

## SOCIAL VOLUNTEERISM IN THE SYSTEM OF REGIONAL SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** The relevance of the problem under exploration stems from the growing social risk for population and the elaboration of efficient measures to support the citizens of the Russian Federation with a significant role played by promotion of social volunteerism. The purpose of this paper is to analyze social volunteerism as a form of social support for the socially vulnerable citizens in the country and as one of the most important directions of state social policy. This paper describes distinctive features of social volunteerism development in the Russian regions, defines motivational constructs of volunteers and the extent of their willingness to help, traces a need in volunteers on the part of social institutions and the immediate beneficiaries.

**Keywords:** volunteer activity, volunteerism, beneficiaries, help, support, social institutions.

### 1 Introduction

Volunteerism has become widely spread in many countries across the globe long ago. Its contribution to social development is highly appreciated at the international level. That's why the volunteerism resource is increasingly becoming the target of studies carried out in Russia in the field of sociology, pedagogics, psychology, law, and now also the tourism. It became evident when the President of Russia proclaimed 2018 as the Year of Volunteer. Undoubtedly, the volunteer movement in our country has been successfully developing for a long while, at least 7 million Russians are involved in various volunteer projects. Thus, at the end of 2017, 22% of Russians had experience in volunteering; in July 2018 this figure rose to 36%. There were 7% of those who call themselves volunteers at the end of 2017, and 11% in July 2018, which shows that the growth rate almost doubled (Mersiyanova, 2019).

The content of social services provided by volunteers is increasingly manifested in their variety and in-depth diversification, which is manifested in the growing complexity of multifunctional dependence, including their complementarity and cooperation, in the context of raising social significance and accessibility to all categories of the population in need of help. The services provided by volunteers are distinguished by a number of advantages, such as the use of a variety of tools and technologies, good organization, personalization and targeted help; an integrated approach; and the diversity of services. In addition to the above mentioned advantages, the cost-effectiveness is also one of the important characteristics of the services, associated with the low cost of such services due to the minimized administrative overhead costs.

Presently, in the Russian regions there is an extensive volunteering practice in social institutions. Volunteers visit children in orphanages and boarding schools, organize leisure activities and material support for the seniors in residential care facilities and nursing homes, provide assistance to people with disabilities in social service centers, etc.

### 2 Literature Review

The volunteerism as a form of altruistic help has been explored by the Russian and foreign authors for a long time. But a "social volunteerism" term is new for the volunteer movement. Presently in Russia, various community service projects and funds promoting volunteering in the field of social support to

various population groups are rapidly growing. However, overall this problem has not received the sufficient coverage, which along with the contradictions found in the social volunteering practices, has given rise to the purpose of this publication, i.e. to study the current state and determine the developmental prospects of social volunteerism.

S.V. Aleschenok (2004), A.I. Ambrazhevich (2009), L.V. Avrorina (2017), A.A. Ivanov (2013), E.Yu. Popova (2016), explore the specific features peculiar to organization of volunteer activities in the system of state social institutions and non-state non-profit organizations.

The methodical manual produced by Yu.S. Belanovsky and I.V. Shirshova (2018) describes the existing technologies for organizing and managing volunteer activities in the social sphere. Special attention should be paid to the work of Yu. Belanovsky "Social Volunteerism. Theory and Practice" (2016), where the author deals with the basics of volunteer management in public institutions, the principles for organization of volunteering work, the methods of work, and the systems of motivation and award. The materials have been prepared based on the experience of the Danilovtsy volunteer movement.

The essence and content of volunteering activities as a social phenomenon, the principles and forms of volunteering, motivation of the participants of volunteering practices became the subject of numerous studies by G.P. Bodrenkova (2013), N.I. Gorlova, T.V. Zaltsman et al. (2018), V.A. Lukyanova (2015), N.Yu. Slabzhanina (2011), L.E. Sikorskaya (2014, 2015), O.I. Kholina (2015).

The work of volunteers in the system of state institutions, including social service organizations, is examined in the papers by A.A. Klepikova (2018) and A.S. Bakulina (2017).

### 3 Research Methods

The leading approach to the study of this problem is a structural and functional approach, which helps to identify the features peculiar to the general (societal) system of volunteerism in the Russian Federation and social volunteerism as one of the feasible ways to provide quality and diverse supplementary social services to institutions (organizations) serving the individual needs of the beneficiaries of social services from institutions (organizations) that cannot or should not be served by regular (paid) employees of such institutions (organizations). The researchers have employed the following methods to carry out this research: a questionnaire survey, methods of systematic approach, observation, modelling, qualitative analysis and typologization of the collected information.

The purpose of our research was to study and analyze social volunteerism as one of the feasible ways to provide quality and diverse supplementary social services to the institutions offering social services.

The research objectives were as follows:

1. With reliance on the interrelated research principles of concretization, typologization and objectification, conduct a survey to explore the conditions for the establishment of social volunteerism as a form of social support to the socially vulnerable citizens within the Russian Federation.
2. Based on the analysis results, define the main directions of further development of social volunteerism in the regions.

### 4 Findings and Discussion

As a part of this research, the authors conducted a survey to explore the conditions for the establishment of social volunteerism as a form of social support to the socially vulnerable citizens within the Russian Federation and one of the most important directions of current social policy of the state,

and to define the needs of institutions in the volunteering assistance of different types and forms.

The subject area of the research was the volunteer work in social institutions.

The methodological basis of the research was constituted by the anonymous questionnaire survey conducted in 2018. The survey covered 1650 respondents residing in the Russian Federation (Altai Territory, Vladimir, Voronezh, Ivanovo, Moscow and Astrakhan Regions, Krasnodar Territory, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area, etc.), including 750 volunteers, 600 clients of social institutions or beneficiaries, and 300 employees of regional social service centers, departments of social protection, centers for aid to families and children, etc.

The age and sex breakdown of the respondents participating in the sociological survey was as follows: 32% men and 68% women, aged from 20 to 70 years.

The key questions of the questionnaire related to the following thematic blocks: the essence of volunteer work and its distinctive features in the social service sphere; motivation and interest in volunteering; the problems and barriers encountered by volunteers in their work with certain categories of citizens (beneficiaries); upsides and downsides of the process of organizing volunteer efforts, expectations of beneficiaries and social organizations.

Structural and functional analysis of plenty of answers to the questions "How do you understand social volunteerism?" and "What dimensions does it include?" allows us to underline that all provided definitions of "social volunteerism" in general reflect a clear understanding of this special area of volunteer efforts and express it as follows: social volunteerism means the activities directed at improving the quality of life of socially vulnerable categories of citizens (disabled people, children with disabilities and people with health limitations, seniors, orphans and children deprived of parental care, and other categories).

Basically, the analysis of different interpretations of the "social volunteerism" concept helps to define the common essential features of this concept - no external pressure, gratuitous nature and social significance.

The survey revealed that the following activities of volunteers are the most mass, widespread and common today (in the descending order):

- Organization of cultural and mass events, cultural and leisure activities, and sports and recreation activities;
- Awareness raising and preventive activities;
- Social support to the population, social household services;
- Humanitarian aid.

As concerns answers given to the question "What kind of assistance does the population expect from volunteers?", it was quite foreseeable, in our opinion, that most answers were related to the provision of social household services. The second place belongs to the answer "social assistance to seniors, people with disabilities and families with small children". This includes the necessary social, medical, psychological and consulting assistance, and feeling the need of this category of citizens in good nutrition, communication and leisure. The third most popular answer was to collect money for medical care and essential supplies.

The fourth place in the list of expectations of the population belongs to various forms of volunteer activities with minor children and teenagers from families exposed to socially dangerous situation, orphans and children deprived of parental care. These include, first and foremost, mentoring, tutoring (e.g., teaching foreign languages), conduction of creative and applied master classes aimed at developing professional skills of the minors, vocational guidance, accompanying a child to school; organization of children's free time, etc.

Finally, the fifth place in terms of population preferences is taken by the answer "organization and conduction of cultural, leisure and entertainment events".

Summing up, a study on the needs of the population in assistance from volunteers shows that the major needs lie in the field of health, financial situation, medical care, and handling of various social household issues.

The next block of questions in this research helped us to define the needs of institutions in the volunteer assistance of different types and forms. Below we analyze the most frequent requests from institutions:

- Organization of cultural, leisure and sporting events for the social institution clients (entertaining and festive events, creativemaster classes);
- Provision of social household services (clean the apartment, wash windows, cook, go to pharmacy, write a letter to dictation, fill in the documents, etc.);
- Participation in sociocultural rehabilitation and social adaptation of disabled children;
- Participation of volunteers in social support for disabled children;
- Conduction of master classes and events geared towards development of professional skills of the minors and their vocational guidance;
- Help in caring for people who suffer from serious illnesses and people with impaired mobility.

The analysis of answers to the announced question revealed that the most demanded type of assistance from volunteers to the inpatient social care facilities are the organization of cultural, leisure and sporting events. The social care facilities providing in-home careservices turn to volunteers for the social household services and assistance to the seniors residing in rural area with improvement of the house surrounding grounds, house cleaning, crop harvesting, log piling. The third place in the list of requests from institutions is given to various forms of volunteer work with minors and adolescents from dysfunctional families and with disabled children (mentoring, tutoring, accompaniment, organization of leisure, vocational guidance, etc.).

In addition, an analysis of the needs of beneficiaries and the activities of volunteers in the regions revealed considerable differences:

- Between the expectations of beneficiaries and the actual volunteer practices. These contradictions become especially vivid when comparing the top 3 needs of the population in the help from volunteers (social household services, assistance to socially vulnerable categories of citizens, fundraising) and the most spread types and forms of volunteer activities in the regions (organization of cultural, leisure and sporting events, awareness raising, preventive activities and ranked only 3rd - humanitarian assistance, fundraising, provision of social household services and social aid).
- Between the expectations of the beneficiaries and the capacity of volunteers to satisfy those. Major expectations of the population are related to the various forms of assistance implying regular long-term volunteer activities. But the results of a study on the inner needs have demonstrated the orientation of volunteers towards short-term (often episodic) participation in volunteer projects and programs.
- Between the basic needs of the beneficiaries and the competences of volunteers to provide the necessary skilled services. The lack of special training of volunteers, insufficient knowledge of basic principles of interaction with challenging categories of population (seniors, disabled people, orphans, etc.) affect the quality of services provided and the willingness of volunteers to work. Social institutions are not always ready to spend their own resources to train volunteers.

When processing and analyzing the questionnaires, we carefully explored all possible answers to the question "Which activities

of no interest to volunteers? Specify 5-10 activities providing a reason why those activities are not popular".

Despite the positive trends in progression of volunteer activities, there are certain problems that need to be addressed: first of all, not all volunteers express readiness to work with different categories of beneficiaries.

There are also problems related to the volunteers themselves, because despite the positive trends in the progression of volunteer activities, not all volunteers express readiness to work with different categories of beneficiaries.

As the research results showed, quite a high percentage (7.8%) of volunteers are not ready to care for people who suffer from serious illnesses and people with impaired mobility.

6.6% of volunteers are unwilling to provide in-home social household services. However, most of the reports contain clarifications that volunteers, for example, refuse to clean neglected housing, to work in unsanitary conditions, to cook, to do repairs (fixing a tap, roofing, etc.) due to the lack of necessary qualifications.

A similar percentage value (6.6%) was obtained for the responses about the unwillingness of volunteers to provide systematic care to seniors and people with disabilities.

A slightly lower percentage (4.8%) of respondents indicated that volunteers have major concerns about work with asocial population categories (persons suffering from alcoholism, drug addiction, persons with criminal record, persons without any place of residence) and with citizens suffering from mental disorders and illnesses (3.6%).

2.4% of volunteers are not ready to participate in long-term projects (mentoring, supervision, foster care) with disabled children and orphans, or to accompany minor "challenging" children and adolescents (3%)

2.4% of all respondents are not ready to provide assistance to medical staff.

And finally, there are volunteers (0.6%) who do not want to be involved in the search for resources (participation in charity events to raise money, clothing, etc.).

The reasons for this become clear after analyzing the answers to the second part of the question "Specify 5-10 activities providing a reason why those activities are not popular", which allowed to objectify the unwillingness or unpreparedness of volunteers to take part in certain activities related to providing assistance to a particular group of recipients.

The obtained picture is as follows:

- Work with vulnerable families, disabled children, orphans is always a very subtle area of personal involvement, which implies high responsibility and requires long and consistent work;
- A heavy psychological burden of work with challenging categories of recipients;
- Low interest and motivation of volunteers to participate in long-term activities on a regular basis;
- Personal safety issues related primarily to work with asocial population categories;
- Lack of necessary skills to communicate with different categories of recipients (difficulties and complexities of interaction with seniors and disabled people);
- No appreciation on the part of recipients;
- Frustration over the impossibility to achieve the pursued goals and expected results, failed hopes to change the quality of life of the clients (recipients).

Next reason mentioned is the lack of consistency in the work of volunteers (meaning that volunteers visit institutions for one-time events and are not ready for long-term involvement) and lack of a unified system of requirements for the work of

volunteers (many respondents pointed to the need in the use of regulations by such institutions in respect of the activities of volunteers).

The next question was: "What conditions need to be met for volunteers to willingly go to help the social institutions?" Having analyzed the detailed answers of the respondents, we managed to distinguish separate blocks:

- Training of volunteers;
- Creation of safe and comfortable working conditions in social institutions;
- Organizational and methodological support for the activities of volunteers;
- A favorable psychological climate in institutions;
- Openness of institutions for volunteers;
- Simple and clear requirements and rules of work for volunteers;
- Provision to the volunteers of the equipment necessary for their work;
- Convenient task schedule for the volunteers;
- Offering a possibility to receive a free medical check-up;
- Internship opportunities.

It is important to highlight that the analysis of the information collected by us through this research allowed us to achieve the announced purpose and to fulfill the defined objectives. All answers to the questions were anonymous and were subjected to scientific analysis in a generalized form. All survey respondents, without a single exception, participated in the survey on a voluntary basis and were informed that they were participating in a scientific experiment. The opinion of each respondent was very important to us and helped us to consolidate the results and articulate a conclusion.

## 5 Conclusion

Practical application in the research of sociological scientific methods enabled the authors to fully implement three interrelated principles: concretization, typologization and objectification.

The principle of concretization, in our case, became the first and starting principle for this sociological research. It allowed us to depict the object of research - the volunteers aged from 20 to 35 years - as a carrier of social changes within the modern Russian society, which, from the point of view of sociology, represents a very specific historical epoch. The main purpose of the survey was to identify the needs of institutions in the volunteer assistance of different types and forms, expectations of beneficiaries, and real volunteer practices. The respondents included both socially vulnerable citizens (disabled people, elderly citizens, families with disabled children, etc.) and employees of social institutions.

The second principle that guided us in the course of the survey was typologization. In our case, it was embodied in the fact that the respondents who took part in the survey were quite typical representatives of youth and middle-aged people.

And finally, the third principle - objectification - allowed us to sensibly and objectively estimate the results of sociological research, which will be the basis for further scientific developments of the team of authors of this paper.

On the basis of the conducted analysis, we have defined the main domains of focus when addressing an issue of development of social volunteerism in the regions:

"Regulatory measures":

- Development of departmental federal, regional and local programs intended to support and promote the social volunteerism;
- Formulation and adoption of solutions in the field of social volunteerism with due regard for the opinions of representatives of the volunteer movement, the Association

of Volunteer Centers of Russia (AVC of Russia), and their inclusion in public and expert councils and taskforces that have been or will be created under federal and regional executive bodies;

- Creation of a standard for the services provided by social volunteers.
- "Infrastructural and organizational measures":
- Involvement of non-profit and volunteer organizations in the implementation of federal and regional state social programs, providing them with informational, organizational, expert and scientific methodological support;
- It is necessary to continue the policy of allocating regional subsidies to non-profit organizations promoting volunteering, and to increase the amount of presidential grants for the "Support of Volunteerism and Volunteers";

"Education and outreach measures":

- Promotion of the culture of volunteerism and involvement of citizens in volunteer programs and projects;
- Raising the professionalism of employees of non-profit organizations in the field of creation and development of social volunteer programs through their training and internships;
- Facilitating the development of partnerships among the non-profit organizations and inter-sectoral interactions by means of experience sharing and replication of best practices in the field of social volunteerism.

"Motivational measures":

- Development of additional motivational incentives for volunteers providing regular assistance to social institutions;
- Titles and badges of honor awarded by governments and administrations of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation to individuals and legal entities engaged in systematic voluntary charitable activities;
- Recognition in the mass media of a high value of activities undertaken by the best social volunteers.

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