



# VOLUNTEERING

mission and gift



“

(...) the more I got to know, not places, but people, it made me understand their lives, and also my own life, our own lives, and I realised that when you see in the news that there is extreme poverty, many people starving to death, it is not another planet, is in ours, that it is happening now and it happens at one side, at the southern side, a four-hour flight away, so it is not something unreal. And I began, too, to have this more global look at life (...)

”



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**FEC – Fundação FÉ E COOPERAÇÃO.** (Faith and Cooperation Foundation). It is a Portuguese Development NGO working in the areas of Development Education, Social Advocacy and Development Cooperation. In the area of cooperation, its intervention focuses mainly in Portuguese-speaking countries. [[www.fecongdo.org](http://www.fecongdo.org)]

**CIPAF- Centro de Investigação da Escola Superior de Educação de Paula Frassinetti.** (Paula Frassinetti School of Education Research Centre). With over fifteen years of existence and thirty publications, in addition to a specialty journal (Saber & Educar - Learn & Educate), it brings together about forty researchers. CIPAF is currently promoting two areas of research: “Problematisation in Education and Training for Educators” and “Building Identity/Identities and Personal and Community Development Projects”. These areas, anchored in research projects that also link to learning practices, seek, together with the production of knowledge and community intervention, to deepen the scientific sustainability of study cycles in the institution. The vitality of CIPAF can also be attested by the quality of its research-action projects, both national and international. The present study was developed by a team of researchers in Social Education.

## **IMPRINT**

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# INTRODUCTION

In 1988, when nine youngsters decided to share their lives, for two years, with small communities of Sao Tome and Principe and Guinea-Bissau, they were unaware they were writing the early history of missionary volunteering in Portugal. Today, 20 years after the first spontaneous departures, there are already more than 50 organised groups who carrying out this particular kind of volunteering. Similar to volunteering for international cooperation, missionary volunteering is distinguished by the Christian motivation that inspires its action. Over a period of time, usually between one month and two years, volunteers offer their time and their skills for free to disadvantaged populations in developing countries, especially those in Portuguese-speaking Africa. Through concrete actions to fight for social justice and distributive equity, it seeks that inequalities are mitigated and that human promotion is achieved in its various dimensions.

The last two decades have seen the departure of more than 4000 volunteers, thus consolidating the action of missionary volunteering in Portugal. But, assessing these years and thinking about the future, a few legitimate questions arise: what is this movement? Who are the volunteers who go out? Who are the organisations that send them? What are the areas in which they work? What motivates them to leave?

Aiming to address these issues, FEC, as national coordinator of the Missionary Volunteering Network, whose main goal is to build bridges, encourage action from all stakeholders and promote common interests, put forward a groundbreaking study on this specific type of volunteering, in partnership with the Frassinetti Paula School of Education Research Centre.

The study “Volunteering: mission and gift”, here presented, is in fact pioneering and innovative

on several levels. On the one hand, it is the first time in Portugal that the action of missionary volunteering is analysed in a scientific manner, as a national phenomenon; on the other hand, it describes with methodological rigour this reality, since it benefits from the participation of dozens of institutions that promote missionary volunteering, which results in a faithful and representative picture of this reality nationwide.

Favouring an approach based on the concept of gift, this study reveals the intense bonds of belonging established between volunteers and local communities, able to develop strong social and emotional bonds. The study also shows that, in a relationship of free and unconditional generosity, volunteers seek, above all, to create symbolic exchange relations that recreate social justice and promote the persons in their uniqueness, as subjects of themselves.

Therefore, "Volunteering: mission and gift" allows us to get to know in detail missionary volunteering in Portugal and to travel to the inner belief of those who chose to be a part of this movement: volunteers..

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Integrating the celebrations of the European Year of Volunteering, FEC – Fundação Fé e Cooperação<sup>1</sup>– within the work of the Missionary Volunteer Network, in partnership with the School of Education Paula Frassinetti<sup>2</sup>, with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, launched a study on missionary volunteering. The results shown in this document are intended to be a contribution of quality, scientifically based, to the national and international discussion on different realities and experiences of volunteering, in particular international volunteering with a religious inspiration – missionary volunteering<sup>3</sup>. Thus, we present an

<sup>1</sup> Since 1988, FEC – Faith and Cooperation Foundation – coordinates in Portugal the Missionary Volunteering Network, involving 57 Portuguese organisations having in common the Christian identity, the work in development cooperation and the promotion and integration of missionary volunteers in their actions.

<sup>2</sup> In particular by CIPAF – Paula Frassinetti Research Centre.

<sup>3</sup> Being similar to international volunteering, missionary volunteering has a religious, Christian

important set of information and reflection on the development of this activity over the last decades, as well as recommendations that can sustain its future growth.

Firstly, we analysed data to characterise the profiles of the institutions and volunteers involved, which had been collected from 137 responses to questionnaires sent to 57 organisations. Secondly, we undertook a conceptualization of the notion of gift, since this notion forms the meaning of the initiatives already implemented and to occur. This notion was completed with the motivations that volunteers express when departing on a mission. To know about these motivations, 137 surveys were responded by volunteers

array, either at the genesis of each group or organisation, the training offered to candidates, or even with regard to partners with whom the volunteers work on the ground, which are mostly religious missionaries, members of religious congregations.

When we go deeper in the meaning of life, the formative dimension of the citizen is magnified, in the fullness of its human coherence, through a renewed concept of solidarity.

attending the FEC training in 2010, former volunteers or volunteers in mission at the time. The study is enriched with the analysis of Life Stories discourses and with a brief description, as an illustration of an institution that, with the support of volunteers, has implemented a development project in Angola. Finally, recommendations were made to promote good practice and improve the performance and impact of volunteering.

It should be stressed that the concept of gift pervades, as an ethical principle,

the connections between volunteers and beneficiaries. In the Christian perspective of gift, which characterises the target group observed in this study, it became crucial to identify the contours, particularly between giving and receiving, which means to clarify how the relationship of gift emerges when social ties are established.

We find, then, that experiencing the meaning of gift with a Christian intentionality proves decisive for motivation and self-assessment or external assessment of the actors and institutions involved. Moreover, it is within this framework that we also need to analyse all contributing factors in the projects under consideration, such as the processes of attracting volunteers, the relationship between their qualifications and the interventions they will be responsible for, their training, their institutional bonds, the implicit internal and external representations, impact assessments, etc..

Regarding the experience of gift as motivation, it seems to be decisive to clarify its meaning. In fact, the lack of clarity in its full assumption may trigger existential phenomena of resistance,

for instance, about the perception of return, i.e., the retribution received, in the form of self-realisation, for all dedication and effort developed in favour of the other. In fact, the realisation that the retribution is, first of all, the actual and fair presence of the other in me may be an important motivating force and an increase to the missionary volunteering project as a project of human solidarity where free reciprocity is fundamental.

The study shows that the in-depth experience of gift and its impact on the spontaneous processes of assessment may, thus, have consequences on times of stay of volunteers at their destinations, as well as on their availability for future actions. Therefore, it is a decisive factor both for the work done during the missions and for the message to be transmitted, when they return to their original communities.

One aspect to highlight is the idea that missionary volunteering is learned while generating renewed feelings of belonging and an enhanced desire to establish demanding relationships with others. Perhaps we could look into the principle that there is, or may

be, in this kind of volunteering a progressive evolution of the Christian experience of gift, thus becoming at its heart a self-nurtured and self-motivated spiral of growth. By deepening the meaning of life, the formative dimension of the citizen is magnified, in the fullness of its human coherence, through a renewed conception of solidarity.

Another important aspect revealed in these preliminary data of the study is that, while affection, spontaneity and informality are authentic sources that feed the dynamics of personal involvement of volunteers, it also seems to be true that there will be a complementary effort to be made in order to strengthen the rational component of organisations and projects. Aspects like the real impact of actions among their recipients and their host institutions, together with a more effective relationship between volunteers' skills and the goals of their interventions should be valued. This latter topic should even involve the systematic introduction of concrete data in the training of volunteers on the contexts of life at their destination and the basics of project management.

Since it provides an authentic individual and collective gift to populations particularly in need, this movement deserves some extra attention. This is certainly a first step in analysing the motivations that guide the purposes, achievements and dreams of volunteers, strengthening the human sense of existence and citizenship that inspire their acts and nurtures their actions<sup>4</sup>. ESEPF has already gathered a complementary set of data and reflections to be included in future reports and studies, in order to continue to contribute to learning, improvement and investment in best practice by FEC and all institutions and actors involved.

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<sup>4</sup> Some limitations, including financial, conditioned this report, preventing a proper consideration of the impact of missionary volunteering activity among the communities of destination, an aspect to be filled in later assessment and research.









From the sample of 137 responses obtained, it is possible to succinctly define the profile of the missionary volunteer<sup>5</sup>: predominantly female (75%), single (about 80%) and holder of a college degree (70%) or postgraduate level qualifications (15%). Clearly, when you look at the distribution of volunteers by age, young people between 26 and 35 years are the ones who most engage (43%), closely followed by the group up to 25 years (38%). Although in a comparatively much smaller number, there are some volunteers much older leaving on a mission. In general, over time there was a very

<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire survey was initially sent to volunteers that attended the training organised by FEC during the year 2010/2011 and intended to leave on a mission in 2011. Since the number of responses received was considered insufficient for the intended scope of the study, later (during the months of September and October) the survey was open to all who were involved in missionary volunteering in 2010 and 2011, ie they could already have been volunteering in 2010 or they could even still be on a mission by then. This way we were able to obtain 137 responses, which was the final sample.

high increase of volunteers in all age groups.

The areas of residence of volunteers are quite diverse, but we can, however, highlight a predominance of people coming from the districts of Lisboa, Aveiro, Porto and Braga. With regard to employment status and financial autonomy, although there are also unemployed volunteers or with temporary jobs, usually they are either students or people with a steady job, and about 62% say they enjoy financial autonomy.

With respect to professions, more than half have a specialist job in the intellectual and scientific areas, and most of them are teachers, psychologists and health professionals.

From those who said they would engage in missionary volunteering actions in 2011, about 70% responded that they would be working in the field in which they have technical, academic or professional expertise.

Slightly over half of respondents said they had spontaneously engaged in missionary volunteering. There is also a quite relevant percentage of volunteers who committed to the mission through the influence of friends or relatives, as well as organised religious groups.

Almost 90% of respondents profess a religion and almost 70% of these said they were actively involved in one or simultaneously in several organisations, institutions or groups within their religion or church.

The length of the mission can be very diverse, and most leave for short-term missions for a period of stay of one to three months. Many volunteers choose missions that last less than a month. Regardless of the length, the number of volunteers sent has greatly increased, and it can also be said that quite frequently the mission is extended in time, the experience is repeated or volunteers remain connected to

other voluntary actions carried out in the same organization or in others.

Regarding the average time, in hours, of training provided to each missionary volunteer before leaving on a mission, we can say that this is an indicator that showed great progression, since the number of hours made available for this purpose has dramatically increased over the years.

In regards to the content covered in the training provided by institutions over the past 5 years, it is noted that the human relationship and teamwork, spirituality, charisma and mission inherent in volunteering are prevalent. Information about the people and the life contexts on the ground are topics that occupy a specific space but have less relevance in the overall hours of training. From the contents listed, the one which assumes less importance is technical training in the field of action.



## 2

## INSTITUTIONS SENDING VOLUNTEERS

According to 37 responses from 56 institutions surveyed<sup>6</sup>, the nature of institutions that provide missionary volunteering is quite diverse, although almost 75% of them are of Catholic origin, such as religious congregations (9), non-Governmental organisations for development - NGO (9), private institutions of social solidarity or diocesan institutions (6).

The preferred strategies to attract volunteers confine themselves to spontaneous initiatives (21 references) and those organised through

<sup>6</sup> To get to the results presented here, we applied two questionnaires - one to the institutions that send volunteers and the other to the volunteers themselves - , through an online platform created for this purpose, called: "Volunteering Project: Mission with Impact". The presentation of the questionnaire to the institutions was made to the person responsible for each missionary volunteering organisation, which was done by FEC via email and by phone. It was noted that the requested data was difficult to fill, particularly with regard to a more distant time horizon and to questions related to results obtained (the impact of actions). Out of a universe of 56 institutions contacted, 37 responded.

pastoral work (19 references). However, relatives and friends (12 responses), as well as advertising (11 responses) also emerge as forms of publicity and volunteer recruitment.

The countries targeted by the action of missionary volunteering are mainly Portuguese-speaking African countries, and among these there is a greater investment in Mozambique (22) and Angola (15). In other countries, there is a balance of ongoing actions, around ten in each, including Brazil, besides 9 actions in other countries.

Almost every institution declared that the main origin of resources for missionary volunteering is fundraising (31 references) and less than half say they also receive donations (17 references). Only two institutions refer public funds and eight state other sources to get the resources needed to pursue their objectives.

### **MAIN FIELDS OF ACTION: AREAS, PERCEIVED IMPACTS AND NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS**

Almost all institutions work in the area of education/literacy/training. Formal and non-formal education (libraries, etc.), training of educators, teachers or experts, and literacy are the most evident ways of action in this area, and their impact is clearly the most emphasised factor in the perception of the institutions surveyed. Out of many examples given by institutions, we list just a few as examples: increased class attendance of students and consequent reduction of school dropout rate and greater academic success; initiatives to create kindergartens and train their teachers; increased school support in the various subjects and implementation of training courses of short duration, along with the operation of school libraries.

Regarding health, there is also a great presence, particularly in the field of health education through preventive interventions and awareness campaigns, general support to health institutions and training of health professionals. As noticeable results, we highlight the reduction of mortality rate (particularly among children), an improvement in the quality of health care provision, the creation of community pharmacies and a nutrition rehabilitation centre.

Legal, economic, personal and social support services provided by volunteers and their institutions are also areas of action of missionary volunteering. Legal support is the least provided service, followed by economic, personal and social support. The target recipient is primarily the youth and children. When we make a comparison by gender, we observe that support is provided primarily to women. The impact of this area is, again, quite varied. Therefore, at this time, we only list some examples: higher quality of life, promoting the dignity of women and children, awareness of gender equality combined with behaviour change, initiatives to create their own

employment through microcredit, creation of a shelter for teens, in addition to professional training in carpentry, car mechanics or other. Schools are the infrastructures that most enjoy maintenance and improvement with the available resources. However, pastoral institutions, housing and social support institutions also benefit, quite often, from this improvement. With regard to the impact, we highlight the improvement of life conditions coming from the (re)construction of water pumps/tanks of potable water, schools, homes, etc..

Community development, especially in the rural context, is not among the areas of action most mentioned. However, here too the ways of action are quite diverse, coming at first the fight against hunger and extreme material deprivation, closely followed by community development (cultural capacity-building and social integration). In the same line of action, but in the urban context, these areas are also prevalent, though there are more institutions acting on this field. We can list, by now, some of the actions taken: build capacity of local leaders, support in extreme hunger crises and

breastfeeding promotion, distribution of seeds and agricultural equipment in exchange for work, training on HIV/AIDS for young students, job creation in missions to support the local economy, among others.

The provision of material and financial resources is also one of the areas where fewer institutions operate. However, the distribution of resources oriented towards the maintenance of ongoing projects and the allocation of resources for the implementation of new projects are also undertaken by institutions. As regards the impact of this area, once again there was a reference, for instance, to increased class attendance of students, academic success and the fact that it became possible to produce agricultural products in larger quantities and with better quality.

Other areas of action have also been mentioned: an institution referred to the training of volunteers and seven stated spiritual and pastoral formation and evangelization (these responses can be explained by the fact that many institutions are religious).

## EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS BY AREA OF ACTION

Aiming to provide more precise data on the volume of volunteers mobilised for missionary volunteering in the last two decades, it is noteworthy that, in almost all areas of action presented in the table below, the number of flows recorded in only five years, between 2000 and 2005, was similar or greater than that which

took place in twelve years, from 1988 to 2000. In the next five years, between 2005 and 2010, the rhythm of flows increased remarkably, at an average ratio of at least 30% to 50% in each area.

However, in this growth we highlight the area of community development that had an exponential increase of over 200% (from data collected, in the period 2000-2005, 232 volunteers set out on a mission and, between

2005 and 2010, there were 701 volunteers) and the area of education/literacy/education almost doubled the number of volunteers sent.

The increase in volunteers can be justified not only by the intrinsic interest that this kind of mission arouses, but also for being areas in which institutions have been increasingly acting. The table shows the following results:

	Education Literacy Training	Health	Human Promotion (Legal, Economic, Personal and Social Support)	Creation, maintenance and improvement of Infrastructures	Community Development	Provision of Material and Financial Resources	Other Areas of Action*
1988 to 2000	493	372	428	361	352	116	60
2000 to 2005	592	313	406	329	232	107	148
2005 to 2010	1067	468	590	459	701	195	272

\* 1 institution stated Training of volunteers and 7 Spiritual and pastoral formation/Evangelization<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> These figures are only approximate and were obtained, at first, through a survey questionnaire applied to institutions. This initial imprecision in numbers required an additional procedure: since not all institutions responded to the survey or had permanent and reliable records of the number of volunteers sent over such a vast time horizon, they were later requested to clarify the figures provided, making them most accurate to the observed reality.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION OF THE INSTITUTION, PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND RESULTS OBTAINED**

Concerning the areas of improvement in which institutions have most progressed over the past few years, there is a clear perception that there was, in general, a great evolution in the organisation of missionary volunteering. However, there are naturally areas that have progressed further, such as: the quality of training provided to missionary volunteers before departure, the specialisation of institutions in more targeted areas of action and enhanced strategies for recruiting volunteers. The continuity of results achieved, beyond the time of intervention by volunteers, is guaranteed primarily by religious congregations or parishes, and also by local communities (volunteers and/or professionals trained by missionary volunteers).



This study favours an approach to missionary volunteering from the perspective of the gift, linking voluntary action to the practice of a gift relationship. In this paper we intend to summarily conceptualise this notion of gift, understood as a specific way to establish social bonds with a deep ethical significance, since the gift has a structure of gratuity and freedom. Subsequently, we analyse the motivations of volunteers and the impact of an action that they carry out in their own life, from the dynamics established in the gift relationship. As mentioned earlier, in this study it was impossible to analyse the impact of the action of the missionary volunteering among their recipients and their communities.

### THE NOTION OF GIFT

Broadly, gift is the action or provision of goods or services performed without expectation, guarantee or certainty of compensation –

which means a dimension of gratuity – seeking the creation, maintenance or regeneration of the social bond (Caillé, 2002a, 2002b). From this definition it follows that the gift relationship is not an utilitarian relationship of economic exchange (which does not mean that it has no utility), but a relationship of symbolic exchange (exchange-for-the-bond), i.e. an ethical relationship that has its rationale in the openness to others and the hope for a response.

In a relationship of economic exchange, what circulates has an exchange value representable by a sum of money and a use value that attaches to the “given thing” an importance depending on its use and functionality. On the contrary, in a gift relationship everything that circulates has a value of bond, i.e., what circulates in the form of gift – an object, a service, a “gesture” – has a symbolic value in that it expresses, nurtures and strengthens

social bonds (Godbout, 1992). The gift serves the relationship, the friendship, or solidarity, being a way to establish the social bond. In the gift relationship, “giving”, “receiving” and “giving back” are, therefore, subordinate to the claim of each person to constitute herself as a person and manifest as such in the relationship with others. This means that the motives and objectives underlying the gift are subject to the quality of the relationship that subjects build between themselves. There is not, then, a relationship with each other only to give or to get something, but to establish, firstly, a movement toward the other as other.

The gift makes an investment, introduces a free and unconditional gesture – expressed in the ability to open to the uncertainty of a return - putting the relationship in a level of gratuity and unconditionality, which is an environment proper of human relations and a condition for trust and sociability can happen.

Therefore, missionary volunteering, as a gift experience, becomes an expression of a citizenship that focus on the intrinsic value of the human person, a requirement of our times.

From this experience, it is possible to think the constitution of the social bond – in a society marked by an excessive individualisation, a “liquid modernity” (Z. Bauman) where social bonds tend to be random and loose. And also the establishment of places of humanisation, spaces for a joint construction of consensus, in short, the creation of spaces that allow the realisation of a common life between subjects.

The field of action of missionary volunteering is immense, marked by personal and social realities tendentiously violent against human dignity, where the lack of basic living conditions prevails. Thus, the volunteer action seeks to respond to the interpellation coming from

the face of men and women marked by social injustice and pain. Therefore, at the core of their action should be these people with their suffering, but also their hopes and dreams.

In this context, the commitment to social justice is essential. Acting in favour of justice means promoting human and social conditions that give the other her right to be a subject, a being with freedom and dignity, author and protagonist of her life.

But establishing a relationship with another who suffers such violence is inseparable from the availability of the volunteer to give her best, transcend herself in her action, transformed into an experience of self-giving. In this relationship, she is present as a person and, with her gift, allows the other to recognise himself as a person and to feel valued in the richness of his uniqueness. This “self-giving” expresses the symbolic dimension of gift, because there is no gift except of what exceeds, by its symbolic dimension, the utilitarian and functional dimension of goods or services (Caillé, 2002). The practice of volunteering is part of a logic of action and a logic of gift, the

“giving” of cooperation and the “self-giving” of generosity (D. Moratalla, 1997), extensive to all human beings, especially those most in need, thus declaring the value of the other.

Trying to materialise the value of solidarity in our times, voluntary action must help create the conditions that allow the other person to become a subject of herself, to build her own life project and to actively integrate into the community where she lives. The development of social conditions for a dignified life and education play a decisive role in achieving these goals. In fact, the fundamental mission of education is to help each person to know themselves, to know each other and to “transform the real interdependence” between people into a “desired solidarity” (UNESCO, 1996: 41), i.e. into the capacity to establish bonds and live together. The essential in the educational activity is to progressively achieve the autonomy of people, in an interpersonal relationship marked by dialogue, participation and co-responsibility. Only this way we can “make each individual drive their destiny” and establish the “exercise [of



an] active citizenship" (UNESCO, 1996: 90). Accordingly, in the voluntary intervention a special relevance is given to educational and social projects, as shown by data on the areas of operation/action of the institutions that participated in this study.

### **MOTIVATIONS OF MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERING AND THE CHRISTIAN SPECIFICITY**

The study by ESEPF seeking to understand the motivations that lead to the practice of missionary volunteering showed up as a complex task, because these motivations are not static. Instead, they become their own volunteering experience, or the gift relationship established (cf. Life Stories).

Considering the profile of the volunteers surveyed, particularly the fact that most of them (about 70%) already had some experience of missionary volunteering, we can expect that, in their responses, they incorporate the reconstruction of their own motivations, specifically, the transformation of more self-centered motivations, such as the willingness

to travel, to know other countries and cultures, and to seek new experiences. These motivations are there especially in the first volunteering experience, then evolving for more altruistic motivations, resulting from the relationship with the other and his interpellation, which are more present in the volunteers who repeat this experience (cf. Life Stories).

Thus, the data from the questionnaire survey conducted to 137 missionary volunteers reveals a hetero-referenced motivation for volunteering practices, i.e., there is a movement which, departing conscious and freely from missionary volunteering - 91.9% of respondents consider this action to be a major cause for themselves, 79.5% reported that giving and giving back is as important as receiving, 51.8% involved spontaneously in this volunteering - head to the other, as another. Thus, 94.2% of respondents consider they are volunteer missionaries because they believe that, this way, they are giving attention to the concrete needs of a community of people, 96.4% report that it is important to help others, 74.4% feel responsible for each other, either who he is.

This movement of decentration of oneself seems somehow to be confirmed when considering, for instance, data on the dimension "Career Development", pointing to a non-exploitation of the other and to a non-utilitarian perspective of voluntary action. And, if it is true that the practice of missionary volunteering can enrich the curriculum vitae of the volunteer, it is nonetheless also true that it can be an obstacle to the integration and career advancement of the volunteer after he returns to his country of origin (cf. Stories of Life).

For 91.3% of respondents, to be a missionary volunteer is very satisfying and rewarding, which is why many repeat one or more times the experience. Respondents recognise that some recognition results from their action: 68.6% of respondents claim to experience the gratitude of others as a result of the relationship established; 51.1% consider it is important to be valued by the institution where they volunteer, 42.3% report that it is important to be recognised for their work as volunteer missionaries. However, volunteer missionaries who responded seem not need

a recognition that praises their persons, but instead the effect of their actions. Therefore, they do not seek self-exaltation, but consider important to receive feedback that makes them progress in their action and as individuals (only 9.5% of respondents consider not need this feedback).

An important motivation for volunteering is the openness to learning and personal development: 84.6% of respondents feel that missionary volunteering can make them better understand what life is; 80.3% report believing that volunteering will change them as persons; 52.5% think that voluntary action will allow them to develop their skills and competencies; 58.4% consider volunteering as an opportunity to learn how to deal with a wide variety of people. The motivation linked to learning and development is also a constant in our Life Stories. The relationship with the other allows us to get in touch with the inner wealth that each person is, making this encounter an opportunity for learning and mutual enrichment. Thus, the practice of volunteering is a privileged context for the volunteer's learning and personal development.

Another important motivation refers to the sense of belonging. In the logic of the gift, the missionary volunteer desires and seeks to establish relationships with the other, to take part in the other's life and of his community. Belonging to an institution or a cause, fundamentally religious, is also a source of motivation to the missionary volunteer.

In the perspective of gift, the volunteer tries to establish a relationship with another which is structured by gratuity and freedom. The missionary volunteer is someone who is free, who make free choices and takes initiatives. His freedom manifests itself in multiple ways. It is present, for example, in generous gestures that he is able to make, in the ability to self-detachment that leads him to leave his reality and the comfort of his life, to go out to meet others who live different realities, very different from his own, often harsh, adverse and demanding. Because he is free, he is able to transform his own motivations and often repeats the volunteering experience, manifesting a consistent and lasting commitment with the other.

The experience of the Christian faith seems to be decisive for the motivation of volunteers. In fact, this motivation is not exclusive, but it is still dominant. Almost 90% of the volunteers reported profess a religion and, from this group, nearly 70% are actively involved in organisations and groups linked to their religion (Christian - Catholic Church). These data help to understand the answers given by respondents in the dimension "Religion": 73% decide to be a missionary volunteer because this kind of volunteering is in line with their religious beliefs, 79.6% reported that the experience of faith creates an interior disposition that leads them to help people in their needs and 71.5% did not agree that the experience of faith has little influence on their practice of missionary volunteering.

For the Christian volunteer, living the faith motivates and stimulates his action and is a guiding light: Jesus Christ is the ultimate and paradigmatic expression of the way the gift relationship should be established and experienced. Therefore, the Christian experience is a grammar of gift that precedes and gives meaning to the action of missionary

volunteering. "The Christian spiritual life, marked by a culture of gratuity, creates an inner openness to others, until the radicalism of offering, to serve the real needs of the people (...). Who is consistent with the Christian faith transforms life and adopts gestures of fraternity, seeks knowledge of situations to be helped and dreams creative ways to solve the problems." (CEP, 2011: n. 2).

In the Christian perspective, the encounter with the other is a place of religious experience (Mt 10,40; 25,35), thus a transcendent reading of the relationship is established and it is stated that the primary reason that motivates and gives quality to that relationship is love. In fact, the Christian meaning of gift is based on "gift in excess", an excess of God's love for the human being, which asks for a response, embodied in gestures of love to each other and to God. Since religious motivation is very important, it is not surprising that 92.7% of respondents refer that their voluntary action seeks to realise the love for others.

The way a Christian should establish the gift relationship involves an understanding of the



reality of love. The New Testament uses the term "agape" to define love. Agape is a kind of love demanding and free, spontaneous and gratuitous, a singular and universal love, able to love the enemies (Mt 5,43-44). Agape is the acceptance of the other, any other, as he is. The practice of agape is, then, related

with detachment, self-decentration and dispossession. These attitudes, however, do not mean a negation or dissolution of the identity of who loves that way, but instead the negation of the tendency to refer to himself as an end. Agape means renouncing to the fullness of ego and power, it presents itself

as the opposite of selfishness and violence (Comte-Sponville, 1995).

Agape love is relational and, therefore, “man cannot live exclusively in self-giving love (...). One cannot limit himself to always giving, one must also receive. Who wants to give love, should also receive it as a gift.” (Benedict XVI, 2006: n. 7). A practice of gift relationship marked by agape love liberates human action from the sphere of selfishness, narcissism and hedonism, and expresses the capacity of self-transcendence of the human being. Nevertheless, to overcome selfishness and establish a relationship under the sign of agape is not easy. Moreover, in the specific case of voluntary action, it is necessary to consider that it takes place, quite often, in situations of great difficulty and adversity. In all this, however, the Christian volunteer, reflecting on the message of Jesus Christ, inspired by the example of His life, feels comforted, protected, secured and confirmed in this path that he wants to follow. The experience of faith supports him in overcoming himself, motivates him to action and leads him to believe in the strength of it.

The voluntary action can, then, become a gift relationship, in the Christian perspective, with the following characteristics: a) it is a response to a real need: the hungry should be fed, the naked clothed, the sick treated, the detainees visited (cf. Mt 25,35-36, Lk 10,30.33-35); b) is an expression of the love that every man needs; c) is a testimony of Jesus Christ; d) is an action by which the Christian not only gives something to someone, but gives himself, implying that he is present in the gift as a person (cf. Benedict XVI, 2006, n. 31, 34-35).

From this voluntary action follows the implementation of a form of solidarity that, in the light of the Christian faith, tends “(...) to overcome itself, take on the specifically Christian dimensions of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation” (John Paul II, 1987: n. 40) and constitutes a pedagogy to discover in the other someone invited to the banquet of life: “solidarity helps us to see the ‘other’ - person, people or nation - as our ‘similar’ (Gn 2,18.20), which is to become participant, as we will, in the banquet of life to which all men are equally invited by God.” (ibid., n. 39).

## **IMPACT OF VOLUNTARY ACTION IN THE LIFE OF THE MISSIONARY VOLUNTEER**

Gratuity and freedom structure the gift and create a relationship that, away from a self-centered logic (individualistic, utilitarian), opens space to the possibility of self-transcendence of the person and to the development of a dynamics of resilience and transformation of the person and social relations. In this process, the establishment of the relationship with the other is decisive, as it was highlighted before. Therefore, the impact of voluntary action, i.e. the effective achievement of intended objectives by his recipients, as well as the impact of the action on himself, depends on the quality of the gift relationship established.

Moreover, the gift relationship as a social relationship is dynamic and in an ongoing construction, allowing us to understand that we learn to live in the logic of gift at the relationship itself. The progressive experience of the gift relationship and its permanent deepening, resulting from the transformation of motivations, should determine an also progressive and positive impact between partners of the

relationship and on their respective host communities. This impact not only means greater efficiency (greater correspondence between goals and achievements), but also more effectiveness (greater correspondence between the results achieved and the existing social and personal needs).

The deepening of the gift and the growing wealth of what circulates in times of giving, receiving and giving back are, somehow, intrinsic to the relational dynamic established, which confirms the presence of “gift in excess” in the relationship. Thus, for example, the volunteer experiences that he learns more by giving himself. And the more he gives, the more he enriches himself and the other and, therefore, both learn more. In the richness of the encounter with the other, someone like me, there is a novelty, a surprise, a mutual enrichment. The “gift in excess” nurtures the relationship and makes it go higher levels of growth and depth, forming a spiral motion in which it motivates and feeds herself.

The data obtained from questionnaire surveys confirm this type of asymmetrical reciprocity,

which is proper of the gift relationship: 95.6% of the volunteers say they give, but they also receive from others and, more specifically, 79.6% feel they receive more than they give. The finding that one receives more than one gives confirms the gift dynamics and the “gift in excess”.

The retribution is a moment of the gift relationship, as a constitutive element of the relationship between subjects. In fact, the relationship with the other allows us to get in touch with the inner wealth that each person is, making this encounter a learning and mutual enrichment opportunity.

But here too it is possible to infer a change in the type of retribution sought. When we go deeper in the gift relationship, we understand that retribution is, ultimately, found in the very relationship that the self establishes with the other, in the fullness and learning that is established in it, and in the growth and personal transformation that each one of the subjects of the relationship experience. This means that retribution is the effective and fair presence of the other in me, the fulfillment and

joy for feeling that one belongs increasingly to the life of another, for feeling participant in transforming the life of the other, in the construction of his life project.







“(…) I think the difference is mainly, not so much at a deep level of value, when volunteering is well practised, but more in terms of belonging and organisation... missionary volunteering falls much more in a context of value that has to do with being a Christian... it is motivated... in this context, these values have already been predefined, i.e., we are sent in the name of Christ...” (Interviewee M2)

The life story “should be a monologue” (Poirer et. Al, 199: 85), seeking to restore the veracity and genuineness of facts and the relationship lived and experienced. The Life Stories were prepared based on the uniqueness of the testimony, without verification. With no pretension of representativeness, two female and two male elements were heard, in a total of four Life Stories. These sought to gather information and reconstruct an individual life experience, as well as capture a certain mood in a situation of missionary voluntary action.

Therefore, these life stories are focused on the experience of missionary voluntary social action. The method that allowed the collection of information was the semidirective interview. The information collected was reviewed and, in some ways, interpreted in the light of the notion of gift, in a sociological perspective.

Thus, we summarily present portraits of life of the missionary volunteer, and the integral reconstruction of life stories was not a methodological criterion. The analysis carried out sought responses to the following questions: Who are missionary volunteers? What are the main motivations that lead them to go out on a mission? How is carried out their selection, recruitment and training/preparation for the volunteer mission? What is the added value of this experience in their life? And in the lives of their host communities? How do missionary volunteers return to their country of origin, which differences do they feel in their lives?

The Life Stories collected do not exhaust the complexity of the social reality analysed. They are a partial view of it. This research work is a first approximation to an unknown social reality, from an academic and scientific perspective. This study brings together and makes visible a set of relevant information on the profile of the missionary volunteer, the main motivations that lead missionary volunteers to go out on a mission, the organisational context that lies behind the mobilisation of missionary volunteering, the impact of the experience of missionary volunteering, both in the lives of missionary volunteers and the life of communities visited and those where they now live. As already shown in previous pages, establishing a profile of the missionary volunteer profile is an essential element for organisations promoting volunteering with this specificity. The profile helps identify and define the essential requirements - personal, professional and social - for the practice of missionary volunteering.

*"... the availability and capacity of committal and service... I think that one of the most important features in missionary volunteering is this dimension of availability and simplicity, a capacity to transcend ourselves in the sacrifice we make, sometimes... it costs a bit to overcome these initial difficulties to find, on the other side, I say, that we gain much more for having had this kind of sacrifice and we become very different persons, because we opened to... become available and make this kind of sacrifice, this kind of work." (Ent. M 2)*

The analysis of Life Histories enabled the verification of certain skills needed to mobilise for the practice of missionary volunteering. The flexibility at work and the ability to immediately react to the unforeseen are two dimensions

almost transverse to all discourses. Other skills should be highlighted, such as the ability to adapt to new situations and harsh conditions, tolerance and understanding to each other, the ability to relate with another who is culturally different.

"I think one of the great skills is the challenge of wanting to learn... Another competence has much to do with exploring and acquiring capabilities that one never imagined and... decentralising, being open to what is happening and also to the needs of others and discussing... Also tolerance and understanding are characteristics and skills that are developed... (INT. F.1)

The notion of strong and safe commitment to the promotion of life and the autonomy of another arises, in the discourses analysed, as a permanent concern of missionary volunteers. This commitment to the situation of the other often makes the missionary volunteer overcome himself. The notion of gift emerges and builds on the relationship with the other, it triggers the gift and does not expect necessarily a retribution. If that happens, it has to do with the empowerment of the other in building his

life project, and remains in the memory of the missionary volunteer throughout his life:

"... the availability and capacity of committal and service... I think that one of the most important features in missionary volunteering is this dimension of availability and simplicity, a capacity to transcend ourselves in the sacrifice we make, sometimes... it costs a bit to overcome these initial difficulties to find, on the other side, I say, that we gain much more for having had this kind of sacrifice and we become very different persons, because we opened to... become available and make this kind of sacrifice, this kind of work." (INT. M 2)

The missionary volunteers are highly motivated people to help another. This motivation is, in most cases, influenced by the family socialisation of the missionary volunteer and his experience of the Christian faith. "...experience of the faith of Christ that makes us, that my missionary experience is... is a great motivation for my experience, to volunteer, I know I do much more than telling everyone that they have to follow Christ, I will give my testimony as a Christian and I assume that this will change...



and besides, too, trust in God, this is one of the gains of opting for missionary volunteering as a Christian is that, believing that, in fact, we are protected by God" (INT. F.2)

Regarding the main motivations that are at the origin of the practice of missionary volunteering, we listed a significant number that we will now briefly describe.

The motivation for learning and personal and social development. Indeed, the fact that they want to travel and meet new realities is a recurrent situation on the part of respondents. The motivation for social belonging is a dimension that has also relative regularity in discourses.

The desire to meet other people and other cultures. The possibility of dealing with new social situations transforms missionary volunteers into social agents who seek a sense of belonging to a community, an organization or a cause. In the light of the testimonies collected, the analysis on the organisational context that involves the process of promoting missionary volunteering allowed to place, in terms of organisational theory and analysis,

the organisations concerned as fundamentally cognitive and human. They are strongly marked by spontaneity and informality of processes and procedures, for example, in terms of selection, recruitment and training of potential missionary volunteers. From this level of analysis, it is evident the need to undertake a higher rationalisation of organisational practices of human resource management and training. "In the case of J. D., it is a smaller group, more informal, but in which the essence... is there and has to do with the... Dorothean spirituality, so the P. F. (...) ... there is a free recruitment, people will know about the place by contact, there is a training about some topics, prepared mainly by the Sisters and some young people who have already participated in previous training (...)" (INT. M. 2)

Regarding the match between skills acquired by missionary volunteers working and working skills needs detected on the ground, it was found, among respondents, that sometimes the desirable correspondence between those skills does not happen, although this need is not always immediately noticeable to volunteers. "...What is important to missionary

*"The intrinsic motivations, they are many and they have changed. Before going out for the first time, the desire was much to know and understand, and open horizons. Also all motivations that are less correct, that everyone has, and it's normal to have them, wanting to know, wanting to travel, having an adventure too. All these bad motivations, I had them too, and also the good ones. After the experience, the more I got to know, not places, but people, I started understanding their lives and also my own, our life, and I realised that when you see in the news that there is extreme poverty, many people dying of hunger, that is not on another planet, it is on ours, that it is happening now and it is on that side, on the south side, a four-hour flight away from here, so it is not something unreal. And I began, too, to have this more global look towards life (...)" (INT. M.1)*

*"One of the attitudes of the volunteer, and to work more and more on the information, is that this capacity to listen, active listening, is not just hearing what the other is saying, is to perceive the environment where he is. The layman, before leaving, and increasingly in training, has this step that we call specific project training, which is to know more about the project that will be developed, but mainly to know a logic of the project; even if this is not his area of academic training, to know the logic of the project." (INT. F.1)*

volunteering, I think, is the willingness to give... and not so much a specific training ..." (INT. M. 2)

Please note that, regarding the information collected and analysed, the views of respondents are disparate. There is no consensus position, by the interviewees, for example, on the adequacy of their previously acquired skills to meet the needs detected on the ground.

Every missionary voluntary action is marked by spontaneity and informality of the various procedures. In view of this situation, it would be pertinent to strengthen on the training plan, previous to the departure of the missionary volunteers, some aspects of the working/project cycle methodology, as well as some basic principles of local development, particularly in relation to the knowledge of the territory and learning about the relationship with another that is naturally influenced by a certain social or class ethnocentrism. "In my first experience, I went with very little information, because we went to a new place where I had never been before, so our preparation, I'd say it was very, very far from what was needed there (...)" (INT. M. 2)

The compilation and systematisation of information also detected that often the missionary volunteer, when he goes out on a mission, is not fitted with a solid and rigorous diagnosis about the reality that he will find. In this sense, it would also be pertinent to draw up more precise diagnoses on the reality of host communities.

As part of the working/project cycle

methodology, it is appropriate to draw attention to another need pointed out by respondents, i.e., it would be important to methodologically assess the progress of ongoing projects in their host communities, to establish a guide for a more rigorous work and to ensure better continuity of work, in terms of voluntary action, on themselves. The missionary voluntary action is one of the expressions of social work and, as such, implies a greater rationalisation in the handover between missionary volunteers, so that results may be optimised.

The "Go and Come Back" of a missionary volunteering experience is a life experience strongly outstanding for respondents. The practice of missionary volunteering is a privileged context for learning and personal development of the own missionary volunteer. Respondents lived this experience and returned with another attitude towards life. They feel different people, more complete in emotions and affection, and more resilient:

"Very important. I gained a lot of this resilience of not giving up. I remember people who lived

with me and shared my days and... they need our work. We cannot afford to give up. We must continue.” (INT. M.1)

They learned that they also run the risk of undermining their own ethical principles, due to conflicts experienced in adversity. “In terms of ethics, provided we go to work in such a country, full of corruption, and everything, I think we become less ethical... We avoided that it would ruin... our belief, if we believe that bribery is spoiling a society we do not use it, only in extreme cases...” (INT. F. 2). Missionary volunteers, moving along on a mission to remote communities, with different logics of social organisation than European societies, may go through situations with greater cultural exposure and personal vulnerability. Sometimes, there might be situations in which missionary volunteers, requiring certain services, such as a health service, should be able to make no use of their social status within the host communities, in order to get access more easily.

They mobilised and developed the notion of gift with the other. They do not expect

retribution, and realised that if they won on the one hand, they also lost a bit here, very concretely in terms of the labour market. “I would be hired in the State, maybe I would now have a permanent post, but right now I’m on a contract and when they do not hire, here now... they don’t. So really, the big risk of being a missionary volunteer is the precariousness of losing opportunities of those who are here and keep having them.” (INT. F.2)

Thus, on one hand, who is a missionary volunteer gains in respect of the gift and, on the other hand, can lose, in a real situation, employment opportunities and stability in it. “Nothing so far. Quite the contrary. It robs me time, especially. And when I commit to it, I don’t work hard. Not that I don’t fulfill the things I have to accomplish, but perhaps I take more time doing them. Now I managed, as a teacher here, to channel and enjoy the good things that I have here and apply them outside. But I think if I did not volunteer I could be further developed in professional terms, but no regrets.” (INT. M.1)

The fact that they are absent from the country made them embrace other concerns of the

local host communities and leave behind their own concerns. This is also an embodiment of the concept of gift. The gift relationship is a story to be built over time, where the free and gratuitous commitment to help the other rules, with no direct compensation. We build it together. It is expected a development of communities and local populations, with autonomy, in order to a more balanced and cohesive world.

They return with a sense of commitment that marks their attitude towards life.

*“I am a volunteer 24 hours a day, everything is said.” As much as I have problems at work, as much as I have difficulties in the projects, it is my commitment, it is up to me to find strategies, to ask for collaboration from my community, to seek cooperation of other people on the ground, to ask for cooperation to the executive secretariat, to try to overcome...” (INT. F.1)*





## PROJECT “ONDJOYETU”, ANGOLA: AN EXAMPLE OF A VOLUNTEERING PROJECT WITH AN IMPACT ON THE GROUND

Gungo, in Angola, is a municipality with 2,200 km<sup>2</sup> with about 25,000 inhabitants. It is a mountainous region that was severely affected by the war. The population gradually tries to return to normal life, but isolation and the lack of resources (human and financial) creates difficulties/obstacles for them to solve their basic problems. In this municipality there is no electricity, communications, drinking water, medical assistance and medication; schooling is very low and does not reach all villages. The missionary groups, which have been present in Angola since 2003, developed their action with this community. Over six missions, 25 volunteers traveled to Angola.

Fruit of the twinning agreement between the Diocese of Leiria-Fátima and the Diocese of Sumbe, Angola, several people have collaborated on this project for periods of between two months and two years. Missionary volunteers have been replaced each

other, thus continuing the project. Based in Sumbe, the team who is on the ground moves to Gungo for periods of one to four weeks, covering various pastoral areas and, thus, alternately reaching different people. The work is developed, depending also on the volunteers on the ground who work in areas as diverse as literacy, education, small development projects, cooking, home economics, youth work, mechanics, community organisation and structuring, and pastoral areas such as spiritual help. One of the most emblematic initiatives is the Project “Grão a Grão” (“Grain to Grain”) which aims to foster grinding activity in the community of Gungo. This goal has been partially achieved and they will soon begin working on a grinding hammer mill in Gungo. After these periods with the more isolated rural communities, the team returns to Sumbe to relax, communicate with family and friends, post some news, buy food supplies and prepare for a new job. The access roads to Gungo are

unpaved, some are in a very poor condition and certain places can only be reached on foot.

In 2011, a permanent team that is in Angola consists of a priest and five laymen. The professional skills of current volunteers are varied, including physiotherapy, engineering, education and carpentry. There is also diversity with respect to age group integrating both new graduates and retired people.







Analysis of data collected allows the following conclusions<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, in the case of **volunteers**:

- The Missionary Volunteering Network, coordinated by FEC, is composed of a set of increasingly numerous qualified people, available and motivated for interventions in demanding places in human, social and technical terms.
- The fundamental motivations that lead volunteers are mostly from a hetero-referenced nature, thus not centered on the volunteer but centered on the other.
- Most volunteers have Christian motivations for their action, finding in the "gift in excess" of Jesus Christ their paradigm of relationship/action.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the conclusions presented are still provisional and may be complemented when the full study is published.

- On the ground, when these volunteers show openness to novelty and learning, they are motivated by altruistic reasons in their action and establish gift relationships as preferred feature in the construction of social bond with others to whom they are sent.
- Fruit of the gift relationship established on the ground, volunteers feel different people and more resilient after returning, learning to cope with difficulties, to have more confidence and to excel themselves. Therefore, voluntary action is highlighted as a factor of development of multiple skills of the volunteer.

With respect to **institutions which send volunteers**:

- From the exponential flow of the number of volunteers sent in recent years, institutions project a great attractiveness among these

volunteers that identify them as privileged mediators for a missionary experience to carry out abroad. Its credibility is underlined by the spontaneous way as a good part of the volunteers come to these institutions (their intrinsic motivation or by influence of family or friends), but also as a result of a fairly organised pastoral work.

- Institutions show great ability and credibility in attracting the necessary resources to achieve their goals, as donations and fundraising testify.
- The study confirms that there are areas of action relatively solidified on the ground. Over the last five years, three priority areas have gained importance: community development, education, literacy, training and support to health.
- From the point of view of sustainability of ongoing projects in the field of intervention

of volunteers, the survey results confirm that it is thanks to the existence of organisations in the areas of intervention that voluntary action lasts and becomes real. The real impact of voluntary action during their period of stay remains to be explored in its full extension.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

Aiming to improve practices in this area, we list some recommendations both to organisations that send volunteers and to FEC, as an organisation coordinating the Missionary Volunteering Network.

Therefore, about the **organisations**:

The study found that, when asked to identify the impact of the action of volunteers on the ground, in terms of results of short (up to 1 year), medium (up to 3 years) and long (over 3 years) term, 2/3 of institutions were unable to identify, quantify or describe such results.

- We recommended that institutions establish clear objectives and transparent performance indicators (in the various personal and social dimensions of intervention...) so that there may be an assessment of outcome introducing the consciousness of fulfillment and satisfaction in all parts;

- We recommend that organisations know how to collect and value the experience gained by the volunteers on the ground and use it for their own development and for internal and external communication.

The study showed that volunteers are qualified and motivated people, but that not always the preparatory training, prior to being sent, meets the needs of the intervention on the ground, which may have as a consequence that the technical skills of the volunteers are not fully exploited in projects on the ground.

- We recommend that the missionary volunteer, when going out on a mission, is fitted with a solid and rigorous diagnosis of the situation about the reality that he will find. To make this possible, institutions could adopt the working/project cycle methodology as a privileged working tool, assessing methodological

and objectively the progress of ongoing actions in host communities.

About **FEC**:

The Life Stories collected, the contact established with some organisations and the information gathered by surveys make it clear that organisations live the process of sending volunteers (recruitment, training, action on the ground and return) in a fairly involved way, but still quite spontaneous and intuitive, often centered on the leadership of one single person of the organisation.

- We recommend that FEC, the entity that coordinates, in Portugal, the Missionary Volunteering Network, may provide training to people leading organisations, thus working to enable a double purpose: on the one hand, to help introduce more rationalising and judicious principles in the

procedures to adopt in these organisations for the recruitment, selection and departure of volunteers; on the other hand, and safeguarding the essential uniqueness of each organisation, it could be good for their own organisations to draft and reach a consensus on a minimum profile of missionary volunteer to be worked with candidates, highlighting the characteristics and core competencies to be acquired before their departure on a mission.

This study embraced the concept of gift as a preferred perspective to analyse the relationship of intervention established by the volunteer in his work on the ground, collecting results on the impact that his action had on himself (motivations and changes occurring after return). However, the gift relationship comprises two poles: the “self” and the “other”.

- It is recommended to conduct a study to identify the effective “gains” achieved by the

intervention of the volunteer on the ground during her stay; i.e., to assess the impact of her action in the short, medium and long term, both from a visible point of view and a more symbolic perspective, immediate or deferred in time (in this regard, remember that the gift relationship is, first and foremost, a symbolic mediation).



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”

“

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We can not afford to give up. We must continue.

”

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