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**REVIEW OF EXISTING YOUTH VOLUNTARY SERVICE PROGRAMMES  
AND PROPOSALS FOR AN INNOVATIVE UNESCO APPROACH**

**SUMMARY**

The General Conference, at its 30th session, decided to add to paragraph 09202 of document 30 C/5 Approved the following text: “The Youth Coordination Unit will continue the inventory of all of UNESCO’s activities relating to youth volunteer programmes with a view to their strengthening, taking into account other programmes existing in the context of the United Nations, other international organizations and NGOs”.

The document presents a brief historical overview of past, and a review of present, UNESCO youth voluntary service activities. The results of the study of existing youth voluntary service programmes and projects conducted by the Youth Coordination Unit (UCJ), which comprised a questionnaire survey, are presented in the form of a detailed review of activities of intergovernmental organizations, governments, major international non-governmental organizations and national and local non-governmental organizations.

The “ingredients for a successful approach” drawn from the study comprise conceptual elements to be taken into account in the planning and design of youth voluntary service programmes and projects and constitute preliminary elements of an innovative approach. Finally, indications are provided on the practical conditions to be fulfilled at different levels and by different partners in order to implement the new strategy. UNESCO’s contribution to the International Year of Volunteers 2001, the elaboration of guidelines for national policy-makers on the status of young volunteers and pilot projects in all areas of competence will be the major activities during the current biennium.

Decision required: paragraph 47.

## Introduction

1. The General Conference, at its 30th session, decided to add to paragraph 09202 of document 30 C/5 Approved, the following text: “The Youth Coordination Unit will continue the inventory of all of UNESCO’s activities relating to youth volunteer programmes with a view to their strengthening, taking into account other programmes existing in the context of the United Nations, other international organizations and NGOs”. The Youth Coordination Unit (UCJ) was requested to submit this inventory to the Executive Board at its 160th session.

2. According to the United Nations definition, youth constitutes people between the ages of 15 and 24. This age group represents about 18% of the world population. Young people’s life patterns in today’s world, marked by unemployment and the fragmentation of society, as well as the development of new technologies, especially in communication and information, and the opportunities offered by globalization, are less and less “linear”. New ways of learning, of acquiring skills and of participating in world development are emerging as young people are exposed to a variety of experiences: formal and non-formal education, apprenticeships, peer-group activities, internships, temporary jobs. Other factors influencing their values, beliefs and behaviour are the media and contacts to networks or youth from other parts of the world through electronic mail or the Internet.

3. In recent years, youth issues have moved up national and international political agendas and there is a growing demand from young people for opportunities to participate in society and in development. At the same time, governments and institutions are seeking ways and means to involve youth and assist them to become responsible citizens. The *Strategy for UNESCO’s action with and for youth* published in 1999 has, as its principal objective, “the empowerment of young people to ensure their full participation in society as equal and valuable partners”. The document then specifies: “**To empower young people is to enable them to use their forces in the service of development**”.

4. Youth voluntary service could be a **powerful tool to achieve youth empowerment and youth participation and give young people the opportunity to actively contribute to UNESCO’s goals and action in all its areas of competence**. Therefore, UNESCO should promote the development of youth voluntary service. It should do so with a clear strategy, based on a definition and current practice, on a critical review of the Organization’s past action, on the awareness of various existing approaches as well as on the recognition of the challenges and problems which young people face in today’s world.

**Voluntary service** is defined here as **altruistic commitment by people who give their time and/or their expertise voluntarily and free of charge, in a formal context, for a given period. Voluntary service requires a number of practical arrangements, such as the payment of subsistence and transport costs and social security coverage for the volunteer.**

5. There are three important dimensions to youth voluntary service: the training it represents for young people, its impact on the community or society and the social recognition for the volunteer derived from this impact. A distinction needs to be made between **full-time voluntary service**, which is **the principal activity** of the person during a given period (at least six months), and **part-time volunteering** (a few hours per week, a few days per month, or a few weeks per year). Depending on whether the voluntary engagement is full-time or part-time, the **implications on the above three areas, as well as the financial and structural support needed, are very different**.

## **Youth voluntary service and UNESCO: a brief historical overview**

6. Since its creation, UNESCO has promoted and supported youth volunteering in the form of *youth (service) camps* or *work camps*. At its very first session in 1946, the General Conference decided that “UNESCO take the initiative in promoting and securing the equitable distribution of youth service camps in the devastated areas for the summer of 1947”. In this historical context, the NGO *Coordinating Committee for Work Camps* (later on renamed *Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)*) was created in 1948 under the auspices of UNESCO. Until the early 1960s, the General Conference and Executive Board’s decisions concerning the education programme relate to the support of international voluntary work camps (as they were called from 1948 onwards) because of their contribution to international understanding. The General Conference sessions in 1972 and 1974 recommended that UNESCO pursue action in favour of national and international volunteering and provide support to youth NGOs to this effect. In 1976, the Executive Board made reference to the “interesting opportunities offered by the use of the services of young volunteers” in the discussion of draft document 19 C/4.

7. From 1976 to 1995, UNESCO attempted to promote youth volunteering and supported activities, mainly work camps and some meetings, training workshops and studies, through subventions and contracts to the CCIVS and a limited number of other governmental and non-governmental volunteer organizations, as well as through contacts with international bodies such as the UNV and the Council of Europe.

1995 marks an important milestone for three reasons:

- (a) the adoption of new Directives governing UNESCO’s relations with NGOs which put an end to regular subventions;
- (b) the adoption of the World Programme for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond by the United Nations General Assembly and the decision by the General Conference that youth be a “priority” target group for UNESCO’s action;
- (c) the creation of a central Secretariat unit in charge of developing a vast programme of volunteering for all age groups in UNESCO.

The above changes strongly affected the way in which the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the CCIVS, had conducted UNESCO’s youth voluntary service activities for several decades. The establishment of a UNESCO Volunteer Corps and programme failed and the Volunteering Unit was dissolved in 1997. Nevertheless, serious questions have been raised about the nature and impact of UNESCO’s action in this area.

8. When the Director-General reoriented and reinforced the Organization’s youth programmes and structures in 1998, he decided that particular attention should be paid to volunteer work as an “irreplaceable means of mobilizing young people” and entrusted the “promotion of voluntary service of young people” to UCJ. The unit started consultations with young people, youth and volunteer NGOs and other partner institutions with a view to developing a comprehensive UNESCO approach to the issue which is reflected in the present document.

## Review of existing youth voluntary service activities at UNESCO

9. UNESCO, as appears from the above, never had a youth voluntary service “programme” but supported, on a regular basis, isolated ad hoc activities involving young volunteers, and youth and voluntary NGOs. These activities first took place in the framework of the education programme (international reconstruction work camps) and, since the mid-1970s, within the framework of the youth and sports programme of the Social Science Sector, which cooperated mainly with the Culture Sector regarding cultural heritage work camps.

10. During the last two biennia, the UNESCO programme sectors undertook the following activities:

- (a) The INFOYOUTH programme, formerly under the Social Science Sector and since June 1998 under the Communication, Information and Informatics Sector, organized a Subregional Consultation on Youth Voluntary Service (Madralin, Poland, 25-28 September 1997), in cooperation with the European Commission, as well as a regional consultation for Asia and the Pacific region on youth and voluntary service (Macao, 1998). It provided in 1998 and 1999 support to the Network for Eastern Europe (EASTLINKS) which was created further to the Poland meeting, for staff training seminars, regional camp leader information and training, field visits, regional consultations and interregional exchanges. The Communication, Information and Informatics Sector is also producing a CD-ROM on “Youth and volunteerism for development and peace” with the Korean National Commission.
- (b) A UNESCO-UNV Framework Agreement concluded in 1997 created the “United Nations Volunteers for Cultural Heritage”; youth volunteers were to be associated with the programme through cooperation with the CCIVS. Work camps were organized in this respect in China, Mozambique and Mexico (see below).
- (c) The following cultural heritage work camps were organized by the Culture Sector, in cooperation with the CCIVS: restoration of a historical building in Kfifan, Lebanon (summer 1999); restoration of Dai Temple, Shandong, China (21 August-31 September 1998), with 15 international volunteers and the local population; restoration of different sites on Ilha de Mozambique (16 June-7 July 1998), with 21 participants; restoration work linked to the Fourth International Workshop for Heritage Conservation, Trinidad, Cuba (13-24 April 1998) with 13 regional and 12 national participants. Further work camps were organized with the Scout Movement in Luxor, Egypt (7 March-6 April 1998) with 51 participants from 22 countries and with the University of Veracruz, Mexico, in 1997 where a group worked on the restoration of the San Juan de Ulúa Fortress.
- (d) Three young long-term volunteers served in projects implemented by the Education Sector: one in the funds-in-trust project “Distance non-formal basic education for rural development” in Lao People’s Democratic Republic, and two in the special project for youth in Togo (in cooperation with CCIVS).
- (e) The Social Science and the Science Sector reported no voluntary service projects for the period under review.

11. In addition to field offices’ involvement in the above activities, the Maputo Office recruited three long-term volunteers in the “Iniciativa Jovem project” in Mozambique; the

Apia Office organized, in cooperation with the United States Peace Corps, volunteer training in health issues and will contribute to the setting up of a Youth Volunteer Corps within the framework of the special project “Youth leadership for a culture of peace in the Pacific”; the Guatemala Office, within the framework of IYCP, and the Beijing Office within a world heritage project, both involved youth volunteers for short periods of time.

12. A cooperation agreement concluded with the government of the Basque country in July 1997 established the “UNESCO Programme of Basque Volunteers”. Since 1998, 38 young volunteers have been stationed in UNESCO field offices in all regions for periods of one or two years.

13. The Youth Coordination Unit (UCJ) has investigated and reflected, since its creation in May 1998, on a coherent UNESCO approach to youth voluntary service. Its participation in several international conferences and national seminars on the theme and its contacts with numerous institutions, IGOs, NGOs and associations have led to the “Study on Youth Voluntary Service” undertaken in early 2000 (see below) and to the present document.

### **The UNESCO study on youth voluntary service**

14. As announced during the General Conference, UCJ undertook a study of youth voluntary service organizations, programmes, projects and initiatives. In order to present the Member States with a strategy based on a critical analysis of existing experiences, the study had the following three objectives:

- (a) to present a survey of the variety of youth voluntary service programmes and projects;
- (b) to identify original and innovative projects, namely those conceived and implemented by young people themselves;
- (c) to highlight important aspects for reflection and possible areas for UNESCO’s intervention.

The study developed a documentary research of programmes of other intergovernmental and of major non-governmental organizations; the research was complemented by a questionnaire survey<sup>1</sup> (Questionnaire in Annex I). In view of the large number of organizations operating in this field, a purposive sample was used.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Full document “UNESCO Survey on Youth Voluntary Service” (1999) available, in French, upon request.

<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire was sent to all 68 UNESCO field offices; to 25 National Commissions particularly involved in youth activities, from high-population countries or from countries with an important tradition in voluntary service; to 170 NGOs and associations, most of which had been in contact with UNESCO in recent years. This sample was completed by programmes and organizations identified on the Internet and through related documentation assembled by UCJ (brochures, publications, conference reports). Altogether, 263 questionnaires had been sent out, among which 93 were to potential “multipliers”, i.e. UNESCO Offices and National Commissions invited to present four or five projects each. **120 questionnaires were received in return** three of which did not concern youth projects; therefore, **117 questionnaires concerning 104 countries (see Annex II) were examined in the framework of the survey.**

### *Programmes of intergovernmental organizations*

15. The only voluntary service programme in the United Nations system at present is the UNV. Specialized agencies or funds do not have youth voluntary service schemes. The European regional institutions have developed in recent years important youth programmes including voluntary service activities.

16. **United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV):** It has to be recalled that the UNV, created in 1970, is not a youth programme. United Nations volunteers usually are about 40 years old. Until recently, UNV actually excluded young people; the minimum age for “specialist” recruitment is 25 and requirements include higher education or technical diplomas as well as a minimum of five years of professional experience. However, a few years ago, UNV created a new category of volunteers, the UNV field workers, who can apply as of age 21; these however only represent about 4% of all United Nations volunteers. Nevertheless, UNESCO should strengthen its cooperation with UNV in the youth domain since UNV promotes volunteering in a general way and has acquired expertise and experience in supporting local volunteering in many countries. It is also the focal point for the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

17. UNV and Netaid.Org launched an original project in February 2000: through a website ([www.netaid.org](http://www.netaid.org)), **online volunteering** features as an innovative possibility of completing volunteer tasks via the Internet. Developed and managed by UNV, the project adds a new dimension to the existing opportunities of volunteering through the United Nations system, especially for young people who are the majority of Internet users.

18. **European Voluntary Service (EVS):** Launched in 1998 by the European Union after a pilot phase in 1996-1997, the EVS offers young people, aged from 18 to 25, the opportunity to volunteer for six to 12 months in a “host organization” in a foreign country. Each project has three partners: a volunteer, a sending organization and a host organization. Since 1996, about 5,000 young Europeans have participated in the scheme (2,700 in 1999). EVS, which forms part of the European Commission’s Youth Programme,<sup>3</sup> has three main objectives:

- (a) to provide an informal intercultural learning experience for young people, encourage their social integration, active participation, increase their employability and give them opportunities to show solidarity with other people;
- (b) to support the development of local communities;
- (c) to encourage the establishment of new partnerships and the creation of networks of organizations and associations within Europe.

Accessible to all young European Union citizens, and recently to young people from the Mediterranean region and Latin America, the programme has a large budget (47.5 million ecu for 1998-1999) and extensive support structures with national agencies in each European Union country.

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<sup>3</sup> In the framework of the joint Council of Europe/European Commission partnership programme for European Youth Worker Training, a training course: “*Project Management and Transnational Voluntary Service*” was held for the first time in March 1999 with 31 participants aged from 19-32 years. It focuses on the process of preparation and management of international youth projects, fund-raising, creating networks and intercultural learning. A second course is planned for this year.

### ***Governmental or national voluntary service programmes***

19. In many countries, national voluntary programmes are run by governments or through public institutions or NGOs. These include civic service years, schemes for university students, programmes for rural development and disaster relief. National voluntary service programmes mobilize significant numbers of young people and can contribute efficiently to development and national cohesion. A clear distinction should however be made between such programs and any form of “compulsory service” such as civic service proposed as an alternative to military service.

### ***Major international non-governmental voluntary service organizations***

20. Many voluntary service NGOs and associations have organized into networks or federations; some of the major organizations are briefly introduced below. Most of them, except AVSO, organize workcamps and increasingly, longer term programmes; this is certainly in part due to the possibilities offered by EVS. International NGOs often work jointly or are members of each other making it sometimes difficult to establish clear-cut distinction between them. All of them have WebPages, which are indicated below.

21. The **Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS)**, already mentioned above, acts as a link between approximately 140 member voluntary organizations all over the world, some of which are international organizations with national branches in many countries. The majority of the members mainly run work camps but some also organize medium- and long-term activities. Although young people constitute most of its member organizations, CCIVS does not define itself as a youth organization. CCIVS contributes to developing voluntary service in regions where it is not yet strong and visible; encourages international volunteer exchange programmes and partnership between organizations; implements programmes and projects with other international organizations; publishes and distributes information; organizes international conferences and seminars and is involved in research and analysis in the area of voluntary service. (<http://www.nrit.com/ccivs/index.htm>)

22. The **Association of Voluntary Service Organizations (AVSO)** forms a European platform of national and international non-profit organizations active in the field of long-term voluntary service. Created in 1989 and based in Brussels, AVSO has currently 11 member organizations but represents more than 80 organizations in Europe since many of its members are themselves networks or international associations. AVSO is striving for a legal status for volunteers and acts as a representative and liaising body for its members in dealing with the European Commission in general and the EVS in particular. (<http://www.avso.org>)

23. **Youth Action for Peace (YAP)** is an international youth movement with branches in Europe and associated partner organizations worldwide. Created after the First World War (1923) in France and Germany under the name Christian Movement for Peace (until 1994), it strives to prevent conflict by helping young people to know each other. It also fights against social exclusion and supports people in their struggle for freedom and self-determination. Besides seminars, training and peace and development education, YAP’s main activity is exchanges of volunteers between countries. Each year, thousands of young people take part in work camps; long-term voluntary service exchanges are also organized for a smaller, but increasing number of young people. (<http://www.yap.org/>)

24. The **International Christian Youth Exchange (ICYE)** originated in 1949 as a post-Second World War reconciliation exchange programme between Germany and the United

States. Today, the ICYE Federation, based in Berlin, has 30 national committees in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America. ICYE offers young people, between the ages of 18 and 25, the opportunity to work as volunteers abroad in local projects (e.g. for children and young people at risk, with the elderly, rural and health development projects, peace education, ecological projects, women's groups, youth centres, migrant workers' support groups, etc.) for periods of six to 12 months. ICYE also organizes short-term international programmes for 16 to 25 year olds. (<http://www.icye.org>)

25. **Service Civil International (SCI)** was founded in 1920 in France and has today 33 branches and groups worldwide. Its aim is to promote peace, international understanding and solidarity, justice, social justice, sustainable development, and respect for the environment. SCI's activities include international volunteer projects (about 500 work camps with approximately 7,000 participants per year), seminars, medium- and long-term voluntary service, education and training courses, individual fellowships, solidarity campaigns, East-West and North-South exchange. (<http://www.ines.org/sci>)

### *National and local NGOs and associations*

26. Everywhere in the world, young people have created their own associations and NGOs which undertake local development or community service activities or joined existing groups. Some NGOs are members of international organizations; others are linked up in networks but many of them just act locally. Therefore, they function in very different contexts and conditions and although they might not organize or provide voluntary service as defined above (para. 4), they give extremely valuable assistance to their communities or countries and deserve recognition and support.

27. The project descriptions received from these organizations (62 questionnaires) provide a rather clear picture of the efforts, achievements and difficulties encountered "on the ground" by those involved in youth voluntary service. They show the crucial role played by local structures for youth participation and for making young people actors in development. They also show the need for support in order to sustain these activities and to provide young people with meaningful experiences.

### *Overall results of the study*

28. It appears from the questionnaire survey that 95% of the projects tried to achieve multiple results; the most frequently quoted was young people's participation in the life of the community, followed by the contribution to local development. Learning and training of youth is a major concern; the survey revealed that 85% of the 108 projects which answered this question included training activities for young volunteers, either in relation to their voluntary work or general capacities and skills. All intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations have a training component in their programmes. Voluntary service activities exist **in all of UNESCO's areas of competence**. Most of the survey projects (87%) indicated that they are active in several domains; the most frequent being literacy/education/training (63%), followed by the environment (59%), "actions in favour of youth" (56%), "actions in favour of marginalized groups" (55%) and intercultural exchange (49%). Arts and culture, intergenerational exchange, culture of peace and human rights and health were also important areas.

29. **Intercultural learning** is an important issue for youth voluntary projects: all IGOs and international NGOs deal with it and 90 of 107 projects in the survey provide the volunteers



with intercultural learning experience. It has to be noted that travel or international exchange are not considered indispensable in this regard since many local or national projects quote as intercultural experiences encounters with refugees, immigrants, people from different ethnic groups, different religion or different social backgrounds.

30. The practical conditions in which volunteers work depend on the programme. **Seventy-five per cent of all survey projects provide some sort of material or logistical support** to the volunteers. Food and local transport is the minimum provided; lodging, insurance and social coverage, as well as an indemnity or “pocket money” for personal expenses (hygiene, clothing, etc.) have to be foreseen for long-term volunteers. Only 44 questionnaires indicate the total cost of the project per month and per volunteer, which varies tremendously according to whether volunteers work occasionally or on a part-time basis close to their homes or whether they serve full-time and at a distance from home or abroad; whether, during work camps, they live in local families or in hostels; whether they receive training or not; etc. The total cost of a project per volunteer/month in the surveyed projects therefore range from around US \$20-50 (local, home-based short-term volunteers in Africa or Asia) to US \$2,000 (long-term volunteers, away from their home town, in Europe or North America). Young volunteers need basic means to live and though they do not receive a salary or remuneration, **voluntary service has a cost.**

31. Concerning budgets, 63% of surveyed projects receive funding from governments, 44% from private enterprises, 26% from private sponsors or their members and 21% from other sources. Thirty-two per cent are partly or totally financed by the participation of volunteers. The size of the projects also vary considerably, with one third mobilizing less than 100 young people per year and another third more than 1,000. National schemes mobilize considerably more young people (over 100,000 youth per year), especially in high-population countries or for specific activities.

32. The study shows that youth voluntary service exists worldwide and that the positive impact of the activities in the local environment makes voluntary service valuable to the community and society at large in domains where often no other institutions intervene. This impact has even pushed private companies to show their social responsibility through financing local youth voluntary service activities. The report “Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development” is based on 12 years of conversations with students aged 12 to 18, living in deprived urban and rural areas in the United States. It shows that young people who benefit from involvement in community projects “... achieve higher academic levels and hold higher expectations for themselves; demonstrate greater self-confidence and optimism about what the future holds; express a strong desire to “give back” to their communities and go on to be productive, employed and active members of their communities ...”. ([www.publiceducation.org](http://www.publiceducation.org))

33. The most frequent difficulty evoked is the lack of funding. Many organizations do not have the means to improve or to expand their activities or involve more volunteers. On the other hand, encouraging examples of successful fund-raising and partnerships of NGOs, public authorities and the private sector exist. Another problem encountered is the “non-status” of volunteers. This is a major concern of many national and international NGOs; problems related to the recognition or awareness of the value of volunteering; visa problems which hamper international exchange or make it “one-way (North-South)” only, as well as the risk, in some international exchange projects, of participants being guided by tourist considerations rather than service motivation.

34. In addition to the above-mentioned difficulties, a clear definition of the objectives to be reached is essential for a project's success. To that extent, clarifying approaches and youth participation is necessary. An attempt was made to classify the surveyed projects using their principal objective as the criterion. This classification highlighted the different approaches to voluntary service in the 117 projects: the "action-oriented" approach (27 projects); the "tool for national cohesion and citizenship development" approach (26); the "social exchange and solidarity" approach (24); the "intercultural exchange" approach (16); the "training" approach (14); and others (10). The survey also explored the role of young people in the projects and found that although only 21 sample projects were initiated by youth groups, in 73 of all 117 projects young people participated in the choice of actions, in 65 projects, young people participated in decision-making and in 70 projects, in evaluation.

### **Ingredients for a successful approach**

35. The study has shown the many facets of youth voluntary service. It revealed important elements that need to be taken into account in order to mobilize more young people, develop meaningful and successful programmes and projects, which would contribute to the double imperative of social development, on the one hand, and to an enhanced youth participation in society, on the other.

36. Firstly, it is necessary to **recognize the specificity of youth**. Young people have expectations and needs when engaging in voluntary work, which are different from those of other age groups. This has an impact on the design of projects, for example with regard to training aspects. Furthermore, like in all youth programmes, young people want to be partners in all steps of voluntary programmes from their conception to their evaluation. A **participatory youth-based approach** will contribute to stimulating their interest and sense of responsibility as well as bringing their creative approaches and ideas into projects.

37. In the past, voluntary service tended to confine itself, at the international level, to encounters in order to enhance international solidarity and peace-building and, at the national level, to the "social area" (caring for the elderly, children in need, the handicapped, etc.). The study showed that, although these areas are still important, voluntary service now covers **new domains of action**. Eighty-seven per cent of the surveyed projects address several domains, the most important being education and the environment, intercultural exchange, actions to help youth and marginalized groups. Around a third of the projects concern art and culture, the culture of peace and human rights as well as intergenerational exchange.

38. Despite the development of "lifelong" learning, it is still during the first 20 to 25 years of their lives that people learn the most and are the most eager to learn. **Learning and training** are essential dimensions of voluntary programmes. Young people can acquire life skills through their participation in the elaboration of projects and the practical experience of the voluntary work itself. However, organizers of programmes and young volunteers alike often feel a need for additional training which will be useful in their life later on. Areas for training mentioned in this regard are, for example, e.g. basic skills in specific areas, citizenship education, conflict resolution and training for the job market. The issue of "intercultural learning" was already highlighted in paragraph 29 above and **training aiming at "learning to live together"** undoubtedly deserves special attention within the framework of voluntary service for youth.

39. One out of four projects of the survey allowed young people to travel abroad. The majority of the study projects are developed in national territories and although intercultural

aspects form part of national programmes, in relation to the nature of the communities where they take place, **youth mobility and travel** play an outstanding role in terms of sensitizing, creating open spirits, discovering other cultures and, finally, meeting with other young people. These positive inputs should facilitate the exchange of volunteers within and between “North” and “South” countries.

### **How to implement the new approach**

40. The strengthening of youth voluntary service in view of giving all young people, who are willing to serve their community during a certain period of their life, the opportunity to do so, requires action by many partners and at different levels: UNESCO and other intergovernmental organizations, governments, municipalities, the private sector, schools and universities, NGOs and associations have to contribute and to join forces in developing new partnerships.

41. Youth volunteer service is increasingly appreciated for its positive consequences to local development, in addition to its beneficial impact on young volunteers themselves. In order for this experience to germinate and provide the best fruits, it needs an institutional anchor. Youth policies provide such a cradle. In recognizing the potential of young people to contribute to the improvement of their society, possible approaches and practices of youth voluntary service should be **integrated in youth policies**. Thereby, all stakeholders would have a clear indication of the legal, political and financial framework in which they operate or engage themselves.

42. In most countries of the world, young volunteers do not have a specific legally defined **status**, which de facto excludes many young people from participating, especially on long-term voluntary service. Volunteers are neither employees, nor workers, students or unemployed - a definition and recognition of voluntary service and the identity of volunteers is needed in order to provide them with insurance and/or social security in response to their specific needs and service requirements. Likewise, laws and administrative rules should not penalize volunteers or their families by depriving them of benefits they would have otherwise received. The absence of an internationally recognized volunteer status also affects visa regulations, thereby limiting international exchange. UNESCO will try to assist Member States in this area during the present biennium through the elaboration of guidelines for national policy-makers on the definition of the status of young volunteers (as foreseen in document 30 C/5) and through innovative proposals such as the introduction of a national “youth volunteer card” which would provide similar advantages to a student card.

43. **Enhancing the value of voluntary service** is another condition for its further development. Its recognition at local, national and international levels would mobilize institutional and financial partners, as well as young people themselves. There are many ways to do so, for example, through national certificates or education credits. Media coverage of voluntary activities and awards for volunteers or volunteer programmes would also give visibility to young volunteers’ contribution to social development.

### **Conclusions**

44. One conclusion to be drawn from the UNESCO study is definitely that **youth voluntary service is a worldwide phenomenon springing from, or responding to, young people’s universal will to engage themselves in social development and to show through concrete action their solidarity**. Youth voluntary service, as illustrated, contributes to youth

empowerment and many former volunteers emphasize the strong influence it had on their lives. However, the notion of “service” - and the focus on the **real development impact** of voluntary programmes and projects - remains crucial. Therefore, attention paid to the personal or professional development of volunteers themselves, however crucial, should be on equal footing with the development concern. Testimonies show that young volunteers, above all, want to demonstrate their solidarity **by doing concrete, useful things** during their service.

45. In order to assist Member States, at their request, in the elaboration of national policies, strategies and programmes for youth voluntary service, UNESCO will have to strengthen its capacities and partnerships in this domain. UNESCO will continue to foster international exchange in the area of youth voluntary service, in cooperation with partners such as the CCIVS and other NGOs and IGOs, through information services (clearing-house function), the promotion of good practice and programmes and policies, and support to networks and training activities.

46. UNESCO will cooperate with UNV and other partners in the framework of the **International Year of Volunteers 2001** in order to contribute to its objectives - recognition, promotion, facilitation and networking of volunteer contributions worldwide - in the youth domain. Several activities are already planned in this respect, such as an international meeting to highlight the different existing approaches to youth voluntary service and to foster new partnerships and the development of a few pilot projects in UNESCO’s areas of competence (basic education, environment, information exchange and networks, media, cultural heritage).

47. In view of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 160 EX/44,
2. Takes note of the importance of voluntary service as a means for promoting youth participation and empowerment and for involving young people in key areas such as basic education, the cultural heritage and environment preservation;
3. Takes note of UNESCO’s activities planned for the present biennium, namely the elaboration of guidelines for national policy-makers on the status of young volunteers, the development of pilot projects in UNESCO’s areas of competence and the exchange of information on good practice;
4. Invites Member States to support the development of youth voluntary service and to include provisions to this effect in their national youth policies;
5. Invites the Director-General to pursue activities with a view to promoting innovative strategies and programmes for youth voluntary service at the national and international level and to contribute to the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

**ANNEX I**

**UNESCO'S STUDY ON YOUTH VOLUNTARY SERVICE**

**NAME OF THE PROJECT:**

1.	Origins and objectives of the project	<i>Check or answer</i>
1.1	Who originated the project?	<input type="radio"/> A local administration <input type="radio"/> The government <input type="radio"/> A regional intergovernmental organization (OAU, EU ...) <input type="radio"/> An international intergovernmental organization (United Nations, UNESCO ...) <input type="radio"/> A local association or NGO mainly composed of 15-24 year olds <input type="radio"/> An association or NGO mainly composed of members of other age groups <input type="radio"/> A regional or international NGO <input type="radio"/> Informal groups or individuals aged 15-24 <input type="radio"/> Informal groups or individuals of other age groups <input type="radio"/> Others (describe)
1.2	Who implements the project on a daily basis?	<input type="radio"/> The local administration <input type="radio"/> The government <input type="radio"/> A regional intergovernmental organization (OAU, EU ...) <input type="radio"/> An international intergovernmental organization (United Nations, UNESCO...) <input type="radio"/> A local association or NGO mainly composed of 15-24 year olds <input type="radio"/> An association or NGO mainly composed of members of other age groups <input type="radio"/> A regional or international NGO <input type="radio"/> Informal groups or individuals aged 15-24 <input type="radio"/> Informal groups or individuals of other age groups <input type="radio"/> Others (describe)
1.3	Why was this project launched?	
1.4	What are the major results expected? (several replies possible)	<input type="radio"/> Implement concrete actions for the most underprivileged <input type="radio"/> Participate in local development <input type="radio"/> Allow a new type of youth training and development <input type="radio"/> Improve the life in the community <input type="radio"/> Allow young people to occupy their free time <input type="radio"/> Allow young people to participate in the life of the community <input type="radio"/> Others (describe)

2.	Field of activity	Check or answer
2.1	What is the field of the project?  (several replies possible)	<input type="radio"/> Art and culture <input type="radio"/> Environment <input type="radio"/> Culture of peace - human rights <input type="radio"/> Intercultural exchanges <input type="radio"/> Intergenerational exchanges <input type="radio"/> Action for marginalized groups <input type="radio"/> Literacy/education/training <input type="radio"/> Youth activities <input type="radio"/> Others (describe)
2.2	Which concrete activities are led by young people in those fields?	
2.3	Where is the project carried out?	<input type="radio"/> Home country <input type="radio"/> Abroad  Indicate country or region .....
3.	Type of voluntary service	Check or answer
3.1	Is the youth involvement compulsory or by choice?	<input type="radio"/> By choice <input type="radio"/> Compulsory
3.2	How much time do the young people devote to this project?	..... hours per week ..... hours per month
3.3	For what length of time are young people involved?	<input type="radio"/> less than 3 months <input type="radio"/> 3 to 6 months <input type="radio"/> more than 6 and less than 12 months <input type="radio"/> 12 months and more
4.	Youth development and training	Check or answer
4.1	Is training foreseen for the young people?	<input type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no
4.2	<i>If yes, what type?</i>	Duration?..... Frequency?.....  Themes of training? ..... .....
4.2 bis	<i>If not, why not?</i>	
4.3	Through this project, can young people experience interculturality?	<input type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no
4.3 bis	<i>If yes, how?</i>	

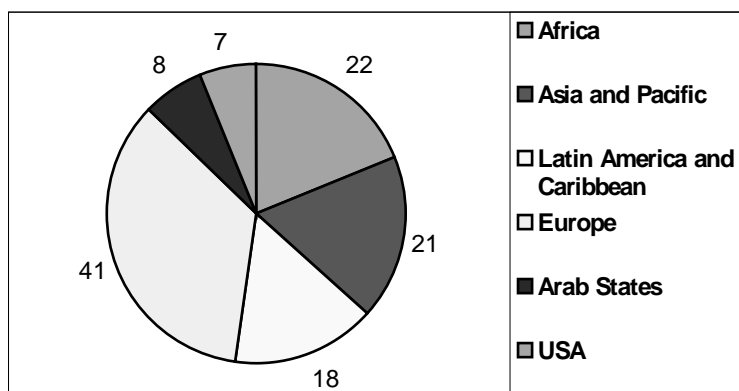
5.	Practical conditions	Check
5.1	During the project, do the young people receive ...  (several replies possible)	<input type="checkbox"/> social welfare <input type="checkbox"/> travel costs <input type="checkbox"/> lodging <input type="checkbox"/> food expenses <input type="checkbox"/> pocket money <input type="checkbox"/> a status recognized by the State or international community <input type="checkbox"/> a visa (if the project is carried out abroad)
6.	Youth role in the project	Check or answer
6.1	Are young people involved in ... <i>If so, how?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> General decision-taking How?  <input type="checkbox"/> Choice of actions How ?  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of actions How?  <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation of actions How?  <input type="checkbox"/> Choice of training courses How?  <input type="checkbox"/> Choices about the future orientations for the project How?
7.	Financial elements	Answer
7.1	What is the annual global budget of the project?	
7.2	What is the cost of the project per youth per month?	
7.3	Who finances the project?	Give the amount for each category of financing source
	<i>Enterprises/private sector</i>	
	<i>Public funding</i>	
	<i>Participation of volunteers</i>	
	<i>Contribution of individuals or members of the organization</i>	
	<i>Other funding sources</i>	

<b>8.</b>	<b>Number of volunteers involved per year</b>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Age of volunteers</b>	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Other remarks</b> (successes, failures, difficulties encountered, etc.)	



**ANNEX II**

**Figure 1: Survey programmes and projects by region**



**Figure 2: Nature of survey programmes and projects**

