

# **Casading Peace: An Analysis of GFP's Volunteer-based Peace-Building Model**

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Previous Work on Volunteering.....	7
3. Research Methods .....	12
4. Findings.....	18
5. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	40
Bibliography.....	45

## 1. Introduction

A number of governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) rely on volunteers to achieve desired outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The role of volunteers in contributing to peace and development has been recognised at the international level for some time, with organisations such as the United States Peace Corps and the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers operating since the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> More recently, in 2003, the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council's Commission for Social Development stated, "Volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at poverty reduction, sustainable development and social integration, in particular overcoming social exclusion and discrimination."<sup>3</sup>

Recognition of the positive role volunteers can play is not limited to volunteers from the developed world; the UN Volunteers (UNV) programme regularly publicises the results of efforts made by its local and national volunteers in infrastructural and social development projects.<sup>4</sup> Traditional social arrangements in a variety of countries incorporate the use of voluntary work, even when it is not labelled as such (this may be something as simple as offering free labour for a harvest).<sup>5</sup> To capture the diverse contributions of volunteering, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has created a manual to measure the economic value added by volunteer work.<sup>6</sup>

Building on this recognition, this report analyses the contributions that volunteers make to the work of a particular organisation based in the developing world: Generations For Peace (GFP). Since 2007, GFP has trained a total of 9299<sup>7</sup> local volunteers from 50 countries across Asia, Africa and Europe. These volunteers are equipped with the skills to carry out their own peace-building programming, addressing local issues of conflict relevant to their specific communities. As a result, programme implementation for GFP depends entirely on GFP's volunteers.

With such a large number of trained volunteers present in countries around the world, it became increasingly important for GFP to track exactly who its volunteers are, why they volunteer, what motivates and demotivates them, and – perhaps most importantly – how active they are in the communities in which they work. Considerable work has been carried out on categorising different types of volunteers (and volunteer work), studying motivations and factors for volunteering, and

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<sup>1</sup> David Eisner, Robert T. Grimm Jr., Shannon Maynard, and Susannah Washburn, "The New Volunteer Workforce," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, (2009), [http://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_new\\_volunteer\\_workforce](http://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_new_volunteer_workforce)

<sup>2</sup> International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF), "Volunteer Taiwan," *Special Reports in Taiwan ICDF Annual Report*, (2003), [https://www.icdf.org.tw/web\\_pub/20040517150919Volunteer%20Taiwan.pdf](https://www.icdf.org.tw/web_pub/20040517150919Volunteer%20Taiwan.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council, "Volunteering and Social Development," (February 2001), [http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2001/2001ECOSOC\\_CSD\\_E\\_CN-5-2001\\_English.pdf](http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2001/2001ECOSOC_CSD_E_CN-5-2001_English.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme Evaluation Office, "Essentials: Volunteerism and Development," (October 2003), [http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/fileadmin/docs/old/pdf/2003/essentials\\_vol.pdf](http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/fileadmin/docs/old/pdf/2003/essentials_vol.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> UN Volunteers Evaluation Unit, "Assessing the Contribution of Volunteering to Development," (August 2011), [http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/unv/pdf/UNV%20Assessing\\_web%20version.pdf](http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/unv/pdf/UNV%20Assessing_web%20version.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> International Labour Office Geneva, "Manual on the measurement of volunteer work," Switzerland: International Labour Organization, (2011), [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_162119.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_162119.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Calculated from GFP's Programme Cycle Sheet November 2016 (Internal Document).

exploring the longevity of volunteer involvement.<sup>8</sup> This study utilises insights from some of this previous work on volunteerism to understand **who** GFP's volunteers are, **what experiences** they have had, **how active they are**, and **why they are active**.

This exploration is important for two reasons: first, it has internal practical usage for GFP, helping the organisation assess how well its model of volunteer-based peace-building is working; second, it presents insights into what motivates and demotivates volunteers across diverse contexts, which can provide interesting learning points for other organisations that pursue volunteer-based work.

To shed light on volunteer activity, 1128 volunteers were contacted in April 2015 to complete a survey. Over a period of four months (April-July 2015), **233 volunteers** completed this survey.<sup>9</sup> These volunteers covered a total of **35 countries**. While this is a small fraction (2.5%) of the total number of volunteers that GFP has trained, the sample reflects close to 21% of the number of people asked to complete the survey, and represents the majority of countries in which GFP operates (70%). As such, it presents the first cross-national exploration of the activity levels of GFP volunteers, as well as the reasons they volunteer with GFP.

On the basis of data collected through this survey, this study finds that the majority of GFP's volunteers are **active** (measured in terms of how frequently they are active and how recently they have participated in volunteer work) and **satisfied** (according to a series of measures regarding volunteer satisfaction and perceived benefits gained). Volunteers' levels of activity are statistically correlated to the number of trainings an individual attends, the presence of financial compensation, an individual's status within the GFP volunteering structure, parenthood, and their ratings of satisfaction and benefits derived from the volunteering experience. In addition to the importance of these factors, volunteers are likely to stay active if a) *they receive support from GFP Headquarters (HQ)*, b) *they continue to derive personal benefits*, and c) *volunteering helps them achieve local impact*. These findings have important implications for any volunteer-based organisation. For GFP in particular, while some factors are inevitably beyond the organisation's ambit, **the majority of factors that explain volunteers' levels of activity are within GFP's control**, which means GFP can increase volunteer activity by adapting and targeting its volunteer management policies.

This report proceeds in the following fashion: first, it describes the previous work done on volunteerism, which has been used to inform the current study; second, it provides a brief overview of the structure of GFP's volunteer-based model, before explaining the research methods used to assess this model; and third, after the methodology section, it presents the findings of the research itself, going into detail about demographic variables, context-specific factors, volunteer

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<sup>8</sup> Some of this literature is summed up concisely in Colin Rochester's review of theoretical and practical work studying the phenomenon of volunteering: Colin Rochester, "Making sense of volunteering: A Literature review," England: The Commission for the Future of Volunteering, (2006): 2-12, <http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resources/20073/20073.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Unless noted otherwise, throughout this document all graphs and data presented refer to the survey responses of all 233 respondents.

experiences, and how each of these affected volunteers' levels of activity. Finally, this report offers a set of conclusions and recommendations, applicable to both GFP and other organisations working with volunteers.

## 2. Previous Work on Volunteering

### 2.1 What is voluntary work?

When most people think of volunteers, they think of people who offer some kind of service without being paid for it. Most formal definitions build on this core insight to identify four common features of volunteering: freely choosing to engage in work, with no remuneration, usually with a particular kind of volunteering structure and clear beneficiaries of the work done.<sup>10</sup> The ILO provides a definition of voluntary work that condenses some of these elements: **“Unpaid non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organisation or directly for others outside their own household.”**<sup>11</sup> This is the definition used for voluntary work throughout this study.

While the term “unpaid non-compulsory work” seems self-explanatory, it leaves room for some grey areas. Volunteers are often reimbursed for expenses incurred during volunteering – such as transport costs, refreshments, and so on. Such reimbursement is not considered payment; paid work generally constitutes payment for the *value* of a service provided, not for expenses occurred while providing that service. However, Blacksell and Phillips find that a significant proportion of volunteers receive some kind of payment beyond expense reimbursement, as well as ambiguous types of rewards for their efforts: concert tickets, parties, good hotels for days away from home, etc.<sup>12</sup> GFP provides similar packages of incentives for its volunteers: expense reimbursement, small-scale financial incentives for pre-selected implementation teams, and access to local and international learning opportunities (and – once in a while – the odd set of concert tickets). Receiving reimbursement or “ambiguous” rewards does not interfere with the classification of an individual as a volunteer, but receiving financial compensation for work done can complicate the issue. For this study, *all individuals undertaking unpaid non-compulsory work are counted as volunteers* – whether or not they are reimbursed expenses or receive other kinds of perks. Where small cash handouts are received, this is taken note of, but is not considered payment for service unless it is a considerable amount per month.

### 2.2 What contributions does it make?

This kind of unpaid work is expected to make considerable contributions to society at large, as well as benefit the individuals who are offering to volunteer. From a social and governmental perspective, volunteering can make contributions to “sustainable communities, rural communities, health and social welfare, criminal justice, education, social inclusion, and anti-social behaviour.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Colin Rochester, “Making sense of volunteering: A Literature review,” England: The Commission for the Future of Volunteering, (2006): 4, <http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resources/20073/20073.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> International Labour Office Geneva, “Manual on the measurement of volunteer work,” Switzerland: International Labour Organization, (2011), [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_162119.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_162119.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> S. Blacksell and D. Phillips, “Paid to Volunteer; The Extent of Paying Volunteers in the 1990s,” London: Volunteer Centre UK, (1994).

<sup>13</sup> Colin Rochester, “Making sense of volunteering: A Literature review,” England: The Commission for the Future of Volunteering, (2006): 2, <http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resources/20073/20073.pdf>

The process of volunteering is not only expected to change society, but also change individuals themselves; volunteering is expected to improve subjective well-being, life satisfaction, the experience of positive emotions, self-acceptance, as well as offering a meaningful purpose in life, a better perceived state of health and a significant reduction in mortality.<sup>14</sup> Volunteering is therefore not just seen as a form of unpaid labour; “the civil society alternative describes it as activism and sees it as a force for social change.”<sup>15</sup> It is this conception of volunteering that GFP takes most seriously, seeing individual volunteers as agents of change in their communities.

### **2.3 Why do people volunteer?**

Volunteering can be very useful to society and similarly beneficial to individuals, but it also has significant costs. It requires people to expend time and effort, potentially for free. This raises the following questions: who chooses to volunteer, and why do they choose to do so?

A great deal of literature on volunteering has been dedicated to answering these questions. A major set of explanations deals with demographic factors, assessing whether the chances of becoming a volunteer are related to age, gender, education or occupation. In some contexts, education above a high school diploma increases the chances that an individual would engage in volunteerism, while marital status and the presence of young children appears to be statistically insignificant.<sup>16</sup> Others have found that immigrant backgrounds have an influence on individuals' propensity to volunteer.<sup>17</sup> On the whole, however, researchers have “not found the links between sociodemographic characteristics and rates of volunteering strong enough to provide a complete explanation for the differences [in these rates].”<sup>18</sup> While the literature suggests that demographic variables are not conclusive predictors of volunteering behaviour, this current research does not discount the link between demographic variables and levels of volunteering. After all, demographics can have different explanatory value in diverse contexts. For this reason, this study analyses whether individuals from a particular demographic background are more likely to be GFP volunteers.

Beyond demographics, previous works have analysed volunteerism through a functional approach.<sup>19</sup> In this understanding, people choose to volunteer because it serves certain functions in their lives. The Volunteer Functions Inventory, developed by Clary and Snyder, suggests six

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<sup>14</sup> Maria L. Vecina and Fernando Chacon, “Volunteering and well-being: is pleasure-based rather than pressure-based prosocial motivation that which is related to positive effects?” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 43, (2013): 870-878.

<sup>15</sup> Colin Rochester, “Making sense of volunteering: A Literature review,” England: The Commission for the Future of Volunteering, (2006): 3, <http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resources/20073/20073.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Maria L. Vecina and Fernando Chacon, “Volunteering and well-being: is pleasure-based rather than pressure-based prosocial motivation that which is related to positive effects?” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 43, (2013): 870-878.

<sup>17</sup> Hiromi Ishizawa, “Civic Participation through Volunteerism among Youth across Immigrant Generations,” *Sociological Perspectives* 58, (2015): 264–285.

<sup>18</sup> Colin Rochester, “Making sense of volunteering: A Literature review,” England: The Commission for the Future of Volunteering, (2006): 12, <http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resources/20073/20073.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> E.G. Clary, M. Snyder, R.D. Ridge, J. Copeland, A.A. Stukas, J. Haugen, and P. Meine, “Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, (1998): 1516-1530.; E.G. Clary and M. Snyder, “The motivations to volunteer: Theoretical and practical considerations,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 8, (2002): 156-159.



major reasons for volunteering: *values* (people volunteer to act on a belief that it is important to help people less fortunate than themselves), *understanding* (people volunteer to contribute to personal learning and skill development), *social* (people choose behaviour valued by their peer group, and to develop social ties), *enhancement* (volunteering helps people feel better about themselves), *protection* (people pursue this to overcome negative feelings about themselves) and *career* (people want to accumulate experience to improve employability in the future).<sup>20</sup> Esmond and Dunlop have expanded some of these insights into a Volunteer Motivation Inventory, adding the following elements as contributing to individuals' desire to volunteer: *recognition* (the need to be recognised for their contributions), *reciprocity* (the desire to participate in an equal exchange within society), and *reactivity* (reacting to past issues in their lives).<sup>21</sup> The Volunteer Motivation Inventory also accounts for the Functions Inventory's stress on volunteerism helping individuals realise their personal values, needs for career development and social connections. These inventories demonstrate that volunteering is often a mix of self-interest and altruism, balancing external needs with internal ones.<sup>22</sup>

## **2.4 Why do some people keep volunteering, while others do not?**

The reasons listed above suggest why people *start* to volunteer, but they do not capture why some individuals *keep* volunteering, while others do not. After all, people do not volunteer for the same amount of time. Broadly, volunteers can be grouped into short-term or long-term volunteers.<sup>23</sup> In the short-term category, individuals might be one-time entrants, who volunteer for a short amount of time for a particular organisation only once, or episodic volunteers, who volunteer for the same organisation multiple times – but for a short amount of time each time.<sup>24</sup>

What are the reasons that some individuals remain short-term volunteers, while others become long-term volunteers? Omoto and Snyder demonstrate that once people begin to volunteer regularly, a large percentage of them continue this activity for several years.<sup>25</sup> As an organisation that relies on volunteers to run peace-building programmes, GFP is particularly interested in how individuals can be engaged as long-term volunteers. Reasons that keep people engaged are manifold, but can be classified into two types: a set of functional reasons for continuing to volunteer, which – as described above – encompass the importance of motivation and satisfaction, and reasons linked to role identity, where being a volunteer becomes part of a person's "self-

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<sup>20</sup> E.G. Clary, M. Snyder, R.D. Ridge, J. Copeland, A.A. Stukas, J. Haugen, and P. Meine, "Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, (1998): 1516-1530.

<sup>21</sup> Esmond and Dunlop, "Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia," CLAN WA Inc., (2004), <https://volunteer.ca/content/clan-wa-inc-developing-volunteer-motivation-inventory-assess-underlying-motivational-drives>

<sup>22</sup> R. Stebbins and M. Graham, "Volunteering as leisure/leisure as volunteering: An International Assessment," Wallington: CABI Publishing, (2004).

<sup>23</sup> Colin Rochester, "Making sense of volunteering: A Literature review," England: The Commission for the Future of Volunteering, (2006): 7, <http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resources/20073/20073.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Judy Esmond and Patrick Dunlop, "Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia," CLAN WA Inc., (2004), <https://volunteer.ca/content/clan-wa-inc-developing-volunteer-motivation-inventory-assess-underlying-motivational-drives>

<sup>25</sup> Allen M. Omoto and Mark Snyder, "Sustained Helping Without Obligation: Motivation, Longevity of Service, and Perceived Attitude Change Among AIDS Volunteers," *Journal Personality and Social Psychology* 68, (1995): 671-686.

concept.”<sup>26</sup> Exploring these reasons, Terry, Pracht and Wiggins suggest that individuals’ commitment to volunteering depends on the following: “the extent to which [an organisation/agent] managed and provided leadership to the volunteer, the extent to which the volunteer activity provided benefits to the volunteer, [and] the extent to which the volunteer activity satisfied the volunteer.”<sup>27</sup> **Satisfaction, in fact, appears to be the primary force explaining sustained volunteerism**; research by Terry, Pracht, Fogarty, Pehlke and Barnett demonstrates that up to “61% of volunteer intention is driven by volunteer satisfaction.”<sup>28</sup> Satisfaction, in turn, is a combination of two factors: the perceived benefits accrued from volunteering (32%) and the environment created by the organisation within which volunteering is taking place (53%).<sup>29</sup> The importance of volunteer satisfaction is highlighted by the fact that satisfaction levels in active volunteers are high when compared to volunteers who are now inactive.<sup>30</sup> As demonstrated in the findings section, the current study also finds that satisfaction is an important predictor of levels of volunteer activity.

For an organisation that wants to ensure long-term volunteer activity, the primacy of volunteer satisfaction raises the following question: how can volunteer satisfaction be maintained? From the literature outlined above, part of the answer lies with volunteers themselves. That is, the extent to which individuals feel they are gathering benefits from the volunteering experience – whether those benefits are intrinsic in the sense that they correspond to volunteers’ personal values, enhancement, and sense of self, or extrinsic in that they contribute to opportunities for career development. The other part of the answer lies with the organisation that is managing the volunteer experience. How an organisation manages and incentivises volunteers can affect the benefits volunteers accrue. From an organisational perspective then, sustained volunteerism depends on, first, an individuals’ perception of the way he or she is treated by an organisation, and second, the organisation’s reputation and personnel practices.<sup>31</sup> This means that developing an emotional link with an organisation is important;<sup>32</sup> in addition, consistent provision of training opportunities and strong interpersonal relationships with existing staff increase volunteer commitment and satisfaction, decreasing turnover.<sup>33</sup> This is both a heartening and sobering insight for volunteer-based organisations: **sustained volunteer activity is not independent of organisational variables**. Changing the way organisations operate can increase sustained volunteerism. Again, the current study underscores the importance of this assertion.

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<sup>26</sup> Fernando Jimenez and Abad Fuertes, “Differences and Similarities among Volunteers Who Drop Out During the first Year and Volunteers Who continue after eight years,” *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 13, (2010): 344.

<sup>27</sup> Bryan Terry, Dale Pracht, and Lori Wiggins, “The Volunteer Life Cycle – A Key to 4-H Volunteer Involvement,” University of Florida, (2014): 4, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/4H/4H30000.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Bryan Terry, Dale Pracht, Kate Fogarty, Tim Pehlke and Lauren J. Barnett, “The Similarities Between Volunteer Behavior and Consumer Behavior: A Study of Volunteer Retention,” *Extension Journal* 51, (2013), <http://www.joe.org/joe/2013december/rb2.php>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Irma Browne Jamison, “Turnover and Retention Among Volunteers in Human Service Agencies,” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 23, (June 2003): 123-125.

<sup>31</sup> Louis A. Penner, “Dispositional and organizational influences on sustained Volunteerism: An Interactionism Perspective,” *Journal of Social Issues* 58, (2002): 458.

<sup>32</sup> Fernando Jimenez and Abad Fuertes, “Differences and Similarities among Volunteers Who Drop Out During the first Year and Volunteers Who continue after eight years,” *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 13, (2010): 343-352.

<sup>33</sup> Irma Browne Jamison, “Turnover and Retention Among Volunteers in Human Service Agencies,” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 23, (June 2003): 125.

The flip side of seeking to explain why volunteers continue to volunteer is asking why they stop volunteering – or, instead, what makes volunteering challenging and unsatisfying. The literature outlined above suggests that once volunteers no longer accrue specific benefits (whether as a result of organisational mismanagement, or changes in personal needs), they are likely to stop volunteering. The current research project is particularly interested in this question, to understand whether – in diverse contexts across Asia, Africa, and Europe – there are specific reasons that individuals find volunteering challenging and consider themselves unlikely to continue. It is important to recognise that these reasons may not be linked to benefits alone, as the process of volunteering itself may generate challenges and consequences for individuals; for example, the degree of emotional fatigue was significantly higher in volunteers who continued for longer, “indicating that sustained [long-term] volunteerism involves diverse costs which accumulates to a lesser degree among [a group that drops out within a year].”<sup>34</sup>

## **2.5 What does this mean for this research?**

The overview of volunteering literature presented above offers some important takeaway points for this research: first, it offers a workable definition of what volunteering is, taking into account the various perks that volunteers might receive; second, it demonstrates the kind of contributions volunteering is expected to make to communities; third, it presents reasons – demographic, functional and otherwise – for why individuals choose to volunteer, which are important in allowing this research project to construct measures to assess volunteer motivation; fourth, the literature reviewed puts forward reasons that individuals continue to volunteer, homing in on volunteer satisfaction as the critical predictor of a volunteer’s duration of service. The literature also demonstrates that organisational behaviour is an important determinant of volunteer satisfaction.

The insights listed above have been used to inform both the broader framework of this study, helping fine-tune the main questions this study sets out to answer, as well as influencing the ways in which answers are sought. The research methods employed are outlined in the section that follows.

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<sup>34</sup> Fernando Jimenez and Abad Fuertes, “Differences and Similarities among Volunteers Who Drop Out During the first Year and Volunteers Who continue after eight years,” *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 13, (2010): 344.

### **3. Research Methods**

The literature presented in the previous section offers insights from the volunteering field, drawing on country or organisation-specific studies, often carried out in the developed world. Before explaining how this literature has been used to inform research questions for the current study, some contextualisation is necessary. To provide this, this section first outlines the structure of GFP's volunteer-based programming model, before explaining the rationale of the research and the questions it set out to answer. From this, the section moves on to detail the research methods used, including quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. Some of the limitations of this study are also discussed.

#### **3.1 The Cascading Model: GFP's Volunteer Structure**

As outlined in the introductory section, GFP is a volunteer-based organisation – but what exactly does that mean? In practice, this means that programme implementation for the organisation depends entirely on GFP's volunteers. Local volunteers from diverse communities are recruited through a rigorous selection process, and are first trained as “Delegates” at International Camps or local trainings. These trainings equip volunteers with the skills necessary to run their own peace-building programmes, ideally tailored to the needs of their communities. During programme implementation, “Delegates are given technical support, curriculum and promotional materials, but only very limited financial support. The emphasis is on Delegates developing relationships and securing support from local partners and stakeholders, using the skills they have learned.”<sup>35</sup>

After completing fixed requirements (which include contributing to local programming), these Delegates are eventually certified as “Pioneers.” As part of the process of Pioneer certification, Delegates are also required to train others, cascading their knowledge and skills in peace building and conflict transformation to other individuals within the community. This process is known as GFP's “Cascading Model,” through which individual volunteers pass on their skills to others, contributing to an ever-expanding volunteer resource pool for programme implementation.

In addition, these Pioneers and Delegates are divided into different “generations.” For GFP, a volunteer trained directly by GFP HQ is from the First Generation of volunteers from a particular country; any volunteers trained by a First Generation Pioneer or Delegate are known as Second Generation Pioneers or Delegates; anyone trained by the Second Generation is from the Third Generation, and so on. This is a critical part of GFP's Cascading Model, as each generation cascades its knowledge and skills to the next generation of GFP volunteers.

The Cascading Model has been in place since GFP's inception in 2007. Through this process, GFP has trained a total of 9299 volunteers in 50 countries across Asia, Africa and Europe. Not all these

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<sup>35</sup> Generations for Peace. “Approach.” <http://www.generationsforpeace.org/en/how-we-work/approach/>

volunteers are active at the same time; some may be implementing regular programmes in their communities, others may be contributing to GFP activities more sporadically, while the remainder may be occupied with other commitments and be effectively inactive.

Keeping volunteers active is, of course, a constant challenge. To nurture activity among Delegates, GFP provides training opportunities, both locally and internationally, as well as providing consistent mentoring through remote support and periodic site visits. Delegates also have the opportunity to become Pioneers. Once volunteers have become Pioneers, GFP offers a Pioneer Incentive Programme. This includes workshops to refresh knowledge, more advanced-level trainings at GFP HQ, and opportunities to become a specialised Pioneer Facilitator, developing volunteers' skills in facilitating trainings on their own. Pioneers are also offered recognition through an annual awards programme. Where possible, Pioneers are given access to scholarships, research grants, and professional courses; they also have opportunities for employment and internships at GFP Satellite Offices in their home countries – and sometimes at GFP HQ in Amman, Jordan.<sup>36</sup>

### **3.2 Research Questions and Rationale**

GFP's Cascading Model has been operational since 2007, with almost 10,000 individuals trained in 50 countries. As apparent from the section above, the organisation expends a great deal of time and effort in training and supporting Pioneers and Delegates, expecting them to cascade their knowledge and skills effectively; this cascading process is assumed to help these volunteers run locally-oriented peace-building programmes, at a very low cost – both in terms of finances and human resources. Nine years into this process, it is time to test this assumption. *Is the organisation's Cascading Model working as expected? What are some of the best practices that can be identified in GFP's dealings with volunteers? What can be changed to ensure increased volunteer activity, so that GFP's Cascading Model is as effective as possible?*

This research aims to understand whether GFP's Cascading Model is working as expected. To do so, this study aims to answer four important questions:

1. **Who are GFP's volunteers?**
2. **What kind of experiences have they had while volunteering with GFP?**
3. **How active are GFP's volunteers?**
4. **Why are they active?**

The first question helps identify whether GFP volunteers have a particular demographic profile. Rochester's overview of volunteering literature suggests that demographics are not a *complete* determinant of people's motivation to volunteer;<sup>37</sup> however, this does not mean that they have zero

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Colin Rochester, "Making sense of volunteering: A Literature review," England: The Commission for the Future of Volunteering, (2006): 12, <http://africanphilanthropy.issuelab.org/resources/20073/20073.pdf>

explanatory value. Identifying the demographic features of the “average” GFP volunteer can be incredibly useful in understanding whether people from particular backgrounds in terms of age, gender, education and so on tend to volunteer more, allowing GFP to focus its recruitment and retention efforts on that category of individual.

The second question zooms in on the experiences individuals have had while volunteering with GFP. This question aims to capture two types of experiences: their experiences with GFP as an organisation, and their experiences in the communities in which they work. In that sense, this question is informed by previous work done on volunteer motivation – this question sheds light on whether people’s volunteering experiences have met their needs, both intrinsic and extrinsic. It also explores the role of GFP in creating and contributing to the volunteer experience.

Charting volunteers’ levels of activity is a crucial part of investigating the effectiveness of a volunteer-based programming model. The third research question aims to assess exactly how often individuals volunteer for GFP, and how long they volunteer for. This helps distinguish short-term, sporadic volunteering from long-term, sustained volunteering, separating more “active” volunteers from inactive ones.

Assessing levels of activity is directly linked to the fourth research question: why are volunteers active? The research aims to explore what factors influence volunteers’ levels of activity with GFP, exploring what is likely to make volunteers continue to offer up their time and efforts to the organisation. This study accounts for two separate types of reasons for activity: first, volunteers’ self-proclaimed reasons for remaining active, and second, the statistical correlation of demographic/experiential factors and levels of activity.

Collectively, these research questions help GFP understand whether its Cascading Model is working as expected. But the findings are also relevant for other organisations that work heavily with volunteers, as well as for the volunteerism literature more broadly. This study presents data collected from local volunteers working in 35 countries, across a broad range of conflict contexts. It moves beyond many of the geographically limited explorations of volunteer behaviour that exist in previous literature, offering a set of findings and recommendations that should be helpful in explaining processes of local volunteerism in a global context.

### **3.3 Research Methods**

Data against the four questions above was collected through a semi-structured survey, distributed over a period of four months (April-July 2015, both months inclusive). An online survey, utilising SurveyMonkey, was circulated to 1109 volunteers in April 2015. These 1109 volunteers were selected on the basis of functioning contact details. In addition, hard copy surveys were distributed to 19 volunteers that GFP staff members had immediate access to (usually through pre-decided

site visits), when volunteers expressed that they had trouble with internet availability. No incentives were provided to the respondents for completing the survey.

Online semi-structured surveying was selected as the primary form of data collection because it allowed immediate access to a diverse respondent population. The structured element of the survey helped collective comparative responses about who GFP volunteers were, against questions about age, gender, education, and employment status. It also presented respondents with multiple-choice answers to rate and categorise their experiences while volunteering, exploring what benefits they were deriving from volunteering and whether they had found their experience satisfactory. These answers were based on the main predictors of volunteer motivation and duration of service, as identified in the literature review.<sup>38</sup> Structured questions about levels of activity helped chart how active volunteers had been over a fixed period of time. In this part, closed questions were chosen over open-ended questions in order to streamline answers and facilitate comparison across the sample.<sup>39</sup> All of these sections lent themselves to quantitative data analysis. Finally, the semi-structured part of the survey probed volunteers on why they had been active, offering them the opportunity to explain – in their own words – what would motivate them to continue as GFP volunteers, as well as what made it challenging.

In total, **233 volunteers** completed the survey.<sup>40</sup> These volunteers were spread across **35 countries**. As noted in the introduction, this is a small fraction (2.5%) of the full number of volunteers that GFP has trained, but it reflects close to 21% of the number of people asked to complete the survey. This sample of individuals also represents the majority of countries in which GFP operates (70%), and contains respondents from all except three of the 28 countries where GFP has active programming.<sup>41</sup> As such, it presents the first cross-national attempt to map GFP's volunteer base.

The results of the survey were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. All open-ended answers were inductively coded, and the results of these codes are presented in the findings section that follows. The quantitative information on demographic and experiential factors was compiled to demonstrate the standard profile of GFP's volunteers, their collective experiences, and their level of activity. To assess whether demographic and experiential factors influenced volunteers' activity levels, statistical quantitative analysis was carried out. This analysis consisted of a combination of multivariate regression analysis and bivariate regression analysis (using

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<sup>38</sup> Vecina, Maria L., Fernando Chacon, Manuel Sueiro, and Ana Barron, "Volunteer Engagement: Does Engagement Predict the Degree of Satisfaction among New Volunteers and the Commitment of Those who have been Active Longer?," *Applied Psychology* 61:1 (January 2012): 130-148; Bryan Terry, Dale Pracht, and Lori Wiggins, "The Volunteer Life Cycle – A Key to 4-H Volunteer Involvement," University of Florida, (2014): 4, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/4H/4H30000.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> H.R. Bernard, "Research Methodology in Anthropology," Oxford: AltaMira Press, (2006): 269.

<sup>40</sup> Unless noted otherwise, throughout this document all graphs and data presented refer to the survey responses of all 233 respondents.

<sup>41</sup> Active countries are all those countries where GFP volunteers are either: a) currently planning a programme; b) running a programme; or c) have done so at least once since 2012. The three active countries from which no volunteer responded are Kosovo, Sudan, and South Sudan.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient).<sup>42</sup> Together, these qualitative and quantitative approaches helped detail the activity levels of GFP volunteers, as well as the reasons they volunteer with GFP.

### **3.4 Limitations**

This study faces a few limitations, partly arising out of the volunteering literature and partly from the research methods used. These limitations, along with ways to address them, are listed below:

- Self-reporting: The data in this study is generated through self-reporting from GFP's volunteers. This means volunteers themselves have supplied estimates of their level of activity; GFP has no independent means of assessing the veracity of these figures. This limitation has been addressed by keeping the survey anonymous, reducing respondents' incentive to over-report the amount of time they commit to volunteering.
- Missing data: The survey was distributed to 1128 individuals, rather than the full total of GFP's volunteers. This means that the results of this study do not account for the motivations and experiences of a huge number of GFP volunteers. Unfortunately, this cannot be addressed, as respondent selection was limited by the availability of functional contact information for all volunteers.
- Response bias: Out of the 1128 volunteers who received the survey, 233 responded. It is possible that many volunteers did not respond to this survey because they are no longer active, or no longer feel a connection to GFP. This should be kept in mind when reading the results presented in this report. Despite this limitation, priority was placed on making the sample of respondents as representative as possible by ensuring that the survey has respondents from almost all countries with active programming.
- Complexity: Rationalising volunteer behaviour is not easy, and the "ticked boxes" of mass surveys do not always allow for an exploration of the many complex motivations for volunteering.<sup>43</sup> The perceived benefits of volunteering are not the same across varied contexts and cultures, so the same measures may not be applicable to all situations and respondents. This study addresses this by mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches, combining the simplicity of a structured questionnaire with options for open-ended answers regarding motivations and challenges.
- Tricky variables: Penner suggests that neither dispositional/personality-based variables nor organisational variables provide, on their own, a full explanation of why people initially decide to volunteer and then continue to volunteer over an extended period of time.<sup>44</sup> Together, they have greater explanatory value. However, measuring "disposition" or personality traits in a remotely administered survey across different cultural contexts is relatively challenging, and has therefore been avoided. This study focuses instead on

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<sup>42</sup> Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is a conventional tool used to measure relationships between two variables with a range from +1 to -1. For more information, please see e.g.: Laerd Statistics, "Pearson Product-Moment Correlation," <https://statistics.laerd.com/statistical-guides/pearson-correlation-coefficient-statistical-guide.php>

<sup>43</sup> K. Brooke, "Talking about volunteering: A discourse analysis approach to volunteering," *Voluntary Action* 4, (2002): 13-20.

<sup>44</sup> Louis A. Penner, "Dispositional and organizational influences on sustained Volunteerism: An Interactionism Perspective," *Journal of Social Issues* 58, (2002): 447-467.



broader trends in volunteering – both demographic and experiential – that could provide a basis for recommendations and adaptations in the future.

Given the limitations noted above, this study has aimed to make the respondent sample representative, informed as far as possible by the insights of the volunteering literature. These limitations should be kept in mind throughout the following section, which presents the findings of this research.

## 4. Findings

This section lays out the findings of this study. Each set of findings speaks to the four research questions: who are GFP's volunteers? What kind of experiences have they had while volunteering with GFP? How active are they? And, finally, why are they active? The answers to each set of questions are then used to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of GFP's Cascading Model, before offering recommendations on what should be maintained and what should be improved.

### 4.1 Volunteer Profile

To become a GFP volunteer, there are specific criteria: volunteers must be over 21 years old and possess a university degree, along with demonstrating significant leadership potential and the determination to contribute to positive change in their surroundings.<sup>45</sup> Beyond that, however, is there anything specific about GFP volunteers? Do the majority of GFP's volunteers share a particular demographic profile? This section describes the main features of GFP's volunteers across 35 countries, offering insight into *who GFP volunteers really are*. In doing so, this section aims to depict the profile of the majority of GFP volunteers, as represented in this survey.

A volunteer's profile is presented on the basis of the following information: status as Pioneer or Delegate, age, sex, continent, country, current employment status, marital status, parenthood and number of children.

Before moving into demographic elements, one of the first components of a volunteer's profile that this survey sought to establish was whether or not each volunteer was a Pioneer or Delegate with GFP. Of the 233 respondents, 103 were Pioneers and 130 were Delegates. This meant that **44.2% were Pioneers**, while **55.8% were Delegates**. For these Pioneers and Delegates, demographic details are presented in the sections that follow.

Starting off with age, on average, GFP volunteers were **31.4 years old**. This average value had a standard deviation of 8.8, meaning that two-thirds of the individuals responding were either 8.8 years older than 31.4, or 8.8 years younger than 31.4 – that is, two-thirds fell within the range of 22-40 years. In terms of maximum and minimum ages, the oldest volunteer responding was 78 years old, and the youngest was only 15 years old.<sup>46</sup>

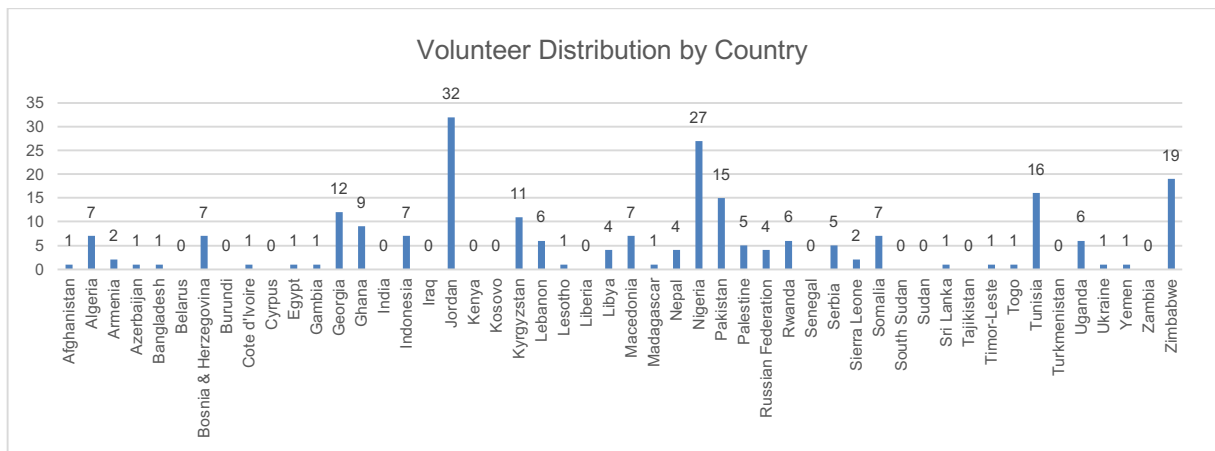
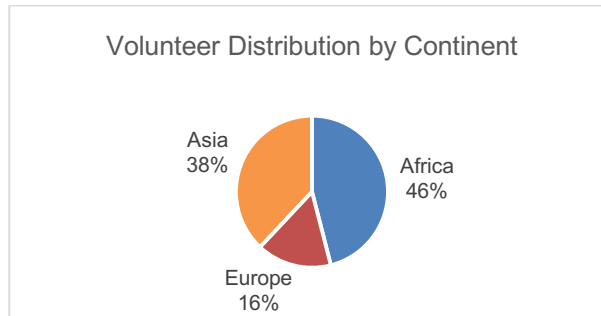
In terms of gender, the distribution of respondents was not entirely equal. A total of **57.1% of respondents identified as male**, and **42.9% of respondents identified as female**.

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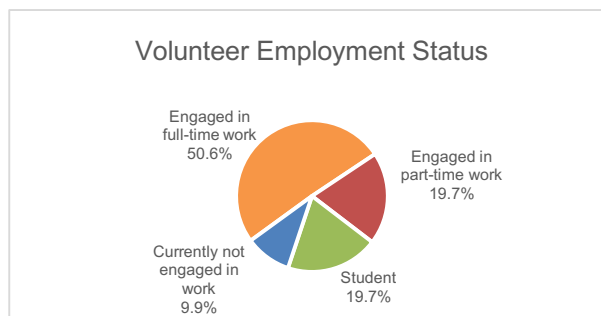
<sup>45</sup> Partly from this site: Generations for Peace. "Approach." <http://www.generationsforpeace.org/en/how-we-work/approach/>; and partly from GFP Induction Materials (Internal Document, June 2013).

<sup>46</sup> As noted above, the minimum age to volunteer with GFP is 21 years. While in some cases GFP Delegates and Pioneers may make exceptions and train someone younger who seems very capable, the fact that 15-year-olds are being trained raises an important flag for the selection of future trainees.

When dealing with location, the survey assessed what continent individuals were from, and what country they were based in. The results for both are presented below.



Another major component of a volunteer's profile was employment status. This is graphed below.



The results of the section on volunteer employment status are particularly important for the following reason: when considering the amount of time volunteering with GFP might require (taking into account the demands of training, programme planning and design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and financial reporting), it would be reasonable to expect that the overwhelming majority of volunteers would be those with limited professional commitments (students, part-time professionals, and those currently not engaged in work). However, in contradiction to this

expectation, **50.6% of GFP volunteers were engaged in full-time work**, while those **volunteers with more limited professional commitments made up the remaining 49.4%**.

The final cluster of demographic details that comprise a volunteer's profile include marital status, parenthood, and – if selected volunteers are parents – number of children. These details are considered important because family commitments may affect the amount of time volunteers have available to commit to unpaid work with GFP.

The results of the marital status and parenthood questions are presented below.<sup>47</sup>



Compared to the results presented above, where full-time employment did not appear to reduce the likelihood of being a GFP volunteer, the profile of respondents when it came to marital status and parenthood showed that **the majority of GFP volunteers were both not married (63%) and not parents (68%)**. While previous literature has suggested that being married, with children, is an insignificant predictor of likelihood to volunteer, the current finding appears to support the idea that family commitments may reduce the likelihood of individuals being GFP volunteers.

The overlap between marital status and parenthood was striking for another reason: the percentage of volunteers who stated they were married (37%) was very similar to the percentage that stated that they were parents (32%). This showed that if a GFP volunteer was married, chances were high that this volunteer would also be a parent. This correlation is important because it is not clear whether it is marriage *or* parenthood that reduces the likelihood of individuals volunteering with GFP – both appear to go hand in hand, serving as a package of factors that may influence the likelihood of volunteering with GFP. It is important to note that this finding applies only to the *likelihood* of being a GFP volunteer, not to *how active* an individual who is a parent would be once he or she decides to volunteer. The impact of parenthood on level of activity will be explored in Section 4.4: Explaining Volunteer Activity.

<sup>47</sup> For the question regarding marital status and the question regarding status as a parent, one respondent in each case did not answer the question. These graphs therefore show the responses of 232 rather than 233 individuals.

As an additional element, the number of children for each volunteer was requested. When calculated as an average across all respondents, the average number of children per volunteer was 0.8. When calculated as an average across those respondents who reported having children, **the average number of children per parent was 2.5**. The minimum number was of course zero, with the maximum number being seven.

**In summary, these findings demonstrate that the majority of respondents are male (57.1%), Delegates (55.8%), employed full-time (50.6%), not married and not parents (63% and 68% respectively).** However, Pioneers are well-represented at 44.2% (perhaps over-represented, given that there is a smaller total number of Pioneers than Delegates within GFP) and women make up a significant proportion of respondents (42.9%). The average age of volunteers is 31.4 years.

#### **4.2 Volunteer Experiences**

The section that follows focuses on the different experiences that volunteers have had while volunteering. This encompasses both their experience with GFP and their experiences in the communities in which they work. As outlined in the literature review, a volunteer's experience – a combination of the environment provided by the organisation, the perceived benefits accrued by the volunteer, and a volunteer's satisfaction – is an important predictor of their intention to remain active.<sup>48</sup>

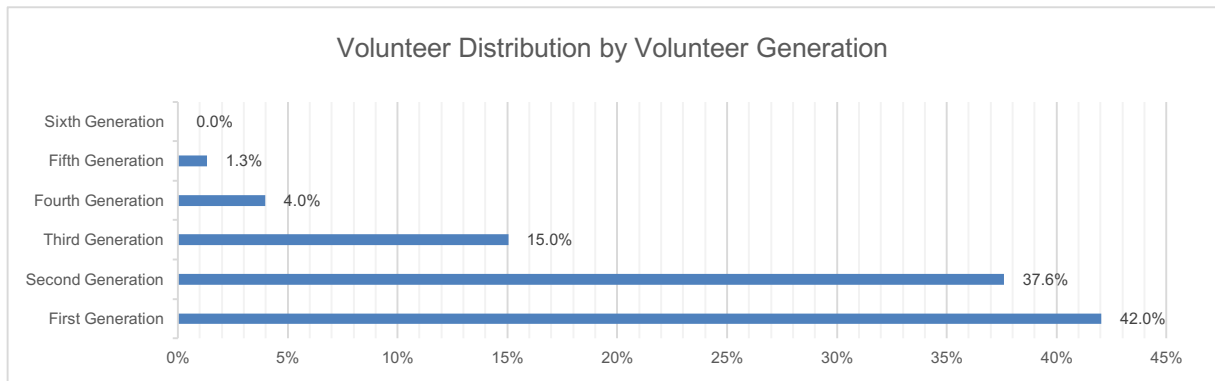
This section is structured as follows: it charts volunteer "generation", year of first training, number of trainings attended, presence of financial compensation, experiences with context-specific factors, and a series of measures regarding volunteer satisfaction and benefits.

As noted in Section 3.1, GFP's Cascading Model is predicated on the idea that each generation of volunteers will pass on their knowledge and skills to others. For volunteer generation, the distribution of respondents is graphed below.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Vecina, Maria L., Fernando Chacon, Manuel Sueiro, and Ana Barron, "Volunteer Engagement: Does Engagement Predict the Degree of Satisfaction among New Volunteers and the Commitment of Those who have been Active Longer?," *Applied Psychology* 61:1 (January 2012): 130-148; Bryan Terry, Dale Pracht, and Lori Wiggins, "The Volunteer Life Cycle – A Key to 4-H Volunteer Involvement," University of Florida, (2014): 4, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/4H/4H30000.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> The graph "Volunteer Distribution by Volunteer Generation" represents the answers of 226 of 233 respondents, as seven respondents did not answer this question.



The graph above demonstrates that **the overwhelming majority of respondents to the survey were First and Second Generation volunteers (79.6%)**. *If the survey is considered representative*, this suggests that through GFP’s Cascading Model, First Generation Pioneers and Delegates are able to cascade knowledge and skills to Second Generation Pioneers and Delegates; after that, the likelihood of cascading appears to drop, as there are far fewer Third, Fourth, and Fifth Generation volunteers represented. Alternatively, this graph may demonstrate that the individuals trained directly at GFP HQ (First Generation volunteers) feel obliged to complete the survey because of an increased sense of connection to HQ staff members. To address these two competing explanations for the distribution presented in the figure above, Section 4.4 presents an assessment of whether the variable volunteer generation has an impact on volunteers’ levels of activity (not just on their response rates to this survey).

A major component of volunteers’ engagement with GFP is volunteer experiences with GFP trainings. Trainings are important because previous work by Jamison suggests that the consistent provision of training opportunities keeps volunteers committed to an organisation.<sup>50</sup> Building on this insight, the survey assesses two elements: the first year of training, and the number of trainings attended by each volunteer.

The information regarding first year of training is presented here as a point of reference. **The average year of first training for all respondents was mid-2011**. Two-thirds of the volunteers responding were trained between (and including) the years 2009 and 2013. The data also demonstrated that – out of all the years in which volunteers were trained – **most respondents were first trained in 2009**.

In terms of number of trainings attended, the breakdown of how many volunteers attended one, two, three, or four or more GFP trainings is presented below.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Irma Browne Jamison, “Turnover and Retention Among Volunteers in Human Service Agencies,” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 23, (June 2003): 125.

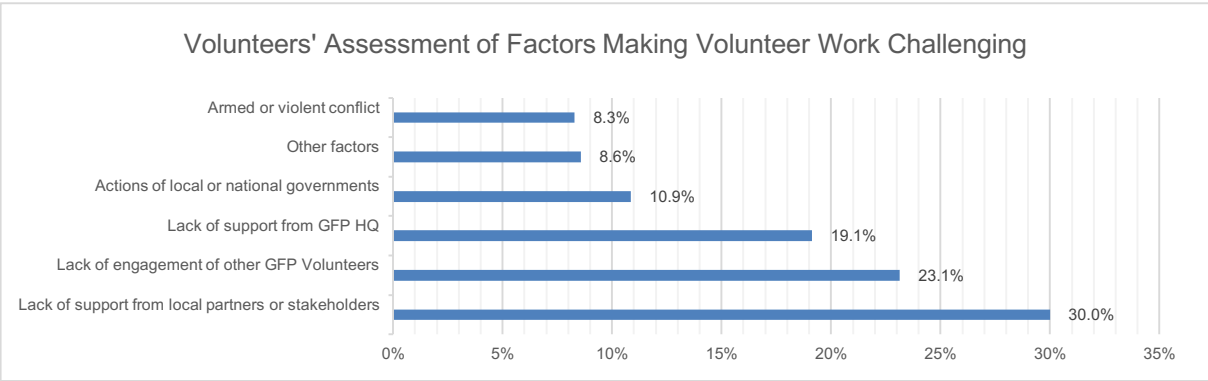
<sup>51</sup> The graph “Number of GFP trainings Attended by Volunteers” depicts the answers of 226 of 233 (again, as for the previous graph, seven respondents did not answer this question).



The graph shows that almost half of the volunteers responding had attended only one GFP training. However, what is particularly striking about this graph is that a significant percentage of volunteers (19%) had attended four or more GFP trainings. This is important because it signals to GFP HQ what percentage of capacity-building opportunities are being offered to the same volunteers, and what percentage of training opportunities are being presented to those who have had limited opportunities in the past. Whether or not these increased training opportunities correlate with higher levels of activity is a question that is explored in the later section on Explaining Volunteer Activity (Section 4.4).

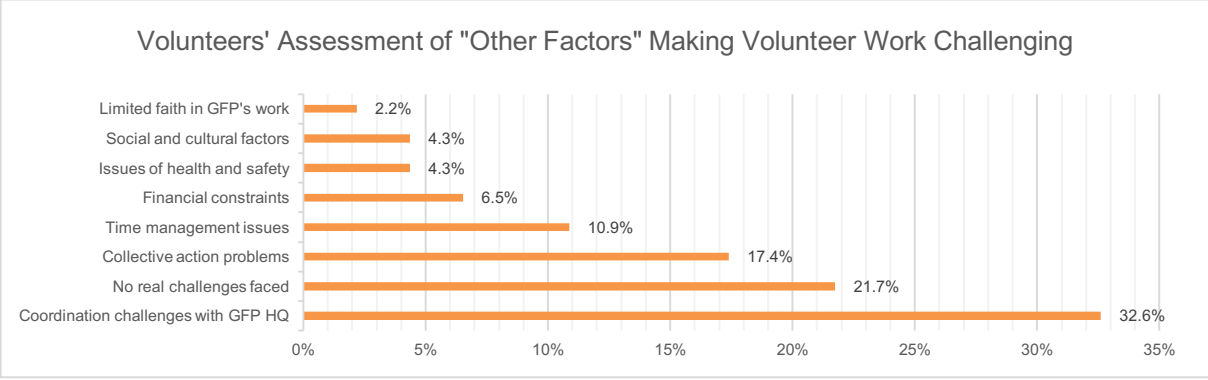
Another important component of a volunteer's experience with GFP is whether they have – at any point – received any kind of financial compensation for the work that they do with GFP. Some volunteers may sporadically have transport, refreshment, or other similar needs met by GFP. Others may receive actual financial compensation for the services they provide in the form of a fixed monthly salary of some kind. This survey only aimed to assess whether any volunteers received fixed financial compensation for their services/work done, not for expenses on transport, etc. The results demonstrated that, in terms of the presence of financial compensation, **16.9% of volunteers had received some kind of financial compensation at some point**, while **83.1% had never received any kind of financial compensation**. This demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of GFP volunteers were volunteers in the truest sense of the word: *all* the work they carried out for GFP was unpaid. Again, the following sections will explore whether or not this financial compensation affected volunteer activity levels.

Volunteers were also asked to comment on their experiences with context-specific factors; the purpose of this was to find out how different factors made locally-based volunteer work challenging. Volunteers were given fixed answer choices, and were asked to choose as many as they found applicable. Their responses are graphed below.



The graph above presents some important insights about what makes volunteer work challenging for GFP volunteers. The key findings are as follows: first, **lack of support from local partners or stakeholders received 30% of all responses**; second, **lack of engagement of other GFP volunteers received 23.1% of all responses**; and finally, **lack of support from GFP HQ received 19.1% of all responses**. These findings represent three significant areas (local partnerships, cohesive local volunteer networks, and HQ support) where GFP can intervene to improve the experiences that people on the ground have when carrying out volunteer work with GFP.

Where individuals selected the option of “other factors,” they were given space to explain what those other factors might be. These responses are presented below.

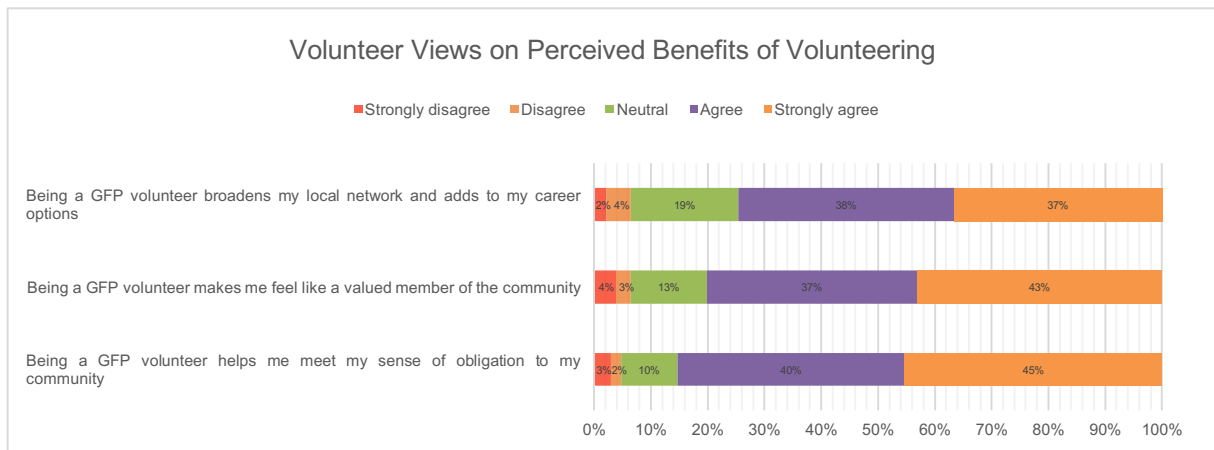


By far the greatest difficulty faced, in this sub-category, was **the challenge of coordination with GFP HQ (33% of responses under “other factors”)**. This reinforces the point on HQ support made above. Collective action problems, receiving 17% of the responses under this sub-category, also reinforced the point on the lack of engagement of other volunteers. Notably, however, **some respondents used this category to comment on the fact that they did not face any meaningful challenges**, implying that the volunteering experience had been relatively smooth (22% of responses under “other factors”).



To delve deeper into the volunteer experience, this survey also set up a series of measures regarding volunteer satisfaction and benefits. These measures corresponded to best practices from the volunteering literature, distilling the insights of the Volunteer Functions Inventory and the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to put forward aspects of satisfaction and perceived benefits that would apply to volunteers from diverse cultural contexts.

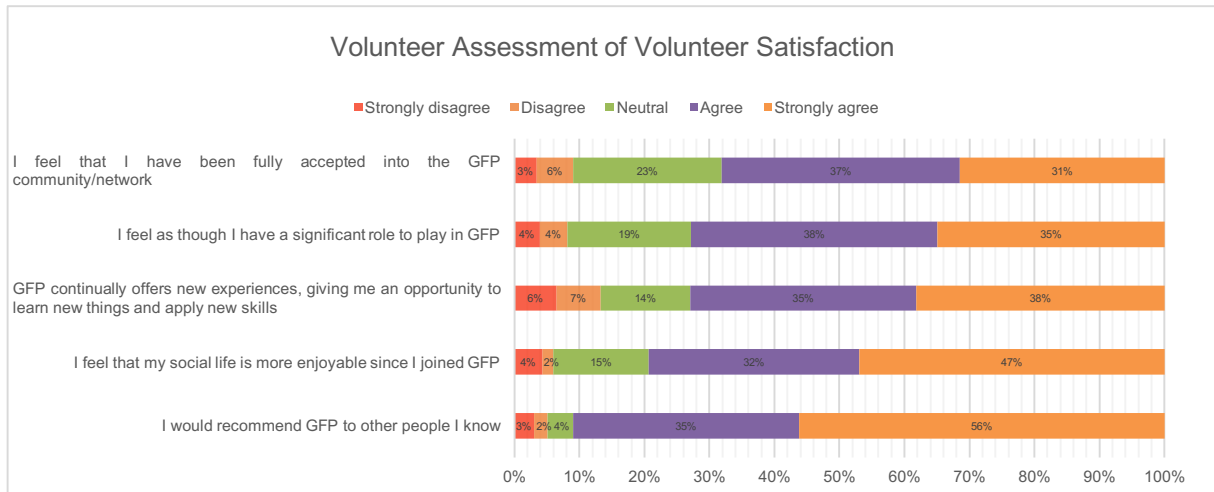
To assess what GFP volunteers perceived as the benefits they drew from volunteering, respondents were presented with a series of statements (listed in the graph below). These statements aimed to assess whether volunteering with GFP made volunteers feel like valued members of their community, served as the fulfilment of a social obligation, or provided improved opportunities for networking. Volunteers were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a scale of 1-5 (where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree).



For the first statement, “Being a GFP volunteer broadens my local network and adds to my career options,” the average response score (on a scale of 1-5) was **4.03**, indicating that on average volunteers agreed with the idea that GFP contributed to their opportunities for professional development. For the second statement, “Being a GFP volunteer makes me feel like a valued member of the community,” the average response score was **4.13**, which suggests once again that on average volunteers agreed that volunteering with GFP helped them feel valued within their community. The third statement was “Being a GFP volunteer helps me meet my sense of obligation to my community,” and the average response score was **4.23**, again indicating agreement – on average – by the volunteers responding. From the above statements, it appears that Pioneers and Delegates agreed, overall, with the idea that being a GFP volunteer brings a variety of benefits.

The next cluster of statements aimed to assess volunteers’ satisfaction with the process of volunteering with GFP. These statements aimed to assess whether a volunteer felt as though he or she had a significant role to play in GFP, felt fully accepted within the organisation, and was

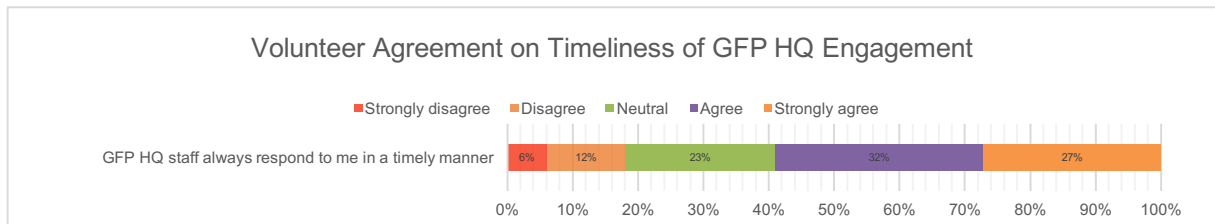
continually offered new experiences through volunteering with GFP. The statements also focused on volunteers' social lives, and rounded up by asking whether they would recommend GFP to others. Volunteers' level of agreement with the given statements has been presented in the graph below, following the scale presented in the graph above.



The average response score, on a scale of 1-5, for the first statement – “I feel that I have been fully accepted into the GFP community/network” – was **3.87**. While still a relatively high figure, this number reflects a lower average level of agreement with the idea that volunteers are fully accepted into the GFP community than for the statements in the previous cluster. For the second statement in the graph above – “I feel as though I have a significant role to play in GFP” – the average response score was **3.96**, indicating relative agreement with the given statement. The third statement – “GFP continually offers new experiences, giving me an opportunity to learn new things and apply new skills” – received an average response score of **3.91**. Next, the fourth statement – “I feel that my social life is more enjoyable since I joined GFP” – had an average response score of **4.16**, demonstrating that GFP volunteering has an overall positive impact on volunteers' social life. Finally, **the fifth statement – “I would recommend GFP to other people I know” – received the highest average response rate so far: 4.39**. These scores show that GFP volunteers, on average, felt satisfied with the experiences offered through GFP; however, there was considerably more variation within this cluster of responses than in volunteers' assessment of the perceived benefits of volunteering with GFP.

The final statement dealt with the timeliness of engagement by GFP HQ.<sup>52</sup> The breakdown of responses about this statement (on a scale of 1-5) is presented in the graph below.

<sup>52</sup> More statements regarding volunteers' engagement with HQ were not presented as there were other points in the survey where volunteers' interactions with HQ were discussed.



In terms of the average response score **for the statement “GFP HQ staff always respond to me in a timely manner,” the result was 3.62**. Given the range of countries and contexts in which GFP volunteers operate, and the workload that this creates for staff members at GFP HQ, this was a positive result – it demonstrated an average level of agreement that GFP HQ staff responded to volunteers in a timely fashion. However, it must also be noted that this was the statement that received the lowest average score out of all the similar statements presented to volunteers.

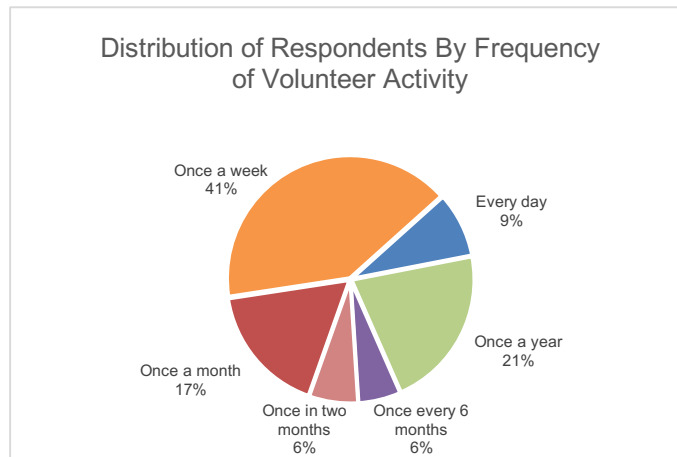
**In summary, these findings show that the majority of respondents tend to be First Generation and Second Generation volunteers (79.6%), unpaid (83.1%), and attend between one and two trainings with GFP (71%).** On average, volunteers appear to **derive significant benefits from volunteering with GFP (with an average score of 4.13 out of 5) and score highly on measures of volunteer satisfaction (an average of 4.06 out of 5).** In terms of **satisfactory engagement with GFP as an organisation, they score more modestly (3.62 out of 5).** Considering context-specific experiences, **volunteers tend to face three major challenges: lack of support from partners and stakeholders, lack of engagement from GFP volunteers, and lack of support from GFP HQ.**

#### **4.3 Volunteer Activity**

The previous sections capture the general profile of GFP’s volunteers, as well as providing an overview of their experiences. Volunteer profile and experience does not, on its own, offer any information about *how much* individuals actually volunteer. This section aims to assess individuals’ activity levels while volunteering for GFP, distinguishing between short-term and long-term volunteers – and, ideally, separating “active” volunteers from inactive ones.

Levels of activity have been measured in two ways: first, by assessing frequency of activity, and second, by determining period of last activity.

The first measure, frequency of activity, is a categorical variable measuring how often a person is active on average. The respondents were provided with a selection of answers on a scale of 1 to 6 (where 1= every day, 2= once a week, 3= once a month, 4= once in two months, 5= once every six months, 6= once a year). Volunteers’ self-reported frequency of activity is charted below.



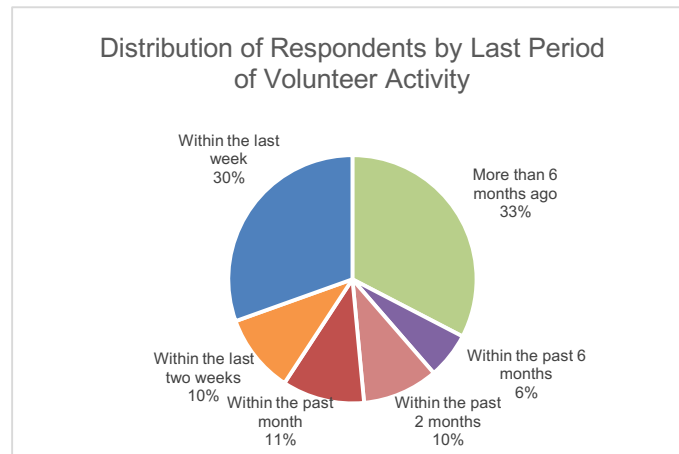
The chart shows that **a total of 50% of the volunteers in the sample state that they are active at least once a week, and 67% that they are active at least once a month.** This indicates that the volunteers in this sample are, on the scale provided, relatively active. However, 21% are active only once a year and 27% are active once in six months – or even less frequently. This breakdown illustrates a diverse spread of the frequency of activity among the volunteers in this sample.

Tracing the frequency of volunteer activity also helps separate “active” volunteers from “inactive” ones. This is useful because it helps GFP decide when an individual should still be considered a volunteer who is actively contributing to running local programming, and when an individual has become inactive (and potentially requires different sorts of incentives to be “re-activated”).

To identify active volunteers, a cut-off limit was selected for this variable. **An active volunteer is a respondent who reports being active at least once every six months, if not more frequently.** This cut-off limit was selected because it accounts for volunteers that have been active during a recent programming cycle in a particular country. For the average GFP programme, a programme cycle typically lasts between nine and fifteen months. If someone does not engage in voluntary work at least once every six months, whatever the reason, chances are that they have not contributed to the most recent bout of programming in their community. As a result, such an individual is not regarded as an active volunteer.

When this cut-off limit is applied to the variable frequency of activity, it demonstrates that **79% of respondents are active, while 21% are not.**

The second measurement of activity, period of last activity, is a categorical variable measuring the time that has passed since a volunteer last contributed efforts to GFP. Respondents were provided with a selection of answers on a scale of 1 to 6 (where 1= within the last week, 2= within the last 2 weeks, 3= within the past month, 4= within the past 2 months, 5= within the past 6 months, 6= more than 6 months ago). The results are graphed below.



The graph shows that, **for 30% of respondents, the last time they volunteered for GFP was within the week prior to answering the survey, and 51% had done some voluntary work within the past month.** However, it also shows – strikingly – that **for 33% of respondents the last time they volunteered for GFP was more than six months ago.** Similar to the frequency of activity variable, this graph demonstrates a diverse spread in terms of the last period of activity among the volunteers in this sample.

The purpose of setting up the last period of activity variable was to provide an alternate means of measuring a volunteer’s level of activity. The difference from the previous variable is that this one measures how active a volunteer has been in relation to when he or she completed the survey, rather than asking for a volunteer’s overall impression of the frequency of his or her level of activity. People may *think* they are active once every week, but when actually asked to comment on when they were last active, the period may be much longer than a week or so.

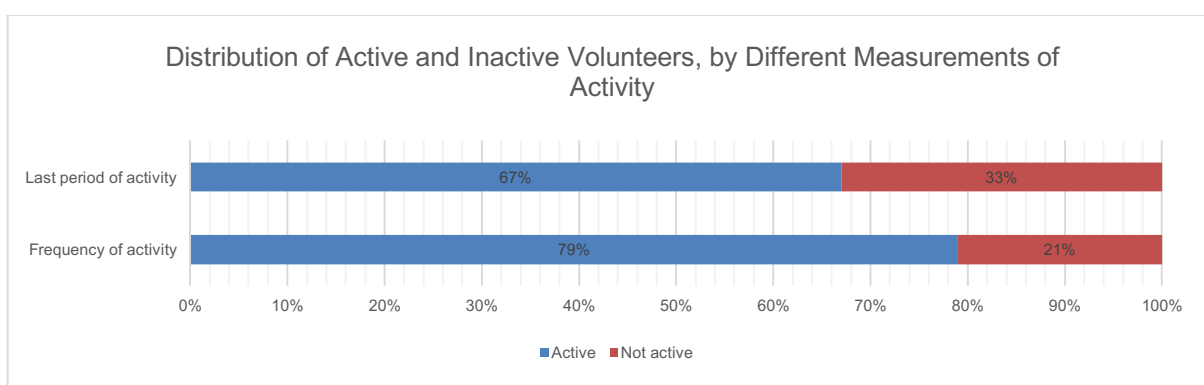
However, respondents’ answers to these two variables were not as dissimilar as the reasoning above suggests. Analysing the relationship between frequency of activity and last period of activity through a bivariate regression between the two variables presented a p-value lower than the conventional limit of 0.05 ( $>2.2e-16$ ). This means that there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The value for Pearson’s correlation between these two variables is strong and positive ( $r= +0.758$ ), indicating that the variables are closely interlinked for this sample and that the respondents’ answers for both variables correspond to each other. In other words, as the value of one of the variables increases by 1 on the given scale of 1-6, the other one increases by 0.758 on average. **The time that has passed since a volunteer was last active and the self-reported frequency of volunteer activity are therefore closely correlated, showing that both variables are valid measures for volunteers’ levels of activity.**

A cut-off limit to separate active volunteers from inactive volunteers was also established for the variable last period of activity. On the six-point scale, **an active volunteer is a respondent who**

reports that their last activity for GFP was *at least* within the past six months, if not sooner. This cut-off limit was established to match the cut-off limit for the previous variable, following the same reasoning; if an individual's last contribution to GFP was more than six months ago, chances are they have not participated in the most recent programme cycle in their community. As such, they cannot be categorised as active.

When this cut-off limit is applied to the variable last period of activity, it shows that **67% of respondents are active, while 33% are not.**

A comparison of active and inactive volunteers, as generated by both these variables, is charted below.



The comparison above shows that when the cut-off limit is applied to last period of activity, rather than frequency of activity, roughly 10% fewer of the respondents managed to fulfil the criteria for being considered active. This suggests that neither of these variables is a sufficient predictor of activity *on its own*. **Collectively, to be categorised as active, a volunteer needs to self-report as active at least once every six months, and this period should always include activity within the past six months from the period of measurement.**

This section has charted the levels of activity of GFP volunteers, showing that **67% self-report as active at least once a month**. To lend credence to this, **51% state that they have done voluntary work for GFP at least once in the month prior to filling out the survey for this report**. On the basis of pre-decided cut-off limits of activity and inactivity, this section has also presented criteria for evaluating when a volunteer is and is not active. From the chart above, a conservative estimate would show that **67% of respondents are active, while 33% are not.**

Measurement of levels of activity are lacking in one respect, however. This report presents data on frequency of activity and last period of activity, but it does not offer conclusions about the amount of time – the number of hours, days, or weeks – that individuals committed to voluntary work with GFP. It does not suggest how *long* the average volunteer works with GFP over the course of a month (or perhaps year) every time he or she volunteers. This study did set out to gather this

information, asking volunteers to estimate – on average – the number of hours they contribute to volunteering with GFP. Answers to this question were wide and varied, usually inconsistent with the number of hours the same respondents declared themselves to be involved in full-time work. Further, the measurement of number of hours did not correlate strongly with the two variables presented above. In contrast, the two variables discussed in this section correlated strongly, suggesting high validity. As a result, other measures for levels of activity were dropped.

### **4.3 Explaining Volunteer Activity**

The sections above have outlined the general profile of GFP volunteers, their experiences, and how active they are. But *why* are they active? This section addresses this research question by identifying linkages between a volunteer's profile, their experiences, and their level of activity. It does so in two ways: first, by presenting the results of multivariate regressions that test the correlation of demographic and experiential factors with levels of activity, and second, by qualitatively analysing volunteers' stated reasons for remaining active.

To test whether elements of a volunteer's profile and experience influenced levels of activity, multivariate regressions were run against both activity variables: frequency of activity and last period of activity. For these two variables, **multivariate correlations as well as Pearson's Correlation Coefficients (r) were tested against all variables for which information was collected for the purpose of this study**. This means that each of these activity variables was correlated with all the components that constitute a volunteer's profile (age, gender, location, etc.) and a volunteer's experience (context-specific factors, benefits, satisfaction etc.); the purpose of this was to check if any of them had a significant relationship with the two variables denoting levels of activity. The results are presented below.

#### Explaining Frequency of Activity

Four factors demonstrate the strongest relationship with frequency of activity: the number of trainings attended, the presence of financial compensation, a series of measurements regarding volunteer benefits and satisfaction, and experiences with context-specific factors. For all four factors, the significance level is below 0.01, indicating with 99% surety that there is a significant relationship between each of them and frequency of activity. In other words, these significance numbers mean that the frequency of an individual's volunteer activity is significantly dependent on the number of trainings attended, whether a volunteer receives financial compensation or not, the type of difficulties they might face in context where they volunteer, and their ratings of perceived benefits and satisfaction.

Exploring the direction of these relationships demonstrates that **as the number of trainings attended increases, a volunteer is likely to be more frequently active. When a volunteer receives some kind of financial compensation (over and above expense reimbursements),**

**the frequency of his or her activity is likely to increase.** For the third variable, there was a significant relationship with four of the nine statements used to assess volunteers' estimation of perceived benefits and satisfaction.<sup>53</sup> **The higher the agreement with those four statements (two on benefits, and two on satisfaction), the more frequently a volunteer engages in volunteer activity.**

The case of the fourth variable, experiences with context-specific factors, is a little unique. As this is a categorical variable, it is difficult to comment on the exact direction of the relationship between these variables. Analysing the frequency of activity with respect to context specific factors shows that, for example, respondents that stated "actions of local or national governments" as a factor that made volunteering challenging are, on average, 0.1 points less frequently active than respondents selecting other factors (on the given scale of 1-6). In contrast, all the other factors selected by the respondents yielded more or less similar activity-related scores. **This suggests that the role of local or national governments is the context-specific obstacle that has the most influence on frequency of activity.** However, the quantitative information collected against this variable is not detailed enough to draw comprehensive or incontrovertible conclusions; further research into the external factors affecting volunteering is required to weigh each factor appropriately.

In addition to these factors, two additional variables demonstrate important correlations with frequency of activity, albeit slightly weaker. These variables account for information regarding the continent in which the volunteering is taking place and whether a volunteer is a Pioneer or Delegate. The significance levels for these variables are less than 0.05, offering 95% certainty that there is a relationship between each of them and frequency of activity.

**The continent on which a volunteer is active affects the frequency of the volunteering.** The multivariate regression shows that there is a significant relationship between the continent on which the volunteer is active and the frequency of activity. Slightly higher frequencies of activity were found among volunteers from Asia compared to Africa and Europe. However, it is difficult to isolate all the potential elements associated with each continent that could potentially explain why continent matters, as a variable; more in-depth exploration would be required to offer a conclusive explanation.

When it comes to a volunteer's status as a Pioneer or Delegate, **Pioneers are likely to be active more frequently than Delegates.** This is hardly unexpected, as it indicates that a person with considerable volunteer experience – which is required in order to receive the Pioneer certification – volunteers more frequently than someone who does not possess that experience.

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<sup>53</sup> Out of the nine statements used for the purpose of this research, four demonstrate significant relationships with frequency of activity as indicated by the Pearson's correlation coefficients (r) that were carried out. These statements were: 'I would recommend GFP to other people I know' (r= -0.25, p= 0.019); 'GFP HQ Staff always respond to me in a timely manner' (r= -0.37, p= 0.00039); 'GFP continually offers new experiences, giving me an opportunity to learn new things and apply new skills' (r= -0.40, p= 0.0068); 'I feel as though I have a significant role to play in GFP' (r= -0.34, p= 0.033). As indicated by the correlation scores, all of these are moderately strong and negative.



## Explaining Last Period of Activity

Running similar multivariate regressions to assess which variables affect a volunteer's last period of activity shows several correlations. In this case, the factors displaying the strongest relationships with last period of activity are (once again) status as a Pioneer or Delegate, the number of trainings attended, the presence of financial compensation, and a series of measurements regarding volunteer benefits and satisfaction. Similar to the correlations with frequency of activity described earlier, the significance level of these variables is below 0.01, meaning that we can be 99% certain that these correlations are significant.

These regressions confirm the following: **if a volunteer is a Pioneer, he or she is likely to have been active more recently; if a volunteer receives financial compensation (outside of standard expense reimbursements), he or she is likely to have been active recently;**<sup>54</sup> and, next, **if the number of trainings attended by a volunteer is high, chances are that he or she will have been active recently;** finally, for four of the nine statements on volunteers' perceived benefits and satisfaction, it appears that **the higher the agreement with the statements listed, the less time has passed since the volunteers' last period of activity.**<sup>55</sup>

In addition to these variables, there are a few other correlations worth mentioning. Volunteer generation also has an effect on last period of activity. The significance level for this variable is less than 0.05, which again means that there is 95% certainty that volunteer generation affects last period of activity. This fits with the insights of the section on volunteer profile, which demonstrated that the majority of respondents were First Generation volunteers. In order to examine the relationship between last period of activity and volunteer generation, a bivariate regression was run between the two variables to establish the direction of the relationship. The correlation between the two variables is slightly weak and positive ( $r = +0.15$ ). This means that the generation of a volunteer is responsible for, on average, +15% of the variation of the last period of activity. In this sample, this indicates that **volunteers trained directly by HQ are more likely to have been active recently, compared to volunteers trained by other volunteers.**

Further, the variable measuring experiences with context-specific factors also shows a significant relationship with last period of activity. While the significance level for this relationship in this case is slightly higher than the conventional limit of 0.05, it is still so close (0.052) that it deserves mentioning. This significance level reaffirms the importance of experiences with context-specific factors when considering activity levels among volunteers. In terms of directionality, the relationship between last period of activity and experiences with context-specific factors mirrors the relationship

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<sup>54</sup> In fact, the calculations demonstrate that the presence of financial compensation is responsible for a 29% increase in frequency of activity and a 21% increase in how recently a volunteer has been active.

<sup>55</sup> The statements in this case were: 'I would recommend GFP to other people I know' ( $r = -0.18$ ,  $p = 0.0008$ ); 'GFP HQ Staff always respond to me in a timely manner' ( $r = -0.394$ ,  $p = 0.000005$ ); 'GFP continually offers new experiences, giving me an opportunity to learn new things and apply new skills' ( $r = -0.38$ ,  $p = 0.0004$ ); 'I feel my social life is more enjoyable since I joined GFP' ( $r = -0.30$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Again, all of these regressions are moderately strong, with the exception of the first one which is quite weak, and all are negative.

between frequency of activity and experiences with context-specific factors. Again, **the role of local or national governments is the most influential in terms of its correlation with levels of activity.**

Lastly, through a multivariate regression, another variable (parenthood) displays a less significant (0.065) but important relationship with last period of activity. This essentially means that despite not ending up below 0.05, whether a volunteer is a parent or not seems to affect how recently they were last active for GFP. To explore this relationship further, a bivariate regression was run between these two variables and demonstrated a slightly negative, significant correlation (-0.11). This means that parenthood is responsible for, on average, -11% of the variation of the last period of activity. This essentially means that according to this sample, volunteers who are parents have, on average, been active more recently than volunteers who are not parents. It is also worth mentioning that the variable accounting for the number of children yielded no significant relationships with any of the activity-related variables in this research.

These calculations demonstrate the following: **a First or Second Generation volunteer is likely to have been active more recently than a volunteer from any other generation.** This has important consequences for the effectiveness of GFP's Cascading Model, which will be discussed in the concluding section. **The role of local or national governments has an important impact on levels of volunteer activity.** Additionally, **if a volunteer is a parent, chances are in fact that he or she will be active more recently than a volunteer without children.** This links to the finding shown in the section delineating volunteers' profiles. The confluence of parenthood and marital status tends to reduce the *likelihood* of an individual being a GFP volunteer; however, once an individual who is a parent has decided to volunteer, that individual is *likely to be more active* than someone who is not a parent. However, while this is an important finding and it demonstrates that parenthood is a factor to consider when analysing volunteer activity, the correlation is relatively weak.<sup>56</sup>

### Summarising Levels of Activity

The table below sums up these findings. The intensity of the colours demonstrates the importance of each set of factors in explaining volunteer activity.

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<sup>56</sup> Conventionally, a correlation is regarded as strong when it is greater than +/- 0.5.; David M. Lane, "Values of the Pearson Correlation," [http://onlinestatbook.com/2/describing\\_bivariate\\_data/pearson.html](http://onlinestatbook.com/2/describing_bivariate_data/pearson.html)

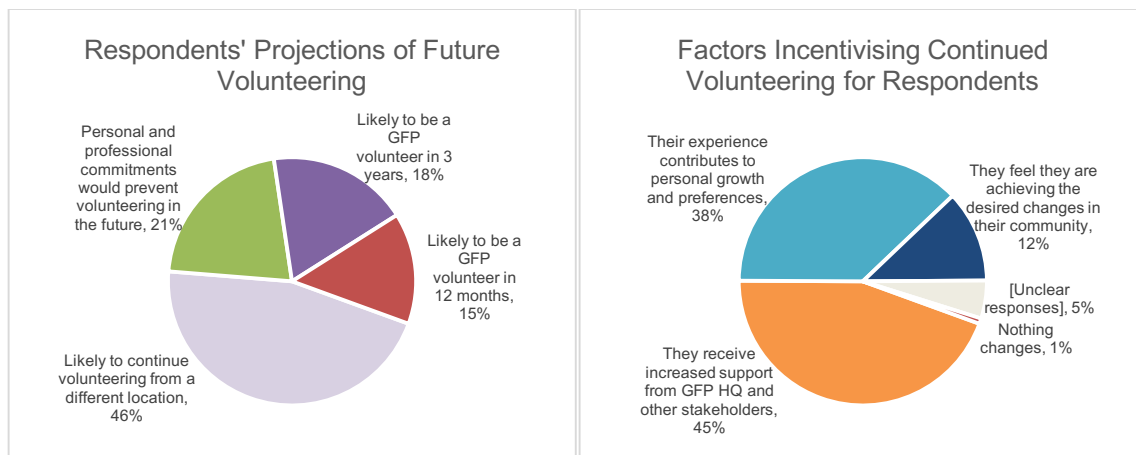
<p><b>SIGNIFICANT, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP:</b>  <b>As the factors listed on the left increase, a volunteer’s level of activity increases.</b></p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of trainings attended</li> <li>2. Presence of financial compensation</li> <li>3. Status as Pioneer</li> <li>4. A volunteer generation trained by (or close to being trained by) GFP HQ</li> <li>5. Status as a parent</li> <li>6. Perceived benefits derived</li> <li>7. Volunteer satisfaction</li> <li>8. Engagement of organisation</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">LEVEL OF ACTIVITY  (Frequency of activity or last period of activity)</p>
<p><b>SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP, BUT DIRECTION UNCLEAR:</b>  <b>The factors listed on the left have a statistically significant relationship with a volunteer’s level of activity, but more exploration is required to understand <i>how</i> these factors affect levels of activity.</b></p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Experiences with context-specific factors</li> <li>10. Continent</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">LEVEL OF ACTIVITY  (Frequency of activity or last period of activity)</p>
<p><b>NO MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP:</b>  <b>The factors listed on the left have no statistically significant relationship with a volunteer’s level of activity.</b></p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Sex</li> <li>12. Country</li> <li>13. Current employment status</li> <li>14. Marital status<sup>57</sup></li> <li>15. Number of children</li> <li>16. Year of first training</li> <li>17. Age</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">LEVEL OF ACTIVITY  (Frequency of activity or last period of activity)</p>

Exploring Likelihood of Remaining Active

The multivariate regressions presented in the previous section demonstrate the correlation of demographic and experiential factors with levels of activity. The results above are based on statistical trends alone. Consequently, the conclusions drawn from this quantitative information are insufficient without considering what volunteers themselves say about the factors that determine their likelihood of staying active. The following section presents coded comments about these factors.

<sup>57</sup> Section 4.1 demonstrates, however, that marital status overlaps strongly with parenthood. And – as the current section demonstrates – parenthood is an important determinant of level of activity.

Respondents' likelihood of remaining active was measured in two ways: first, by asking whether they expected to be a GFP volunteer after a given period of time, and second, by asking – open-endedly – what would make it likely for them to continue volunteering with GFP.



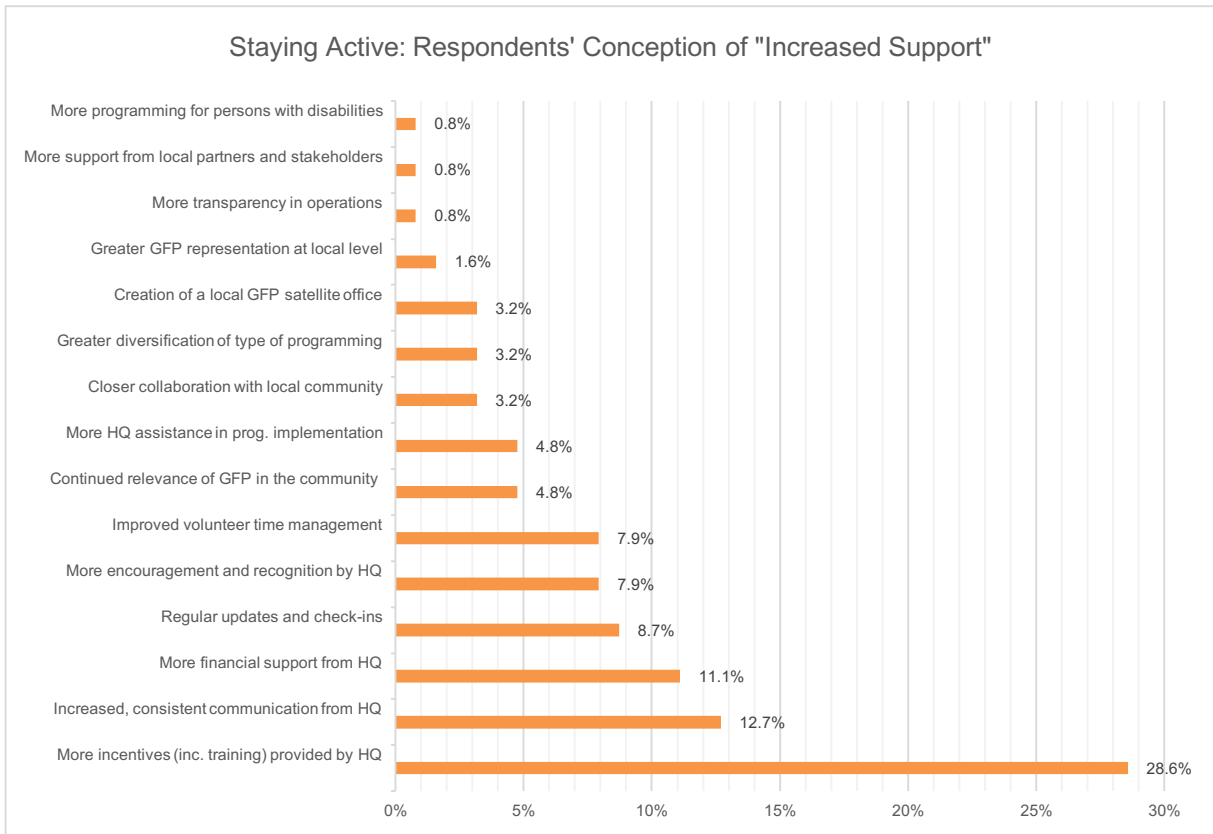
The majority of respondents stated that they had the intention to remain active, whether in the next twelve months (15%), three years (18%), or even from a different location (46%). Intentionality can be seen as a crucial component of potential future activity, showing that GFP volunteers demonstrate – at least verbally – a considerable degree of commitment to the cause. However, **an important 21% clearly stated that personal and professional commitments would prevent them from volunteering in the future.**

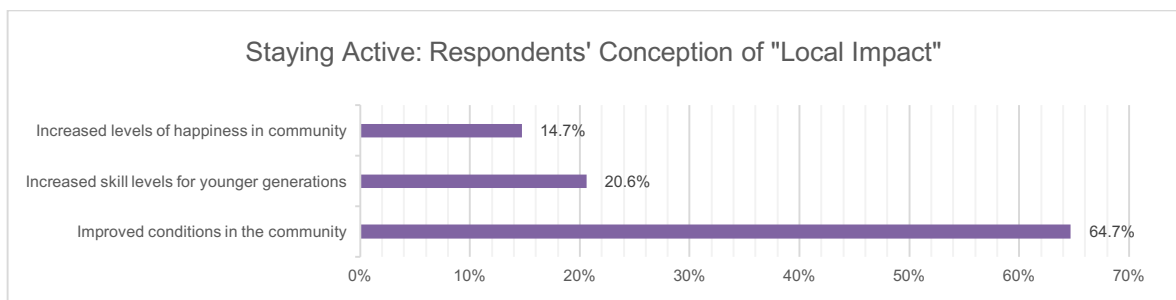
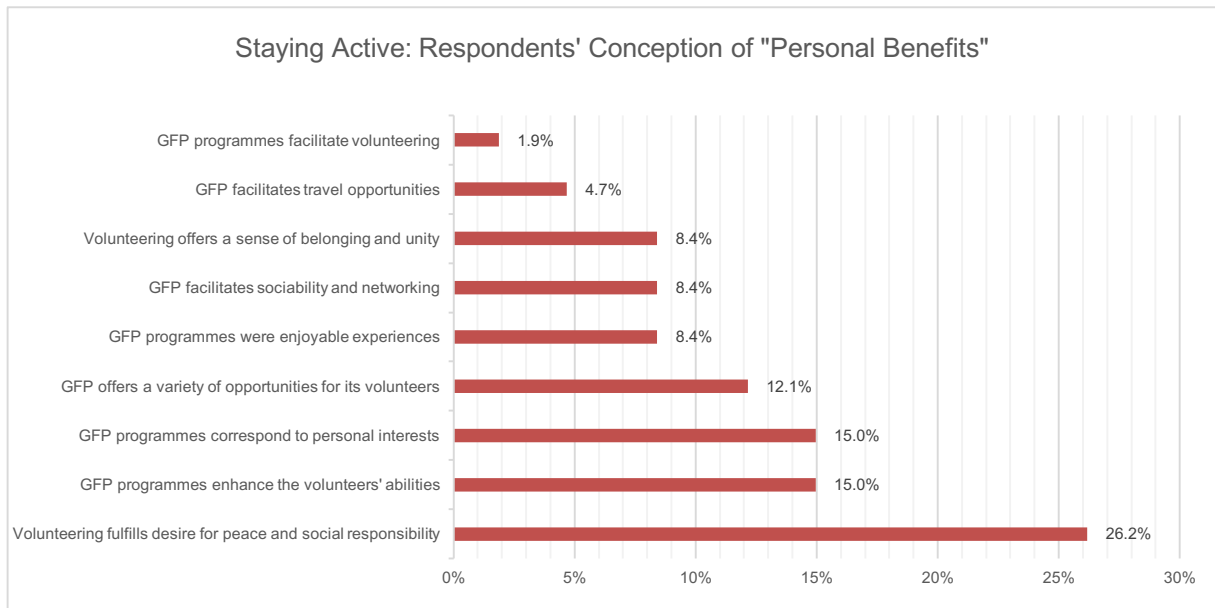
Having explored, statistically, the factors that correlate to increased activity, it is also useful to understand what factors – in volunteers' minds – would incentivise them to continue to be active.<sup>58</sup> The overwhelming response was that **increased support from GFP HQ and other stakeholders (45% of all responses received) would make volunteers likely to continue.** The second most important response related to volunteers' themselves, speaking to the volunteering literature's stress on personal benefits: **volunteers were likely to stay active if their experiences contributed to their personal growth and individual preferences (38%).** Perhaps surprisingly, a relatively small number had results-oriented or impact-based reasons for continuing to volunteer – **only 12% of all responses received suggested that volunteers would stay active if they felt they were achieving the desired changes in their community.**

Volunteers provided detailed explanations as to what they meant by these three main categories (support, personal benefits, and local impact). Of those who asked for increased support from GFP HQ and other stakeholders, **the most common answer (at 28.6% of all responses) was that they require more incentives from GFP HQ to continue to stay active.** Out of the responses

<sup>58</sup> This was an open-ended question, inductively coded and analysed. Out of 233 respondents, 167 chose to answer this question. The graphs in the rest of this section present percentages of the responses of those 167 respondents.

that mentioned personal growth and individual preferences, **the most commonly mentioned reasoning for staying active was the fact that volunteering with GFP helped fulfil an innate passion for peace, as well as meeting a sense of social responsibility (26.2%)**. Out of the 12% of responses that dealt with local impact, **64.7% stated that improved conditions in the community were likely to incentive volunteers to stay active**. The full range of volunteers' responses are presented in the three "Staying Active" charts on the next page.





#### **4.5 Summary of Findings**

This study has explored **who GFP's volunteers are**, **what experiences** they have had, **how active they are**, and **why they are active**. This section summarises some of the main findings against the study's four guiding research questions.

##### *Who are GFP's volunteers?*

Within this sample, most respondents are male (57.1%), though women make up a significant proportion (42.9%). There are more Delegates (55.8%) than Pioneers (44.2%). The bulk of respondents are employed full-time (50.6%), and are not married and are not parents (63% and 68% respectively). The average age of volunteers, based on this sample, is 31.4 years.

##### *What kind of experiences have they had while volunteering with GFP?*

Most respondents tend to be First Generation and Second Generation volunteers (79.6%). An overwhelming majority are unpaid (83.1%), and attend between one and two trainings with GFP (71%). Volunteers appear to derive significant benefits from volunteering with GFP (with an

average score of 4.13 out of 5) and score highly on measures of volunteer satisfaction (an average of 4.06 out of 5). When thinking about satisfactory engagement with GFP as an organisation, they score more modestly (3.62 out of 5). When considering context-specific challenges, volunteers' responses fall into three main categories: lack of support from partners and stakeholders (30%), lack of engagement from GFP volunteers (23.1%), and lack of support from GFP HQ (19.1%).

#### *How active are GFP's volunteers?*

This report measures volunteer activity by assessing frequency of activity and last period of activity. In total, 67% of respondents carry out volunteer work at least once a month. In addition, 51% state that they have done voluntary work for GFP *at least once* in the month prior to filling out the survey for this report. When pre-decided cut-off limits of activity and inactivity are applied, it appears that a *minimum* of 67% of respondents are active, while 33% are not.

#### *Why are they active?*

When volunteers report the following elements, they also report a higher level of activity: high number of trainings attended, presence of financial compensation, high ratings of perceived benefits and levels of satisfaction, status as a Pioneer rather than a Delegate, status as a parent, membership of a volunteer generation trained by (or close to being trained by) GFP HQ, and high engagement of GFP as an organisation. While some of these factors have more of an impact in explaining activity than others, all of them are important explanatory variables in determining levels of volunteer activity. Looking to the future, three major factors influence volunteers' likelihood of *remaining active*: increased support from GFP HQ and other stakeholders (45% of all responses received); whether volunteers' experiences contributed to their personal growth and individual preferences (38%); and, finally if they felt they were achieving the desired changes in their community (12%). **The more these factors are in place, the more active a volunteer will be.**

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Overall Conclusions

GFP's Cascading Model consists of equipping volunteers with the skills to carry out peace-building programmes in local communities; these volunteers are, in turn, expected to *cascade* their skills to others, increasing local peace-building capacity and contributing to programme implementation. This study set out to assess how well this model of volunteer-based programme implementation was working. Who were GFP's local volunteers, and what kind of experiences were they having? How active were they, and why? To complete this assessment, 1128 volunteers were contacted in April 2015, and over a period of four months (April-July 2015), 233 volunteers from 35 countries completed a semi-structured survey.

Data collected through this survey demonstrated that the majority of GFP's volunteers were both active and satisfied. Activity was measured in terms of how *frequently* individuals were active and how *recently* they participated in volunteer work. Satisfaction was measured through a series of statements regarding volunteer satisfaction and perceived benefits gained. Both these elements demonstrate that the Cascading Model was working considerably well in ensuring that volunteers remain involved with GFP.

To explore what factors explained activity, some quantitative work was done. The study showed that volunteers' levels of activity were statistically correlated to the number of trainings an individual attended, the presence of financial compensation, an individual's status within the GFP volunteering structure, parenthood, and individual ratings of HQ engagement, satisfaction, and benefits derived from the volunteering experience. In addition to the importance of these factors, volunteers were likely to stay active if they received support from GFP HQ, continued to derive personal benefits, and witnessed the desired impact in their local community. This study demonstrates, therefore, that while some of these factors are clearly external to GFP, **many of the factors that explain volunteers' levels of activity are within GFP's control**. Recommendations for how GFP can increase volunteer activity will be discussed in the following sections.

### 5.2 A Few Extras

While the conclusions presented above apply to the study as a whole, there are a few other themes that emerged from this research. These are considered below:

- Parenthood matters: The study appears to present two seemingly contradictory findings – first, the majority of respondents are not parents (68%), and second, being a parent actually increases volunteer activity (the correlation of parenthood and last period of activity is close to the significance level of 0.05). From this, it seems that individuals who are parents are less *likely* to volunteer (perhaps because they anticipate having less time



to devote to volunteering). However, once individuals who are parents decide to volunteer, this factor actually correlates with an increased level of activity. However, it must be noted that as the correlation is weak, parenthood appears to be important in this sample, but it is more difficult to say how much of a role it plays in GFP's global network.

- Employment status does not matter: It would be reasonable to expect that most volunteers would have limited professional commitments (students, part-time professionals, and those currently not engaged in work). Instead, the majority of GFP volunteers were engaged in full-time work (50.6%). In addition, an individual's employment status had no correlation with either of the measures of volunteer activity – it affected neither the frequency of activity nor the last period of activity.
- A single measure of activity is not enough: One of the outcomes of this research was a clear cut-off limit to distinguish active volunteers from inactive ones. This is important for GFP to calibrate its volunteer management policies, knowing where to target improvement efforts. However, applying a cut-off limit that expected a volunteer to be active at least once in six months was insufficient – volunteers' self-reported frequency of activity was slightly different from the way they reported their last period of activity (though this difference was not statistically significant). To eliminate any room for error, this study asserts that for an individual to be categorised as an active volunteer, he or she needs to self-report as active *at least* once every six months, and this period should *always include* activity within the six months that precede the time of measurement.
- Volunteer satisfaction matters more than local impact: Just as the literature suggested, volunteer satisfaction (including the perceived benefits volunteers derive from their work, as well as the engagement of the organisation providing leadership) is an important predictor of levels of activity. In fact, when respondents were asked what was likely to incentivise them to remain active, only 12% of the responses received suggested that local impact mattered; changes in the community, therefore, are not as important as a volunteer accruing perceived benefits and receiving support from GFP HQ. Programmatic success will *not* offset any dissatisfaction felt by volunteers when it comes to personal opportunities or management by GFP HQ.
- Cascading has its limits: To the extent that the majority of GFP volunteers in this study appear to be active and satisfied, GFP's Cascading Model appears to be working. Activity suggests that volunteers are participating in programme implementation, and satisfaction suggests that their levels of activity will be sustained. However, two findings are of note here: a) First and Second Generation volunteers make up the bulk of respondents (79.6%) and b) hailing from a volunteer generation trained by (or close to being trained by) GFP HQ increases levels of activity. In fact, whenever the volunteer generation increases by one (for example, from First Generation to Second Generation), the time since a volunteer was last active increases on average by 15%. The further volunteers are from being trained by HQ, the less likely they are to be active. In terms of a desired ripple effect, therefore, GFP's Cascading Model is not working as effectively as might have been hoped.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

This section presents a list of changes that GFP can make to increase its volunteers' activity levels. These recommendations are grouped into four main categories:

1. **Continue to capitalise on the package of incentives currently provided to volunteers by GFP HQ (in the form of trainings, financial compensation, and Pioneer certification).**
  - The number of trainings attended correlates with increased volunteer activity. Trainings fulfil volunteers' desire for personal opportunities, as well as offering them increased capacity and encouragement to implement peace-building programmes. More training opportunities will lead to greater activity in the future.
  - The presence of financial compensation is also correlated with increased activity. While too great of a financial incentive would turn individuals into employees rather than volunteers, it is important for GFP to consider providing specific financial incentives when possible. While this is already in place, the financial incentive structure can be expanded. New incentives can represent small monthly payments during intense periods of programmatic activity (for example, during data collection). This will benefit volunteers who dedicate a lot of work and effort at certain parts of the programme cycle. Task- or time-specific financial incentives will limit the monetary strain on GFP, while also encouraging individuals to commit more time and effort to volunteering.
  - An individual's status as Pioneer or Delegate also influences levels of activity; a volunteer is more likely to be active if he or she is certified as a Pioneer. Pioneers are likely to be both more invested in local programmatic activities due to the time they have committed already, and more motivated to continue volunteering because of their certification (as this opens up a whole range of incentives through the Pioneer Certification Programme). GFP should therefore attempt to keep expanding the number of certified Pioneers, as the certificate appears to serve as both reward and motivation.
  
2. **Improve GFP HQ's engagement with volunteers (in terms of both timeliness and content).**
  - The majority of respondents in this sample are active and seem satisfied with their work with GFP, which is a very heartening finding. However, a cluster of findings demonstrates shortcomings in GFP's engagements with its volunteers. Volunteers have suggested that lack of support from GFP HQ makes volunteer work challenging (19.1% of all responses received); out of the 8% who talked about other challenges, 32.6% zoomed in on coordination challenges with GFP HQ as a major problem. Timeliness of HQ engagement with volunteers – while relatively high – received the lowest score of all satisfaction- and benefits-oriented statements (3.62 out of 5). In

addition, increased HQ support is an important factor in keeping volunteers active in the future (45% of responses received suggested this).

- In Section 4.2, this report put forward a number of critical elements related to volunteer satisfaction and benefits. While GFP cannot ensure that all of these are present, HQ efforts can be made towards ensuring an environment that provides volunteers with the type of fulfilment they are looking for – noting, of course, that activity levels are more dependent on volunteers feeling fulfilled than on volunteer-led programmes showing actual changes in terms of peace-building indicators.
- Collectively, these findings suggest that crucial improvements can be made in both the timeliness of GFP’s responses to volunteers, and in the content of those responses. The “Staying Active” graphs in Section 4.4 present a detailed breakdown of what volunteers mean when they request increased support. These ideas can be used to craft an engagement strategy that is directly responsive to volunteers’ needs.

**3. Tailor mentoring and support to best address context-specific factors identified in this report.**

- This report has identified a few context-specific factors that hinder volunteering (including lack of support from local partners or stakeholders at 30% of all responses received, lack of engagement by GFP volunteers at 23.1%, the actions of local or national governments at 10.9%, and armed or violent conflict at 8.3%).
- GFP HQ cannot change external factors on its own. From Section 4.4, the factor that has the greatest impact on a volunteer’s level of activity – the role of local or national governments – is, for example, completely out of GFP’s control. However, the organisation can put more energy into providing mentoring and technical support to help volunteers deal with some of these factors, even if it cannot change these factors directly. For example, trainings can be tailored towards helping volunteers mobilise other community members to support programme implementation (solving the problem of lack of engagement of other volunteers). In addition, mentoring support provided by GFP HQ staff can be targeted towards helping volunteers create and sustain local partnerships, addressing both funding and capacity problems.

**4. Make adaptations to the Cascading Model itself.**

- This is perhaps the most important recommendation of this report. This study set out to assess whether GFP’s volunteer-based process is effectively cascading knowledge and skills to help volunteers run locally-oriented peace-building programmes. In terms of ensuring that volunteers are – for the most part – satisfied, and appear to be contributing actively to peace-building, GFP’s volunteer-based model appears to be working. But in terms of cascading knowledge and skills to other “generations,” the model appears to be significantly less effective (Section 4.4 shows that each generation is less active, on average, than the generation that preceded it).

- Painful as this might seem, for GFP, this finding has significant implications: instead of focusing on repeatedly passing on knowledge and skills locally, GFP's model should reorient itself to primarily HQ and First Generation-led trainings. The closer volunteers are to being trained at HQ, the more active they are likely to be; trainings that equip volunteers beyond the Second Generation are likely to have less payoff in terms of generating active volunteers. As such, they may no longer be worth the investment for GFP. While this research did not set out to gather this information, it is also likely that some degree of knowledge and direction is lost when information and capacity is cascaded from one generation to another (also known as agency loss).<sup>59</sup> Consolidating trainings at GFP HQ or with First Generation volunteers has the advantage of reducing these sorts of losses.

In conclusion, GFP appears to be successfully running a volunteer-based programme implementation model, with a solid incentive structure in place to ensure volunteer activity. With the recommendations noted above, this model can become even more efficient, effectively cascading peace in local communities.

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<sup>59</sup> John D. Huber and Charles R. Shipan, "The Costs of Control: Legislators, Agencies, and Transaction Costs," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25, (February 2000): 29.

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