Volunteering Infrastructure in Republic of Moldova

Date: December 29, 2010

Author: Antonita Fonari, President, Association “Youth for the right to live” (TDV)
        General Secretary, National Council of NGOs in Moldova

Co-author: Sergiu Ostaf, Executive Director, CReDO
           Member, National Council of NGOs in Moldova

The authors are leaders of two NGO members of The Coalition for promoting the law and volunteering activities (the Volunteering Coalition). The coalition members have been consulted in the preparation of this material.

1. Volunteering infrastructure concept definition

Volunteering infrastructure represents the systems, mechanisms and instruments needed to ensure an environment where volunteering can contribute to the development of the all sectors of society, and building a cohesive and inclusive society based on solidarity and active citizenship, contributing to increased social capital.

Some elements of the volunteering infrastructure that we consider important and relevant are:

- Legal and a regulatory framework on volunteering;
- A national volunteer centre / networks at local, regional and national level;
- Appropriate funding to ensure sustainability;
- Cross-sectoral cooperation between stakeholders including Global Compact Network Moldova and other business;
- Research done regularly and systematically by The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova;
- Governmental policies such as developing a national strategy for volunteering.

The volunteering infrastructure should:

- Be accessible, collaborative, empowering, professional and transparent in all its dealings with people and organisations;
- Supply expertise, quality services, effectiveness and efficiency;
- Support volunteering in all its diversity;
• Be open to anyone no matter of age, abilities, social category or level of time available for volunteering;
• Increase and improve the quality and quantity of volunteering;
• Ensure high-quality, innovative and progressive services that are focused on measurable outcomes;
• Give an impulse to the political, social and economic development in the Republic of Moldova.

2. Volunteering landscape

The volunteering is not yet developed in the Republic of Moldova; it is at the beginning of the path. The Moldavian Law on Volunteering (I) defines, at article 2, volunteerism as “voluntary participation at the offering of services, knowledge and skills or provision of activities in public utility domains, on their own initiative, by the individual called volunteer. Volunteering can take place under the voluntary contract or outside it.” This definition was built after public discussions between the years 2006 and 2007.

Moldovan definition of volunteerism defines the followings principles of volunteering:
• Volunteering addresses human, environmental and social needs;
• Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer;
• Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only;
• Volunteering is always a matter of choice;
• Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community;
• Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work;
• Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.

Moldovan Law on Volunteering presents, at article 3, the following basic principles of volunteering:
   a) Participation as a volunteer on the basis of the freely expressed consent;
   b) Active involvement of volunteer in community life;
c) Effectuation of volunteering excluding any financial or material compensation from the beneficiary of the volunteer or host institution, except to cover the costs of carrying out;

d) Recruiting volunteers on the basis of equal opportunities without any discrimination;

e) Knowledge by the volunteer of rights and obligations;

f) Knowledge of relevant activity involving voluntary contribution;

g) Participation in international volunteering.

There are no official statistics regarding the number of volunteers. According to the research conducted by the Resource Center of Moldovan Non-governmental Organisations for Human Rights (CReDO) the involvement in organized volunteering activities is significantly below the average of countries with consolidated democracies (4-5 times smaller than a decade ago) and it is lower than in Central and Eastern Europe (2 times smaller than a decade ago in the Czech Republic). The number of volunteers was between 16,000 and 23,000 in 2005. The national volunteer participation rate of population was 3.8-6% in that case. (2)

Most volunteers are young people. There are no official statistics regarding the age groups, gender or the field where they are most active. The main fields of activities are:

- **NGO Field**: active participation in administrative and logistic aspects of NGO activity, organisation of trainings, seminars, documents typing, translation, etc.;

- **Social assistance Field**: facilitators in the orphanages, help assistance to old persons, help assistance for persons with disabilities and to persons from disadvantaged families;

- **Ecology Field**: sanitation activities, water cleaning, parks arrangements, trees and flowers plantation. (3)

- **Faith-based volunteering**: there are a number of churches and religious organizations, running projects on volunteering basis.

The survival of NGOs depends on the involvement of volunteers in its activities. In rural areas, employees usually work on a voluntary or project basis. (4) One of the obstacles is the wrong perception of the population on volunteering and the lack of a culture of volunteering. As there is no strong volunteering culture in developing countries, including Moldova, the need for promotion of civic activeness and for
capacity building in volunteering management is obvious. Moldova works on building its own interactive model on developing a volunteering culture in the country, which would be applicable throughout Eastern Europe.

The media and decision-makers, in general, have favourable perception and attitude towards volunteering. National activities carried out by the Volunteering Coalition are well mediatized in the media, especially by UNIMEDIA news portal that it is the permanent media partner. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Media coverage</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>A volunteering activity is publicized for the first time.</td>
<td>Many social actors throughout the country have made volunteering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>10 media institutions were involved.</td>
<td>25 very important public persons were involved in volunteering activities (members of Parliament and parliamentary committees, members of central and public local authorities, leaders of political parties, businessmen, and funders).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>11 media institutions were involved.</td>
<td>26 very important public persons were involved in volunteering activities (journalists, local stars, and celebrities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Since this moment journalists began to promote volunteering at each action held during the entire year on their own initiative.</td>
<td>It was involved especially the Local Public Authorities (LPA) from Chisinau and territory, people and companies from the business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Legal framework on volunteering and its implementation

There is a law on volunteering approved this year. Law no. 121/2010 of 18 June on Volunteering was published in the Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova No.179-181 of September 24, 2010, Art. 608.
The Coalition for promoting the law and volunteering activities (the Volunteering Coalition) was lobbing the draft Law on Volunteering in Moldova for the last four years:

- **June 2006** – Initiative to develop and promote the draft Law on Volunteering;
- **2006 – 2007** The Volunteering Coalition organized 11 public discussions with different groups of the society (students, persons with handicap, young persons, old persons, journalists, politicians, deputies, etc.) for the consulting and the redactions of the draft Law on Volunteering;
- **2007** – Elaboration of "Cost-benefit Analysis of the Draft Law on Volunteering" by CReDO. The Ministry of Education and Youth transmits the Cost-benefit Analysis with the draft Law on Volunteering to all ministries for endorsement. When the draft law was to be presented in the Government meeting, the Vice-Minister resigned, and all documents which have been working with NGOs were lost;
- **December 2008** The Parliament adopted Decision no. 267 of 11.12.2008 on approval of Strategy Development of Civil Society in the years 2008-2011; according to art. 2 (a) the Government would submit to Parliament the draft legislation on volunteering as it was mentioned at the letter C (Strategic Priorities), point III (Development of active civic spirit and volunteering). (5) The draft law was placed on the agenda of the Cabinet of Ministers that adopted the draft law;
- **March 2009** – The process for endorsement of the draft law by the Secret Information Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration ended; after launching the electoral campaign the work on the bill was stalled;
- **November 2009** – The draft Law on Volunteering has been studied by experts of The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL) in Budapest who provided a number of recommendations that were included in the bill;
- **December 7, 2009** – The draft law was registered as a legislative initiative in the Moldovan Parliament, as a result of efforts of the Volunteering Coalition and the Parliamentary commission for culture, education, research, youth, sports and media;
- **March 10, 2010** – The draft Law on Volunteering has been positive endorsement by Government;
May 28, 2010 – Law was adopted on first reading by Parliament;

June 18, 2010 – Law was adopted on second reading by Parliament;

September 24, 2010 – Law no. 121/2010 of 18 June on Volunteering was published in the Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova No.179-181.

The Law on Volunteering aims to acknowledge the importance of this activity in promoting the values of civic solidarity through the participation of Moldovan and foreign citizens. This law tries to promote the active participation of every citizen in the community’s activities, to strengthen the civic responsibility and to capitalize the human capacity in order to fulfill the needs of the society. The law establishes a regulatory framework for voluntary activities in Moldova.

The law is not implemented yet. Until now there is no public body responsible for volunteering in the country; there is the Volunteering Coalition in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports that achieve the activities listed in the art. 15 (2):

a) National Volunteer Week - annual event to promote volunteerism and recruit volunteers;
b) Volunteers Festival - annual event that recognize the merits in the field of volunteering;
c) National Volunteer Conference - an every two years event organized, that identifies key objectives and goals of the volunteers at the policy level.

4. Structure of the non-profit sector involved in volunteering

There is neither a national volunteer centre nor a resource centre for volunteering. In this moment, the Volunteering Coalition is a national umbrella organization for organizations involved in volunteering. This coalition plans to create a national volunteer centre, but at the moment lacks funding opportunities.

The Volunteering Coalition was created in August 2006 by 5 non-governmental organizations and 2 networks of NGOs in partnership with the General Direction of Education, Youth and Sport of Chisinau and the Ministry of Education and Youth. The Secretariat of the Volunteering Coalition is maintained by Association "Youth for the right to live" (TDV). The member organizations and networks are:

1. Association “Youth for the right to live” (TDV);
2. Young and Free: Training Resource Center;
3. Resource Center of Moldovan Non-governmental Organisations for Human Rights (CReDO);
4. Association „Service for Peace” (SFP);
5. The National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM);
6. Social Network (represented by Association “Motivation”).

All the organizations that involve volunteers and the number of volunteers involved in them are not known. The main known volunteering organizations, that activate at regional level in the Republic of Moldova and operate with international volunteers, are: Association „Service for Peace” (SFP); ADVIT Moldova; Peace Corps Moldova, AVI Moldova, and AIESEC Moldova. It is only known the situation in 16 organizations involved in the project "Strengthening of the capacities of local NGOs in the elaboration and development of a volunteering program" funded by The Black Sea Trust a project of the German Marshall of the United States and implemented by Association "Youth for the right to live" (TDV). (6) According to the latest evaluation, from November 2010, those organizations that involve more volunteers are:

1. TDV Balti with 35 volunteers;
2. Association “Children's Friends” with 28 volunteers;
3. Médecins du Monde Moldova (MdM) with 27 volunteers.

There is no close cooperation between volunteering organizations. Also, it is known that many individual initiatives, small, newly established NGOs, and faith-based organizations could increase their capacity to influence the problems-resolution processes, if there would be a framework, where they could grow in their capacity to motivate and manage volunteers.

5. Other stakeholders

There are no public entities / public service providers that involve volunteers. The businesses are not involved in volunteering yet and they are not cooperating with volunteering organizations.

Until 24 March 2011, the Government has to develop and approve normative and methodological framework necessary to implement the Law on Volunteering according to article 9 and 18.
Now, the Ministry of Youth and Sports works at the elaboration and implementation of the mechanisms on the Law on Volunteering. Simultaneously, the Association “Youth for the right to live” (TDV) develops sustainable models of promoting and encouraging volunteering (developing of implementation mechanisms on the Law on Volunteering, developing policies to encourage volunteering supported by employers, public and media events involving civil society organizations, citizens and authorities on promoting the good practices and benefits of volunteering) through the project “Development and implementation of the policies for stimulating the volunteering in Moldova” made possible through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under AED’s Moldova Civil Society Strengthening Program (MCSSP).

Other public administration bodies and political parties are not involved in promoting volunteering yet. The schools are little involved in promoting volunteering and there is not a subject on volunteering in schools. It isn’t cooperation between the voluntary sector and these last stakeholders.

6. Funding opportunities

The sources of the financial support for the Volunteering Coalition are following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The provider of the financial support for the Volunteering Coalition</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soros Moldova Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49,956 $</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID, under AED’s MCSSP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>47,000 $</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Youth and Sports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$ 4,000 in every year to organize annual National Volunteers Festival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 2006 to 2009 budget per year was $ 9,991 and $ 29,657 in 2010. Also in 2010 Association "Youth for the right to live" (TDV) received for a volunteering project $ 21,861 from the Black Sea Trust a project of the German Marshall of the United State. The finances were received on projects based, except money received from the Ministry of Youth and Sports which are allocated from the budget.
The sources of funding are stable and reliable. Money allocated by the funders comes on time, thanks to a well established system for requesting funds. We met little difficulty in working with the Ministry concerning the term of the money allocation from the budget for *National Volunteer Festival*. The rules of the provider of the financial support are suitable and not too restrictive.

On the basis of the project with **USAID, under AED's MCSSP**, the **Volunteering Coalition** has proposed to obtain continue financial support for volunteering activities from the business over the next 2 years. Now there are not strategies fundraising, but we plans developing the concept of **Corporate Social Responsibility** (CSR) and integrating CSR into business.

### 7. Research done regularly and systematically

There is no systematic and reliable research on volunteering and its contributions in Moldova. Data related to volunteering and the impact of volunteering are not measured in any way. The **National Bureau of Statistics** (NBS) of the **Republic of Moldova** does not mention anything about volunteering in the **Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova**. (7) According to the article 10 (3) of the Law on Volunteering, NBS should organize statistical research starting with the year 2011.

The study “**Cost-benefit Analysis of the Draft Law on Volunteering**” elaborated by **CReDO in Moldova** shows that the economic value of volunteering activity is estimated within 0.07% and 0.16% of GDP and that there is no dates and information in order to evaluate the total positive effect of the activity of the volunteering.

### 8. Ethics and quality standards for volunteering

**Until 24 March 2011**, the **Government** has to develop and approve, according to article 18 of the **Law on Volunteering**:

- a) Minimum quality standards for volunteering;
- b) Model of Volunteering Contract;
- c) Procedure for issuing of certificate and model of Nominal Volunteering Certificate and Volunteering Booklet;
d) Model of Evidence Register of Volunteers, of Volunteering Contract, model of Nominal Volunteering Certificate and Volunteering Booklet;
e) Conditions for the implementation of incentives for volunteering.

Now, Association “Youth for the right to live” (TDV) is working in the project “Advocacy for the promotion and implementation of the Law on Volunteering II” funded by Soros Foundation Moldova (SFM) at the "Guide for the Volunteer Coordinator" which will contain a general code of ethics and necessary toolkits for the involvement in volunteering activities. At its elaboration will be used the toolkit used in the work with the volunteers by some organizations in the country, as well as the international experience in the field.

9. Awareness about volunteering opportunities

There is not a database of volunteers and volunteer opportunities yet. Now, some information could be found on different sites of different organizations. The Law on Volunteering, at the article 10 (2) mentioned that central administrative authorities will coordinate databases containing information on offers and requests for volunteers.

The Volunteering Coalition promoted volunteerism through various activities including the National Week of Volunteering (SNV) “Come on in our gang of volunteers!” and annual National Volunteer Festival “Down hat” in front of volunteers”. Annually on 5th December is organised the National Volunteer Festival, in the frame of which are nominated the persons which are actively involved in promoting voluntary activities in Moldova. The event gathers around 1500 persons. The public persons, NGOs members, individuals are awarded with prizes, and receive special certificates which confirm their engagement in voluntary activities.

President of TDV received the Medal of Civic Merit for promoting youth and volunteering policies in 2009. This year, 2010, according with the article 15 (1) of the Law on Volunteering, the President of the Republic of Moldova gave the Medal of Civic Merit to 3 persons (2 persons from NGO and 1 that it is public employee) for special merits obtained in the volunteer work conducted over a period of several years. As we said media is receptive to volunteering. For examples the Volunteers Festival (2010) had 40 media appearances.
10. Any other additional country specificities

Through the mechanisms to motivate volunteers, Republic of Moldova is the state with one of the best laws of volunteering in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and some European Union countries. The volunteers will benefit from a range of incentives for volunteering:

a) stimulating the accumulation of professional abilities:
   - Art. 14 (3) the consideration of the volunteering as work experience at the employment, certification and promotion;
   - Art. 14 (6) 5 transferable educational credits are awarded annually for practical stages in areas related to public utility and specialty study of the volunteer;
   - Art. 14 (7) volunteering will be considered initiation practice or license practice if they have confirmed at least 40 hours.

b) Stimulation of civic activism and recognition of the voluntary contribution:
   - Art. 14 (4) volunteering taken into account at the enrollment in higher educational institutions, to provide scholarships or accommodation in student hostel, in the case of the accumulation of equal score by two or more candidates.

c) Stimulation of host institutions:
   - Art. 16 (1) Local authorities may give exemptions and facilities to host institutions to pay local taxes under the Tax Code;
   - Art. 16 (2) NGOs, that have the public utility status, will benefit of a preferential right to purchase public social services.

11. Recommendations

We recommend, in order to create an enabling volunteering infrastructure in the Republic of Moldova, the following changes:

1. Implementation of the existing strategy concerning volunteering contained in “Strategy Development of Civil Society in the years 2008-2011”.

2. Creation of a department within a ministry (Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection of Moldova or Ministry of Youth and Sports or Ministry of Education of Moldova) in order to have a public body
responsible for volunteering in the country, and directions that coordinate volunteering activities at the Local Public Authorities (LPA) level.

3. Implementation of the law within the timeframe (until 24 March 2011) set by the Law on Volunteering. This will bring:

   a) Implementation tools and mechanisms (minimum quality standards for volunteering, model of Evidence Register of volunteers, of Volunteering Contract, model of Nominal Volunteering Certificate and Volunteering Booklet, a General Code of Ethics and necessary toolkits for the involvement in volunteering activities etc.);

   b) Systematic and reliable research on volunteering, and measurement of the impact of volunteering by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova (official statistics regarding the number of volunteers, the age groups, gender, and the field where they are most active, etc.).

4. Complete development of implementation mechanisms concerning volunteering at the National Volunteer Conference in February 2011 (identification of key objectives and goals of the volunteers at the policy level, finding way to involve the public entities / public service providers, schools, and political parties, involvement of all social categories in all types of volunteering activities, etc.).

5. Creation of a National Volunteer Centre that with central administrative authorities will coordinate databases containing information on offers and requests for volunteers in order to ensure a closer cooperation between volunteering organizations.

6. Obtaining of a continued financial support for volunteering activities from the business through the developing of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and integrating CSR into Global Compact Network Moldova and other business.

We recommend to be adopted at European level the following change. Starting from the premise of an equal partnership and the fact that not only NGOs from the EU can offer expertise, in order to stimulate the cross-border projects, it is important to have a equal financial support of both NGOs from EU and from neighbouring countries too.
Current policy suggests a spirit of superiority that blocks and offends the partnership with NGOs from neighbouring countries of EU.

12. List of resources


6. TDV, 2010, Rezultatele concursului de selecție a ONG pentru elaborarea / dezvoltarea Programului de Voluntariat (The results of NGOs’ selection contest for the elaboration / development of the Volunteering Program). Available at: