# Work meaning and identity of volunteers

A study to explore motivation, work meaning and identities of volunteers in South-India

**Summary**

In this study work meaning of individuals involved in volunteering work is explored. Work meaning refers to employees' understanding of what they do at work as well as the interpreted value, or significance, of what they do. Volunteering work is a type of work that is done out of free will and without remuneration. Work meaning has been investigated in organizations that employ paid employees. This study explores work meaning in a new context: volunteering work in South-India.

Research suggests that the organizational experiences of volunteers are often different from the organizational experiences of paid employees. What meanings volunteers attach to their organizational experiences, will be assessed by focusing on how volunteers make sense of their involvement. Following a process-oriented approach on volunteering, initial motivation to volunteer, work experiences and consequences for identity development are the topics taken into account in this study.

37 interviews were conducted with individuals involved in volunteering work. They participated in a variety of organizations. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by assigning labels. Labels that held comparable meanings were grouped and assigned to codes. Consequently, the codes were ascribed to the three categories which make up the process approach on volunteering.

The findings show that volunteering is meaningful work. Compassionate communication forms the core of the volunteers' job content. The work experiences that volunteers talked about were perceived as highly meaningful. These experiences contribute to ongoing involvement in volunteering. Volunteering involvement has considerable consequences for job meaning, role meaning and self meaning of the individuals in this study. Ultimately, the meaningfulness of volunteering work leads to happiness and satisfaction, which emerged as by-products of engaging in volunteering work.

The main implication of the findings in this study is the importance of relational job architecture to foster meaningfulness of volunteering work and to keep volunteers motivated. Future research should also examine work meaning of volunteers acting in different sociocultural settings and should further examine the role of calling and spirituality in volunteering work.

**Samenvatting**

In dit onderzoek is de work meaning van individuen die vrijwilligerswerk doen onderzocht. Work meaning betreft het begrip van werknemers over wat ze doen op hun werk en het belang dat ze daaraan hechten. Vrijwilligerswerk is werk dat uit vrije wil wordt gedaan en waarvoor mensen geen inkomen ontvangen. Work meaning is voorheen onderzocht in organisaties waar werknemers werken die betaald worden voor hun werkzaamheden. Het huidige onderzoek past work meaning toe in een nieuwe context: vrijwilligerswerk in Zuid-India.

Uit onderzoek blijkt dat de organisatorische ervaringen van vrijwilligers vaak verschillend zijn van de organisatorische ervaringen van betaalde medewerkers. Welke betekenis wordt verleend aan de werkervaringen van vrijwilligers, wordt onderzocht door te kijken naar hoe vrijwilligers zin geven aan hun werk. Vrijwilligerswerk zal in dit onderzoek als proces worden beschouwd. De initiële motivatie om ermee te beginnen, werkervaringen en de gevolgen voor de identiteit van vrijwilligers zijn de onderwerpen die aan bod komen in dit onderzoek.

Er zijn 37 interviews gehouden met mensen die vrijwilligerswerk doen. Ze waren actief voor verschillende organisaties. De interviews zijn woordelijk uitgeschreven en geanalyseerd door labels toe te kennen. De labels die vergelijkbare betekenissen vertegenwoordigen, zijn gegroepeerd en kregen vervolgens codes toegewezen. De codes zijn tenslotte toegewezen aan één van de drie categorieën die samen een procesbenadering op vrijwilligerswerk vormen.

De resultaten tonen aan dat vrijwilligerswerk betekenisvol werk is. 'Compassionate communication' vormt de kern van het werk dat de vrijwilligers doen. De werkervaringen waarover de vrijwilligers spraken werden beschouwd als zeer betekenisvol. Deze ervaringen dragen bij aan de motivatie van vrijwilligers om door te gaan met hun werk. Vrijwilligerswerk heeft aanzienlijke gevolgen voor de job meaning, role meaning en self meaning van de individuen uit dit onderzoek. Vrijwilligerswerk is zo betekenisvol, dat het leidt tot geluk en tevredenheid, welke zich manifesteren als bijproducten van betrokkenheid bij vrijwilligerswerk.

De belangrijkste implicatie van de resultaten uit dit onderzoek is het belang van een relationele job architectuur, om de betekenis van vrijwilligerswerk te bevorderen en om vrijwilligers gemotiveerd te houden. Verder onderzoek zou de work meaning van vrijwilligers die actief zijn in andere culturele settings moeten onderzoeken. Ook zou toekomstig onderzoek de rol van roeping en spiritualiteit in vrijwilligerswerk verder kunnen onderzoeken.

## Acknowledgments

Doing research in a different culture is a truly enriching experience. Living in India for six months has broadened my horizon and it has reinforced my realization that it is very valuable to step out of the comfort zone and discover the unknown. The process of discovering the realities of the Indian culture and talking with people about their volunteering work was something I enjoyed very much. I am thankful for all the volunteers who were willing to share their volunteering experiences with me. Most of them have given their hearts to volunteering and are very passionate about it. Their (life)stories and passion have inspired me.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The meaning of work is an important issue for individuals involved in work, since many people spend a great deal of their lives working. Through working people can earn a living, but that is not the only reason why people work. This has been acknowledged since long ago; Morse & Weiss (1955) found that even though people have enough money to support themselves, they would still want to work. Individuals engaged in volunteering work prove that their reason for working is not a financial one. Research evidence shows that a strong relation exists between volunteering work and positive well-being (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). This relation suggests that work can also be seen as a source from which meaning and satisfaction can be derived. To find out more about the meaning of work for people involved in unpaid work, this study focuses on the work meaning of volunteers.

The aim of this study is to explore work meaning in the context of individuals performing volunteering work in South-India. The meaning of volunteering work has not explicitly been addressed from a work meaning point of view previously. The focus of earlier research on the meaning of volunteering has been on volunteering as phenomenon (Yeung, 2004), reflections and reasoning about volunteering, care and employment in the lives of unemployed and employed people who volunteer (Baines & Hardill, 2008; Crisp, 2006) and the meaning of volunteering in the lives of elderly people (Narushima, 2005; Fisher, Day, & Collier, 1998).

The meaning that an individual derives from work is created through sensemaking, which is spurred by a need to determine the deeper purpose or ultimate goals of work (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). By studying the work meaning of volunteers through a sensemaking approach, we gain more insight into how the meaning of work is created in a volunteering context. Considering the 'fairly well established link between sensemaking and identity construction' (Ashfort, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), we will also gain knowledge about the identities that individuals construct as a result of making sense of volunteering involvement.

Work meaning has previously been researched in contexts with paid employees. Research however suggests that the organizational experiences of volunteers are different from the organizational experiences of paid employees (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009), presumably as a result of effects of organizational context (Johns, 2006, as cited in Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009, p. 911). Indeed, volunteers do not have contractual obligations and are not financially dependent on their volunteering work. Since there are very few 'carrots' and virtually no meaningful 'sticks', the control of volunteers' actions is quite uncertain (Pearce, 1993). This implies that volunteers have a lot of freedom to shape their jobs and that they are free to leave their volunteering organization or quit volunteering involvement anytime. Nevertheless, it is evidenced that despite the absence of the formal means that can tie individuals to an organization, volunteers have shown to hold relatively high affective commitment towards their volunteering organization (Van Vuuren, De Jong, & Seydel, 2008). However, what is left unknown in research about the meaning of volunteering work is how meaning is created and how it leads to consequences in terms of identity development or commitment.

Therefore, this study will focus on the work meaning of volunteers and the sensemaking processes that inform the meaning of volunteering work. The consequences for the identity construction of individuals involved in volunteering will be addressed. By following a process-oriented approach on

volunteering, motivation to volunteer, work experiences and consequences for identity development are the topics taken into account in this study.

## 2  LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Work meaning

Meaning can be understood to be an interpretation people give to an experience that connects that experience to a deeper purpose and thereby creates stability (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). When focusing on interpretations of experiences that happen in a work context, the concept of work meaning forms a useful lens. Work meaning is a way to look at work motivation and how work experiences contribute to a sense of purpose.  It is employees' understanding of what they do at work as well as the significance of what they do (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Work meaning can be intrinsically determined (within the individual) and extrinsically determined (by the job and wider environment). Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) take the perspective that work meaning results from both: the meaning of the job, the role and the self in the job all determine work meaning. The meaning of the job at work, job meaning, is the characteristics of tasks and activities that one does at work and the interpreted value of this job and its tasks and activities. The meaning of the role that one has at work, role meaning, comprises the characteristics of one's role at work and the interpreted value of the role. The final constituent of work meaning, self meaning, refers to the characteristics one imputes to the self while at work and the interpreted value of the self at work.

Work meaning also regards the importance of work in one's life and the importance of the work role in one's life (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). In this regard, work can be seen as a job, as a career or as calling. When an individual perceives work as a job, focus lies on material benefits that the work brings. For someone who sees his work as a career, work gets its importance because of the possibilities for personal achievement and career advancement. In the orientation of work as calling, extrinsic rewards are not meaningful. Individuals who view work as calling see work as an end in itself and as a source of personal meaning, fulfillment and social contribution. The orientation of work as calling is the one most closely related to experiencing work as meaningful.

### 2.2 Meaningful work

Meaningful work is work experienced as particularly significant and holding positive meaning for individuals (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). Although the value and significance of particular work varies between individuals depending on an individual's sensemaking processes and personal meaning construction, several mechanisms exist through which work can acquire meaning (Rosso et al., 2010). Work is likely to be experienced as meaningful if it appeals to the following constructs: authenticity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, purpose, belongingness and transcendence. These mechanisms overlap to a large extent with the five needs for meaning in life: people have a need for value, purpose, self-efficacy, self-worth (Baumeister, 1991) and self-transcendence, as proposed by Seligman (2002).  Meaning in life likely is derived from activity across a range of life roles, according to Ryff & Singer (1998), although work has been identified a particularly likely candidate for spurring meaning and purpose. The sources that can spur meaning and purpose are addressed by Pratt & Ashforth (2003), who emphasize the importance of meaningfulness *at* work and meaningfulness *in* work. The former concerns finding meaning in organizational membership (for example engagement, commitment and loyalty) and the relational needs that people often meet through their workplace. The latter, meaningfulness *in* work, refers to finding meaning and developing a sense of identity inclusive of the actual tasks and roles that people prefer to fulfill at work.

With the emergence of the positive organizational scholarship stream, meaningful work has got considerable attention. Positively connecting to others, transcendent behavior, virtuousness and

prosocial behavior are few of the topics that have become important in research regarding positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn 2003). Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) say that meaningful work is about cognitively meaningful tasks but it is also about work that creates a sense of joy (Wrzesniewski et. al, 2003), which connects workers to a larger good and to things viewed by the worker as important in life. Steger & Dik (2009) also developed a model of work as meaning in which transcending one's own interest, which they call 'Working for the Greater Good', is the outcome of pursuing work as meaning. Meaningful work has also been linked to concerns as job satisfaction, life satisfaction, the meaning of leisure, and spirituality. By addressing these concepts, work is situated socially and personally, suggesting points of view that that call the very nature and goals of work into question (Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, & Lair, 2008). Meaningful work clearly overlaps with but may also be distinguished from the traditional concept of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is typically envisioned by scholars as a matter of specific needs and expectations met through the job as provided by an organization; whereas meaningful work broadens the scope of analysis to include individuals' (or groups') dreams, hopes and senses of fulfillment and contribution (Cheney et al., 2008).

**2.3 Meaning making and the importance of sensemaking**

The meanings attached to particular work are not inherent to the work itself. The meanings attached to events, situations and experiences at work are not built into them, but acquire meaning and can become meaningful through sensemaking. Sensemaking is the process of noticing, interpreting, and acting in response to a stimulus (Weick, 1979). The process of ascribing meaning to one's work or job, meaning making, is a subjective one depending on cultural and interpersonal sensemaking processes (Rosso et al., 2010). The cultural and interpersonal sensemaking mechanism emphasizes the role of the social environment in understanding how meaning and meaningfulness are constructed. Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) are particularly outspoken about the role that others play in the construction of individuals' work meaning. Other authors have also argued that meaning making is a process in which other people play a central role. Cartwright & Holmes (2006) say that people are thought to organize their experiences around three central questions in their search for meaning:

- Where do I belong;
- How do I relate to other people;
- What is my value and contribution to other people?

In a relational view on meaning making as the above authors held, emphasis is on social interaction between actors, wherein meaning can be perceived as essentially a socially constructed phenomenon (Gioia & Thomas, 2006). The importance of social interaction is mentioned by Taylor & Van Every (2000, as cited in Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 412), who focus on the importance of communication in sensemaking: "We see communication as an ongoing process of making sense of the circumstances in which people collectively find ourselves and of the events that affect them. The sensemaking, to the extent that it involves communication, takes place in interactive talk and draws on the resources of language in order to formulate and exchange through talk… symbolically encoded representations of these circumstances. As this occurs, a situation is talked into existence and the basis is laid for action to deal with it". This relation between enactment and sensemaking is also acknowledged by Thomas, Clark, & Goia (1993), who state that these two are 'inextricably linked'. How sensemaking relates to meaning construction and identity is also addressed by Weick (1995, p. 23); he states that "People learn their identities by projecting them into an environment and observing the consequences." Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley (2008, p. 343) comment on this quote by stating that

"Observing concerns sensemaking or reflecting on the reactions to identity enactment and deriving meaning from the experience."

## 2.4 The meaning of volunteering work

A type of work that has not been paid attention to in work meaning research is the type of work that is done unpaid. This may be due to what is commonly understood as 'work': According to Taylor (2004), the concept of 'work' has been regarded synonymous with public paid employment. This traditional view of work as public paid employment provides a narrow formulation of work that excludes unpaid work done in the formal and informal sphere. Scholars have expressed their criticism towards this view, stating that "Such a narrow definition of work (as paid employment) puts the economic needs of society ahead of all the other purposes of our existence" (Wagner, 2002, as cited in Cheney et al., 2008, p. 142). Cheney et al. (2008, p. 142) also mention that "Broadening our scope is critical to the consideration of meaningful work." Volunteering work is a type of work done outside of the paid employment domain which they argue should be included in research about meaningful work.

Cnaan (1996, as cited in Rochester, 2006) identified the following four dimensions of volunteering activities: 1) free choice; 2) absence of remuneration; 3) structure and 4) intended beneficiaries. Rochester (2006) says that although a single definition of what is exactly understood as volunteering and what is not does not yet exist, these four dimensions were found to be common to a variety of definitions found in volunteering literature. In addition to these dimensions, Safrit & Merrill (2002) mention that volunteering implies active involvement: it involves active participation or contribution of time, energies or talents; it is never seen as the giving of financial or material resources as a donor or sponsor.

When studying work meaning of volunteers, the approach of volunteering as a process or as narrative theory is a useful approach. A process-oriented or narrative approach seeks to understand how people volunteer, that is, to conceptualize the complex nature of volunteering as well as the way it unfolds as a process over time and in interaction with its environment (Hustinx, 2010). While motivation to volunteer is a well-researched topic (Wilson, 2000), research following the process-oriented or narrative approach is less prevalent. A couple of scholars however have regarded volunteering as a process, for example Omoto & Snyder (1995, 2002), who developed the 'Volunteer Process Model'. The model is based on research on AIDS/HIV volunteerism, but the authors found evidence for the existence of those categories in other research as well. They see volunteering as a continuous process starting from initial motivation to volunteer to consequences of long-term volunteering involvement. Their process-model distinguishes between 'antecedents', 'experiences' and 'consequences.' Another process model is that of Haski-Leventhal & Bargal (2008), who described what happens with individuals once they enter a volunteer organization as a socialization process in which a person goes through five phases: nominee, newcomer, emotional involvement, established volunteering and retiring. According to them, the importance of the model lies in the way it explains transitions between the phases and details the process, experiences, and emotions involved in each phase.

A closer look at the volunteer process follows hereafter; focus will lie on the separate phases or parts that can be distinguished in Omoto & Snyder's (1995, 2002) Volunteer Process Model. Additional relevant literature is involved that is related to antecedents, experiences and consequences of volunteering involvement.

*Antecedents of volunteerism*

The Volunteer Process Model incorporates eight factors that are antecedents to volunteering: demographics, prior experiences, personality differences, resources and skills, motivations, identity concerns, expectations and existing social support. The authors comment on these antecedents that they have been informed by a functional approach to personality, motivation and social behavior, one in which the purposive and agentic nature of human action is emphasized. As well, these specific motives have been identified through a deductive process, using key concepts in psychological paradigms (Mac Neela, 2008).

Mac Neela criticizes volunteer motivation research that the identification of volunteer motives has been theory-driven, as has the identification of 'motive' as a key concept in itself. He conducted a qualitative research on volunteers' experience of their initial and continued involvement in a volunteer organization, based on an inductive approach. Regarding volunteers' initial involvement, he found that individuals often had mixed motives to join volunteering, expressing that they both like doing it and because somebody has to do it. Also 'giving something back' was an initiation reason. It both reflected a concern with reducing unpleasant feelings such as guilt over one's own fortune, as well as 'giving something back' as an exchange because one takes from the community that one lives in and should also give back to that community. Some participants saw volunteering as an obligation. Mac Neela also identified interest in career development as a reason to join volunteering and other less cited motives were a desire for esteem enhancement and social engagement. Finally, pre-existing bonds with the volunteer organization (for instance family members who benefit from the volunteer organization) drew people to volunteer with the organization.

*Experiences of volunteerism*

As the next stage, the Volunteer Process Model describes the 'experiences' stage, which concerns the experiences of volunteers concerned with AIDS/HIV patients that may promote or deter continuing involvement. The authors have explored respectively interpersonal relationships between volunteers and beneficiaries, the extent to which volunteers feel their service has met their expectations and fulfilled their needs, volunteers' perceptions of their work, their service organization, and their perceptions of other people's reactions to their work as factors contributing to involvement. They have named these factors as follows: Volunteers' choice of role, volunteers' performance, relationship with client, support from agency staff and other volunteers, organizational integration, satisfaction and stigmatization.

Mac Neela (2008) explored 'continued involvement' in his research, which can be seen as similar to the 'experiences' stage of Omoto & Snyder. Mac Neela assumed that the motivations for joining volunteering, which he sees as initial motives as described above, are different from the motivations for staying, which he sees as ongoing motives. Ongoing motives are described by him in terms of benefits and challenges. He understood benefits as "The achievement of motives and unanticipated rewards that emerged during the volunteer experience" (p. 132). Among his interviewees, he found that "pragmatic or self-oriented benefits were emphasized to a greater extent than when initial motives were discussed" (p. 132). Learning, understanding, career benefits and integration into the local community were some of the benefits mentioned by the respondents. At last, Fisher et al. (1998, p. 51) looked at the role of volunteering in older people's life and they also say that initial motivation to volunteer is reinforced by intangible rewards; they emphasize that volunteer motivation is reinforced by social appreciation: "Initially, a volunteer volunteers to be active and to help others. The

motivation to volunteer is reinforced by the intangible rewards that volunteers receive, such as the praise and appreciation from those they help and from other volunteers and staff". Besides social appreciation, Fisher et al. (1998) mention additional rewards; these can be seen as consequences of volunteering which will be addressed in the next part.

*Consequences of volunteerism*

In the final stage, the consequences stage, the Volunteer Process Model has focused on changes in knowledge, attitude, behavior and motivation as a result of involvement in AIDS volunteerism. As well as on the consequences length of volunteering service, commitment to volunteering, commitment to organization and identity development of volunteers. Regarding the longevity of service for example, volunteers served longer to the extent that they were more satisfied. In their own self-reports, volunteers claim that their experiences have powerfully affected and changed them (Omoto & Snyder, 1995).

Other research also confirms that volunteering involvement has considerable consequences for volunteers in terms of self identity (Crisp, 2006), learning and personal growth (Tsai, 2009; Narushima, 2005; Moultrie, 2004, unpublished manuscript), finding a sense of purpose and a sense of efficacy by making a difference in other people's lives (Fisher et al., 1998). Research has been conducted on the meaning of volunteering in the lives of particular social groups, for example unemployed people in employable age and retired people. Crisp (2006) showed that volunteering can enable individuals not in paid employment to construct alternative identities that confer self-respect. Further, volunteer activities provided unemployed people with valued social contact whilst also instilling a sense of purpose and of making a contribution to society more broadly. Volunteering is an activity full of meaning for elderly people as well, as shown in research on elderly people volunteering in hospitals by Fisher et al. (1998). Helping others and interacting with others were the most important sources of meaning derived from volunteering. Through helping others, the elderly engaged in positive interactions and gained a sense of being needed by those one helps and could observe that one's actions making a difference in another person's life. Many respondents focused on volunteering as providing a chance to interact with those they helped and with other volunteers at the hospital. Other consequences in Fisher et al.'s (1998) study included an enhanced perspective of one's life or situation, opportunities for personal growth, and reinforcing a positive self-concept by witnessing how one's efforts make a positive difference in the lives of others.

**2.5 Research question**

The literature shows that volunteering is a meaningful type of work. It is interesting to study volunteering from a work meaning point of view, because it will provide insight into how respectively the volunteering job, the self and the volunteer role form sources of meaning in volunteering work. Further, the literature showed that volunteering experiences, benefits and rewards play an important role with respect to whether a volunteer will continue or cease involvement. But the literature does not reveal concrete, day-to-day work experiences and actions that contribute to ongoing involvement in volunteering. Following sensemaking theory, volunteers will make sense of their actions, experiences and identities by observing their behaviors. Sensemaking happens in talk; from the stories that people tell about their volunteering work, the meanings attached to the volunteering job, the self and the volunteer role can be inferred.

Therefore in this study, volunteering will be studied through the lens of work meaning to see how people make sense of their volunteering experiences and actions. Because the link between sensemaking and identity construction is fairly well established (Ashforth et al., 2008) meanings attached to volunteering work and consequences for identity construction will be the major topics of interest in this study. Following a process-oriented approach to volunteering, why people started with volunteering, why they continued and what the eventual identity consequences are, will be the guiding structure. The factors of the Volunteer Process Model were established a priori and theoretically driven; since meaning is the central concern of this study, an emergent approach (Deetz, 2001) is considered most appropriate in the context of this study.

This leads to the following research question:

**Which motivations, work meaning issues and identity consequences emerge from the stories of people who are involved in volunteering?**

## 3 METHOD

In this study a qualitative methodology was employed to address the research question. Interviews were considered to be the most appropriate means to achieve the study's purpose. Patton (2002) mentions that interviews facilitate to learn about people's feelings, thoughts and intentions. How people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world can be best achieved through asking people questions about those things. As Patton (2002, p. 341) notes, "The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective." Since all these aspects are of main importance in studying the work meaning of volunteers, interviews are considered to be the most suitable tool in this study.

### 3.1 Research context

The research was carried out with individuals participating in different volunteering organizations in the cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad, India. I chose to involve volunteers from numerous organizations to capture some of the diversity of volunteering activity. The respondents performed their volunteering work in various organizational contexts, which could roughly be differentiated into three types. The first type is the kind of organizations that were run by both paid employees and volunteers. These organizations provided clear programs to be carried out by volunteers. The second type of organizations was those that were fully run by volunteers. Third, there were also respondents that were members of informal, unregistered groups that provide help to a diversity of people in need. Some respondents had initiated such a group, together with friends or colleagues. Finally, a part of the respondents did not perform their volunteering activities in one of the aforementioned settings; these volunteers did not work in one of the three types of organizations mentioned above. Instead, those volunteers regularly visit respectively hospitals, old age homes, orphanages or schools, either alone or with friends, to provide help to the people over there. Refer to Appendix C for an overview that represents the work that volunteers perform.

### 3.2 Data collection

*Participants*

A total of 37 interviewees participated in this study. 34 of them (14 women, 20 men) were only involved as volunteers in their organizations. In addition, also three interviewees (two women, one man) had a paid job in their respective organizations. They also chose to carry out suprarole volunteering in their organizations. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 73 years. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents. A minority of the participants performed their role in office setting, for example as program coordinator. The majority volunteered 'in the field', delivering direct services to their beneficiaries. The length of volunteering experience varied from one volunteer who was involved for approximately five months, to others who had started volunteering 30 years back. Most volunteers were involved for at least two years. Individuals' weekly time commitment to volunteering ranged from one hour to 25 hours. Some volunteers could not express their involvement in time duration, since volunteering had 'become life' for them and a few others volunteered on irregular basis. Based on employment status, the participants could be divided into four groups: 21 of the 37 interviewees were in full-time paid employment. Eight were partnered mothers who expressed no interest in paid work; one respondent preferred volunteering to paid employment. Six respondents were retired and one participant was a MBA student. Refer to appendix B for a schematic overview containing individual participants' demographic information and time commitment to volunteering.

*Table 1: Research participants*

|        | Student | Employed | Unemployed | Retired | *N* | Mean age |
|--------|---------|----------|------------|---------|-----|----------|
| Male   | X       | 15       | 1          | 5       | *21* | 41.5    |
| Female | 1       | 6        | 8          | 1       | *16* | 36.7    |
|        |         |          |            |         |     |          |
| Mean age | 22    | 31       | 43.1       | 66.2    |     | 39.4     |

Recruitment of volunteers happened in two ways. First, a major part of the participants was recruited by the guidance of three key informants. These informants facilitated access to the major volunteer organizations that were part of this study. Second, a minority of the participants was recruited according to the snowball sampling principle: individual participants providing me with contact information (email addresses and/or phone numbers) of other volunteers whom they were connected with. The intention was to include a variety of volunteers with regard to the characteristics age, gender, and employment status.

*Instrument*
The interviews were held face-to-face and consisted of open-ended questions. A semi-structured format was chosen, to ensure flexibility of emerging topics and to be able to anticipate on respondent's answers. By focusing on the need to allow the participant to tell her or his story, the structure of the interview can be more flexible than in other methods (Gilbert, 2010).
The interview guideline consisted of two parts: Part A, motivations, in which the participants were prompted to talk about their volunteering work and how they got involved. Part B, meanings, intended to explore the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences and to capture the importance of the volunteering work and organization in the participants' life.  Participants were encouraged and probed when they started talking about themes and telling stories that they initiated themselves during the interview. Refer to appendix A for the interview guideline.

A total of 38 interviews was conducted, of which one was omitted afterwards because the person in casu did not consider herself a volunteer, as she mentioned during the interview. She had only accompanied her neighbor's volunteering activities a few times. Apart from the individual interviews, I have conducted a tour through a charity hospital during which I met and spoke to a couple of charity hospital volunteers. The interviews lasted 74 minutes on average and were conducted at the office of the volunteer organization, at participants' homes or at a café.

**3.3 Data analysis**
All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis comprised of three phases and was done with help of ATLASti software. In accordance with a grounded theory approach, a constant-comparative method of data analysis was used (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Because meaning was the central concern of this study, a grounded approach is appropriate since "A grounded interpretive approach is particularly useful to explore the meanings that humans assign to their experiences as reflected in their oral or written accounts of those experiences" (Addison, 1989, as cited in Faver, 2004, p. 243).

In the first phase, during the initial readings of the transcriptions, I used open coding and in vivo coding to identify numerous first-order quotations, phrases and concepts that were present in the respondents' stories (Van Maanen, 1979). An example is the "*It gives me satisfaction*" phrase.

Subsequent readings followed to assemble the first-order codes into concepts that defined similar ideas or issues. For example, the phrases *"I want to give back to society"* and *"I can use my knowledge and skills"* were both assigned to the concept of 'generativity'.

In the second phase, axial coding, the concepts that resulted from the first phase were reviewed to determine if they could be grouped and linked to overarching categories, while keeping in mind the process approach on volunteering. Wrzesniewksi et al.'s (2003) theoretical framework on the meaning of work, which explains work meaning as the content and significance of respectively the job, the role and the self at work, was used. At first I focused on the content of job meaning. The core meaning of the job content was acts of compassionate communication. Consequently I assigned codes to the concepts that contended evaluative aspects of 'job meaning', 'role meaning' and 'self meaning', depending on if the code's content was related to respectively the evaluation of the job, the role or the self. These codes were assigned to the category 'identity consequences.' Further, the codes that contained motivations why the respondents started volunteering were assigned to the category 'initial motivation'.

In the third phase, I read over the entire transcriptions again, focusing in particular on the codes and concepts that did not belong to either initial motivation or identity consequences. I identified a number of work experiences and other factors that could be assigned to a new category: 'work experiences.' As similar to the open coding phase, I devoted special attention to interpreting the meanings those experiences held for the respondents. Within the 'experiences' category, I could make a distinction between unique critical incidents that some volunteers had encountered and direct consequences of volunteering involvement that were more frequently reported. Thus ultimately, the 'experiences' category was separated in 'direct consequences' and 'critical incidents'.

Tables 2 till 6 provide an overview of the entire volunteering process seen through the lens of work meaning, as it was drawn from the data: 'Initial motivation', 'content of job meaning', 'experiences' (which was divided into 'direct consequences' and 'critical incidents') and the final category, 'identity consequences'. Elaborations on these tables will be made in the next chapter.

## 4  RESULTS

The research question aims at describing the motivations, work meaning issues and identity consequences that can be identified from the stories told by individuals who are involved in volunteering work. Four main categories emerged from the data: (1) factors that initiated getting involved in volunteering; (2) job content of work meaning, which was in essence compassionate communicative acts; (3) direct consequences, which were work experiences and critical incidents that contributed to ongoing motivation to volunteer and (4) identity consequences. Each of these four categories will be described in the results section, accompanied by tables 2 - 6. These tables give overviews of the contents of all categories illustrated with corresponding quotations.

First of all, the six initiation factors will be elaborated on, followed by job content: descriptions of the actual work that the volunteers say they do and an interpretation concerning the essence of their work: compassionate communication. After that, work experiences and critical incidents that contributed to ongoing motivation to volunteer are provided. To conclude with, elaborations will be made on the consequences that emerged related to respectively job meaning, self meaning and role meaning.

### 4.1 Initial motivation

Initial motivation to start volunteering refers to the reasons why individuals became involved in volunteering. Several distinct and sometimes co-occurring factors that made individuals decide to take the step into volunteering were found. These factors are: (1) making (better) use of available time; (2) need to give back time, skills and experience to society; (3) life events; (4) missing something in life; (5) role models and (6) the problems of society. Table 2 provides an overview of the initiation factors.

*Table 2: Initial motivation*

| Initiation factor | Sample Quotes |
| --- | --- |
| ***Time***<br>Making (better) use<br>of available time | |
| Finding a way to fill<br>available time in a<br>useful way | "Then, that was the thing I just thought ok maybe it's a I did have some amount of free time I thought I could use. I thought I could be a little more useful. And I could use my free time, maybe it will help somebody is the feeling with which I started off." |
| Finding a way to make<br>better use of time | "What happened is with four friends, we started before two years, this social cause. So with four friends, what we decided is working and enjoying on weekends and not utilizing the time. Before, many of the kids and the people, do not getting exactly what they need. Like support. Moral support, monetary support, or education wise, it can be anything.  Taking any matters. Then with four friends, one of my seniors, my classmates, my colleague, different different people. With four people we started a group called 'Winning Aspirations'." |
| ***Generativity needs***<br>Skills and experience which<br>one would like to 'give back'<br>to society | "But when you have to do something, which is not relating to money terms, when you have achieved your money calculations already and you have time, effort on your hand, you have your skill set with you, you want to do something for somebody, unrelated to you. And do that without any money in return." |

**Life events**

| | |
|---|---|
| Critical incident | "But there has been one incident in my life eh it's very eh it was a major incident in my life, first time I am just coming to join a job. (…) From there I was coming to Bangalore, my money was stolen, everything was stolen. But luckily I had my certificates and all, I was just coming to come and show the certificates and then get a date when I have to go and report to and all. Many things have been stolen, my ticket has been stolen, everything has been stolen. (…) He gave me 10 Rupees, I thanked him. At that time he said: 'You will also find someone needing this kind of help at some point in time in your life, every time you, this is a promise that you do not have to give me anything in return. Just promise that you would help.'" |
| Transforming the meaning of a personal tragedy by making it the basis for social action | "No, no. Definitely not now, maybe after some time. Not so early. I turn into social causes, so early, only because of my death of my father." |
| Preventing others for having to go through the same as what you have experienced | "What I feel is, I felt like when I was in childhood onwards, I faced a lot of problems. So I do noy want to somebody face the same problems." |

**Missing something in life**

| | |
|---|---|
| A feeling of missing something in one's life, without realizing what 'the missing something' is. | "I was looking for an opening to do something. Ya, that definitely was there. I was looking for you know, an opening to you know, feel satisfied. Something was missing in my life. Something I felt that you know I should be doing something. I did not   know what it was. I had no clue of what I should be doing. But it was there definitely." |

**Role models**

| | |
|---|---|
| Other people who have been functioning as role models and who have been contributing to the development of a certain mindset | "Ya I I was inspired all along in my life by the examples of people around me and through my readings also. People have many .. their life. Eh just not make good studies and then get a job and have a family and then finish your life at that. I want to do something more enriching, more enabling." |

**The problems of society**

| | |
|---|---|
| Being confronted with problematic situations: corruption, a dirty and polluted environment, people living in poverty. | "I walk down the street, and find an old man lying on the road. Somewhere I think behind my mind. Can I do something? Just it keeps, you know, I keep it in my mind, until I find an answer. Same thing happened with me near my house, there is an old man, and he lives on the arms, he has been living there for years. He has no shelter -I: sorry, he?-  On his arms, in sense he begs for money." |

*Making (better) use of available time*

The availability and use of time happened to be a factor to start volunteering in two different ways. Firstly, respondents told that they had a lot of spare time they wanted to use in some way, preferably for a good cause:

Personally I joined it because I had lot of time on my hand. My children were growing up and I wanted to use that time for a cause. So then I felt when somebody, ok when I started the thing, I just started out of because I was, it wasn't motivation. It started because I had lot of time. And I wanted to channel that time for a good cause. (R#13)

Secondly, people thought of ways to spend time in a better way; where 'better' generally referred to causes other than those with a purely hedonistic goal:

> I mean, that was the time probably I got to uh think about it. The motivation was more of uh utilizing my time better especially on a weekend, rather than going to a shopping mall, or a movie or pub or bar and just waste the money around, I wanted to utilize the time in a better way. So that was the initial motivation and uh that was the initial motivation to get into something, and AIDS awareness was something, I wanted to do something challenging. (R#25)

*Need to give back time, skills and experience to society*
'Generativity' is a term that is used to refer to the need to 'give back to society' (McAdams, 2006). According to Erikson (1963, p. 267), "Generativity is primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation." The need for generativity was a motivation mentioned by a substantial number of respondents. For most of the people, this need was expressed by the wish to give back skills, experiences and time to the society:

> Now after retirement we get pension. And we got lot of experience, we got lot of time also. These two things we want to utilize and help the society and the community at large. (R#31)

*Life events*
Three people were unfortunate to have to experience a negative or traumatic happening in their life. This formed the basis for their motivation to start helping other people:

> Why I am studying these all days, because they help me a lot to recover from my major accident. Because when I was in the hospital, so many my village people donate the money to save. So three days, I am in coma. They all are helping me. I do not want to help the same people, but at the same time I can help someone else. From that time onwards I got the strong feeling. (R#1)

For them, the meaning of their tragedy was transformed by making it the basis for social action. Two of them explicitly articulated that they wanted to prevent other people for having to go through the same as what they had experienced themselves:

> Because I know what is the problem. So I do not want to someone else to struggle. (R#1)

One respondent reported having experienced a critical incident, in which somebody had robbed him on the street. An unknown person provided help to him. The helper did not want anything in return; he only wanted the victim to promise to help somebody else in the future, whenever needed.

*Missing something in life*
Two respondents had the feeling that their lives were incomplete; therefore they experienced a lack of happiness and satisfaction:

> That means I am missing something, I am not happy with what I am doing. I lost something. I do not know what I am missing at that time. (R#6)

Both of them did not have a clue about what would be the thing that they missed in their life. They were looking out for an opening to do something; volunteering work was the thing that they ended up doing. One respondent came across a newspaper article informing that donors were urgently

needed to save a child's life; he started working to collect money, together with his friends. The other respondent got involved because of her son who was involved in a civic club in her school. Through the school she got in touch with the organization that dealt with civic awareness and she started as a volunteer.

*Role models*

Other people played a major role for the respondents to get involved in volunteering. Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa (who was given Indian citizenship in 1948[1]) and the God Swami are three examples of Indian icons that were mentioned in the interview accounts. Respondents were inspired by their icon's way of life. Also 'ordinary people' like parents, friends and spouses functioned as inspirators. These actors have in common that they contributed to the development of a certain mindset in individuals and they instilled an attitude towards serving humanity:

> Two things madam, love all, serve all. Everybody should be equal to us. 'Help ever, hurt never'. That is what Swami says. 'Help ever, hurt never'. You .. always help, .. that is all.  Why all these people are doing service is, .. doing service, to humanity. Is everybody is going to tell everybody, .. God is an example, for everybody, the way He is doing service is truly .. doing service. He says 'my life is my message'.  'My life is my message.' He is showing exactly, he is serving the poor. (R#21)

Besides these role models in the form of people, also religious texts like Bhagavad-Gita, books and a 'Landmark course' have functioned as sources of inspiration.

*The problems of society*

Quite a number of people were concerned with the common problems of Indian society.  Many felt the need to 'do something' when being confronted with respectively people on the street who live in poverty, a dirty and polluted environment and corruption:

> So, I think that has brought me till over till here, the problems around me. Be it myself experiencing you know, coming across the people who beg, or it may be reading in newspaper about children's right being violated, corruption. Or people being sexually abused. So, these things, these daily uh experiences any common man who is on the road.  Any common person would on the road. Each of us would see all these problems in life. (R#28)

In sum, six factors that contributed to the motivation to initiate volunteering work were found in the stories told by the respondents. They varied from respondents' need to use time, skills and experience for the benefit of society (that is, making (better) use of available time and generativity needs), to personal factors (namely life events and missing something in life), to other factors (in casu, role models and the problems of society).

## 4.2 Job content

When asking the respondents about their work activities through the questions "*Can you tell me what you are doing?*" and *"Can you tell me about your volunteering work?"* they came up with various answers. The respondents talked extensively about what they are doing and they talked in great detail about the execution of their volunteering work. Refer to appendix C for an overview with quotations of the job content of volunteers who represent the various organizations. In short, I will point out the kind of volunteering jobs and -organizations the volunteers were involved in:

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[1] Retrieved from http://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/religion/article33284.ece

- Visiting children in orphanages;
- Visiting elderly in old age homes;
- 'Right to Information' related topics;
- Fulfilling wishes of terminally ill children;
- Educating citizens on HIV/AIDS awareness;
- Teaching children on regular school subjects;
- Increasing the quality of life in residential areas;
- Providing guidance to patients in a charity hospital;
- Encouraging Indian youth to take up volunteering projects;
- Supporting disabled children from the weaker section of society;
- Providing telephonic counselling to people who need psychological support;
- Spontaneous help in case of floodings or encountering people and animals in trouble on the streets;
- Volunteering for the organization that teaches children about civic awareness and active citizenship;
- Fundraising for people with an urgent medical problem who needs a surgery but who lack sufficient financial resources;
- Helping to facilitate the job search process for visually disabled people, like assessing their competences, helping with the job application process and offering training programs to develop skills.

### 4.2.1 Compassionate communicative acts in the form of noticing, connecting and responding to suffering

Even though the volunteers were involved in diverse organizations that concerned different subject areas and various work activities as described above, a unanimous understanding regarding the essence of their work emerged from their accounts. Providing emotional support to beneficiaries was the core essence of the volunteering tasks for a large part of the respondents. Only in the accounts of respondents who were involved in two of the organizations included in this research, offering emotional support was not clearly present. Three respondents literally said that they provided this type of support to beneficiaries, using the term 'moral support': *"Sometimes they need some support kind of thing, rather than financial help, they need some moral support."* Why this form of support is considered important is because usually there was little that could be done to solve the problem of the beneficiary. Respondents believed that the only thing that their beneficiaries needed, was someone to talk to and share experiences with; someone who could listen to their grief and who could make them feel good and happy.

When looking at the ways how providing emotional support was actually enacted, a range of communicative acts could be identified from the data: (1) touching; (2) listening, being, speaking and (3) adopting the role of family member. Table 3 provides an overview. These communicative acts are all related to the theme of compassionate communication. However, they are not compassionate acts in itself. For example, listening and speaking could both be a form of emotional support and could be compassionate acts. To be indicated as a compassionate act, it has to meet three criteria (Kanov, Maitlis, Worline, Dutton, Frost & Lilius, 2004). First, there should be awareness about that someone is suffering. Second, a felt compassion towards the sufferer should exist, which could be in the form of emotionally connecting with and taking the perspective of the sufferer. The third point is that a response should come that has the intention to bring relief or to alleviate suffering. It is therefore

described as a three-part process (Kanov et. al, 2004): 1) attention to or noticing of suffering; 2) empathic concern, a felt relation with the other and 3) action to lessen or relieve suffering.

The interview accounts showed a pattern that resembles this three-part process of compassionate communication. The three-way process applied hereafter is literally adopted from Miller (2007), who used the categories noticing, connecting and responding.

*Table 3: Content of job meaning: Compassionate communicative acts*

| Theme | Description | Sample quotes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Perspective taking* | Looking at things from another person's point of view | "While you are there in their shoes, you will understand, what they go through. And that itself will make you inspiring to do things." |
| *Touch* (physical and emotional) | Evoking or eliciting tender feelings | "I can touch other people, I become more I I become a meaningful human being, no? I only breath, I do not only breath and eat for myself." |
| *Listening* | Giving an ear to someone | "I do not really counsel, but I lend an ear and that is all they need. They tell me that I promise we have someone whom we can talk to, and tell our problems to. That is all we need. It just helps us get it out of our you know whatever is worrying us." |
| *Being* | Being present for someone | "We just put some some open ended questions or like uh we just put some open ended questions and eh basically they were wanting to speak, they did not have somebody, who was asking I mean who was caring for them and uh all these days they would just be abused in various different ways either by their employer by their employer or by the people around them or something." |
| *Speaking* | Speaking a few words to someone | "But with the elderly, uh basically a companion. You know somebody, I listen to them, they listen to me. They share their experiences. I tell them about myself. It's more of a mature discussion that happens with the elderly." |
| *Role adopting* | Acting in the role of a close relative | "Because when we go there, they start talking because they start talking because they .. their young age. So it's very you know depressing to them, they talk about their younger age, they feel really happy. 'I used to do this, I used to do that, you know?' Now they cannot do anything, but then they remember all those things and they feel happy when somebody is there to talk to them, understand, their concerns, you know. They feel like their grandchildren are talking to them, haha.". |

**4.2.1.1 Noticing suffering**

First of all, the fact that someone is suffering needs to be noticed by the care giver.  It is awareness about another's pain. Many respondents noticed that there was suffering, of which the following quotes are examples.  In these examples, *"troubling poor people"*, *"upset has been created"*, *"how people are living over here"* and *"they do not have any support"* are the phrases that indicate that suffering was noticed:

> One thing is, it hurts lot of them so most of the times when I .. corruption is troubling poor people who can't do anything, that makes you feel like ok, I am educated, what can I do for them? Can I do something? (R#5)

> And see, when I am there, the people have to interact with me, not with the ..  Because I know how upset, what upset has been created with this riding short over people, without thinking of what their situation. (R#14)

> It all started every day while crossing the place I used to think how people are living over here. And the kids will be, they do not have a proper dress and they will be having something in their hand eating and the flies will be sitting on it. (R#15)

> They lose all the hope to live. Because they do not have any support from anybody, financially, or morally. If you see, listen to their words and their difficulties facing in livelihood, there somebody says they do not have food to eat, three times in a day. They are living with only by one time in a day. Like that way they say. (R#6)

**4.2.1.2 Connecting with the sufferer**

In Miller's (2007) research, the process of 'feeling' was named 'connecting' since her respondents went beyond feeling with the sufferer; they attempted to connect with the sufferer. Connecting with the sufferer also appeared in the current research data. Perspective taking, looking at things from another person's point of view, was the most common strategy to establish a connection with the beneficiaries. Expressions like *"We have to look at things through their eyes",* were used. By connecting to others in this way, you get to understand the pain that others have to go through and you get to learn how life is for the other person. This respondent, who teaches underprivileged children, experienced that he could easily relate to many students by thinking from their perspective:

> Your problem, in the sense, what I am trying to say is that, you have to put yourself into their shoes. Though it's often abused expression, you know. You have to put yourself into other's shoes to understand their problem. It's a cliché, most of the people use it as a cliché. But it actually worked here. You you know should try to think from their perspective. What will work and what will not work. And you go with that mindset and talk to them. Things actually do happen. I have seen that. And it happens with me. It happened and I could easily relate to, now I have seen almost 400 to 500 engineering students. (R#23)

Besides the cognitive connection, connecting emotionally was also used as a way to connect to the beneficiary:

> Every case I have taken so far, every person whom I offered help, I do not see it as a help, I mean a problem and I am giving solutions. I take it to heart. I feel that it's someone whom I know very well. Unless you give that involvement it's not easy to get the things done. Unless you give involvement, you cannot see pain. The pain from them. You have to put yourself in their shoes. (R#3)

**4.2.1.3 Responding to the sufferer**

The third sub process was that of responding – actually behaving or communicating in ways that could be seen as compassionate. What is seen as compassionate is "Any action or display that occurs in response to another's pain, with the aim of alleviating that pain or helping the sufferer to live through it" (Reich, 1989, as cited in Kanov et al., 2004, p. 814). In this study, bringing relief to suffering was done through respectively touching, listening, being & speaking and role adopting.

*Touching*

Touching acts are those that evoke or elicit tender feelings in people. Respondents used the expression that they touch, they can touch or have touched other people's life. Often when a respondent used this expression, it was almost synonymous to saying that he had the feeling of having changed someone's life or having made a difference in someone's life. A touch can be touch in physical form, or in emotional form. Here is a quotation of a doctor who uses 'touch' when treating his patients, which is the great value of his treatment:

> The minute we touch them, they are happy that they are in uh they are blessed, they feel suddenly strong recharged! But the real real fact is, it's me who is getting the recharge, not them! If you see, if you see in the video, I *touch* each and every patient. I put my hand on their shoulder, that is reassurance for them. I touch every part that they complain of pain, to feel, like the knee joint. It they say it's pain when I touch, I find a swelling, I find it's hard. I find that moment .. Like this there are so many things that we can make out instantly. So basically these are the things that give it the human touch. That is the great value. (R#7)

*Listening, being & speaking*

Listening, being and speaking are not only enacted as forms of emotional support; they are compassionate acts in the stories that were told. This is because they are practised by the respondents as an action to lessen or relieve suffering. The three were closely connected in the stories told by the volunteers and were often used interchangeably as illustrated in the following excerpts.

*Listening*

In the first quote, the goal is to solve the problem of the sufferer, which is already done to half extent by listening to the problems that beneficiaries have:

> There are many people who wanted to tell their words. They are having lot of problems, no. We just give our ear to them, our ears to them. They'll be speaking their own whatever their inside. We work as counselors also. –I: Ah, in the hospital?- Hospital. Main job is we have to we'll hear whatever they say. Because, because they are in problems, they are not able to think properly. So we'll helping them there. First we'll hear them, and then their 50 % problem is solved actually. Somebody hears their problem you know, they feel very good. That is the work we do. (R#22)

*Being*

Although it was uttered as *"giving time"* to beneficiaries, the actual meaning of 'giving time' is 'being present' for the beneficiaries, so that the beneficiaries have somebody to talk to and feel that their existence is acknowledged. Many times, the people in the old age homes do not have others to talk to and to share their life experiences with, so they would look forward to the weekly visits of the volunteer:

> All they want is a little time. So when I used to go there, they used to uh say, (name of respondent), give me at least 3 minutes of your week, uh for us. So, it's basically giving some time for them, talking to them.

Because all they want is somebody whom they can talk to. So they would wait for a week for that somebody comes and ask about, about what all I did the whole week. (R#28)

*Speaking*

Speaking to the beneficiary gives him the feeling that there is somebody to help him. This respondent's goal of speaking a few words to the parents is to alleviate the family's suffering by giving them inspiration to live:

> I will talk to the patient as well as the parents also. Like that also makes a lot of difference in their lives. Rather than simply giving money, if we say some few words to them, then they feel there is somebody to help us. Otherwise they will get some inspiration to live. Sometimes they won't have money and they are discussing with all 'This is like that'. (R#6)

*Role adopting*

Some volunteers said that many of their beneficiaries do not have anybody to talk to. Being there for them, sharing their fears, sharing their happy moments of the past is very important and gives the beneficiaries inspiration to live. What is compassionate in this is the fact that the volunteers not only give the kind of attention and support that the beneficiaries need, but that they seem to be able to adopt the role of family member. This is a big thing because many times, the real family members of the beneficiaries do not seem capable to offer the support that a child needs. Or even worse, family members who do not want to be in touch with their old parents anymore and as a result just discarded them, as told by one of the respondents. Adopting the role of family member is illustrated by the following quotes where the volunteers, according to their perception, are able to act in the role of parent. This quote actually is a continuation of the above excerpt where the volunteer tells that he feels very touched when the guy shares his personal problems with him.

> Same, same kind of influence, however for these people, for poor people, it means a lot more. Because they do not have the right source, or someone to talk to. Just give .. their feelings. It's their parents, they do not know. Because their parents are daily, workers. They do not have that maturity to guide, though they may be 40, 50 years, but they do not actually have that temperament to guide this, kids, you know that that, ya. The fact is, you can do that. You sort of acting as a surrogate parent. (R#23)

Besides adopting the role of family member, a second compassionate way of presenting oneself in respond to the sufferer was found. It happened during interactions with visually challenged people. According to one of the volunteers who interacts with visually challenged people, you should not show sympathy towards people who do not have eye sight. Instead you should behave like you will do with any other person. This can be seen as an act of compassion, because the volunteer exactly knows how to behave in the way that the visually challenged people appreciate it most. Visually challenged people do not want to feel sorry for. They want to be seen as any other human being. They want to come up in their lives. This volunteer said that he interacts with visually challenged people in the same way as he does with his other friends:

> My role is, see, I I I want to assist them, like I would have assist anybody else, right? But yes, I feel bad. They may not feel bad about their, you know problem, but I definitely feel bad when somebody has to live a life without eyes right, so that makes me feel bad. But I also try not to shudder sympathy on them and make them feel too bad about it. And making it sound like I am doing a favour to them, or anything of that sort. So, for example, I yell at them, I do a joke with them. Everything I did with my normal friends. So that too I can make them feel normal, right?  So, with your friends, for example, you'd be very free, to express yourself, like when you are angry, when you are not. When you share a joke, that is how I do with my friends and if I am with them. (R#24)

Concludingly, compassionate communicative acts formed the essence of the job content of the volunteers. After suffering was noticed, volunteers connected to their beneficiaries through perspective taking and they responded to them by means of touch, listening, speaking, being and role adopting.

## 4.3 Experiences that promote ongoing involvement

Descriptions of the job content of the volunteers were given in the previous paragraph. Subsequent, a process could be identified in which people made sense of their work activities and experiences. For many respondents, this sensemaking resulted in an enhanced motivation to continue volunteering.

### 4.3.1 Direct consequences that contribute to ongoing motivation to volunteer

There were ten factors, which were actions and work experiences that became meaningful through respondents' reflecting on and interpreting these particular experiences. A distinction can be made between experiences that are interpersonal (1-7) and factors that originate in the respondents self: intrapersonal factors (8-10). These ten factors, that can be regarded as experiences and factors that promote ongoing volunteering involvement, are:

(1) seeing a smile on the beneficiaries' face; (2) the bonding with the beneficiaries; (3) expectations of other people; (4) creating happiness; (5) seeing the fruits of your efforts; (6) being touched by others; (7) self-other identification; (8) doing it because it is a passion; (9) experiencing calling (in retrospect) and (10) self identity statements: 'me' now and 'me' later. Table 4 contains an overview of the direct consequences.

*Table 4:  Direct consequences*

| Theme | Sample Quotes |
| --- | --- |
| ***Seeing a smile on the beneficiaries' face*** | "I listened to her, for three minutes, and I could see the smile in her face, which I am sure she did not forget all her life. I wonder, five to ten minutes, just your existence, I haven't done anything. Just my presence she felt so happy. And I I really felt so happy, at that time. I really felt, do I have that power, or did I do something miracle that she is so happy?" |
| ***The bonding with the beneficiaries*** | |
| Special bond | "Or, they have kids but they are not ready to take care of them. Some of them, they are they are well to do, they can have some caretakers at home but still they are at old age home. So the kind of emotional bonding that happens with them. I feel I have made a difference to them. Especially that time would be .. for them, that I mentioned. I still, she used to keep each and every Rupee, she used to keep and store it. And when she gave me ten Rupees also I denied saying that "no, it's ok, I do not need require money, your blessings are enough." |
| Family metaphor | "By seeing smile on their faces I feel that ok I am the part of them. -I: You are part of?- Part of them, I mean part of them. It's like one family. So, I will just sit there, they will call me 'anna', like 'anna' means brother. -I: in Telugu-  Ya 'anna' means brother in Telugu. So sometimes 'anna', they used to call me 'sir', now it's got reduced to 'anna'." |
| ***Expectations and perceptions of other people*** | "All I like is probably I interact with people, teach people and you know, sort of guide them into that, counsel them. And in the training, they trust me completely because I am I know the stuff. And I have full accounting, full confidence in me and probably that also motivates me. You know again I have that people's confidence." |

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Creating happiness*** | "Why do we do all these things? We want to see happiness in the patient's eyes. To achieve that, all these things are required. Nothing can beat their happiness, ok, that is the ultimate thing. We achieved one goal." |
| ***Seeing the fruits of your efforts*** | "So I was very happy, so probably ya I think only this teaching that sort of you know if people have confidence in me, that definitely motivates me and more than that, if I can see something tangible, some tangibles results happening." |
| ***Being touched by others*** | "But sometimes it's like you know, giving something, you do not feel that you'll get anything in return, you do not feel, but somewhere touches you. And you get some, you become a better person. You become a better person, you become a happier person." |
| ***Self-other identification*** | "Because I do not feel that that person can pass because for him, I used to wake up in the morning at four 'o clock. For their examination. I used to get down at my home, ready for the office, take my bag and go there to their school. Ask them to wake up and ask them to study. Like eh I that whole examination, I feel that is for me. My aim is I want to give these three people life. In life, they will, they have to think back what they did in the higher education, definitely they will remember me." |
| ***Doing it because it is a passion*** | "It's sure that you know, how children respond to you. You are like an idol to them. That is surely very satisfying, you know. They, when you tell them (change), they've never seen it that way. So new perspective they get. So it's really very you know, and especially even the school authorities, they look 'hey why .. not getting paid for this, why do you want to do this.' It's like a passion, you know." |
| ***Experiencing calling (in retrospect)*** | "Now, it's eight years after that incident that I got into and I am totally, I feel it's my life calling. That I am addressing, being in this organization." |
| ***Self identity statements*** | |
| Me, now | "So actually, I am a person who was uh more into doing some service, help people. Where there is a requirement I love to go always to help people. No matter what it is. No matter what it is. It might be financial help, it might be a moral support. It might be anything with human resource, I would love to go and help people." |
| Me, later | "Because I feel after a certain time, people you know they become very indifferent. Which I feel wrong. Indifferent to the conditions of the children, indifferent to the work, somebody is dying, let them die. They do not have that you know, that inner feeling of –I: you mean people in general?- People in general ya. I do not want to become like that, ya. Because for me that indifference, is very bad you know. You just walk in, somebody is dying, they do not want to help the person." |

*Seeing a smile on the beneficiaries' face*

Respondents frequently said that they felt extremely happy when they could see a smile on the face of the beneficiary. The meaning of seeing a smile is two-fold. First of all, the fact of merely seeing a smile, gives the volunteer the impression of *being* taken care of. An example of this is given in the following quote uttered by a volunteer who teaches children in an orphanage. When he reaches the orphanage and sees the smile on the children, he feels that someone is there to take care of *him*:

> If they are coming and they say 'hi' to you when you reach, with a smile on their face, you feel like somebody is there for you, take care of you, something is there. For them also they will feel that one person came to here, to help us. They also feel. (R#1)

Secondly, the act of *making* someone smile has big meaning for the respondents. Seeing that you can make someone smile, is the confirmation that you have really been of help to someone. And that realization gives an enormous happiness to the respondents. Seeing someone smile is the feedback that you brought happiness in someone's life, even though that person has experienced a lot of trauma in life:

> Because ok, though she has so much of trauma in her life, but still I could give her at least five minutes of smile on her face. That is something which is really, you take back as a person. That you can make somebody smile, even though they have such traumatized background, backgrounds. So that happiness again uh, you know, it's, you cannot equate it with, even if you give me a million Dollar, I will not be happy as much as I am happy for that. (R#3)

*The bonding with the beneficiaries*

The relationships between the volunteers and the beneficiaries developed into a bond that is both enriching for the beneficiaries as well as for the volunteers. This volunteer reflects on this bond as a special one that gives him energy and satisfaction:

> That is the main thing you know I am really I am happy that they are following me, wow, I have special bonding with them. That is a happiness which I get from that. No no, definitely, I will come, make sure that I go, make sure that that thing reaches them. So it gives me inner satisfaction, some some energy. Many times, what happens is like, I will go on weekends also, you have some time over ration or something. Some other work. But that time also, that energy comes, because of that bonding. (R#4)

A couple of volunteers compare the bond that exists with beneficiaries as if they were family members of the volunteer. It has significant meaning when volunteers see beneficiaries as family members, because in India the bonding with family members is usually very strong (Kumar & Guruvayurappan, 2007).

> Most of them, are in touch with me. It's the bonding I share with them. They become more of my family members. I told about the blind man. He is more of a family member. I visit their house very often, I go and have lunch with them. His parents have become old and I talk to them, more of a family. It's the bonding. (R#3)

*Expectations of other people*

The 'role of other people' was already mentioned as a factor in the chapter about initiation motivation, where 'others' functioned as role models. But the role of other people appeared to be not only a factor contributing to initiation motivation; after the initiation process the volunteers are still sensitive to others. The expectations and positive perceptions that others have about them, keep volunteers motivated:

Every day I feel, these examples, and these type people around me, keep me motivated and they give me .. So that I won't drop down my enthusiasm and .. what I have. So that I won't lose my spirit. And people, the moment I walk into the school also I have a person called 'Subramani sir', who has motivated me he is already 70. He said: 'For your age, what you achieved, is great. And I do not want you to stop this'. 70 years old. And people expect more from me. They are not satisfied with what I have done. They expect more, you should do more, you should do more. I should do more. And this I think gets motivated by me. (R#27)

*Creating happiness*
Many respondents said that they wanted to make and see people happy. In many stories that were told, it was evident that they had brought happiness to their beneficiaries. Making other people happy resulted in the respondents feeling happy themselves:

So in essence you are giving them what they deserve. And that makes them happy. So I feel like I am feeling myself happy about whether I can see the smile on them. (R#25)

This effect of happiness coming back from receiver to giver is a positive side-effect that triggers the motivation to continue:

But that, the main thing is that while we are satisfying a wish, that happiness which we can see in their faces. That is really. So, that makes us come back, actually. (R#18)

*Seeing the fruits of your efforts*
The fifth aspect identified as a motivator to ongoing involvement is seeing that the efforts that were put in, brought visible and tangible results. Those visible and tangible results were often described as seeing that one's efforts had changed attitudes and behaviors of other people:

Because I feel that whatever efforts I am doing, be it in terms of teaching them, or or trying to bring the change that I want to see. I feel it's been fruitful. Seeing the way that they have changed as well. So, that keeps me going. Say that I have seen the change that I want to see. Let me do more. Let me volunteer more. (R#28)

*Being touched by others*
Being touched by others, where 'others' usually refers to beneficiaries, also exists in physical and emotional form, like 'touch' as a compassionate communicative act mentioned before. For the individuals who reported being emotionally touched, it happened in general during interactions with beneficiaries who had different kind of problems in their lives, but to whom the individual was able to make some difference. Here is a story of a respondent who was very much touched by a guy when he realized that he had been of great importance to him by making him feel relieved:

This guy actually wanted to talk to someone, talk with someone, who can help him, guide him. For all long, he is 20 years, 20 years old. Since his childhood he has never talked to his parents, he has never talked to you know, his fears. He was never able to share his experiences, his thoughts you know, with someone who is senior to him, yet who is approachable and who can guide him. Right? Just as an NGO it gave me the opportunity to interact with that student. Now, he called me and he shared a lot of personal problems with me and he actually wanted me to sort of guide him, how to go about it, it was very touching. And he told me that ya I have never spoken like this, with anyone before because I never, I never got the opportunity, now I found anyone to. So I would say this NGO, is really a very good platform for me to touch based that student. And sort of effects a change in his life. And if I tell him like, even whatever happens, if he calls me and tells this has happened, is important for us to apply, he accepts it. He actually accepts it and let go of

his worries. You know whatever his worry was, he actually feels a lot relieved, you know after talking to me. So I feel it's very touching. Not the only case, I had 2, 3 cases, like this. (R#23)

*Self-other identification*

One person confessed that he used to wake up at four A.M. to go to the school where he volunteers to ask the students to start studying. He did all this, because he can identify with the children in the school; as a child, he used to be in the same situation as where these children are now. He felt like the exam these children were preparing for, was his own examination:

> Because I do not feel that that person can pass because for him, I used to wake up in the morning at 4 'o clock. For their examination. I used to get down at my home, ready for the office, take my bag and go there to their school. Ask them to wake up and ask them to study. Like eh I that whole examination, I feel that is for me.  My aim is I want to give these 3 people life. In life, they will, they have to think back what they did in the higher education, definitely they will remember me. (R#1)

According to Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg (1997, p. 491), helping one's relational partner, given the expansion of self, is tantamount to helping oneself: "It is the commonality, not the compassion, that generates helping." The commonality between the children's position and the respondent's own position in childhood, made this volunteer do things as if he was doing these things to help himself.

*Doing it because it is a passion*

Passion is enthusiastic devotion to a cause, ideal or goal.  A considerable number of interviewees used the word 'passion' when talking about their volunteering involvement. Things that are done with passion are done because the respondents feel intrinsically motivated to do it, they love to do it or they do it because it comes from the heart:

> Things that you do with passion are entirely different, as in you go that extra mile. Even if you have to go till here, you will go till there. Because you have that passion, you want to do that. (R#37)

The fact that they do not get paid for it, is a very important factor. When his efforts would have been rewarded with money, it would be a problem for this respondent because it then becomes a formality, which does not come from the heart:

> That is what I feel as in you know, for me personally, money with it brings a lot of problems for me. As in you know, if money comes that becomes a formality for it becomes a job .. But without money, uh, it's something that you do with heart. Not just with the brain but also with the heart. (R#37)

*Experiencing calling (in retrospect)*

The two respondents who said that they were missing something in their life, got involved in volunteering without the intention that this was what would made their lives complete. While reflecting on their experiences during the interview, they said that volunteering was the missing part in their lives that brought them satisfaction:

> I got a chance, by reading this case in newspaper and everything with this one and then I got some satisfaction. Then I thought, this is the thing what I miss in my life! (R#6)

*Self identity statements*

A number of interviewees had (strong) convictions about who they are now or who they want to become in the future. Also statements about the kind of person that they do *not* want to become in the future were present. This woman for example does not want to be a superficial person:

> You know as I said it would be very easy for me to get sucked into this socializing and partying and that kind of. It's much easier. But I do not want to do that, that is not my bend of mind. It's too superficial. (R#14)

Another woman informed about the kind of person she never wants to become in the future:

> You know they got good families, but families that you know at the end .. them and just discarded them. So they do not really learn about how they went through life and how their children have abused them, beat them up, thrown them out of the house. Those are things that, touches you. And one thing makes you realize is that you do not want to ever be a person like that, you know. (R#26)

To summarize, ten factors that contributed to respondents' ongoing motivation to volunteer were found. The majority of them concerned work experiences that were interpersonal; these concerned particular happenings in the relationship between volunteer and beneficiary. The experience of emotions played a very central role in these relational experiences. Seeing smiles, energizing personal bonds, the creation of happiness and being touched are all happenings that appeal to the emotionality of the volunteers. Further, social expectations and the cognitive aspect that one's work has brought change in other people's lives are also motivational factors in the interpersonal sphere.

The remaining motivational factors are beliefs that came from within the volunteer; among these was the perception of volunteering work as one's calling and as a passion in life. The commonality between a beneficiary's situation and the volunteer's former situation, makes one do things for beneficiaries as if the volunteer was doing those things for himself. Furthermore, volunteering can help one to be the person whom one wants to be or does not want to become.

### 4.3.2 Critical incidents

Apart from the ten factors described above that appeared frequently, some individuals reported unique critical incidents that had significant meaning regarding their motivation to continue volunteering. I noticed during the interviews that these experiences were not just casual ones. Mainly because respondents were speaking in a significant more emotional way than that they were speaking during the other parts of the interviews.

Table 5 provides an overview of significant experiences in the lives of some respondents. All but one ('The Magic of Touch') happened during volunteering episodes. The 'Magic of Touch' happened before the respondent in casu was involved in volunteering, but he stated that 'Touch' is what he is looking forward to while he is doing volunteering work; he thinks that it is 'his motivator.'

*Table 5: Critical incidents*

| Critical incident | Quotes |
|---|---|
| *'Helper's High'* | 1) "Very close. I mean, within 1 or 2, 3 minutes we became very close. I do not know, Our hearts just connected, automatically. It was amazing feeling. I can't tell you, I can't express you properly. .. I never expected such kind of thing. Free tests, I mean it costs 1000 Rupees or 2000 Rupees, whatever! The way he is willing to help, that inspires me!"<br><br>2) "So when he came and he shaked my hand and he said that it's happened because of you, so it really gave it was like flying in the air you know. It really made me to feel that my, I was thirteen years fourteen years at that time, me doing the tenth standard. So at the fourteen years I did something very small, ok. So but that it gave this much impression for him and to adopt two kids. So those who have been victims in a tsunami." |
| *'The magic of Touch'* | 3) "I was trying to get the old man cross the road, with so much of noise, traffic going and all that. After he got to the other side, he did not say *'thanks'*, he did not say *'thanks'*, but he just gave me a small, you know, touch. That touch was a little heavy. He just pressed, looked, and then went. That spoke so much itself. Ok. It was you know, it was pretty eloquent actually, that particular touch to me. But I went and wrote it in my diary that time, I used to make a diary. I do not know where it has gone. The magic of Touch –I: The magic of Touch?- You know that touch meant so much to me. So these things, you know, these are some things, that I really look forward to. So, I think that is what the motivator is." |
| *Receiving blessings* | 4)"He said: *'Thanks a lot, God bless you',* with a lot of wishes and a lot of bay leaves, flowers, plums. And he gave me a lot of blessings. He is an old man, he gives so many blessings and I was like you feel so good. Isn't it strange someone who says *'God bless you, be happy'*. It's good. You feel like a lot of .. You asked me what motivates me? I think they themselves motivate me." |
| *Impacting others* | 5) "That was eh I do not know it was so encouraging to me in the very first year, that ok I am able to change lives like this. Then I thought you know I must continue this. There is no way I am going to stop, this. If I am able to change, even if that one child if I changed him away from criminal activity, I have done something good for society! You understand because you do not know one person with criminal mind might get in many more. It's everything multiplies you know. That was very encouraging. I never knew the child was sitting there with a knife, I never knew that."<br><br>6) "Ya I mean, so I mean I sometimes wonder how and how, how much you can be of an influence in someone else's life. In a positive way. You make a positive difference to someone's life. I never experienced this before. And after, ya, after joining this NGO, after interacting with these people, I I I feel that, I I I gained that experience. So you can also positively impact someone. And I mean you may be remembered for this, or you may not be remembered for that. It really does not matter. But all that matters is, you know that you have positively influenced someone. So that is, I do not know, I have never done that before. And when I did that and then I realized that I mean this kind of influence, it was really helping him out it was really help him shift his you know, life. So that I felt ya, really good." |
| *Spontaneous bonding with beneficiaries* | 7) "So it was two-way bonding which happened. And we, never went there to bond with them. It was purely professional that we went there to give them a session and come back. But we bonded well, and basically the human value was the line of human values is what that attached us together, rather than the cause or whatever it is. I mean it was more that they felt for us and we felt for them. So it was a one to one touch with each one of them."<br>8) "Many days it was actually after the interview telecasted, after 10 days the school was reopened. I came into the school, he rushed towards me and he came to me. |

He said *'sir I watched you on TV sir.'* I said, *'what? Which tv?'* *'No sir, that you help a small child with heart operation sir. I watched sir. Please sir, please keep doing good job sir. You should always help for all children, like us sir'.* Trust me, that day is a special day in my life. That is a special day in my life, I realize, I should live for these children. .. But this boy, I really because I even never felt, you'd have seen me, that aspect!!! And why why I started thinking, why did that child say, in that way. Why did he come to me and say *'Sir, help everyone sir.'* This is the satisfaction, the real satisfaction, the very .."

## 4.4 Identity consequences

The job content has been addressed in paragraph 4.2. The other component which constitutes work meaning according to Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) is the evaluation, or the interpreted value of respectively the job, the role and the self at work. Both the stories that volunteers told about significant experiences as well as direct answers to the questions what volunteering means to the respondents and what it means to them to be a volunteer, contained evaluations of the value of the volunteer job, role and self with respect to volunteering. The descriptions hereafter illustrate what consequences volunteering involvement has for the job-, role- and self identity of the volunteers in this study. Table 6 provides an overview.

*Table 6: Identity consequences*

| Theme | Sample Quotes |
| --- | --- |
| ***Job meaning*** | |
| The job is of high value: giving new life to people is worth a lot | "If I make a difference, I am giving a livelihood to a poor man. Because corruption, stopping corruption is nothing much; you are giving livelihood to a poor man. So in essence you are giving them what they deserve." |
| The job is the essence of life | "So I feel that this is the essence of my life, even though I do a lot of peripheral things outside, this I think is my essence, contributing to some long-lasting change. Which will be there even when you go. It's not past perfect. Something...." |
| Personal enrichment | "I see different aspects of life" |
| The job sorts out a 'ripple effect': actual beneficiaries will start helping other people | "Students, who get support from students. Once they got job, they will support another, like that way. So, he will inspire somebody else, around. So that is why it will grow. After some years, everybody will be there for everybody. It's a kind of motto of us." |
| It is 'fun' | "What I am thinking every day about it. Be perfect. Am I working on that, am I doing something to be perfect. Even more. Maybe that is why I always want to be challenging I would say, take more challenging, do more. Be different, be uh perfect. It takes time every day, for me, it's like fun. It's fun." |
| ***Role meaning*** | |
| The volunteer role has become internalized | "Importance I mean uh as I said, it's part of life. It's as simple as, you can't survive without water so I can't survive without volunteering." |
| Volunteering needs to be taken seriously | |
|     Dedication | "That is where your dedication comes and all. I have to make my volunteers that. So in the process I have to do a lot of talking, myself, to be you know, that (kind) I need to be good at everything, I need to be I need to know everything, So and then, a person taught to others and then I come out of that case. So I work on something else and then I take that completely. And then I pass the task to |

|                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| ---------------------------------------------------- | ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- |
|                                                      | someone else. That is how I have to work. That is the reason it takes lot of reading and you know."                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Commitment                                           | "Ya that is what I am assigned you know the goodness that I am doing around, it's something that you can't see immediately. Probably as a volunteer you have first to be committed. So that you have to like what you volunteer. If you do not like what you are volunteering, you cannot be committed. Commitment is very important" |
| Involvement                                          | "It's your involvement into it. Every case I have taken so far, every person whom I offered help, I do not see it as a help, I mean a problem and I am giving solutions. I take it to heart. I feel that it's someone whom I know very well. Unless you give that involvement it's not easy to get the things done." |
| The importance of social support                     | "With supporting family, we manage, somehow. Sometimes I have to rush just out of the house you know without having the dinner or lunch ready. Ok, but his family is supporting so, it's ok. Some day one meeting is there, whole day one meeting, I will be away. So I have usually my father in law staying with me. Then my husband arranges for the lunch and you know, haha, somehow manage." |
| Basic needs come before my volunteering              | "And the ma the other reason why I am able to spend so much time, to be very fair, personal needs are satisfied. You know my children, I have 2 children, my son is well-settled. My daughter is probably in two years she is also settled well and you know I have, I have definitely a sense of satisfaction, having achieved." |

**Self meaning**

|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| ------------------------------------------------------------ | -------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------- |
| Becoming a happy and satisfied person                        | "End of the day when I sleep, I am happy. I live a contented life, I have no regrets."                                                                                                                                                         |
| Becoming a more meaningful and good human being by doing things for other people | "So, in all, all these things put together, are what you do to others, right? And that is being unselfish. So all these things give me, a lot of satisfaction. And I am very convinced that ya, life is more meaningful only with all this, than with other things, right." |
| Sense of belonging to humanity                               | "It's like human nature, it should be there. He is also like you, he is also human being, he is also .. You should not be like he is not related to me, why should I help him? Human nature, that is it. I can't tell the exact reason. It's, a feeling. If everybody in the world has that feeling, our world will be ultimate." |
| Becoming a confident and proud person                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|   Confidence                                                 | "So maybe five years ago I wouldn't have talked with so much of confidence. But now I feel yes, volunteering has made me a more confident person."                                                                                            |
|   Pride                                                      | "There is some justification. Ya I feel proud that really I am not wasting time, I am helpful to the many, brother, my other colleagues, who are in need of me."                                                                               |
| Becoming committed                                           | "So I have my deadlines, I have my commitment and I try to keep that. I hate it when I can't keep them. I do not like it. I do not feel good when I can't keep my commitment, so I For me, it's like any other job, ya."                        |
| Feeling of high self-worth by doing things for people unrelated to you | "I feel that right now I feel that I am doing something, haha than for others also. All what I do is for myself or my family also, I have to do, I am doing it. So this is what I can do other than that. For others or for the society. Like that I feel very important." |
| Creating an immortal identity                                | "This is how we have learnt how to leave our footprints. When we go we will leave these footprints and we'll go with very good memories."                                                                                                      |

**4.4.1 Job meaning**

**4.4.1.1 The job is of high value**

Volunteering gives the opportunity to do very important things for other people. Through volunteering work, the respondents are able to give new life to people. Of course, some people have more possibilities than others to directly see their influence on the health and life of other people through their volunteering work. Among the respondents, the doctor who provides free medical care to underprivileged people has better opportunity to see that his actions have brought new life to people, than the volunteer who teaches children. But what happened was that both doctor ánd teacher told that they can give or bring back life to people. The teacher frames his work as "*Important means, because I am giving even one or two people new life, that will be helpful for them.*" The doctor can give back different life roles to one person:

> Now that has brought back her life one, mother for six children, wife for the husband and housewife who can take care of the whole house! And mind you, I have done nothing. I had spare that ten Rupees very easily, anytime. If it could save the life. It's so true, of all illnesses, and when I knew, that .. and it took me hardly two minutes. With two minutes of my life was spent to get back a mother, to get back the housewife, to get back a life, why not? I spend whole of the day and that is why I do it. (R#7)

This doctor frames the work that he has done to give back life to the woman, as if it was 'nothing.' And in fact, it was indeed a small effort for him: Ten Rupees, which he could easily save, plus two minutes of his life. Like other respondents, who also talked about the high value that their volunteering work has said, the work gets its importance by looking at what the efforts mean to the lives of the beneficiaries. This volunteer organized free surgeries for people with cataract (avoidable blindness):

> The blessings which you see from their eyes, they think, you are super human being. And that humility in you makes you feel that I have done nothing! It's just the networking I had, it's just a facility which exists. The hospital does not belong to me, the doctor does not belong to me, the medicines do not belong to me. It's just we're putting these things which are available together, to make your life feel better. So the feeling which comes on the old man's eyes, when he comes out of the operation he can see things much clearer than what he could. It's unimaginable. (R#29)

How small the effort was for the volunteer is of no importance to make it very valuable for the beneficiaries. And in these examples it was basically time, a little amount of money and networking that were put in by the volunteers.

**4.4.1.2 The job is the essence of life**

The volunteering work is of as high value to the volunteers themselves, as it is to their beneficiaries. For a number of volunteers, volunteering work had become the essence of their life. For one respondent, volunteering means so much to him now that he cannot survive without it. It started as a hobby, but it has become part of day-to-day life now. His own explanation for this is that he gained a lot from volunteering, more than he had given. Gaining in terms of awareness about how privileged he is compared to his beneficiaries, happiness and a change in personality.

For others, volunteering is also very essential. One person would have had "*Just a mechanical artificial life*" if he was not into volunteering. Being involved in volunteering enhances the quality of life and it makes life more meaningful:

It broadens the mind, it helps living a full life. It helps me live an entirely interested life. It keeps me interested in life. Certainly, it keeps me interested in so many things, that I do not have a dull moment. I've always got something to do, or write, or read. So I am living a full life. (R#14)

For many, a life without volunteering would not be a complete life.  Even for the nineteen respondents who have a professional job (mostly in information technology related professions) besides their volunteering involvement, volunteering work is more meaningful to them than their professional work is. This was largely because of the fact that volunteering gave them a lot more satisfaction and happiness than their professional work did:

If I am going to my office and 365 days I just keep seeing my monitor, doing something on the computer, I would think that it's not a complete life that I am living, I will be missing something. And if I put my community work in action and if I see my output or if I see a person happy because of me at the end of the day, I will have more happiness before IT. (R#15)

### 4.4.1.3 Personal enrichment

There is even more to volunteering according to the majority of the volunteers. As just mentioned, it makes life more meaningful and the happiness and satisfaction derived from it contribute to volunteering being the essence of life. Besides that, there is another reason why the volunteers attach a high value to their volunteering work. It is because it brings them personal enrichment: volunteering gives them an enhanced perspective on life, personal growth and learning. This happens especially through interacting with beneficiaries and experiencing how life is for them. Stories related to personal enrichment were abundant. A few excerpts that capture how respondents formulated an enhanced perspective on life: *"I see different aspects of life"* and *"It helps to see the bigger picture of life. That it is not just about you and your problems and your issues and all that."* Personal growth is indicated by the following quotations: *"I have improved as a person"* and *"By working together in society, you have to come down and adjust. It's helping me in developing my character."* In addition to this, two respondents said that they have learnt to be more patient.

A majority of volunteers told that they have learnt from their beneficiaries in one or the other way. Interacting with beneficiaries is inspiring and getting to know their life experiences helps to relativize one's own problems:

She inspires me and that way, so it's not my experience. That is her life experience. But her life experiences are helping me, in tackling my problems in a much trivial way. Rather than thinking about it days and days, I am getting stressed. I am probably able to think my problems in life, in a much lighter way. So basically that is what I meant, that is when I use the statement you know, I can learn from others' experiences as well. (R#25)

Another volunteer has a particular respect for people from grassroots, whom he thinks of as *"most intelligent people."* He said that the tendency is to look down on people from the grassroots. But he has realized that he can learn from them and the way they survive with the least of resources:

Ehm they have, there's a most intelligent people, in my view. As in you know, with no background of education, with no tools, they still .. life is. For example you know, eh that is been one of the biggest lessons for me, in life. As in do not look down on anyone, everyone has their own individual .. And I especially .. from the grassroots, the kind of knowledge they have, the kind of innovative solutions they have. They might have very very limited resources, but they make the best use of their resources. .. So I believe there is a lot of knowledge that is not captured, traditional knowledge, which you can learn from the interactions with them. (R#37)

One respondent made a comment that volunteering means helping herself, because of the learning experiences that volunteering brings her. She paradoxically states that she is not helping others by helping them, but that she is helping herself instead:

> So that is why at the end of the day I feel is I am helping myself. It's a learning for me. So it's not like I am helping others by helping them, right? It's like I am helping myself. (R#36)

While the above emphasizes the learning for the volunteer, there were also volunteers who saw learning as mutual learning between volunteer and beneficiary:

> Uhm, it was pretty good talking to all candidates, we can learn more from them, how they feel in life. Pretty challenging for both of us. I can learn certain things from them, they learn certain things from me." (R#15)

**4.4.1.4 The work sorts out a 'ripple effect': actual beneficiaries will start helping other people**

The meaningfulness of volunteering work was not only derived from the belief that volunteering is valuable for both beneficiary and volunteer. Apart from the above described positive outcomes it has for both groups, many of the respondents had a goal in mind that they wanted to strive for by means of volunteering work. The desire 'to make a change' and 'to make a difference' was expressed frequently by the volunteers. Throughout, the belief that their work could indeed influence and change society, environment and behaviors and attitudes of other people got confirmed. The critical element that gave volunteers the feeling that they have really brought some change is receiving feedback:

> When you go to a school and the principal says that 'oh' and does not have words to explain how much they feel [the civic awareness organization] has changed their children. Or when you go to the traffic police department and they have tears in their eyes tears of gratitude. Those are the gestures that make you feel that ok, that is the indicator I would say, for to me that ok, you know we are doing it. We are making a difference. (R#9)

As the talking and enquiring about making a change developed from the desire to make a change, to getting the feedback that a change had indeed been made, respondents ultimately came up with an end-goal or aim that they wanted to reach. This was called 'ripple effect' by the civic awareness volunteers. It means that the impact of teaching about civic awareness will directly change the beneficiaries whom were taught; these beneficiaries in turn will impact a wider circle of people, so that more people will get affected and change:

> And when those children change, definitely they are going to start changing the lives of others, too. Maybe in their home, or their friends. You know, the the change goes on as we say 'a ripple effect'. (R#13)

To sort out a ripple effect was not only an important meaning of the work for the civic awareness volunteers; others also told about end-goals that were related to this effect. Although they did not use the term ripple effect, what they meant was about the same:

> That is where I want to mobilize people. I want to create awareness amongst people. So that for individuals, they can do it. They can do it themselves. Ultimately what end goal is, we are making lives of people better. I cannot see it. I can't you know if you ask me how many people you have done it? I can't say that, right now. But I know I am working towards it. (R#5)

Other expressions that were used were *"Needy people who start helping other needy"* and beneficiaries who will inspire other people so that *"After some years, everybody will be there for everybody."*

**4.4.1.5 It is 'fun'**

A couple of volunteers told about the joy that they experienced while doing volunteering work. Finding happiness and satisfaction could be seen as related to fun, but those two were some of the feelings that resulted from doing volunteering work. Experiencing joy however was a feeling attached to particular activities itself. Interacting with children was experienced as enjoyable. It kept one volunteer *"young at heart"*, and another one became *"kid with the kids"* when playing with them in an orphanage. This volunteer finds it fun to be challenged by difficult questions that are sometimes asked by children in the classroom:

> Of course classroom sessions are the most satisfying .. the interactions with the children are the best part about. -I: What is so special about the interactions?- It's just fun you know! I mean you, children ask you very difficult questions sometimes. (R#10)

**4.4.1.6 Summary job meaning of volunteers**

Volunteering work means doing very important things for other people, while it is only a small effort for the volunteer. By looking at what the help means to the beneficiary, the work gets an enormous value. It relates to one of the three core aspects of meaning making, namely what is one's contribution and value to other people? The value and contribution to other people is evident for these volunteers: giving back life to people and giving back eyesight are very manifest contributions. Another core aspect of meaning, namely how one relates to other people, is addressed by many volunteers. Being open to the life experiences of beneficiaries and respecting their knowledge means a learning process for the volunteers. Volunteers indicate that they learn from interactions with beneficiaries, that it is fun and that it leads to personal growth and a broader perspective on life. Moreover, the interactions are inspiring for both volunteer and beneficiary. The desire to make a difference and to make a change, and ultimately sorting out a 'ripple effect' while volunteering, provided the volunteers with a sense of purpose. For some it has made their lives more meaningful. Finding happiness and satisfaction in volunteering play an important role in why volunteering is perceived as meaningful. The job meaning of volunteers can be represented by the concise statement 'Helping oneself by helping others', derived from a quotation of one of the volunteers.

**4.4.2 Role meaning**

**4.4.2.1 The volunteer role has become internalized**

When asking the respondents about what it means for them to be a volunteer or how important the volunteering work is in their lives, a considerable number came up with the answer that volunteering has become part of them or part of their identity. Some could not even think of a life without volunteering anymore:

> So but overall, it's basically, it's part of me and it cannot be taken away. Because I find happiness in it, so it's just part of me. It's just basically now it has become day to day life. Earlier it was a hobby, apart from my life, but now it's the day to day life. (R#25)

Like this volunteer, there were others for whom volunteering was also a peripheral activity in the beginning, but over time it had changed from a peripheral to a central role. And for some it even resulted in the volunteer role becoming part of the self.

**4.4.2.2 Volunteering needs to be taken seriously**

Further, the respondents drew inferences regarding their thoughts and convictions concerning the role of volunteer. Some of these considerations were put in a particular determined way. Volunteering needs to be taken seriously; a significant effort is needed in order to make things happen. Dedication, commitment and involvement were the keywords that were used to express this belief. What was remarkable is that quite a number of respondents said that they did not know how to go about volunteering in the beginning. Volunteering is something that people learned by doing: *"So till six months we were like clueless, we were clueless. We just learned how to do volunteering in those six months."* This same respondent continued saying he had learnt how to be a good volunteer:

> It's not that easy as we say. It's something tough. You should give your efforts. If you are doing this for fun, it's not worth. You should put your efforts in it. You should be serious about it. You should be dedicated about it. Then only it's gonna happen. (R#4)

Commitment towards the volunteering work formed an important issue to some volunteers. Since volunteering is sort of 'giving', where you do not expect anything in return, there should be something within yourself that makes you want to do it. Here we see what happened when the external reward in the form of money, was lacking:

> So what happens is, since this volunteering is something that you know, is something that we are not getting paid basically, we're not getting paid. And so it vanish. Suppose if they have office work at their office they will say sorry, I cannot some. And no one is there to monitor them, no one is there to .. ish them to tell like this is not right I mean if you have a commitment, you should, shouldn't uh lay off to that. (R#23)

This was an observation made by a volunteer who saw that other volunteers in his NGO did not show up when they had office work to do. He finds that once you decide to start volunteering, it becomes a commitment that should be hold on to. Then, several interviewees talked about that it is important to put your time and energy in the cause that was chosen and that you have to give your hundred percent for it. Involvement is needed to get things done. One volunteer told a story which shows how her involvement had grown over time. In the beginning, she was just spending a number of hours for her cause. The volunteer cause grew on her more on more and her involvement changed to how much work she has to do to achieve certain things:

> When I joined (civic awareness organization) I did not think I would get involved this deeply. I was gonna spend three hours and that was it. But the whole cause grows on you and you want to you know, have the best you can give out of yourself for the program. And so my hours of commitment growing over the period of time and then it did not become that I had committed three hours it became as what I want to achieve. And how much I need to sit here to achieve that. (R#9)

**4.4.2.3 The importance of social support**

The presence of social support is one of the conditions under which volunteering work can be done to full extent. A tension between one's social responsibilities and doing volunteering work exists. Volunteering work can only be done when support from significant other people, mostly other family members, is present:

> Yeah actually I do not have any responsibility for my family, to take care of my parents. Actually my brother is there, that is why he is taking care of my parents. So he is my friend. Because of him only I am going to spend this many hours for this work. Otherwise I have to take care of so many responsibilities. I do not have anything, so I am doing for this. So I can I think I can continue for lifelong with this kind of .. (R#6)

### 4.4.2.4 Basic needs come before volunteering

The fourth and final category that emerged from the data concerning the role of volunteer, is that basic needs have to be satisfied in order to be able to spend much time in volunteering. The basic human needs that are referred to, as formulated by Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Basic Human Needs, are physiological needs and safety needs; the first two layers of the pyramid:

> No I am not saying that, I am not saying that but to be very honest, to be able to contribute so much time in volunteerism is only because I am financially secure. Ok so I guess I am privileged to not have to work. (R#9)

However, one remarkable exception needs to be mentioned here. Since the sense of happiness derived from volunteering involvement is even stronger than the urge to take up a paid job for the following respondent, he depends on the income of his sons for his livelihood:

> He told that he is very happy to help others. He will if he has any personal work, he will prefer social work first, next to his job. Now at present also he is not working and no .. His sons are working and his livelihood is his sons earnings only. But he gets more satisfaction, personal satisfaction only in social work.[2] (R#16)

He considers his role as volunteer to be too important to take up a paid job instead.

### 4.4.2.5 Summary role meaning of volunteers

Volunteering is serious work, despite that it is done unpaid. Exactly because it is unpaid, it requires serious dedication, involvement and commitment. Because there are no material rewards like a monthly pay cheque. It is a kind of work that one needs to learn how to do; one needs to learn how to be a good volunteer. After having gone through the first phase of learning and the realization that volunteering is work to be taken seriously, volunteering brings happiness and satisfaction. This can be described as a form of long-lasting, eudemonic happiness. The consequence for some volunteers was that the volunteer role has become part of one's identity. To be able to be a devoted volunteer however, support from other people is required and for most volunteers, fulfilment of basic needs comes before engagement in volunteering.

### 4.4.3 Self meaning

### 4.4.3.1 Becoming a happy and satisfied person

'Self-satisfaction' was the most frequently appearing code in the data; respondents gave many examples of instances wherein they felt happy. It does not come as a surprise therefore that these frequent experiences of happiness have also made the volunteers happy and satisfied people. Satisfaction and happiness were already mentioned in the paragraph role meaning as 'volunteering is the essence of life.' Yet, this sense of happiness and satisfaction goes further than that, because the respondents also drew inferences about the self; they have become happy and satisfied people now:

> But since I volunteer, I am satisfied, I see so many people, I am changing uh many lives in whatever little way I can. So, that makes me feel so good that ya I took the right step one year back, saying that, let me not just feel bad about the problems but let me do something about it. (R#28)

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[2] translated from 'Kannada', a South-Indian language, by a translator during the interview

**4.4.3.2 Becoming a more meaningful and good human being by doing things for other people**

A small number of volunteers found the purpose of self, the purpose for existing, in volunteering. Being unselfish is what they wanted to be, and what they accomplished to be by doing things to other people through volunteering:

> The purpose, to find purpose for what I am. Before, I pass away there is something I have to do,  I have to pay back. -I: Sorry? Before you pass away, ya then?- Before we end our lives, something we have to do. I do not have to be selfish for myself. (R#3)

Apart from these few volunteers who found the purpose for who they are in volunteering, a general tendency that emerged was the creation of a positive identity: *"That gives you a good, great feeling of being a, good human being"*. The respondents in this study have become meaningful human beings, good people who felt both useful to others and good about themselves.  In their stories they stressed that a consequence of volunteering is that a positive identity can be created; it makes it possible to do something good, be useful and to feel nice about yourself: *"More than anything, you feel that uh you feel useful, you feel useful if you work as a volunteer, in that"* and *"Like I told you that feel good thing is there about yourself."* The lack of monetary rewards is compensated by the positive identity that this volunteer construed: *"For us we don't get paid. So the only thing that encourages us is ok, I have done something good."*

Regardless whether people have learnt something from her or regardless whether a difference has been made or not, this volunteer construed a self identity that can only be seen as positive:

> I do not know how much difference I make. I do not know really how much effect I have on people and what people, you know, learn from interacting with me. But it's something that I will feel, I am doing, you know. Whether everyone says it or not, I do not really care, but I feel it, that I am doing something, for someone. So, that is very nice that is a nice feeling. (R#26)

**4.4.3.3 Sense of belonging to humanity**

Through participating in volunteering, respondents acquired a sense of belonging to humanity. In fact, two ways of saying that one belongs to humanity, were present. The first one was by making statements that by performing certain actions, it is evidenced that one belongs to humanity:

> I found, the closest to humanity when they are suffering, if you can take care of them, you are doing something that is closest to humanity. (R#7)

The second one contained statements that humanity is important and that it should be regarded as important by everyone:

> More than that, more than being calling ourselves as an Indian it's like we call a good humanity, so following being a good humanity is more important thing. So that is what (civic awareness organization) is taught me and I am going and teaching that. (R#8)

Further, different explanations of what being human means were provided by the respondents. For one, being human means transcending beyond one's national identity; everybody is equal, no matter which country he comes from. Another respondent said that being human means that one should also help people who are unrelated to him. The respondents with a religious point of view told that they served humanity and by serving humanity, they indirectly served God: *"Because all human beings are His embodiments only, we are His creatures. So if you serve, indirectly we are serving Him also."* This

person continued by telling that it is the moral duty of a human being to help other human beings who are suffering:

> So it's not a part of our program, but still, as a human being, suffering to human being, you know when they are we are eating food for three times, they are not able to get food. So it's our bonded duty, moral duty, to approach them, give whatever shelter we can. (R#31)

### 4.4.3.4 Becoming a confident and proud person

Seven respondents said that they had become a more self-confident person thanks to being involved in volunteering. An increased knowledge on topics like civic awareness or human rights usually was antecedent to this increased self-confidence.

> Many things, also be it working with the eh youth on the .. and motivating them to do something good. Even the elderly, motivating them to come out of what they have undergone. Making them feel uh good or complete a better life. So that in turn gives a lot of self-confidence at the end of the day. (R#28)

Implications of this increased self-confidence were for example that one was able to make a difference on a larger scope. Two civic awareness volunteers said that they were able to make a difference even in their neighbourhood.

Also, a number of volunteers reported that they feel proud because of the work that they do. These feelings of pride mainly arose from the individual's belief that he has been contributing to the society or that he has been helpful or has done something good to other people. Additional to this, for some the feeling of pride arose when conversing with other people and hearing positive reactions from other people:

> Every colleague, all of my colleagues know what I am doing in weekends and something. They will ask me on Monday that we are starting at the week 'what you did in the weekend?' So it's, I feel some proud what I did in the weekend. (R#6)

The same applies for another volunteer, for whom seeing that he could make a stranger smile, made him feel proud. Seeing that he could make a stranger smile, made him realize his potential:

> Ya individually also I take pride in what I do so eh individually also I feel ya I mean, because it's also making me realize my potential. Because four years back, I never knew that I have this potential, that I could make anybody smile, within this matter of half an hour or one hour spending time with them, that to a stranger. Probably her *(points at the woman sitting next to him with whom he is engaged)*, I spend time with her, I can make her smile. But a stranger I mean, it's uh good I mean it's something uh I never knew that I have this potential, it's like self-realization of my uh uh undiscovered or unexplored potential. (R#25)

### 4.4.3.5 Becoming committed

Commitment was already previously addressed as part of the role meaning, but is it also a consequence for a couple of volunteers' self meaning. These were the volunteers who described themselves in terms of "*I am committed*" and "*I have my commitment*". They were convinced that it was their commitment towards the volunteering work that made them successful and persistent in achieving certain work-related goals. One volunteer said that her commitment kept her organization going. For the following volunteer, sticking to his commitment means not only talking about things, but doing things and taking it to the heart:

> Ehm, because I feel I am more committed. More committed and they expect more. I am not a person who talks and who end of the day, just saying that no, sorry. I stick to my commitment, I take it to heart and I

take it where I go. This is one .. because, uuh it's it does not answer this. I am giving you from my own uh thought. It's an answer we have got from many people. Just before I am more committed, successful in that. (R#27)

Phrases like *"But the whole cause grows on you", "during my absence, I am there, but my heart will be here only"* and *"I stick to my commitment, I take it to heart and I take it where I go"'* as in the quotation above, clearly refer to the affective component of commitment: a person's emotional attachment with an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). In the current study, it refers to the volunteering cause, organization or beneficiary.

### 4.4.3.6 Feeling of high self-worth by doing things for people unrelated to you
In Indian society, fulfilling one's role duty as part of the social responsibilities that one has, is considered as highly important (Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990). In the context of helping behavior, It is regarded as 'normal' to help family members and other people with whom one is closely related, in case these related people are in need of something. For example, it is inherent to the role duty of 'child' to provide assistance to elderly parents in case there is a need. This is not a matter of personal choice, but an obligation that needs to be complied to. One respondent sees this relationship as reciprocal: *"See, the case is, why you look after your family? Because definitely they look after you better. Why will you always get something for your family, because they take care of you."*

The volunteering activities performed by the respondents in this research, are all aimed at beneficiaries who are not blood-related or otherwise closely related to them. It is exactly this 'doing things for people unrelated to you', which is in fact going beyond one's role duty, which gives respondents a sense of high self-worth. This respondent felt that he is wanted and accepted very much because of his volunteering work:

> Someone who is not related to me. See, anyone, any person whom you meet, they'll be definitely will be living for someone who is very related with them. It might be mother, father, wife, lover, somebody. But today, lot of people, who are nowhere related to me. They want me so much, they accept me so much. They want me so much probably because of my work. (R#27)

### 4.4.3.7 Creating an 'immortal' identity
The final category relating to volunteers' self meaning that emerged from the data, is the desire to construct an 'immortal self' that can live on after death. A couple of volunteers expressed this desire, one of them framing this desire as 'selfish':

> So I have that selfishness, that people should remember me, even after death. So, one more moral which my mom taught me is, you won't live, after your death, by what you take. You always live, after your death, by what you gave.

Shneidman (1995) distinguishes fives ways in which the self can live on after death; one of them is symbolically immortalizing the self, in the memories of those who are still living. This is exactly what a couple of volunteers in this study wanted to achieve: to be remembered by the people who will be left behind.

### 4.4.3.8 Summary self meaning of volunteers
Volunteers viewed themselves in a very positive light after they started volunteering. Doing something good for other people and contributing to other people is something that made the volunteers feel good and useful. They described themselves as happy and satisfied people thanks to their

volunteering involvement. Further, feelings of high self-worth arose because of doing things for people who are unrelated to the volunteers. Because volunteering goes beyond one's duty of taking care of family members and it is therefore seen as doing more than what one is supposed to do 'normally'. That realization leads to a feeling of high self-worth. One volunteer regarded being unselfish as the purpose of her life, and volunteering is her means to construe a self identity as unselfish. To take care of people who are suffering is framed as an action that connects one to humanity, and some frame it as a moral duty of human being. By serving humanity, God is also served, because humans are His embodiments, according to the volunteers with a religious point of view. Feelings of pride and self-confidence arose from volunteering involvement because of various reasons: from an increased knowledge on volunteering topics, from a feeling of competence when capable to better beneficiaries' lives, from telling other people about one's volunteering work and from realizing one's potential. Then, some volunteers have become committed people who take the things they do to their heart. Their commitment is the reason why they have become successful volunteers according to their own saying. A few volunteers expressed the desire to create an 'immortal' identity.

## 5  DISCUSSION

In this study, the work meaning of individuals involved in volunteering was explored by focusing on sensemaking of work experiences and identity consequences that emerged as a result. Conclusions are drawn regarding two concerns. First, conclusions about the work meaning and identity consequences of volunteers will be drawn. This is followed by conclusions related to the process of volunteering: the role of critical incidents and direct consequences as contributors to identity development. Further, theoretical contributions and practical implications of the findings will be presented as well as limitations of the current study and recommendations for further research.

**Conclusions**

### 5.1 Work meaning and identity consequences of volunteering involvement

*Happiness and satisfaction as by-products*
In this study, the work meaning of volunteers was investigated by addressing the job content of volunteers as well as the significance, or interpreted value of the job, the role and the self in volunteering context. The general inference that can be drawn from each of these three constituents is that volunteering leads to happiness and satisfaction in life. Happiness and satisfaction namely are the ultimate consequences of engaging in volunteering work for the volunteers participating in this study. Happiness and satisfaction emerged as key concepts in volunteers' experiences and meaning making; it seemed to be the 'end-station' to where volunteering has led the volunteers. Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing (2010) put the following statement:

"Happiness as a long-term process of meaning making and identity development through actualization of potentials and pursuit of subjectively relevant goals. Happiness usually arises as a by-product of cultivating activities that individuals consider as important and meaningful."

In this study, happiness and satisfaction are the by-products of engaging in meaningful volunteering pursuits. None of the volunteers said that they were on a quest for happiness and satisfaction. But they found it, nonetheless. By reflecting on volunteers' job meaning, role meaning and self meaning, it is explained why volunteering is perceived as meaningful work with happiness and satisfaction as by-products.

*Job meaning: content*
The core of volunteers' job meaning is the relational accomplishment in the form of noticing, connecting and responding through acts of compassionate communication to relieve their beneficiaries' suffering. In these acts of compassionate communication, the importance of non-verbal communication in interactions becomes very well apparent. We saw the volunteer doctor who touches his patients as a matter of blessing and reassuring them, and other volunteers, who just need to 'be present' to make a tremendous difference to the beneficiary's life. These are the symbolifications of taking care of the beneficiary; it gives him the feeling that life is still possible and that his life counts. The importance of non-verbal compassionate communication in volunteering is noticed in other research as well; Vernon (1981) describes the role of the volunteer in caring for terminally ill patients: "Merely recognizing and feeling the presence of the other can be an important communication act. Nothing needs to be said. Sitting with, holding the hand of, touching the brow of, another person can

be a tremendous recharging of the 'spirit' for the recipient. The request to 'hold me' should be honoured."

Compassionate communication is not only important in volunteering work, but also in the broader context of suffering in organizations. Experiencing compassionate communication at work is important for positive emotion and affective organizational commitment and suggests that the effect of experiencing compassion is not only a momentary affective event but also accumulates to leave a lasting trace on organization members (Lilius, Worline, Maitlis,, Kanov, Dutton, & Frost, 2008).

**Identity consequences: job meaning, role meaning and self meaning**

*Job meaning*

The meaningfulness of the volunteer job derives from finding a sense of purpose in volunteering; volunteers said that they want to make a difference, to make a change, to help needy people and to make people happy. For many of the volunteers these desires formed a purpose that made their lives more meaningful. The majority of the volunteers who were employed in a paid job, said that volunteering was more meaningful than their paid job because of the happiness and satisfaction derived from volunteering. By looking at what their volunteering work means to the beneficiaries, the work gets an enormous value. A remarkable finding was that a very small amount of money and just a little time can make a tremendous difference in the life of a beneficiary. One's value and contribution to other people is a fundamental aspect of meaning making and the volunteering job provides a very clear answer: giving new life to people. Volunteering is experienced as enjoyable and it provided the volunteers with learning and personal growth; a few respondents told that their personality had changed to better because of the work. Increased knowledge, a broader perspective of life, awareness about how privileged one is, the ability to relativize one's own problems in life, patience and enhanced social skills are the main findings relating to learning. It were mostly the interactions with beneficiaries and getting to know how life is for them which brought volunteers this growth. This finding is consistent with a basic assumption of relational spirituality (Faver, 2004), which describes that interacting with people with a different worldview is essential for personal and social transformation.

*Role meaning*

The individuals in this study have said that the role of volunteer should be taken serious and dedication, commitment and involvement towards the work are important. These are the requirements to become successful volunteers. For most of them, the volunteer role has become part of their identity and the role identity of volunteer is salient now. Initial motivation to volunteer should be taken into account here; for instance, quite a number of participants said that they wanted to use their time in a better way, meaning that they wanted to change behaviors aiming at hedonistic pleasure for pursuits that were more meaningful for them. In terms of Seligman's (2002) differentiation between living a Pleasant life, a Good life and a Meaningful life, the shift to a meaningful life has been made for a majority of the respondents, because the volunteer role proved to be meaningful. Steger (2008) found that pursuing eudemonic activity had a sustained positive relation with the next day's well-being, particularly meaning in life. In his study, two of a total of seven "eudemonic acitivies" were operationalized as 'volunteering time' and 'listening carefully to another's point of view.' The high degree of happiness and satisfaction that the volunteers reported are the results of living a meaningful life, which is associated with the most lasting form of happiness according to Seligman. It is eudemonic happiness, a form of happiness that is achieved by living virtuously and attaining goals that have intrinsic merit. Dedication, commitment and involvement can be regarded as the virtuous

qualities that volunteers should portray in their enactment of the role in order to experience this kind of happiness.

*Self meaning*

The self as source for experiencing meaning in work appeared to be an important contributor to the meaningfulness of volunteering work. Three characteristics of meaningful work, namely the need for belongingness, self-esteem and transcendence emerged as consequences for self meaning. Through volunteering, the participants have broadened their circle of concern. Personal concerns of fulfilling family duties and paid employment were the main focus for individuals before volunteering involvement. During involvement, volunteers provided help to beneficiaries who were unrelated to themselves, which gave rise to feelings of high self-worth. To help people who are suffering is an action that connects one to humanity and which spurs a sense of belonging to humanity. Serving humanity means serving God for the volunteers with a religious point of view. The volunteering job has helped individuals to transcend the self and to include unrelated people, humanity, God and the environment. The work is framed as 'doing good', it is unpaid work without material benefits; a positive self identity, a happy and satisfied self, confidence and pride is what volunteers received in return for their help and contributions to other people. Affective commitment towards beneficiaries and the volunteer organization developed as a result.

**5.2 The role of direct consequences and critical incidents as contributors to identity consequences**

During volunteering involvement, important experiences happened. These significant work experiences, in this study named as 'direct consequences' and 'critical incidents', can be seen as contributors to the identities of the volunteers. The notion of volunteering work as calling could be seen as the most striking finding of this study. The two participants who missed something in their lives found in volunteering work the thing that they missed. For them, it was a secular calling, whereas the volunteers who expressed *"Service to mankind, is service to God"*, pursue a sacred calling, which imbues work with both meaning and meaningfulness through the sense that one is serving God and meeting the needs of the larger community (Rosso et al., 2010). The participants started with volunteering without expectations, having no clue that volunteering would change them, and that it would eventually play a central role in their lives. For some, volunteering now is a basic need: *"It's as simple as, you can't survive with water so I can't survive without volunteering"*, a calling: *"Now, it's eight years after that incident that I got into and I am totally, I feel it's my life calling. That I am addressing, being in this organization"*, or life: *"It's a life for me, it's become life."*

With respect to the direct consequence of 'seeing the fruits of your efforts', other research confirms that this can give raise to meaningfulness: Britt, Adler & Bartone (2001) mention that meaningfulness arises out of an encounter with the direct results of work, a growing experiential understanding of why that work is important. With respect to the 'bonding with the beneficiaries' can be said that these bonds are meaningful not only because it appeals to the need for relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000), known to be one of the basic human needs; when looking at the nature of these relationships, we see that they are of a very special kind for the volunteers that bring them happiness and satisfaction. The bonds are 'emotional', 'based on human values' and 'special' as can be seen from these examples: *"So the kind of emotional bonding that happens with them", "The line of human values that attached us together"* and *"Wow I have special bonding with them. That energy comes because of that bonding"*.

These bonds can be typified as 'high-quality connections' (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), which form a source of meaningfulness in itself.

Concerning the critical incident wherein volunteers experienced that they could directly impact their beneficiaries' lives, namely 'impacting others', literature related to prosocial motivation offers a useful explanation. Grant (2007) proposes that both 'perceived job impact on beneficiaries' and 'contact with beneficiaries' can lead to experiencing self-identities in terms of competence, self-worth and self-determination. The depth, breadth, frequency and physical proximity of the contacts with beneficiaries are important dimensions that determine to what extent people develop affective commitment towards beneficiaries, which in turn is related to the motivation to make a prosocial difference. The contacts between volunteers and beneficiaries in this study were emotional connections, face to face and on a regular basis, enacted in the form of compassionate communication. Based on Grant's (2007) propositions and Lilius' et al. (2008) research evidence, these contacts should lead to high affective commitment. Indeed, in this study volunteers indicated that they have become committed volunteers now: becoming committed is an outcome for self meaning in this study. Also perceived impact on beneficiaries contributes to the motivation to make a prosocial difference. Volunteers said that they were *"making a difference"*, *"changing lives"* and *"positively impact someone"*, which all refer to perceived impact. Grant stated that identity outcomes of the motivation to make a prosocial difference are competence, social worth and self-determination. In this study, 'impacting others' and the '(spontaneous) bonding with the beneficiaries' were the factors that have led to volunteers describing their identities in terms of high self-worth and confidence.

*Jolts as prompts to identity work*
Finally, the 'direct consequences' and 'critical incidents' in this study may have contributed to the identity development of the volunteers in another way: they could have functioned as "jolts." Jolts are prompts to identity work and they can activate identity construction (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). Dutton et al. (2010) propose that positive feedback may jolt evaluations of identity and increase self-regard. In this study, volunteers talked about how happy they got when they received feedback from beneficiaries, examples of feedback they received were *"You have been of great help", "I am doing well now"* and *"God bless you"*. The blessings received from beneficiaries, the smile on the face, the happiness that came from the beneficiaries' eyes and the Touch as critical incident, can be regarded as the positive feedback that the volunteers received which created the positive self-identities that were construed by the volunteers. Even so, prosocial acts may strengthen virtuous identity content as Dutton et al. (2010) propose. Thus *"Doing something good"* that volunteers often talked about might have contributed to their talking about themselves in more positive terms.

**5.3 Theoretical contributions**
This study offers three theoretical contributions. First, this study integrated work meaning and volunteering theory, which has not been done previously. This was realized by showing how the job, the self, the role, others and spirituality (in the form of (sacred) calling and self-transcendence) form sources of meaning in volunteering work. Second, the present study identified a new category of forces that are important to understand volunteer motivation: critical incidents. Critical incidents play a crucial role in ongoing motivation to volunteer, but have never been mentioned as factors of volunteer motivation in previous research. Third, the current study showed that volunteering engagement is a means to find meaning in life when meaning is lacking in other life domains. For instance, the

volunteers who were also involved in paid work mentioned that volunteering was the thing that brought them meaning, instead of their paid work.

Extending former research on volunteering, the present study identified concrete, day-to-day work experiences ('direct consequences and 'critical incidents') which spur meaningfulness. Whereas the Volunteer Process Model identified a large number of constructs in the antecedents, experiences and consequences stage, the model does not provide insight into concrete work experiences that foster or lead to meaningfulness. Second, this study revealed a new category of factors that affect initial motivation to volunteer: contextual factors. Contextual factors are for instance characteristics of the society that one lives in. 'The problems of society' (as identified in the category 'initial motivation') is such a contextual factor that emerged from this study. In previous research on volunteering motivation, contextual factors have not been taken into account.

## 5.4 Practical implications
Given the results, three practical implications can be drawn. The first implication concerns volunteer administrators who deal with recruitment and motivation of volunteering workforces. They should realize that relational job architecture is of main importance in keeping volunteers motivated. Direct personal contact with beneficiaries of volunteering service, proximity and possibility to develop meaningful relationships will foster the motivation to volunteer. Volunteers like to make a difference in others and to see their direct impact on other people. To see what effect their work has in bringing about change also works as a motivation. In organizations where volunteers are part of the workforce, relational job architecture is important both to foster meaningfulness for volunteers and to foster affective commitment because of the lack of formal means to tie volunteers to an organization. Regularly communicating feedback to volunteers with information concerning how much their work has helped and affected the beneficiaries might provide additional motivation to volunteers.

Second, compassionate communication in organizing is important in every organization where suffering is present, in order to relieve suffering and to keep the organization 'human'. When employees experience suffering, colleagues should pay attention to it by acknowledging it and responding in a compassionate way; whereas management should offer the possibility for professional help if the need is there.

The third implication for managers is that they should be aware of emotions at work and the role that emotions play in work behavior, especially in motivation of employees. The acts of compassionate communication, the critical incidents and the direct consequences of volunteering involvement were to a large extent positive emotional events contributing to ongoing involvement in volunteering. Broaden-and-build theory suggests that in the presence of positive emotion at work, people experience an expanded thought-action repertoire, broadened mindsets, and enhanced openness (Fredrickson, 1998, as cited in Lilius et al., 2008, p.196). Briner (1999) addresses the importance of emotions by stating that the experience of emotions may have effects on a range of work behaviors and cognitions, for instance motivation, engagement, teamwork and prosocial behavior.

## 5.5 Limitations and recommendations for further research
This study has several limitations. First, due to practical considerations of executing research in a country where I did not master the native language, I had to restrict myself to involve English speaking, educated individuals as interviewees. Only one participant did not speak English. This has implications for the generalization of the results. It might be that the work meaning of Indian

volunteers who come from other strata of society than the participants in this study, differs from the results found in this study. Although, to counter this point, it might be probable that the respondents in this study belong to the strata of society that engages in volunteering more often than populations less represented in the research. Therefore, the sample in this research could be a good representation of the volunteer population in India.

Second, the concern of transferability is important when doing research in other societies and cultures. The contextual nature of qualitative research means that careful thought must be given to the potential transferability of its results to other sociocultural settings (Kuper & Lingard, 2008). Characteristics of the Indian society that might hamper transferability to other sociocultural settings, in particular to developed countries, are the common problems that are part of Indian society. For instance, poverty, corruption, floodings, lack of accessible education and health care for all citizens. These aspects of the Indian society offer a lot of 'potential' for volunteers to improve the society and the living circumstances of the citizens. As a result, making a difference in such a context might be more easy compared to a society where such problems are not present. Especially when transferring the findings of the current research to developed countries, where these problems and tremendous differences between prosperity levels are not overly present, work meaning of volunteers might have a different character.

Third, Indians tend to represent the self in relation to others: "The proclivity for Indian participants to represent the self in terms of self-to-other and other-to-self modes is consistent with the Indian sociomoral value of *dharma* (righteous duty)" (Mascolo, Misra, & Rapisardi, 2004). This could imply that the meaningful relationships and bonds between volunteers and beneficiaries in this study are not so much a specific meaning of volunteering work. Instead, they could have been the consequence of the tendency for Indians to construct a self in relation to others. In that case, emphasis in conversations with Indians will usually be on talking about the self in relation to other people and the relationships with other people.

Fourth, a foreign researcher might evoke different or stronger emotions compared to a native researcher during interviewing. For instance, a respondent might not want to disappoint the researcher, who came to his country especially for the research, by giving 'moderate' answers. Another possibility could be that the respondents would like to impress the researcher by making overstatements. Although it was said in the beginning of the interviews that no 'good' or 'fault' answers exist and that the interview is all about one's personal experiences and feelings, it is impossible to entirely control for such effects.

Finally, attention must be drawn to the open structure of the interviews. A semi-structured format was chosen to offer the respondents sufficient possibilities to express their thoughts and experiences freely without feeling confined to a restricted set of questions. The content of the individual interviews differed considerably as a result of this. However, since the purpose of this study was to *explore* motivation, work meaning and identity, consistency of the findings between the interviews is not a main issue; breadth and depth of the answers are more important in getting a thorough understanding of work meaning and identity of volunteers.

*Recommendations for further research*

In the current study, the meaning of volunteering work is explored through the perspective of the service deliverer: the volunteer. An interesting opportunity for continued exploration would be to address the perspective of the service recipient: the beneficiary in this research. What is the meaning of receiving volunteering service for the beneficiary? Is the job meaning as expressed by the volunteers, like giving new life to people, also perceived by the beneficiary as feeling of having received new life? In particular should be addressed the meaning of the volunteer–beneficiary dyad; does the relationship mean as much to the beneficiary as to the volunteer? Although Butcher (2004) found that the relationship between volunteer and beneficiary can be enriching for both; she does not address why it is enriching, apart from stating that most of the deliverer–recipient dyads investigated in her study were relationships based on autonomy.

Second, further research on work meaning of volunteers in India should examine the role of spirituality and calling in volunteering, which both are current topics in meaningful work. Spirituality is an aspiration toward connection to the sacred, including a higher power, guiding force or energy, or belief system (Hill & Pargament, 2003). In this study, self-transcendence was a spirituality-related outcome for self meaning of the volunteers which formed a source of meaningfulness and which merits further study.

Finally, as mentioned above, the potential for transferring the findings in this research to other sociocultural settings is doubtful. To get a more thorough understanding about work meaning of volunteers, it is therefore recommended to extend research about work meaning of volunteers to volunteers living in other countries. For instance countries that do not have the 'problems of society'. Also countries whose citizens are said to construe an individualistic sense of self, like United States, Canada, Western and Northern Europe or Australia, should be included in research about work meaning of volunteers.

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**APPENDIX**

**Appendix A:  Interview guideline**

**Introduction**
Explaining the research
Confidentiality

**Demographics**
Age
Gender
Education
Employment status
Actual community work/volunteer role
Marital status
Weekly time commitment to volunteering
Volunteering since

**Part A: Motivations (in terms of work meaning)**
• Can you tell me about your volunteering work?;
• How are you doing it?;
• Why are you doing it that way?
• How did you become involved?

**Part B: Meanings (belonging, relating/connecting to others, value/contribution to others)**
• How important is the volunteering work / volunteer organization in your life?
• What does it mean for you to be a ... volunteer?
• Can you come up with experiences of happenings in your volunteering work which you will never forget? Why will you never forget that experience?

**Important, at the very end:** Would you like to tell me anything about your volunteering involvement which I have not asked for or which I forgot to ask you?

**Other possible themes could be:**
Attraction of volunteering and motivating elements;
Commitment and continuation;
Social ties;
Role of religiosity;
Benefits, rewards;
Demands, drawbacks of volunteering involvement.

## Appendix B: Respondents' demographic data

| Interviewee no. | Age | Gender | Employment status | Volunteering for (refer to appendix C) | Weekly or monthly time commitment to volunteering |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R#1 | 25 | Male | Employed | L | 10-12 hrs/week, 2 days a week. |
| R#2 | 27 | Male | Employed | R | During weekends |
| R#3 | 22 | Female | Student | B | Minimum 3 hrs. during weekends |
| R#4 | 27 | Male | Employed | S | On Saturdays or Sundays |
| R#5 | 25 | Male | Employed | R | 60-70 hrs/month |
| R#6 | 29 | Male | Employed | R | Maximum 25 hrs/week |
| R#7 | 55 | Male | Employed | Q | Every Sunday |
| R#8 | 29 | Male | Employed | E | 3 hrs/week |
| R#9 | 38 | Female | Unemployed; expressing no interest in paid work | E | About 20 hrs/week |
| R#10 | 48 | Female | Unemployed; Expressing no interest in paid work | E | Officially one hour a week, but in reality a lot more |
| R#11 | 73 | Male | Retired | E | 10 hrs/month |
| R#12 | 25 | Female | Employed; combining paid employment with suprarole volunteering within organization | E | Paid employment + volunteering are maximum 45 hrs/week |
| R#13 | 45 | Female | Unemployed; expressing no interest in paid work | E | 3-5 hrs/week |
| R#14 | 63 | Female | Retired | D | 15 hrs/week |
| R#15 | 30 | Female | Employed | F | About 52 hrs/month during weekends |
| R#16 | 51 | Male | Unemployed | J | On daily basis |
| R#17 | 48 | Female | Unemployed; expressing no interest in paid work | I | 2 meetings/week |
| R#18 | 37 | Female | Unemployed; expressing no interest in paid work | I | 2 field visits/week |
| R#19 | 45 | Female | Unemployed; expressing no interest in paid work | I | 3-4 hrs/week |
| R#20 | 36 | Female | Unemployed; expressing no interest in paid work | I | 7-8 hrs/week |
| R#21 | - | Females and males, group interview | Retired | N | |
| R#22 | 66 | Male | Retired | G | 4 hrs/week |
| R#23 | 28 | Male | Employed | M | Every Saturday or Sunday, sometimes mornings during weekdays |
| R#24 | 28 | Male | Employed | F | 'Freelance' |
| R#25 | 29 | Male | Employed | A | During weekends |
| R#26 | 28 | Female | Employed | K | Depends on availability of time, work- and social responsibilities |
| R#27 | 27 | Male | Employed | T | "It's become life" |
| R#28 | 25 | Female | Employed; combining paid employment with suprarole volunteering within organization | K | 2-3 hrs/week |
| R#29 | 50 | Male | Employed; combining paid employment with volunteering | I | 15 hrs/week |
| R#30 | 26 | Female | Employed | K | During weekends |
| R#31 | 70 | Male | Retired | O | Daily |
| R#32 | 67 | Male | Retired | O | Daily |
| R#33 | 44 | Male | Employed | P | 3 hrs/week |
| R#34 | 58 | Male | Retired | P | 8-12 hrs/week |
| R#35 | 37 | Male | Employed; combining Paid employment with volunteering | H | Paid employment and volunteering are intertwined |
| R#36 | 31 | Female | Employed | C | During free time; about 1 hour |

| | | | | | daily |
|-------|----|--------|--------------------------------------------|---|--------------|
| R#37 | 26 | Male | Employed | C | 25-30/hrs week |
| R#38 | 40 | Female | Unemployed, expressing no interest in paid work | I | 4 hrs/week |

**Appendix C: Volunteering organizations and quotations that represent the volunteering work**

| Organization / group | Job content |
|---|---|
| A | So we came up with a lot of ideas like putting up posters, doing street plays, and then, making some colourful pictures, you know flipcharts basically. Uh we can show this pictures in certain demonstrations. Like uh for example safety measures, how to use a condom. That kind of demonstrations and many such things I mean uh, you know, for uh and different groups, how do we address. If we are doing it for the youth, we will make it more like a personality development for them, for a youth. If you're making it for these women, we will tell them not just about HIV aids, but also certain health related sanitation issues, so that they can keep the surroundings clean. |
| B | We just go and visit that. Then we go another activity was we went to a government school. Ok, there, we focus on education. We have different modules. (short break) We have different modules (...) Like education is one, something for the blind, something for the mentally retarded. Because we want to touch every aspect of the society. That is how things are happen. ( I think) we donate food to people, sometimes. |
| C | Our plan is to work in five areas. Education, healthcare, water ... and sanitation, livelihoods and governance. So, governance is largely I handle .... -that is related to the RTI?- RTI. I am not much into education and there are people who take care of it. |
| D | I think because of their childhood, they are not able in some ways to absorb, the school education and then they become drop outs. We have to keep them gainfully occupied and this is where I come in. So I was introduced to the home at that time uh through the workgroup. We have a crafts room, and we have a little store outside. |
| E | Ya the volunteer is handling what office gives us, the session content and modules, which are all ready for us. Which we go and impart to the kids, talk to them. We do not really, I do not see that we're teaching them, we talk to them, It's more of interactive sessions that we have in the classroom, and we try to make it as activity based as possible instead of just make getting them to take notes. In X we do not believe in that kind of a thing. It's more of we should feel that it comes from within them to have the civic sense, as we call it. And to be a civic conscious person, that is what we trying to bring out in present generation so that as they grow older, our city improves, because they've found that lot of Bangalore has to do a lot of civic sense to a large extent. |
| F | So, I was being part of all the processes, starting from registration till the end, where they inform the candidate that this job is available or not. This particular area, are you ready to go over there? If they say 'yes', these people will talk to them. I have been involved in that stage. And also, I have seen some people placed in big companies, even IBM. I even have one of the candidates, he has become my friend now. He works with IBM, his name is (...). He is visually challenged, but he does the same work as I do in my office. |
| G | We are helping the patients. See normally patients come to the hospital you know. Patients are already in pain. And people who accompany them, also they will be not in a very stable condition. So right from beginning, how to register, where they have to go what are their facil, find out what is their problem, find out whether that facility, where it's available. We'll guide move to registration then to the further uh consultation. |
| H | So that is how I started association with H as a mediator. So since then, so I have been helping, identifying many children from the slum -what kind of children?- Identified many disabled children from the slum. And then uh providing help for the education, surgery. And then also if there are mentally retarded, challenged, mentally challenged, we provide them special education and then also some of the income generating projects for deserving children. |
| I | So along with her, I go around, she will identify where the place, where we have to go and all that. So she calls me up. If I am free, I go we have been to many places. We have been to ... hospital, cancer, uh paediatric cancer ward, children who have cancer. We have visited them lot of times and we have fulfilled their wishes. Wishes could be anything from books to cars, toy cars, then we have carrom boards, then we have video games. All these children whatever they wish. First we go, we identify their wish, we interview the child, we talk to the child in the first session. |
| J | Sanitation is the main problem in the slums. In that sanitation also, he approaches each student in the slum. And he convinces the parents and all for education. Gives the awareness about education. So he makes them more interested in education and ... |
| K | But with the elderly, uh basically a companion. You know somebody, I listen to them, they listen to me. They share their experiences. I tell them about myself. It's more of a mature discussion that happens with the elderly. |
| L | I am doing helping the kids for their regular activities. At the same time, teaching. Because we have 15 to 20 students in the orphanages and those all are orphans. They are having shelter there. |

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| M | So first uhm 6 months, eh I was teaching at that Koramangala center. They have a center in Koramangala. So first 6 months I was teaching in the Koramangala center and eh then uh I do not know, somehow I felt uh I should do more for M . Because uh then I used to teach for 2 hours |
| N (group interview) | Actually I am helping to patients.   Our main intention is to help the patients and the staff. We are coordinating between them   -coordinating, between the patients and staff- patients and staff, the doctors. |
| O | Our main aim of this standing committee is, to improve the quality of life in and around office, in and around our colonies.  Basic amenities are like roads, water supply, drainage, tree plantation, good electricity. So these are the basic amenities. They are being looked after, but still, the residents are not satisfied. Somehow there are some difficulties. So we jump into action and get the things done. |
| P | Uh when the people come with their issues, uh we listen to them, the best thing is listen. First we listen to them we start ...what exactly is the pain. So by coming out with a different ways or version of their own pain, they themself will realize what is exactly cause of the pain. Once we made people to understand what is the cause, they will find their own answer. We need not have the right answer. |
| Q | When you have seen, one and a half million patients, you should know how simple everything is. Especially when you know the illnesses are simple, straightforward. The difference there, how one can see so many patients is, the patient has only one complaint. He will only tell me I have fever, I have headache or I have chest pain, or I have asthma, you understand, only one complaint. He will never tell me another one. He will tell me back pain, or he will tell me knee pain, that is it! Nothing beyond that. That is a fact! And we treat them exactly for that, and they get better. |
| R | Actually we do some activities like some helping apart from the helping for the poor for their medical we'll support for some education things also. Education and some creating some awareness camps. Eh awareness camps regarding voter registration, for example. |
| S | So we want to give like motivation to those kids, we want to support them, morally, we want to enjoy life with them. Because it's like even we can spread out our lives and even they can get some entertainment, any of the things, some knowledge. |
| T | So, yes, this is one particular point, which I came across, and I felt,  this is what, T should be.  If you work, if T is working for any cause, it should be benefiting for a large number of people.  It shouldn't be, something like, we do a project for a category of people. If I am doing a project for children, it should benefit for any category of children.  It shouldn't be for only for underprivileged. It shouldn't be for higher, higher society children, no. If I am doing a project for children, it should reach all the children. That is the concept of T. And that is the reason, in our vision and mission, we have not restricted ourself for any particular area. |