The Problem: An undervalued resource

Volunteering is a crucial renewable resource for social and environmental problem-solving the world over, but its effective management requires better information and an enabling policy environment.

However, in all but a handful of countries, no reliable data exist to gauge the extent and character of volunteering, and what data do exist are not comparable. As a result, volunteering remains under-valued and its potentials under-realized.

A Solution: The ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work

A unique opportunity now exists to establish a permanent system for boosting the visibility and credibility of volunteering. This opportunity arises from the convergence of the 10th Anniversary of the UN 2001 Year of the Volunteer (IYV + 10) with the release by the International Labour Organization of the first official ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work, calling on national statistical agencies to measure the amount and economic value of volunteering through regular labor force or other household surveys.

This new Manual, drafted by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies in cooperation with the ILO and an international Technical Experts Group, represents the first-ever internationally sanctioned approach for gathering official data on the amount, character, and value of volunteering. This approach will generate cross-nationally comparable data, and has the advantage of being cost-effective, efficient, reliable, and feasible in a wide variety of countries.

Benefits of the ILO Manual

By making the adoption and implementation of this new Manual one of the principal objectives of IYV+10 in your country, you can help to:

- Boost the visibility and credibility of volunteer work
- Improve the management of volunteering
- Assess effectiveness of volunteer promotion agencies
- Document the enormous economic impact of volunteer effort
- Promote a more enabling policy environment for volunteering
- Create a lasting legacy for IYV+10

How can you help?

Implementation of this new Manual is not automatic. National statistical offices must be persuaded to adopt the Manual and follow its guidelines. To help achieve this, the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, along with a number of volunteer promotion organizations, have launched a Global Volunteer Measurement Project. We need your help to:

- Communicate
  Get the word out about the ILO Manual. Bring this new tool to the attention of your network and to the statistical agency in your country through newsletters, blog entries, emails, and personal visits to the labour force survey personnel in your country’s statistical office.

- Mobilize
  Get friends, contacts, and colleagues involved. Convene meetings of key stakeholders. Engage key foundation leaders, senior government leaders or legislators, nonprofit association leaders, and any other influential personality who can attract the key officials within the labour statistics department. Contact Johns Hopkins to coordinate actions. Email volunteers@jhu.edu, and visit www.ccss.jhu.edu.

- Contact
  Begin a conversation with labour force statisticians and with people in charge of the statistics department. Initiate a letter-writing campaign.

- Partner
  Work in partnership with labour statistics officials. Statistics offices are often short on staff and funds—offer your expertise and technical assistance from JHU/CCSS.

- Disseminate
  Make the results widely known. Once the data are available, it is important to disseminate them widely so that they can be used—the more feedback they receive, the more likely it is that statistical agencies will update the data in future years.

For more information, including details about the Manual’s approach to measuring volunteering, please visit www.ccss.jhu.edu or email volunteers@jhu.edu.