Study on
The dynamics of International Volunteerism and Solidarity Exchange
In India

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I. Context of India

India at a glance

- **Population:** 1.241 billion
- **Total area:** 328,723 km² last reported in 2010
- **Political system:** Democratic republic
- **Human development index:** 134th (out of 187)
- **Gender Inequalities:** 129th (out of 155)
- **Adult literacy rate:** 62.7%
- **Infant mortality rate:** 19‰
- **Children under 5 years:** 33.8%
- **Fertility rate:** 2.6 children per woman of childbearing age
- **Labour force participation:** 30% (women) 83% (men)
- **Life expectancy:** 65.4 years
- **GDP:** 1847 billion USD (10th)
- **GNI per capita, PPP:** (2,359$ (rank)
- **Population with less than 2$ per day:** 24.4%
- **Official development aid received:** 0.16% of GDP

*Source: Report on Human development 2011, UNDP*

“To India, the land of dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty, of splendour and rags, of palaces and hovels, of famine and pestilence, the country of hundred nations and a hundred tongues, of a thousand religions and two million gods, mother of history, grandmother of legend, lettered and ignorant, wise and fool, rich and poor, bond and free, the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all the rest of the world combined”

—Mark Twain.
Prior to illustrating about the voluntary sector in India and the role for France-Volontaires in international solidarity and exchange, a brief introduction to this large country would be required. The above quote by Mark Twain poignantly captures the mosaic of identities, cultures, languages and ethnic groups, which can be located in the seventh largest country in the world.

To begin with, India, the seventh-largest country, covers a huge geographical space of 3287260.2 km². This landmass roughly supports more than 1.22 billion people, making India the world’s largest democracy and second most populous country in the world.¹

A. Diversity

Diversity is the most important characteristic that defines India. It has 17 major languages and 22,000 distinct dialects. It has over a billion individuals of numerous ethnic extractions known in South Asia. It has a population that is 37 percent illiterate, yet possesses one of the world’s largest pools of trained scientists and engineers. Its ageless civilization is the birthplace of four major religions, a dozen different traditions of classical dance, and 300 ways of cooking a potato.²

Despite the diversities, it is also ridden by enormous variations in regional experiences and achievements, in a country where the federal political structure gives a lot of power to the provincial states. It would be therefore a mistake to consider the sub-continent of India as homogeneous. There is no single ‘problem region’ within India, and one has to be aware of the different kinds of challenges that arise in different parts of the country. In so far as any broad patterns can be identified, it is agreed that in terms of social indicators, deprivation is endemic in most of north India, with the south Indian states doing significantly better in most respects, especially in the sectors of mortality, fertility, literacy, and gender equity.

B. Inequality

Inequality is the other important principle that characterizes modern India. Historically, it emerged from the caste system - a system of social stratification for the division of labor and power in the society. While the battle to abolish caste within the society is still being waged, other forms of inequality in terms of class and gender have also begun to mark their space.

So, the question arises - is India a poor or a rich country? By its sheer size, it suggests that India is the 10th largest economy in the world – and could well be the third largest by 2030. On one hand, India has more billionaires than Britain. On the other, 8 of its states have more poor people than 26 poorest African nations combined together, which accounts for 410 million poor people³. Paradoxically, it is magnet both for the world’s aid agencies⁴ and for its multinationals.

³ 8 Indian states have more poor than 26 poorest African nations”, The Times of India, Dated 10-07-12.
⁴ India is the first World Bank recipient country (accounting for both IDA and BIRD)
An important aspect in the field of International development is that elementary deprivation in the world is now heavily concentrated in two specific regions: south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. It is not the worst case but as economists\(^5\) have pointed out, this observation has to be interpreted bearing in mind that there are large regional variations in living conditions within India. While India is doing

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significantly better than, say, Ethiopia or Congo in terms of most development indicators, there are large areas within India where living conditions are not very different from those prevailing in these countries. To give an example, Uttar Pradesh, a state in the heart of India has a larger population than Russia. Yet, it is not doing much better than the least developed among the sub-Saharan African countries in terms of basic development indicators.

Yet, it would be incorrect to say that both the regions are in the same condition as far as development is concerned. In many respects, living standards are now distinctly higher in India than in sub-Saharan Africa. Life expectancy, for instance, is around 63 years in India, while in sub-Saharan Africa it is as low as 47 years (due to spread of AIDS, which led to a sharp decline of life expectancy in many African countries).

Both the regions share two common problems: a) endemic illiteracy, b) low educational achievements. Available estimates suggest that adult illiteracy rates are quite similar in the two regions. However, India comes out worse in the comparison, mainly due to low female literacy rates. In fact, India is entering the twenty-first century with a majority of adult women unable to read and write. This is in sharp contrast with the relatively good record in higher education and scientific research of the country.

Secondly, there is much evidence suggesting that under nutrition is considerably higher in India (and south Asia) than in sub-Saharan Africa. To provide an example, more than half of all Indian children are undernourished and the incidence of anemia among pregnant women is estimated to be as high as 88 percent.

In some respects, economic and social inequalities are sharper in India than in sub-Saharan Africa. This applies particularly to many dimensions of gender inequality. India has a disastrous record of one of the lowest female-male ratio in the population (933 women per 1,000 men), owing to female mortality along with female deprivation in the field of gainful employment, schooling opportunities, patterns of property rights and decision-making within the family.
II. Volunteerism in India

A. When did the voluntary sector in India emerge?

The above image has been utilized as it epitomizes the multifaceted nature of volunteerism in contemporary India. The image is of Sri Sri Ravi Shanker, a spiritual guru who is also the founder of the ‘The Art of Living’, an international, non-profit, educational and humanitarian organisation. During a time when the country is witnessing increasing protests against corruption and gender injustice, he has raised a clarion call for increased participation in public affairs by ‘giving one hour’ for a ‘better nation’. A religious guru often associated with right-wing ‘Hindu’ fundamentalists, he has suggested his solution for a ‘better India’- it is through volunteerism, a sector in which its citizenry can actively participate in nation building. Clearly, one can observe that volunteerism in India is deeply steeped in religious values.

However, this juxtaposition of religion and volunteerism is not a novel trend in India. Historically, volunteerism has always followed the footsteps of all the major religious texts, which has espoused the practice of charity. From the Rig Veda, dating back to 1500 BCE to Islam, which made ‘zakat’ (almsgiving) obligatory amongst its rituals, India has witnessed various usages of volunteerism. Other religions, such as Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism, have also included teaching and edicts that encourage voluntary and
charitable action.  

Truly, volunteerism in India has been dynamic and it has survived over the years due to the flexibility it has revealed under differing aegis. During the 19th century, with the Britishers ruling India, voluntary action took on a more modern, institutionalized form when Christian missionaries combined their efforts at propagating their faith with a range of social development initiatives, such as building of schools, orphanages, and medical centres. This practice of ‘Christian’ volunteerism is still prevalent and existent in many parts of the country, performing a host of community-related activities and facilitating the development of the marginalized sections. In fact, the Indian reformists who played a vital role in the independence movement drew their inspiration from these missionary actions and began synthesizing their social reform efforts with Hindu charitable activities. Following this, three major Hindu councils (sabhas) evolved - the Arya Samaj, the Brahma Samaj and most importantly, the Ramakrishna mission. In fact, all the above stated organisations are deeply involved in promoting education and are thriving through their voluntary activities in present-day India.

However, the most important historical figure that personifies this intimate relationship between religion or spirituality and volunteerism is Mahatma Gandhi. His doctrine of ‘self-sufficiency’ during the independence movement left a deep imprint and voluntary organisations, till the present day, focus on organizing efforts to promote “self-help in economic and social life”. A clear example of this strong influence can be seen in AVARD (India’s association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural development), which has identified Gandhian ideology as the most prominent guiding philosophy of NGOs in India, alongside that of Christianity. In fact, an article states that during 2005-10, NGOs have spent over Rs 1,300 crore on religious functions.  

**B. What is the present situation of the voluntary sector in India?**

While religion and spirituality forms the philosophical basis of volunteerism in India, yet it is very difficult to assess the actual size and diversity of this sector. To provide an exact number of existent NGOs is an impossible task. Firstly, there is no centralized, classified comprehensive database of NGOs, which acts as a huge deterrent. Alongside, more NGOs and non-profit organisations are mushrooming in each part of the country, fuelling disenchantment with the functioning of these organisations. As a result, the large and unorganized nature of this sector has led to unverified perceptions of NGOs being corrupt and unprofessional. This is despite the fact that certain NGOs play a key role as delivery agents for support services to the poor and are also competent repositories of knowledge whose expertise lies unutilized by the government and the private sector. Clearly, the NGO sector in India is akin to a ‘jungle’ – large, invisible yet widespread, supporting different forms of volunteerism.

However, statistics are imperative for comprehending the ‘large’ size of this sector. In the first detailed survey of NGOs in India (2003), it was estimated that there were 1.2 million NGOs in India, with a majority (51 percent) of them registered, mostly under the Society Registration Acts. The most recent report (2010) suggests that there is an NGO for every 400 persons in India and latest figure stands at 3.3

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6 Famida Handy et al, ‘From Seva to Cyberspace: The many faces of volunteering in india’, pg 2,3.
million⁹. There was a disclaimer that even this staggering number was less than the actual number of NGOs active in the country, as the study did not take into account all the various types of registrations in India.

Surely, the large numbers of NGOs offer various possibilities of initiating international solidarity partnerships yet there remains a veritable hitch. Despite the staggering number of NGOs active in India, most global donor agencies and voluntary agencies lament that they do not find enough "eligible partners" to work with.¹⁰ For instance, Oxfam India funds around 250 NGOs in India and according to their viewpoint, finding professional, above board organisations that follow transparent ways of functioning is a challenge (in India).

How do NGOs play a role?
1) Important delivery agents for support services to the marginalized communities and covers a large scale.
2) Competent repositories of knowledge due to closer access at grassroots level.
3) Innovative, vibrant and supports different forms of volunteerism.
4) Government has begun to recognize NGOs an important part of the development model.

Why the NGOs are unable to play a role?
1) Unorganized sector. Urgent requirement for an independent, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector.
2) Has not been properly utilized at the policy making level.
3) No proper mechanism for monitoring and accountability, leads to unverified perceptions of being corrupt and unprofessional.
4) Has limited autonomy, does not have the space to take up political issues.

C. What is the nature of the relationship between the Indian government and the voluntary sector?

In comparison to other countries such as Tanzania and Kenya, the model of interaction between the Indian government and the civil society is termed by the World Bank as a ‘collaborationist’ one¹¹ - a genuine partnership exists between the two to tackle mutually agreed problems, coupled with energetic but constructive debate on areas of disagreement. However, one needs to read further into it to understand that the government allows considerable autonomy among the grassroots-oriented organisations as long as they are politically harmless. Moreover, the state does not attempt to cut the NGO sector out of the development process but to coerce it into following the central government’s model by cracking down on dissenters while attracting others through increased governmental grants¹².

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¹² Femida Handy et al., ‘From Seva to Cyberspace: The many faces of Volunteering in India’, pg 10.
Interestingly, they have formed their own quasi-governmental NGOs, known as ‘government operated nongovernmental organisations’.

Yet, certain positive measures have been undertaken by the government which has recently begun to envisage a development model where the NGOs play an important role. The National Policy on Voluntary sector in India (2007), formulated by the Planning Commission\textsuperscript{13} is an example. A much required step, the policy visualizes the evolution of a “long term sustainable and institutionalized collaboration between the government and voluntary organisations”. It also notes the importance of setting up an independent, national level, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector. Yet, few measures have been undertaken for its implementation. Significantly, the National policy has not been verified by the Parliament and is not binding. The absence of a structured and comprehensive national policy adopted by all the important stakeholders (the state government, private sector and the voluntary organisations) needs to be addressed for promoting volunteerism.\textsuperscript{14}

In terms of foreign NGOs, confusion persists at an ideological level. Since 1960s, the spectre of the “foreign hand”\textsuperscript{15} has played a crucial role in the Indian politics as an omnipresent, engaging shadow in Indian politics, which has been blamed for all the mischiefs that could not be resolved. This particular ideology plays an important role in formulating the perception of Indian authorities towards foreign NGOs. For example, the current Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh blamed rich NGOs from the US and Scandinavian nations for stalling the protests against the setting up of two reactors at the nuclear power plant in Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu\textsuperscript{16}.

D. What role does domestic volunteerism play in India?

There are various stakeholders prevalent in the Indian voluntary sector. It has to be emphasized that the sector is highly heterogeneous in terms of the philosophies practiced by different segments, their areas of activity and the size of institutions. Yet one can see, that domestic volunteerism plays the largest role in the functioning of these organisations. Some of the sectors in which it plays a huge role are the governance and management of common property resources, social support networks formed by citizens for the weaker sections of the community as well as art, music and folk culture. For example, the NCC (National Cadet Corps) was the first organisation in India to recruit domestic volunteers amongst students and presently, has 1,300,000 youth enrolled in the program.

During the 1970s, domestic volunteerism was increasingly associated with fund-raising and charitable activities, especially by the middle class and promoted by organisations such as Rotary International and Lion’s club. However, a marked change is occurring in this sector, which is now moving from ‘financial-related activities’ to ‘action-oriented activities’. Active citizenship has become the buzzword for the human capital provided through volunteerism. Along with United Nations Volunteers (UNV), other platforms like I-volunteers, Joining hands and VSO are some of the organisations which act as platforms

\textsuperscript{13} Planning Commission was set up by a resolution of the government of India in 1950 to primarily formulate, execute and monitor the Five Year Plans to determine the government’s priorities and most effective utilizations of resources, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planning_Commission_(India)

\textsuperscript{14} Harsh Jaitli, ‘Volunteers and Voluntary sector’, from the United Nations Volunteers (UNV)’s report on Volunteering In India


to support domestic volunteerism. In the following paragraph, certain examples are provided of youth-based domestic volunteerism, which find similarities with the VIECH supported by France-Volontaires.

Recent years have witnessed the evolution of innovative fellowships for attracting the youth. The Gandhi Fellowship is an example, inspired by Gandhian values of ‘becoming what you preach’. It selects graduates and postgraduates from elite institutions across the country, who choose to go back to primary schools to teach in an innovative manner and bring new ideas to the classroom. It promotes austere living and prohibits smoking and drinking during the tenure of two years.

Teach for India is another example, which selects young professionals and places them as teachers in private low-income schools and government schools. Apart from private fellowships, the government has also begun to support this form of ‘active citizenship’ amongst the youth. The Prime Ministers’ Rural Development Fellows Scheme pays a substantial stipend to young development professionals to play an important role in the organisation of the public life of the village. Other organisations like Blank Noise and the YP foundation promote volunteerism but in a more informal setup.

E. Where does International volunteerism stand in India?

International volunteerism in India is alive and plays an important role. Though there is no proper documented account of the number of international volunteers working in India, it is clear that India hosts numerous such volunteers each year. The ‘Volunteer Abroad Report’ (2012) states that India is the most searched country, on a monthly basis, for volunteer opportunities.

There are six important trends in International volunteerism in India:

- The tenure of the assignments:

  The international volunteers have predominantly worked in India for a short-term project. **Short-term volunteering (for placements less than three months)** has been popular with international volunteers in India and only a minority of the organisations received volunteers for medium- and longer-term placements.

- Volontourism:

  The short-term tenure of the projects has also led to many international volunteers combining their assignment with travelling in the country. Many organisations such as private tourism companies and NGOs have attempted to utilize it to their advantage and have begun proposing paid assignments that combine the two together.

  However, this has served as the most important deterrent for international volunteerism as many organisations working at the grassroots level are skeptical of ‘Volontourists’. Though not against discovering the country, yet it often raises questions about the accountability and motivations for

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17 The Gandhi fellowship states its purpose as follows, ‘Gandhi Fellowship believes India needs a new brand of constructive leadership, a pool of social change leaders who can think out of the box. We aspire to develop a cadre of future leaders to build the new India’.

18 http://www.gooverseas.com/volunteer-abroad-report

19 Comhalam’s Volunteering Options report, ‘The Impact of International volunteering on host organisations- A summary of research conducted in Tanzania and India’, Pg 8.
the project. This was also another reason behind host organisations requesting for skilled and aged professionals against young volunteers who are more associated with travelling.

* No government support:

The Indian government does not provide much support in the sector of international volunteerism. The government strictly regulates the sector and the central policy framework is rather restrictive and instable.

This is clearly visible through the hurdles faced by international volunteers in obtaining visa. Till some time back, international volunteers would obtain a ‘tourist visa’ for the tenure of their assignment. However, the government has now made it mandatory for every international working professional to hold an ‘employment’ visa. This is the biggest obstacle in international volunteerism in India. Moreover, the visa policies are instable and are subject to the bureaucratic ties between the governments.

* Fragmented:

The sector of international volunteerism is fragmented and unorganized. There is no singular platform consolidating the international volunteers in India. Many platforms are existent in the sector and knowledge is not easily available or disseminated.

* Competitive:

There are multiple independent international volunteer sending agencies working in India. United Nations Volunteers clearly occupies the central stage but there is also Peace Corps, Red Cross, Skillshare International, VSO amongst others who dominate the sector of international volunteerism.

* Diaspora volunteering

Diaspora volunteering is the most recent and important trend that has emerged in the field of international volunteerism in India. International Volunteer sending organisations are targeting the first, second or third generation of Indians (who migrated to other, usually western countries) to return and contribute in various social development activities.

Diaspora volunteering is useful in a two-fold manner: it is easier for the next generation of the diaspora to avail a visa (PIO - Person of Indian Origin status) and there are many international volunteers prepared to participate and discover their country of origin.

Important examples of diaspora volunteering are: Indicorps, the American India Foundation’s (AIF)’s William J. Clinton Fellowship for service and DFID’s diaspora volunteering programme.
III. **Methodological overview of the study**

Presently, there is no data available pointing to the number of French volunteers in India. The first exercise to consolidate the organisations that have hosted French volunteers has been initiated by France-Volontaires in India. However, considering the size of the country, it is an impossible task to locate and identify each of these organisations.

*A. The analytical framework*

The research on French volunteerism in India is an initiative that has not been undertaken before. The study fulfills a two-pronged strategy of disseminating information about France-Volontaires’s presence as a unique platform for volunteering in India and also helps to create a database of organisations that have hosted French volunteers.

*B. Objectives of the study*

- **To draw up a qualitative and quantitative panorama** of the French practices of voluntary and solidarity commitments in India
- **To start a network dynamic** in the perspective of the implementation of a future Volunteer Space.
- **To understand the practices of voluntary and solidarity commitments** according to the local context.
- **To inform about France Volontaires** and its missions as a key reference organisation.
- **To start and/or keep networking** among the actors, especially volunteers and host organisations.
- **To identify local needs** in terms of support/accompaniment.

The above objectives have formed the basis of the study in India. However, following the construction of the analytical framework, several adjustments were made in order to adapt the methodological framework to the Indian context:

Indeed, while France Volontaires is primarily interested in the forms of engagements undertaken by the French volunteers, it is the partnership with Skillshare and the context of India described in the previous section, which has motivated the modifications in the interview schedule in order to better integrate the diverse forms of engagement of European volunteers.

However, the time and budget constraint restricted the geographical scope of the study. Taking the large size of the country into account, it was uncertain whether it would be possible to identify 30 organisations that had hosted French volunteers.
Hence, right at the onset of the study, three important changes were made which would have an impact on the study:

- To incorporate both French and European Volunteerism in the research. This shall help to increase the ambit of the study on international volunteerism India.

- As a minimum of 30 hosting organisations was required for the statistics to be carried out and important trends to emerge, the sample was split into 20 only French volunteer hosting organisations and 10 European volunteer hosting organisations.

- Two sets of questionnaires were made, one for organisations that had hosted French volunteers and the other one for organisations that had hosted European volunteers or were partners of Skillshare India.

Following this, another objective was added along with the above mentioned ones.

* To explore a possible partnership with Skillshare India and include their partner organisations which have prior experience of hosting British volunteers.

**C. Difficulties encountered:**

After the finalization of the analytical framework, three main methodological barriers were identified in the construction of the database of organisations that had hosted French volunteers. Firstly, no starting database was available for locating NGOs that had hosted French volunteers. Moreover, taking the size of India into account, it was difficult to identify which region to concentrate on. (Where to begin?).

Furthermore, another important problem emerged when trying to establish contact with NGOs. Certain NGOs were under the radar of the Indian government and confused France-Volontaires with a governmental agency. Despite many clarifications, this particular NGO was not ready to provide any details.

**D. Data collection methods**

* Internet:

To identify the French volunteer hosting organisations, Internet became the first source of information. There were some reports by European Union and various volunteer sending platforms, which provided the names of NGOs that might have hosted French volunteers. However, it was soon identified that this was a time-taking method with unreliable results.

* Identification of nodal contacts (persons and institutions):

Resource persons on French Volunteerism in India were identified who contributed to the construction of the data-base of the host structures. Following are the principal contacts:
**Database of other French volunteer sending organisations:**

The database provided by FIDESCO, SCD and La Guild for their Asia operations were important sources for locating the French volunteerism in India. All these databases were provided by the Indian representative of France-Volontaires.

**French volunteerism located in specific regions**

The above sources helped to form the preliminary database of organisations that had hosted French volunteers and a geographical trend began to emerge. Most of the organisations that had hosted French volunteers were based in southern India, mostly around Pondicherry.

Since the southern region in India is predominantly Tamil speaking, it was difficult to establish contact through telephone. Moreover, it was observed that majority of the organisations were not responding to email correspondence, due to wrong email ids or incapability of understanding English. As a result, it became clear that the NGOs in and around Pondicherry would require contact to be established by personally meeting them.

During the mission to Pondicherry, 16 NGOs were interviewed in and around Pondicherry, Chengapettu and Chennai (in Tamil Nadu). Also, three important nodal contacts were identified in Pondicherry that would facilitate further research and networking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact points</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFP (Institut Francaise de Pondicherry)</td>
<td>French research centre in Pondicherry, funded by the CNRS. The French social scientists were crucial in identifying local NGOs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jauzelon Celina</td>
<td>Directrice de Stage, Institut de Cooperation Internationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronique Glas</td>
<td>Head of social service, French Consulate General in Pondicherry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Snowball sampling method*

The interviewed NGOs provided other contacts which have been included in the database. Hence, snowball sampling was an important method of data collection in south India.
IV. Procedure of the survey

A. Time frame

The survey officially started on 1st November 2012. An interim report was presented on 14th February, 2013. Alongside, the interim results were presented at the France Volontaires Asia meeting in March 2013 at Vietnam.

B. Conduct of the survey

During the survey, around 47 organisations were contacted out of which 31 organisations participated in the entire survey. Significantly, only 4 organisations responded to the survey via email and completed it online. The rest of the 27 surveys occurred through in-depth and personal interviews.

As pointed out in the methodology, the sample was split into 21 French Volunteer Hosting Organisations (FVHO) and 10 European Volunteer Hosting Organisations (EVHO). The geographical distribution is given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of structure</th>
<th>FVHO</th>
<th>EVHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry and around</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other areas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey represents 517 volunteers who visited India in 2012. The results attempts to throw light on French and European volunteerism prevalent in India from the perspective of host structures and NGOs.

Importantly, France Volontaires has presently 8 assignments in India. These 8 assignments are extremely diverse and are taking place in various institutions such as the Alliance Française de Pondicherry, Institut Français in New Delhi, IBAB in Bangalore and Raindrop in Bargah, Uttar Pradesh to name a few. The Volontaires du Progres (Volunteers directly sent by France Volontaires) are involved in various sectors from linguistics and culture to education etc. During the survey, only 4 out of the 8 present volunteers were interviewed. This was an attempt to include other grass-root organisations and to have a more neutral and holistic perspective of French volunteerism reflected in the survey.
V. Results of the survey: Trends reflecting contemporary French and European volunteerism in India

A. The organisations interviewed – who are the host structures?

* A majority of charitable organisations, associations and NGOs

![Fig 1: Status of organisations interviewed](image1)

Most of the FVHO and EVHO interviewed identified themselves as charitable organisations or associations. It is important to mention that most of the interviewed organisations did not understand the question about the status of their organisation. This is because the NGOs in India define themselves according to their registration or legal status. Hence, when 11 organisations identify themselves as charitable, it is because they have been registered under the Registration of Societies Act as seen in Fig 2. Similarly, 1 organisation registered under Sec 25 Companies Act identifies itself as a non-profit company.

![Fig 2: Type of Registration](image2)

9 organisations call themselves associations out of which 5 were FVHO and 4 were EVHO. The 3 organisations which identified themselves as unregistered in Fig 2 are based in Pondicherry. This means that they are registered in France and are unregistered in India. Amongst the FVHOs, Auroville holds a special status as it is an autonomous body created by Act of India Parliament, 1988.

* Most of the host organisations formed recently

12 of the 31 interviewed organisations are less than 10 years old. Therefore, most of the host structures are recent. Created in 1889, Alliance Française is the oldest institution of this sample. AshaDiya is the most recent one, created in 2012.
Fig 3: Main field of action

8 of the 31 FVHOs and EVHOs are involved in local & territorial development followed by health, social and hygiene education. Local & territorial development includes a whole range of issues including ecological security, community development and provision of various income-generating schemes for the local public. Naturally, it remains an important domain of intervention for organisations working at grass-root level. Health, social and hygiene education followed next with a large number of organisations working in this sector. These organisations were involved in training health workers from the community. These health workers were women selected from the community who helped to disburse information about AIDS, sexual diseases, female foeticide, tuberculosis amongst many other health-related issues.

The option education, teaching & “francophonie” were clubbed together for the purpose of analysis. However, it turned out to be problematic as most of the organisations pointed out that they were not focused on “francophonie” in India but rather on imparting basic education to the people.

4 of the FVHOs in Pondicherry focused on working with children in different capacities, such as street children or children with special needs.

It is important to note that funding received under specific programs of bilateral organisations often influences the sector in which grass-root NGOs function. So if certain organisations are working on the health sector presently, there exists a possibility that they would work on another related sector if the source of funding changes.
Partners are crucial for promoting French and European Volunteering

The graph represents the various media which facilitated in raising awareness about French and European volunteering. Globally, it is the partners and the network which facilitate to spread awareness about volunteerism. Clearly, 22 organisations came to know about volunteerism (French or European) due to their partners and 13 due to their networks. These two media have played a vital role in initiating and sustaining French and European volunteerism in India.

Out of the 21 interviewed FVHOs, 12 of the organisations had come to know about French volunteering through partner organisations based in France. Out of them, 7 are based in Pondicherry which clearly establishes that the organisations there retain a close connection with NGOs in France. Also, the NGOs in Pondicherry were better acquainted with French networks and NGOs such as Fidesco and La Guilde.

For 7 out of the 10 EVHOs, their partner organisation Skillshare International (India) Trust had played an important role in the placement of European volunteers. Mostly Britishers (but also a few Germans), these organisations had hosted them under a United Kingdom funded program called International Citizen’s Service (ICS).

Word of mouth and Internet also play a small but significant role in raising awareness. Importantly, none of the organisations had learnt about French or European volunteering through centers of information.

Four organisations stated that they had not been interested in receiving volunteers. Rather, they had been approached by the volunteers directly, some of them tourists.

Host organisations have a limited budget

Majority of the organisations stated their budget in rupees (India currency). Only the organisations that were funded by partner organisations in France had a higher budget, usually in Euros. For the financial year 2012-13, thirteen organisations had a budget below 50,000 €.

A large number of NGOs depend on bilateral funding and donor agencies, Britain’s DFID (Department for
International Development) being the largest one. With DFID phasing out by 2015 from India, a large number of organisations shall be looking for alternative ways of fund-raising to sustain their activities.  

**Host organisations contribute in different ways to finance the assignments of their volunteer**

**Fig 6: What advantages do volunteers receive?**

It is important to consider that mostly the host organisations do not finance VSIs (Volunteer of International Solidarity, French volunteering programme) and other volunteers in a similar manner. Thereby, a large part of VSIs’ costs is paid by the organisation while the other volunteers are generally not funded at all. Sometimes, volunteers contribute for the expenses generated by their placement (accommodation, food) in addition to paying for their flight ticket and visas.

It is important to remember that most of the volunteers are paid compensation for their assignment and do not receive a salary. This compensation is either paid in cash – money for covering basic needs and/or in kind – flight tickets, transportation to go to the field, accommodation, food, insurance etc. 

This graph above shows that only 13 organisations provide an allowance, covering 25% of the total cost of the assignment. Generally, it has been observed that the non-VSIs do not receive any allowance in cash. However, certain host structures can also provide support in kind, even though no tendency could be based on the above sample.

**B. Identity of the French and European Volunteers – who are they?**

**French volunteerism – minority but significant**

Based on this sample, 1 out of 3 European volunteers is French. Amongst the 31 organisations interviewed, 21 were FVHOs while 10 were EVHOs. Yet, in totality, 330 non-French European volunteers compared to 180 French volunteers were identified, accounting respectively for 64% and 36%. Clearly, it is in congruence with the fact that India, being an Anglophone country, welcomes large number of Britishers, Americans due to historical ties. However, French volunteerism is thriving in India,

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20 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/11/09/foreign-aid-to-india-ends_n_2098787.html
informally and often outside the scope of formalized international partnerships. It also corroborates with the fact that French volunteerism is not well documented in India and requires further research.

A French volunteer in Varanasi

*Status of the volunteers and their assignments*

What is the status of the volunteers?

(Total: 517)

- Volunteers without arrangement: 41%
- Work camps: 6%
- Students’ orgs: 8%
- Interns: 7%
- VSI: 2%
- VIA/VIE: 3%
- Service Civique: 0%
- Non-French Volunteers’ scheme: 28%
- Committed paid workers: 0%
- Senior unpaid: 5%

*Fig 8: Status of the volunteers and their assignments*

Of the French and European volunteers covered in this survey, 41% (214) fall under the category ‘Without arrangement’. It refers to all the volunteers who are not in the recognized categories of *V.I.E.S* or *Service Civique*. The volunteers usually have no status, no provision and may work with organisations without a well-defined project. This represents the informal channels of volunteering that has existed in India against the well-defined ones. These volunteers also represent the population of International tourists who often visit India and eventually find a project during their stay in India.
Following it, 28% (144) of the volunteers work in India under a national or international program supported by the government of their respective countries. In India, a large number of British and German citizens volunteered under such programs.

6 % participated in youth camps where young unpaid volunteers were involved in restoring buildings. For example, the city of Dharamsala in India often invites young volunteers to work on the buildings of schools and they can also contribute by teaching. Moreover, youth camps have been immensely popular in southern India. Subsequently, 7% and 6% were interns and students as confirmed by the following news article(see footnote). 21

**Skill provision as the main objective of the volunteers’ assignments**

![Chart](chart.png)

**What are the objectives of volunteers?**

( Total: 31 structures, 71 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills Exchange</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing skills</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 9: What are the objectives of volunteers?

For 25 of the 31 interviewed organisations, the main objective of the volunteer assignments (French & European) was bringing skills. 23 organisations believed that it was skills exchange whereas 13 suggested that it was the volunteer’s objective for discovery. 10 organisations stated objectives which included embarking on a spiritual journey. One organisation stated that as the headquarters were based in France, they trusted a French volunteer more for accounting and project management. It was also easier for a French volunteer to communicate with the main office in France.

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A majority of women among the volunteers

68% of the French and European volunteers are females as opposed to 32% of males. Interestingly, the figure exactly matches with the study conducted in Philippines (Study VIES Philippines in 2012).

Most of the volunteers are between 18-26 years

In the survey, 71% (367) of the French and European volunteers were between 18 to 26 years. The age group of 27-55 is far behind and represents 18% (93) of the sample. Youth clearly play an important role as catalysts of volunteerism, in contradiction with the myth that the young do not care about social issues as before.
Possibly, they choose to travel at the end of their studies or during a sabbatical year to broaden their experience. Besides, working with NGOs would require people to be capable of taking risks. Young people between 27 to 35 years old are often prime candidates for these challenging positions. Furthermore, this general trend of youth commitment in the world can be explained by the greater availability of age group 18-26 who do not hesitate to leave during their studies or before finding their first job.

Consistent with the previous observation, organisations welcome young but qualified volunteers. Thus, 58% of volunteers have completed college education prior to their placement, with nearly one third of them who hold a master’s degree (33%). This also reflects the growing trend of ‘professionalization’ of the development sector - that more persons with higher qualifications are entering the sector. It can also be a criterion of selection when candidates are too many. However, it needs to be mentioned that most of the organisations were unsure about the education levels and did not consider it a very important criterion.

Partly, due to the fact, that persons who volunteer internationally already possess a certain level of education, as deemed fit by the host structures. Also, it reflects a supply affecting demand model. Over the years, as more educated persons have begun entering the sector, the organisations in return have begun demanding for volunteers with higher levels of education.

C. Recruitment Procedure of the volunteers – How are they selected?

20 of the 31 interviewed FVHOs and EVHOs were hoping to learn from the interesting professional experience brought by the volunteers. Indeed, as noted previously, the organisations envision the voluntary assignments as an opportunity for skill provision and exchange. Commitment is also an important requirement for the success of the placements as 17 organisations confirmed it. Flexibility and economic reasons were other characteristics that were recognized as important features by the host structures. 2 organisations also mentioned that the French/European volunteers approach and demand work with their organisations.
 Volunteers recruited primarily through volunteer-sending organisations

Fig 14: How do you recruit volunteers?

The French and European volunteers were placed via a sending organisation in 36% (15) of the interviewed host structures. However, in almost 24% (10) of the structures, volunteers had been placed directly without the intervention of other volunteer supporting organisations or networks. This reflects that there are informal and conventional channels still in place through which the international volunteers directly approach the organisations without passing by sending structure and contact is established through Internet.
A “classical” approach to recruiting volunteers, dominated by CV and interview

**Fig 15: What is the recruitment process?**

The preferred mode of recruitment for the FVHOs and EVHOs remains through reviewing the curriculum vitae in order to maximize the coordination of local needs with the skills of the candidates. Meanwhile, telephonic interview and physical interview are also important tools utilized for the recruitment of volunteers. When the host organisation is not able to conduct these interviews, it usually delegates this task to the volunteer-sending organisation or to the French branch of the organisation. Two organisations suggested that they had sent prior requirements and entirely relied on the relationship of trust established with the sending organisation which carries out the entire recruitment process. Other recruitment methods were Skype or a letter of recommendation from the previous organisation. Also, certain NGOs informed the volunteer sending organisations about their requirements even before the selection process and did not participate in the recruitment process undertaken by the respective organisations.

**Fig 16: Who provides the training?**

Of the volunteers welcomed by the organisations stated that their volunteers had received prior training by the sending organisation as compared to the 14 organisations which provided the training themselves. This shows that most of the host organisations expected the sending organisations to provide in-depth training to volunteers to fully prepare them for their assignment and for the intercultural encounter. They stated that they would also provide a training, mostly to facilitate the volunteers in the country and to support their assignment. 1 organisation had hosted volunteers with no training. Interestingly, this could be either due to the fact that they have hosted large number of International volunteers before or have not invested sufficiently in creating mechanisms to support the volunteers.
Trainings prioritize on volunteer’s work and intercultural management to facilitate the integration of volunteers

Fig 17: What is the content of training for volunteers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Content</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others (child protection &amp; lang course)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dev &amp; solidarity awareness</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional mediation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural management &amp; exchange</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field mission &amp; Volunteer's work</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistic</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 30 organisations, either the volunteer had received training by the sending organization or they had provided the training themselves. In this sample, 29 of the organisations had focused on the volunteer’s work and field assignment. Clearly, the organisations which receive volunteers with a specific task organize trainings centered on the assignment to facilitate the work. The rest of the sample represented the organisations which receive volunteers informally and periodically, with no proper arrangement prior to the assignment.

Consequently, 12 focused on project management tools during the training of the volunteers to support them during their assignment. These were the organisations where the volunteer was playing an important role in terms of coordinating with the local partners and monitoring the field work.

256 of the organisations paid attention on intercultural management and exchange during the training for the volunteers. There was no clear pattern identified on which organisations paid attention to the aspect of intercultural management and exchange. However, the ones which had focused on intercultural management, paid equal attention on the aspect of intercultural exchange.

10 of the organisations which focused on logistic were those organisations which were providing accommodation and lodging to their volunteers. Security has become an important area of concern for organisations recently, especially for female volunteers with increased cases of molestation and rape in India, especially New Delhi which has received international attention for increasing rape cases. Also, in certain internal areas of conflict, it would be essential to provide information to volunteers about their safety and precautionary measures.

D. Volunteers’ contribution: What are the host structures looking for?

Practice of local language, team work and group management are the core skills sought in volunteers

Fig 18: What are the skills required in recruiting volunteers?
Familiarity with the local language is a priority for majority of the host structures. As established in the initial part, India has 22 main languages recognized by the Constitution and 22,000 dialects. In this vast array of languages, some knowledge of the local language is a real advantage according to host structures. When enquired further, the host structures suggested that a curiosity for the language and culture would carry forward a long way in facilitating a smooth assignment for the volunteer.

Team work is also an asset that most of the host structures sought in volunteers, so that the International volunteer will not work singularly but will make an attempt to be a part of the working environment. Certain host structures spoke of difficult experiences in which they did not succeed to make the volunteer feel integrated in the team. This can also be connected with the first skill that if the volunteer is acquainted with the local language, it shall facilitate in maintaining a harmonious working spirit.

If the practice of local language is globally the most cited skill (whatever choice, 1,2,3), it is the capacity to manage group which is the competence the most sought by host structures as per their first choice. Indeed, the volunteer should reveal group management skills.

Finally, the host structures also hoped that the French or European volunteer would be able to facilitate national and international networks. Most of the NGOs in India are usually ill-equipped to access other networks. They often continue to work at a community level with no proper documentation of the work being done by them. Hence, the NGOs hope that the volunteer shall be able to facilitate them to showcase their work at an international platform. As the head of an NGO in Pondicherry stated, “The French volunteer we had with us did not do much work. It took her time to adjust and she just observed and learnt. But when she went back to France, she was instrumental in raising funds for us. We are extremely grateful to her for it, for carrying our voice to France.”

*Adaptability and commitment required from volunteers*
What are the human qualities required in volunteers?
(Total: 31 organisations, 91 responses)

The primary skill sought in applicants is their capacity to adapt as Indian organisations recognize that working with communities in India requires volunteers to show flexibility. As the cultural context is extremely different from France and Europe, the volunteers will require following the local customs. Moreover, by adaptability, the host structures also pointed out that refer to certain logistical issues such as adjusting to the unavailability of electricity or warm water, lack of internet connectivity etc. One host structure pointed out, “Some volunteers have a particular working style, they expect a work plan and everything to be organized....but we have to deal with every day and spontaneous situations, if a daughter-in-law is burnt or any situation arises..hence, sometimes there is a difference in working style”. Clearly, the volunteers would require adapting and being self-organised.

Commitment for the cause was the next most sought human quality amongst volunteers. Every NGO, in whichever sector of intervention, were completely driven by their cause, be it working for street children, women or health. They hoped that the international volunteer would have the same fervor and zeal for the cause even if they had not witnessed such conditions in their own country.
Volunteers' domain of activities pivoted towards health services and education

Under this survey, the majority of the volunteers were involved mainly in the field of health. As explained before, health is an important domain of intervention in India with communities, disadvantaged youth and poor communities dealing with numerous calamities. This was followed by education and training sectors in which host structures required dire support. A lot of organisations clearly stated that they required French and European volunteers to provide specific training on gender or physiotherapy. Computer, IT skills and communication was also identified as an important domain of intervention since most of the grass-root organisations are ill-equipped to handle communication based issues. Mostly, communication or computers constitute rarely a position in itself, but are used for training or education as well as to communicate with the headquarters in France or partners and donors in the world.

Project management and training are the key positions assigned to the volunteers

For seventeen out of the 31 organisations, project monitoring and support was the primary role assigned to the volunteers. This was followed by training which has been voiced as one of the primary demands from French and European volunteers. Other important roles included project coordination and organizing youth camps in congruence with the previous results.
Degree of satisfaction is above average with the volunteers

Fig 22: What is the level of satisfaction with volunteers?

Overall, the host organisations were decently satisfied with their previous experience of hosting French and European volunteers. Indeed, 20 out of the 31 organisations gave a mark of between 6/10 and 8/10, to the French and European volunteers hosted by them. Hence, most of the organisations gave a score above the average.

6 organisations gave a score of 5/10 or less, throwing light on the difficulties organisations face when dealing with volunteers. 5 of the organisations assigned a score greater than 8/10 in terms of their satisfaction with the volunteers with whom they had worked. 2 amongst them gave a full score of 10/10.

For 4 organisations, it was difficult to give a rating of satisfaction with volunteers because some volunteers work independently. They are the ones who responded to the survey, and the question on appreciation therefore represents an auto-evaluation.

E. Monitoring for volunteers – How are the volunteers supported during their assignment?

Important Intercultural difficulties faced by host structures and volunteers

India is considered by the community of international volunteers as one of countries where the adaptation is the most difficult. From food, gender relations, clothing to alcohol consumption, there are many facets that international volunteers have to understand about the country. Interviews and interactions with French volunteers present in India have pointed that their integration in the country has been the most difficult yet fulfilling experience.

Nearly 95 % of surveyed organisations, reported having encountered particular difficulties in hosting the volunteers (see in fig 22). If these difficulties are diversified, the intercultural difficulties are the most cited by the structures.

Fig 23: Do host structures have difficulties with volunteers?

The main difficulties concern the intercultural differences, as 19 out of 31 surveyed structures mentioned to have met difficulties of this kind with international volunteers. Logistical issues (11 structures) and financial issues (8 structures) are also reported. As far as the latter is concerned, they are linked to an effort for the structures to complete the stipend amount of
volunteers, which were estimated insufficient. The 8 structures facing financial issues have been utilizing come funds earmarked for other activities, in order to cover the volunteer expenses.

The language barrier is a reality that particularly French volunteers encounter in India. Majority of the host organisations stated that the host French volunteers had lower English speaking abilities compared to the ones from other nationalities, what could have led to real problem during the assignment. Moreover, many NGOs wanted to use the expertise of international volunteers in proposal writing and documentation (in English). A limited knowledge of English can therefore constitutes a serious obstacle to the completion of the assignment.

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Half of the host organisations provide monitoring

Most of the structures (16 of 31) provide training and monitoring of the host volunteers. In 9 cases, the monitoring is ensured by the sending structures. Only six organisations did not provide any follow up. Moreover, one organization suggested to clarify the role and competence of both the sending and host organisations in delivering appropriate volunteers monitoring.

Yet they do not utilize formal channels of monitoring

Of the 31 organisations interviewed, 17 use no follow-up document, representing 55% of the sample. Meanwhile, seven organisations (22%) use a monitoring form for each volunteer, regardless of their status. Other organisations use materials for monitoring and evaluation, but less systematically, or rarely.
Volunteer’s assignment is the primary area of monitoring

**Fig 27: Content of follow-up**

The content of follow-up by the host organisations primarily constitutes the content of the assignment and project follow up. 13 of the organisations cited this as primary area of concern. Clearly, the priority of the organisations was pivoted towards the assignment of the volunteer.

10 of the host organisations stated that they hold discussions on volunteerism and their involvement. 9 organisations stressed on the psychological aspects of the volunteer along with 8 host structures who pay attention to the integration and intercultural relations of the volunteers. Both of them are interconnected and a volunteer which will be easily integrated will face lesser psychological issues during his/her assignment. Interestingly, the organisations which stressed on cultural aspects and integration were largely headed by French or European persons. Clearly, their own experience could have made them aware of this issue and hence, they took initiatives to include it as part of their follow up.

Volunteer on *Service Civique* contract in Pondicherry
A quite regular follow-up of the volunteers during their assignment

How often are volunteers monitored?
(Total: 31 organisations)

- 12 of the 31 interviewed organisations offer monitoring at least once a week in various forms, and 10 organisations offer a monthly monitoring. This is important because it allows the volunteer to have another perspective about the assignment, to provide a feedback so that the volunteer can evolve. This will also allow the volunteer to reflect about the function, the project on which he works or the local culture.

How are volunteers monitored?
(Total: 31 organisations, 73 responses)

- The organisations receiving volunteers with various responsibilities often have several monitoring procedures. Some are specific to the assignment; others are common to all the volunteers.

- 18 organisations utilize internet and telephone to have a regular update of the work being done by the volunteer. This is often utilized when the headquarters are based in France. Fourteen organisations require a regular report, while nine organisations prefer the evaluation form that can address more technical issues. Monitoring carried out during field visits is mainly carried out at organisations whose projects are distributed over several villages, or whose volunteers are working with partner organisations or are working outside the office. Eleven organisations therefore go to the field to meet their volunteers. An alternative to these site visits is to use the phone or via Skype. Whether it is face to face or by videoconference, fourteen organisations organize formal interviews with volunteers, supplemented by informal interviews for four of them.

- Contrary to the expectation of receiving training, organisations offer relatively few to the volunteers. Only five organisations organize such workshops. However, it is a wonderful medium to not only provide surveillance but to support the volunteer to improve on specific issues identified by the host structures.
F. Perspectives of host organisations – what do they need?

Specific technical expertise – most needed from volunteers

Fig 30: What are the needs of the host structures?

What are the needs of the host organisations?
(Total: 31 organisations, 69 responses)

- Technical: 17
- Work camps: 13
- Institutional: 12
- Finance: 11
- Logistic: 8
- Information: 6
- No Needs: 2

Most of the host organisations expressed need for volunteers to provide specific technical expertise (17 out of 31 HO). The fields mentioned were engineering skills, IT skills, textile designing and marketing. Volunteers for organizing work camps were demanded by 13 host structures. 12 organisations expect from volunteers to provide them institutional support. 11 organisations seek financial support as indeed some organisations are working with very limited resources.

Three surveyed organisations expressed need for volunteers with a prior training in social sciences or research. These mentioned organisations required research to be conducted out on a specific topic for the activities of the organisation to be advanced. Clearly, the needs of the host structures reflected that the volunteers were seen more as ‘skilled development practitioners’.

High expectations of networking and support to be provided by France Volontaires

Fig 31: What services can FV provide?

What services can FV provide?
(Total: 31 organisations, 83 responses)

- Administrative: 16
- Volunteers’ training: 14
- Follow up in field assignment: 13
- Networking with ‘Global South’: 12
- Networking with ‘Global North’: 12
- Logistic: 9
- Security: 5
- Don’t know: 2

The foremost expectation is pivoted on administrative support. 16 organisations expect France Volontaires to provide administrative support in terms of visa. As suggested earlier, visa procedures are rather complex and hence the host organisations expect France Volontaires to guide and also lead on these issues.

Fourteen host organisations also hope that France Volontaires would provide support in terms of the pre-departure training. Most of the organisations felt that the training provided to their volunteers was satisfactory but had space for improvement. On the same lines, the organisations would like France
Volontaires to provide services to the volunteers throughout the duration of their placement, with particular attention paid to the beginning of the assignment. Several organisations are interested in monitoring services for their volunteers because they are unable to ensure this function themselves, either by lack of time or lack of appropriate tools. As a result, a request also concerns the creation of monitoring tools that France Volontaires would put at the disposal of the host organisations.

Clearly, host structures anticipate France Volontaires to be a gateway to acquaint and contact new partners, equally from the North and South. Locally and globally, France Volontaires will help the host organisations to build relationships with professionals involved in the same field, contact between various volunteers and with other NGOs.

VSI in Pondicherry
VI. Recommendations for the Future Implementation of France Volontaires office (EV)

France Volontaires has been carrying out activities in India for the last two years without any formalized space. From April 2013, it has commenced to propose actions and services to the host organisations and French VIES present in India through a physical space. By forming a strategic partnership with Skillshare (International) India Trust, a Volunteer Space shall be opened to welcome both French and also European volunteers. In this sense, the Volunteer Space in India shall continue to provide services in the same manner as has been conducted in other countries but it shall also move to new grounds. The strategic partnership will allow France Volontaires to utilize the expertise developed by Skillshare during the last 20 years in India.

The following recommendations result directly from the present survey and from more informal discussions with the managers of the organisations, volunteers and significant persons from France Volontaires during the Asia meeting in Vietnam, March 2013.

⋆ Creating a physical space that welcomes both French and European volunteers

As the Indian Country representative of France Volontaires suggested, the volunteer space should be “a space for dialogue between all actors, volunteers, state and non-government organisations, associations etc., that works in solidarity, cooperation and development. Indeed the physical emplacement of this space is conducive to the inflow of these actors within the city or state. Indeed the footfall is an important parameter to gauge, generate and harbour these relations with the Voluntary Space.”

Hence, a physical space shall be most probably opened in south Delhi, easily accessible by metro and public transport. It will also be located near to the locality where majority of the French volunteers live in Delhi. This shall allow the volunteers to easily access this space as per their convenience.

⋆ Creating a virtual space, inclusive to include all the volunteers

The physical space, while essential for creating a hub for volunteers, has its limitations in terms of accessing the volunteers spread across the length and breadth of this large country. Hence, a virtual platform will support it, which shall hope to grow beyond a physical space in India. The virtual platform shall look at providing a platform for interaction, questioning, information dissemination, and information management. It would be a space for periodic and defined web-based activities on a schedule that would find resonance in physical activities on same themes harnessed in the physical space. There should thus be a clear relation between the physical and virtual activities. This format would allow in accessing interactions between various cities and regions.

It would also allow volunteers to share their experiences through blogs, forms and social media, thereby documenting their experiences, sharing knowledge and creating links and support groups.

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22 To contact Vikas Harish, the Indian representative of France Volontaires, kindly mail at vikas.harish@france-volontaires.org
Hence, all forms of social media such as Facebook, Twitter will be utilized to promote the activities of the voluntary space.

* Forming two physical spaces, taking into account the vastness of India

The primary physical space shall be formed in New Delhi. This shall allow to form a new epicenter of French volunteerism away from south of India. Later, a satellite branch shall be opened in Pondicherry.

* Identifying NGOs and designing assignments that require specific and high skill expertise from volunteers

As the research reflects, Indian organisations are seeking volunteers with specific and technical expertise. The international development sector has become competitive and the Volunteer Space should play a critical role in creating a database of NGOs and facilitating them to recognize their needs in terms of French volunteers.

* Utilising the expertise of the French institutions in India such as the French embassy, the French research centres, the Alliance Française network, Sciences Po network.

The research has gained largely from harnessing the French contacts at various institutions. The Volunteer Space should hence act as a catalyst and facilitate all the French institutions to interact with each other. It should also allow the French institutions to be connected with the NGOs and hence form a mutual beneficial relationship.

* Utilising the expertise of Skillshare in identifying NGOs which are transparent and follow fair practices in volunteerism.

As established, the NGO sector in India is large and unorganized. Skillshare shall play a critical role in facilitating the Volunteer Space to identify NGOs that follow all the legal formalities, as established by the Indian government and the law. It shall also facilitate in Service Civique assessments which shall act as a safeguard for the well-being of the volunteers.

* Developing links with other voluntary organisations

American (Peace Corps), British (VSO), Australian, Japanese (JICA), Korean volunteerisms are relatively well developed in India. It may be interesting to approach these structures to share experiences and establish formal channels of communication.

* Developing communication tools

As the activity of the Volunteer Space commences, it shall be necessary to develop communication tools so that host organisations and volunteers could quickly, and on a sustainable basis, identify the Volunteer Space as the reference point in terms of support and guidance for all French and European actors taking voluntary commitments in India. Organisations and volunteers must visualize the Volunteer Space or EV as a space dedicated to their needs.

* Providing administrative support

The Volunteer Space shall disseminate information and facilitate linkages between the volunteers and the Embassy or Consulate. Similarly, all the volunteers shall be encouraged to register with the Embassy upon
arrival, whatever maybe the length of their volunteering. This shall allow volunteers to obtain information from the Embassy, and conversely, the Embassy will get a better knowledge of the work being done by NGOs, which should generate a multidimensional partnership.

Finally, the structures expect from France Volontaires to obtain clear information on laws, administrative duties, etc. to be implemented in the country by NGOs.

* Opening the voluntary space officially to all the important stakeholders on International Volunteers’ day

December 5 has been recognized as the day to celebrate the International Volunteers by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV). The Volunteer Space could officially open its doors to all the significant stakeholders on this particular day to mark its space. In fact, the International Volunteers’ day could be celebrated along with United Nations Volunteers (UNV) to commemorate the day.
**Conclusion**

France Volontaires’s definition (2000) visualizes volunteerism for people who get involved in a free and responsible way. The survey has attempted to provide a holistic picture of French volunteerism that has been thriving in India. It has attempted to throw light on the diverse sectors and multifarious profiles in which the French volunteers have been involved. Hence, it is a first initiative to give credits to the work done by the French volunteers over the years.

It also broadens the horizon and includes European volunteerism into its ambit. This methodology can serve to be useful to clearly understand the share of French volunteerism in European and international volunteerism. It can also be utilized to provide a comparative analysis to provide an all-inclusive picture of International volunteerism in India. However, due to time and budget constraints, the above mentioned exercises could not be carried out. Yet, in the follow up of this study on India, further new territories can be explored to truly understand and identify French volunteerism and help to build new partnerships in international solidarity and exchange in the globalizing world.