured. According to Azhar et al. (2013), parents are a child's closest relative who can influence his/her achievements. The fact that the youth have been showing interest and taking active part in various voluntary development activities is a manifestation of how parents, guardian and community members have been playing their role in moulding positive behaviours in them, which in turns builds them into active participants in private and communal activities. This corroborates study findings by Chan and Elder (1999), which demonstrated that youth whose parents are actively involved in a community are more likely to become active themselves in the future in providing free community services. Fletcher and Van Horn (2000) also argued that the existence of any supportive environment of different forms from parents contributes towards a greater participation of youth in voluntary activities.

The role of educational institutions in motivating youth to acquire the spirit of volunteerism is relevant just like in other institutions discussed above. Respondents in the study said that both primary and secondary school students benefited from the training they acquired from educational institutions. FGDs with the youth showed that through extracurricular activities and outreach programmes established and managed by the students themselves, the youth had been able to gain skills to work outside their schools during their training years, and that they had sustained this spirit after they graduated. For instance, the youth narrated that their past experiences of active engagement in student clubs of different interests—such as environmental and health protection—had played an important role not only in helping them acquire formal skills, but had also helped them contribute in the development of their communities through volunteerism. This corroborate previous findings by another study, which found out that when schools give students extra tasks and duties to undertake in the course of learning, this helps students develop positive attitudes towards adolescent volunteerism, which in turn directly and positively affects their future participation in volunteer activities (IVR, 2013; Takashi & Hatano, 1999). Through mobilizing students and establishing curriculum that motivate civic engagement in community organizations, educational institutions like schools provide youth with a volunteering forum (Rotolo & Wilson, 2004).

4.4 Challenges Facing Volunteerism among the Youth

The study findings show that youth volunteerism contributes enormously in supporting various local development initiatives. However, some respondents also mentioned several challenges that reveal the lack of an understanding and weak levels of volunteerism spirit on the part of some youth. It was observed that this discouraged other youth from actively participate in voluntary activities. The

responses below from a question that intended to understand whether youth are ready to volunteer when requested shows the lack of understanding of the concept of volunteerism, and the total absence volunteerism spirit among some youth:

Mhh! No, without payment? You must give them something.

.....

Currently a big percentage of youth have put forward money as their number one priority. So, it is very difficult for a youth to easily agree to sacrifice and undertake voluntary activity (MF KII CDO NY 09).

These statements narrate the extent to which there is a lack of understanding of the concept of volunteerism, as well as a complete lack—or the decline—of the spirit of volunteerism among many youths. Youth expectations of money and other material benefits from communal activities where they live is a clear sign either selfishness or a lack of understating of the concept of volunteerism. It shows a poor sense of belongingness to a particular community, as well as laziness on the part of the youth.

When participants were asked to explain what may be the major causes of the poor state of volunteerism spirit among some youth, several issues were provided as narrated below.

This situation may be attributed to the current economic system (market economy). Youth of this generation have a feeling that to have money and material wealth is the most important thing because for them money is everything (IR KII YDO 02).

To some extent this has something to do with the way community residents—parents, guardians, and government officials—have not taken responsibilities to couch and train the values of supporting each other, which makes youth lazy to engage in such activities. Had these youths' stakeholders played their role in training them on the importance of volunteerism to themselves and community at large, the youth would not been forced to do so (IR KII CDO IF 04).

Ehh! That issue is very challenging in the contemporary world. Most of youth decline in taking part in volunteerism nowadays. And this is the main task we must do: to insist to them that the youth cohort constitute a significant national workforce, and therefore they should be ready to sacrifice their time and energy in development indicatives at their localities as well as at the national level. (IR KII WEO 01).

On examining the above extracts, two main issues are apparent: (i) the changing economic system in the country has inspired individual success at the expense of community interests; and (ii) stakeholders have failed to train the youth on the importance of volunteerism. As stated earlier, notwithstanding various external challenges facing individuals in their environment, parents and institutions are critical in shaping positive behaviour among the youth. Therefore, it stands to reason that the failure of some institutions—such as schools and families—to mould positive youth behaviours that instil important values (such as hardworking solidarity, and sense of belonging) is the major cause of the declining levels of volunteerism among the youth in the contemporary generation. The study results

indicate that it is the failure of these institutions that breeds the culture of laziness, greediness and selfishness among the youth, things that erode the spirit of volunteerism in general.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the role of youth volunteerism in community development projects in Iringa region, Tanzania, to find the best ways of improving best practices in facilitating local development projects, as well as addressing challenges that hinder effective youth volunteerism. The findings show that while there are several examples of best practices of youth volunteerism in development projects in some villages, there are challenges in other areas. One of the major challenges causing poor, or lack of, volunteerism among the youth is the lack of proper understanding on the part of youth of the concept of volunteerism and its advantages. Also, there is poor youth socialization from families, community members and institutions. In some instances, institutions such as families and schools have failed to help the youth to understand and internalize community values and norms that develop positive behaviours, including volunteerism, which has in turn hindered their effective and active participation in development projects.

Although in some ways people solely blame the contemporary paradigm shift of socio-economic system guiding today's economy (e.g., market economy), the study established that the lack of appropriate upbringing of children and youth to address challenges brought about by the paradigm shift stands to be the main cause of the diminishing levels of volunteerism among the youth. We argue that if the youth are well prepared in terms of getting proper training on hardworking and solidarity, among other important values, they will be able to withstand all forces that prevent them from contributing to the development of their communities through volunteering. Thus, we recommend that all institutions need to play an active part to educate the youth on the importance of volunteerism so that they can actively engage in community development activities. Previous literatures have established that volunteerism is one of the best efficient means of learning new skills and knowledge, as well as contributing to the socio-economic development of a community. Hence, further initiatives among all key development stakeholders are required to prepare the youth to develop volunteerism spirit to sustain attained achievements and address weaknesses unveiled in this study. This is critical to facilitate and meet both community and national development targets.

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