

## Making Volunteering Visible<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRAK

Kerja sukarela selalu dikaitkan dengan jenis pekerjaan yang tidak berbayar dan percuma serta tidak pernah diambil kira di dalam data kebangsaan Malaysia. Kertas kerja ini mencadangkan agar kerja sukarela diambil kira sebagai satu nilai ekonomi dan sebahagian daripada aset negara. Asas empirikal kertas kerja ini adalah berdasarkan satu kajian yang telah dijalankan pada tahun 2003 yang berkaitan dengan sumbangan nyata atau tidak nyata pesara kerajaan di dalam kumpulan profesional dan pengurusan sektor Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia. Ia mengandaikan bahawa dengan memberi nilai wang yang sesuai dan sepatutnya terhadap sumbangan pesara sukarelawan di dalam pembangunan komuniti, akan menggalakkan lebih ramai pesara melibatkan diri dalam kerja yang lebih produktif dan bermakna semasa tempoh peralihan hidup mereka.

### ABSTRACT

Volunteer work is always associated with free and unpaid employment and is never accounted for in the national data of Malaysia. This paper argues that voluntary work should be made visible by according it with economic value for it to be part of the national asset of the country. The empirical basis of this paper is reflected in a research survey conducted in 2003 on the tangible and intangible contributions of the public service retirees who belonged to the Professional and Managerial group within the Malaysian civil service. It is premised on the belief that providing a decent and liveable monetary value to the retirees' voluntary contribution in community development would usher in more retirees to come forward to engage in meaningful and productive work during the so-called transition period of their waking life.

### INTRODUCTION

The world over is facing an uphill battle of engaging the ageing population in the most productive and meaningful way. In western countries such as the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia, concerted efforts have been underway to ensure that the elderly gets their fair share in the development of their nations. For instance, in America, the Independent Sector, a non-profit organization

with a membership of at least 500 charities, youths and other groups, conducted a survey in 2002, had estimated that Americans spend 19 billion hours per year volunteering and put the value of these efforts at US\$226 billion. This represents 2.5% of the United States Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is greater than the GDP of 85% of the countries in the world (United States Department of Energy 2003, as cited in Penner 2004). Such

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concerted efforts are well reflected in the manner in which the political and civil leadership formulates social and health policies and regulations affecting the ageing population; creating formal support services; job-matching programme within the formal and informal industries; and, initiating support programme within the non-governmental framework, among others. Thus, it can be said that the whole system of governance initiates and supports programme that are fully effective and operational and which considers, among others, the equally prominent role that the elderly population plays in the mainstream society. In less developed countries, however, much is to be desired when it comes to the status and welfare of the ageing cohort presumably because these countries still have to confront other more pertinent issues affecting the 'productive' labour age group to the extent that the elderly is relegated to the background. For example, has the increasing number of older population been reflected in development plans, specifically in regard to the budgetary allocation for the elderly?

How it did come about that the elderly population has become redundant and disposable when they no longer thought to contribute to the economic life of the nation? That this perception may well be pervasive in many developing countries is a seeming reality. Perhaps it would be interesting to note that, such reality springs from a policy that few developing countries in the region have adopted. It is based on the principle that promotes and encourages the productivity of the people and where their productivity and economic 'exchange value' is measured in relation to the labour they put in their work. The bias in this model definitely impacted on the elderly population where the essentiality of the labour exchange is couched in monetary terms for those who are active and, as such, demarcates the population of the community from those who are not. In the case of Malaysia, when working adults in the government sector reach the mandatory retirement of 55/56, they become a 'redundant' workforce; while in other

countries e.g., Philippines and Singapore, the retirement age is around 60.

The main objective of this article is to show how voluntary work of retirees could be accounted for in the national statistics as part of the assets of Malaysia. In this way, retirees' contribution will be quantified in light of the number of ways they can engage in voluntary work.

#### *Voluntary Work Among the Retirees*

What is then the relationship between retirement and volunteerism or is there any connection between the two? According to the Independent Sector Report (1995), about 50% of the adults in the US were involved in voluntary work. It was also found that more women, more whites and particularly those with higher incomes were more prominent. About 11% of the 93 million volunteers were involved in political or societal activities. A telephone interview survey by the Hong Kong Public Opinion Program (HKPOP) of 1555 randomly selected persons aged 15 and above, indicated that 22% had participated in organized voluntary services and 55% had non-organized voluntary mutual aid activities. Of these, 22% were professionals or semi-professionals. Altruism was the main reason for volunteering with 72.2% believing that people volunteered to help others. The average contribution of a volunteer was estimated as HK\$2660 (US\$350). As to the most important volunteer cause, nearly half of the respondents in the Commonwealth Fund Survey were church-related, followed by health services (Bass 1995; Fischer and Schaffer 1993). The recent volunteers were from among women, high school education or higher preferences, married, high income, good health and active in religion (Bass 1997).

The ability of seniors to re-enter the labour force and find jobs has no doubt been aided by the fact that more of them are enrolling in the career or job-related education programs. According to the latest available data from the Department of Education, the number of Americans 55 and older enrolled in the career or job-related adult education courses

increased by 45% between 1995 and 1999. An analysis of the Department of Education statistics found that there were 10,800,000 Americans 55 and older participating in the adult education programs in 1995. Of those, 3,800,000 or 35%, were enrolled in the career or job-related courses. By 1999, seniors in adult education jumped 27% to 13,700,000, of which 5,500,000 were taking job-related courses. Most surprisingly, perhaps, is the fact that, while individuals 65 and older enrolled in adult education programs grew 12% between 1995 and 1999, those taking job-related courses expanded by 38%, from about 697,000 to 966,000 (Challenger 2003).

Malaysia does not have sufficient data with regard to its volunteers from among the retirees. In view of the fact that social changes and social development are a high priority, retirees could be of help in this area. This study attempts to ascertain the extent of involvement of the retirees in voluntary work and their potential for further involvement in the activities planned under the 8thMP. As Herzog and Morgan (in Bass *et al.* 1993:120) have said, "...If older persons were viewed as a potential societal resource, we might begin to document the contributions they make through volunteer work today and attempt to identify circumstances that can facilitate further volunteer work...."

There is little data, if any, about the involvement of Malaysian retirees in voluntary work. Any reference to volunteerism in the 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan (8MP) is with reference to youth. In view of the importance of the community development, the Government has planned for various community and family development programs such as *Rukun Tetangga*, *Pesta Gawai* and *Pesta Keamatan* under the 8MP to assist the people cope with social changes and social integration. The Government is also aware of the decrease in the family size and increase in the longevity of the older generation. To meet the challenges of the future, the Government will encourage smart partnerships with NGOs. More care-centres for the aged, the disabled, unfortunate children will be established. Recognizing the importance of training for

social workers the Government has established the Social Institute of Malaysia in 2001. The Institute will cater for training in family development, psychology, sociology, social work, counselling for volunteers and members of NGOs and other social workers (8MP, 2001: 530-533). The retirees could contribute to these activities.

#### *Volunteerism and Community Development*

A community is a group of people living in a locality bonded together by a special nationality, race, religion, values or occupation. Boyle (1981:150) defines it as '...a social system of relationships is implying a patterned aggregation of individuals and objects operating as an interdependent whole with some degree of regularity....' Development is described as a dynamic concept of growth and improvements subject to continuous environmental change. Community development is a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress with the active participation of the whole community and with the fullest possible reliance on the communities' initiative (Rothman 1974). Levin and Perkins (1997) emphasize the importance of democratic procedures, voluntary cooperation, self-help, development of indigenous leadership, and education in community development.

Community development cannot take place without the community involvement. Stukas and Dunlop (2002) suggest "efforts to increase involvement of citizens in their communities are now widespread, involving both top-down process (i.e. government initiatives) and bottom-up processes (i.e. grassroots organizing)". In the US, President Bush and President Clinton issued the National Community Service Act 1990 and the National and Community Service Trust Act. The global initiative was further promoted through the National initiatives and the UN General Assembly 2000 resolution such as "to promote the contribution that volunteerism can make to the creation of a caring society (annex 111, article 54, p.24). Community involvement requires the understanding of

roles and perspectives, needs and outcomes of all the various constituent groups in the system and their integration (Stukas and Dunlop 2002).

However, we have extended our community domain to global perspectives in relation to the community we live in today. "...The broader global community will be enhanced by the health of the many smaller communities that constitute the whole..." With this perspective and the introduction of the information age, we have to make connections, reach out to create a system of relationships with the blurring of boundaries and enter the virtual world of relationships where "...every person has a chance to be influential and make difference in the world by being a volunteer", where every CEO will promote the ethics of "Everybody is a volunteer in this organization. Everyone has stewardship or personal responsibility to improve our community..." using the "...dominant force of our society ...the goodness in the overwhelming majority of the people..." (Covey 1998 in Hesselbein, Goldsmith, Beckhard *et al.* 1998). To quote Van Til (1995:11). "The world has never been in so great a need of the work of volunteers and the many voluntary organizations sustained by voluntary commitment..."

Bartle (n.a.) suggests 16 elements of community strength – altruism, common values, communal services, communications, confidence context, information, intervention, leadership, organization, skills, unity, networking, political power, trust and health. According to Bartle, the more any community has of each of the elements, the stronger it is, the more capacity it has, the more empowered it is. The PMP group of retirees has the experience and expertise to help in developing all those elements among the community and can be a driving force for community development. Volunteerism is related to the good of fellow human beings or good of the people in a community. As the CEO of the National Institute of the Negro Women says:

Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It's important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop.

#### *Organized and Unorganised Volunteering*

Literature indicates that less emphasis has been done in both organized and unorganized types of volunteer work preferring instead to account and give value to the organized form of volunteering engaged in by men and women. Perhaps this is again another avenue where bias is taking place in research on volunteerism especially when only the so-called voluntary work in formal groups is duly recognized the result of which is the underestimation of other type of volunteer work. This has implication on gender where women volunteers tend to draw their interests on unorganized voluntary activities as extension of their so-called feminine roles such as housecleaning, baby-sitting and others.

As defined by the South Australian studies on voluntary work (Ironmonger 2002), *organized volunteering* or *indirect volunteering* refers to unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills willingly given by an individual through an organization or group. *Formal or organized volunteering* is indirect as it is mediated through an organization. Reimbursement of expenses or small gifts is not regarded as payment of salary. Work reimbursed by payment in-kind is not regarded as volunteering. On the other hand, unorganized volunteering (direct volunteering) refers to the informal unpaid help and care that occurs within the personal networks of family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances. Informal or unorganised volunteering is direct as it is not mediated through an organization. It includes regular, spontaneous and sporadic help that takes place between friends and neighbours such as giving advice, looking after other people's children or helping an elderly neighbour.

It is interesting to note that in Australia, for example, unpaid work in the household economy must be accounted for in unorganized volunteering to be able to get a

clear picture of the time donated by volunteers to the said type of volunteer service. As argued by Cahn (2002) and the United Nations University (undated), "...if the same calculations were used to assign value to unpaid work in developing countries, where even more of women's work is unremunerated, the differences would be even greater". These and other issues provide the background of this article.

### METHODOLOGY

The research was an exploratory study conducted in 2003 designed to understand the status of the retirees who once belonged to the Premier and Managerial and Professional sector of the Malaysian Public Service and who left the service between 1989 and 2000. Of the more than five hundred questionnaires mailed to the retirees throughout Malaysia, 261 retirees replied, representing the various offices such as education, administrative, police, medical, legal and technical.

The survey instrument consisted of nine sections with a total of 215 items with statements ranging from the reasons why retirees engage in voluntary work to their willingness to volunteer in the future. The Likert scale was used to measure the retirees' opinion with one as the lowest and five as the highest. Scores were tabulated and statistical analyses were applied.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### *Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Retirees*

Of the 261 respondents, 13.4% were female while 86.6% male with 52.1% from both sexes were volunteers. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the volunteer retirees came from Peninsular Malaysia; 5.9% from Sabah; 6.6% from Sarawak and 16.9% from the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan. Ethnically, within the ranks of the volunteers, 66.8% were Malays; 17.8% Chinese; 8.8% Indian; 1.5% Kadazan; less than one percent Iban; and, 4.4% from other ethnic groups.

The overall marital status reflected that the majority (90.3%) of the respondents were

married with children. The other 9.7% represented those who were married but had no children (2.7%), single (3.9%) and those who were never married (3.1%). A similar situation was reflected for both the volunteers and the non-volunteers. However, it was noted that the ratio was a little less (89.0%) among the volunteers than the non-volunteers (91.2%). The ratios would be different from the West where the difference between each category would be very little (Cnaan *et al.* 1993).

About half of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree (52.9%) whereas 32.2% were equally divided into diploma and master qualifications. Only 2.3% possessed doctorate qualifications while the remaining 12.6% comprised professional, technical and other qualifications. The proportions were somewhat equally represented among the volunteers and non-volunteers. Generally, it was noted that the volunteers possessed a slightly higher score than the non-volunteers except for the HSC/Diploma qualification. This is true in other studies where it was found that those who volunteered possessed higher qualifications (Fischer and Schaffer 1993). Cheang and Braun (2001) also found that volunteers had higher qualifications than the non-volunteers.

A little more than half (54.8%) indicated that they had no dependent children, while 21.8% with one child and 11.5% and 11.9% with two and three dependent children, respectively. This is quite different from the West where there would rarely be dependent children among the retirees as they retired generally about ten years later around the age of 65. This is a pertinent factor as it is related to the need of working for income after retirement at the age of 56 years. It is noted that more of the volunteers (50.7%) than the non-volunteers (39.2%) have dependent children.

It is interesting to note that slightly more than half (51.7%) had dependent children during their retirement life. This was expected as the compulsory retirement age was set at 55/56 years. Hence, if the respondents had married between the ages 25-30, their children

would have been their tertiary education. This was one strong reason why the retirees were engaged in full-time or part-time work. It was thus seen that more than half of the retirees were doing voluntary work although they still carried the burden of their dependent children. This may not be common in the West where retirement was much later.

About a quarter (24.5%) of the total respondents had dependent parents as compared to 21.6% for the non-volunteer and 27.2% for volunteer retirees. This is also a pertinent factor for Malaysians as the value of extended families is a common feature. This aspect is also a special feature among the Malaysian retirees who had not only dependent children but also dependent parents to look after. Again it was noted that the volunteers had more dependents than the non-volunteers.

As the majority of the respondents were Malays, it is not surprising that 59.8% of the respondents practiced Islam. The other religions in order of adoption were Christianity (14.6%), Buddhism (11.5%), Hinduism (6.5%), Non-believers (3.4%) and other minority religious group (4.2%). There was a higher proportion of Muslims (68.4%) and Christians 15.4% among the volunteers, and a higher ratio of Buddhists (15.2% against 8.1%), Hindus (8.0% against 5.2%), Non-believers (6.4% against 0.7%) and 'Others' (5.6% against 2.2%) among the non-volunteers. This meant that there was a greater % of Muslims and Christians among the volunteers than the non-volunteers; the other religions were less reflected among the volunteers. These religions were again relevant to the people of Malaysia as represented by the proportion of the population of the country.

Only 2.3% of the respondents perceived their financial position to be 'not satisfactory'. On the other hand, 93.1% considered their status as 'satisfactory to good' while 4.6% perceived it as 'excellent'. Only two respondents (1.5%) in the volunteer category and four respondents (3.2%) in the non-volunteer category perceived their status to be unsatisfactory. With about 50% engaged in

productive work and their regular pension as income they should be comfortable. However, there may be a few who have to support the education of their children.

Going by the findings from 10 studies (Fischer *et al.* 1993), there is a likelihood of increase in volunteerism with increase in income. This is to be expected from the retirees who continue to hold high positions in organizations during retirement.

The health status among the overall respondents can be considered as excellent (6.5%), good (43.13%) and satisfactory (44.8%). The remaining 5.4% was perceived as not satisfactory. Generally the ratios for the volunteers and non-volunteers were somewhat similar. The volunteers indicated a slightly better profile. The self-perception was not very different among the volunteers and the non-volunteers. Considering the fact that about 50% of them were gainfully employed, their health status can be assumed to be good. However, there may be some who would succumb to degenerating diseases of aging that make up the 'not satisfactory' category in the range of 4.4% for volunteers and 6.5 % for the non-volunteers.

Various studies have indicated that poor health can be a de-motivation to volunteer (Fischer *et al.* 1993; Chambre 1987). Humanistic theory suggests that humans determine what they want to do at every stage of their lives. This is supported by the comments from the respondents:

... Now my health is not so good to do more volunteer service... I have been operated twice on my spine.

... I am a diabetic; heart problem, high blood pressure, high cholesterol. Age has caught up; a little weak.

... At present I have diabetes and hypertension and therefore not very healthy.

... I have less energy – use a number of supplementary vitamins.

It was found that 48.5% of the retirees were living a 'free and easy' life. Of the

remaining 51.5%, 13.8% were in full time job, 11.5% were in part-time jobs, 20.4% were self-employed while 5.8% were in search of jobs. Volunteers were slightly less (13.2%) involved in the full-time jobs than the non-volunteers (14.5%). There were more (14.0%) among the volunteers in the part-time jobs than the non-volunteers (8.9%). More volunteers (25.0%) were also self-employed as compared to the non-volunteers (15.3%). However, fewer volunteers (3.7%) were looking for jobs as compared to 8.1% of the non-volunteers. Less percentage (44.1%) of the volunteers was 'free and easy' compared to 53.2 % of the non-volunteers.

This is in contrast to Cnaan's findings, of which 6.9% of volunteers and 3.2% of the non-volunteers engaged in part time work. Those who were not gainfully employed were between 56.4% for the volunteers whereas 42.5% for non-volunteers. There were 36.7% volunteers and 54.3% non-volunteers engaged in the full time work.

Attendance at place of worship is seen to be generally high. The percentage for 'at least once a week and more' is 46.3% for the volunteers, and 35.2% for the non-volunteers. Altogether, they represented 40.75% of the respondents. These would probably be Muslims who were expected to pray five times a day. Among those who attended at least once a month or more, it was found that the volunteers had a higher attendance (97.1%) as compared to the non-volunteers (80.8%). The attendance of the volunteers who attended 'several times a day' was 34.6% as compared to 21.6% among the non-volunteers. In sum, 10.7% hardly ever attended the place of worship. Among the non-volunteers, they formed 19.2% of the respondents as compared to 2.9% of the volunteers.

This is in line with the western countries where it had been found that there were more churchgoers among the volunteers. It can be agreed therefore, that those who are religious are more inclined to volunteer.

It is observed that all in all 52.1% of the respondents were from the Education service and as shown in Table 1, 61.0% of the

TABLE 1  
Percentage respondents by service  
at time of retirement

Services	Volunteer (n=136) %
Education	61.0
Police	5.1
Finance	1.5
Medical	1.5
Social/Welfare	3.7
Administrative	14.0
Engineering	1.5
Agriculture	2.2
Other	9.5

volunteers were from the Education service as well. This can be associated with the similar percentage of participants in the sample. Among the volunteers the Administrative service comprised of 14.0%. Police service was 5.1%, whereas 9.5% of the volunteers were from other miscellaneous services. Except for the education service, all the other services had a smaller percentage of volunteers than the non-volunteers. The ratio of the non-volunteers to volunteers for the Police service was more than double.

This was reflected in the comments of one respondent, saying "... I feel as an ex-police officer, I have contributed 36 years of my life helping the general public and my colleagues. I feel now is the time to spend on my family...." Only 1.5% of the Medical and Finance persons were volunteers indicating that they were still active in their paid profession.

It was noted that the volunteer retirees had participated more in all the school activities. Among the various school activities, 14.2% had been involved in voluntary activities outside school. The contextual model (Lewis 1997; Pepper 1942) suggests that development is a continuous process intervened by concurrent circumstances and not earlier traits. According to Fischer and Schaffer (1993), "...a number of studies have shown, people who volunteered in old age tend to be those who have volunteered when they were younger...." Cheang and Braun (2001) support the

TABLE 2  
Percentage respondents by volunteer activities during working career

Volunteer Activities	Volunteer (n=136)	Non-volunteer (n=125)	Overall (n=261)
Religious Institution	20.6	15.2	18.3
Youth development	5.7	4.2	5.1
Educational	18.2	16.2	17.4
Human services	5.7	5.1	5.4
Health	2.3	4.0	3.0
Work-related	11.3	17.0	13.6
Arts	1.8	1.4	1.7
Cultural and Humanities	2.6	4.0	3.2
Political	4.7	2.9	3.9
Community foundations	4.9	4.7	4.8
Societal benefit	5.7	4.0	5.1
Recreational	7.4	10.1	8.5
Service clubs	5.7	7.2	6.4
Informal (care-giving)	3.4	4.0	3.6

TABLE 3  
Distribution of volunteer retirees based on type of services

Type of service	Percent (n=136)
Religious	34.6
Education	33.8
Social	22.1
Community	18.4
Welfare	16.9
Health	10.3
Political	7.4
Recreational	7.4
Work-related	5.1
Societal benefit	3.7
Sports	3.7
Service clubs	2.9
Youth	2.2
Arts & Culture	0

findings as their study found that 52% of current volunteers performed voluntary service when they were children. However, the 'younger period' could extend from school to one's career.

As for the involvement of the retirees in voluntary work during their pre-retirement careers, it was noted that the volunteers were

generally more involved than the non-volunteers in voluntary work during their working careers as shown in Table 2. The most popular contributions were for religious institutions, educational, work-related services and leisure activities. This is in support of the findings that retiree volunteers would normally have been involved in service work while at school or during their working career.

A recent research on volunteer retirees in Malaysia showed the various areas where volunteer retirees rendered their services. Following their interests, most of the retirees spent most of their time in religious (34.6%), educational (33.8%) and social activities (22.1%) as depicted in Table 3. The areas where voluntary work took place among retirees were in more or less organized and structured groups and did not in any way account the work that took place outside it.

#### *Putting Dollar Value on Volunteering*

Conventional understanding of volunteerism stresses that it is a free service rendered by an individual's desire to lend a helping hand to the community. Some scholars argue that work is not truly a voluntary work if it is remunerated (Smith 1991, as cited in Wilson 2000) and argue further that argue that voluntary work

whether it is engaged in by retirees or from other age cohorts would lose its spirit and value once it is remunerated.

It is rather important that since retirees' productive contribution within the public service ceased to be given economic, social and political meaning and value after retirement, the urgency to account for the retirees' work beyond their formal employment in the civil service needs to be highlighted. Voluntary work in any form must be included or accounted for in the national data based on the following considerations: firstly, household work such as taking care of the dependent or sick family member, child minding or baby sitting, extending domestic help as housecleaning, etc. must be included both in the local, state and national statistics arguing the relevant role of extended family members vis-à-vis sustaining the household or family unit (see for example, Ironmonger 2002); secondly, by accounting unpaid household work, it would provide our national leadership, in particular, the different government agencies working on the family and social welfare, the much needed picture of the extent the country is dependent on our own citizens; and thirdly, drawing from the experience of advanced economies where both paid and unpaid voluntary work in the organized and unorganised units/groups are remunerated and accounted in most official documents, e.g. Gross National Products, Human Development Report, Volunteer Services Programme among others. As the United Nations (undated) acknowledges, much of the voluntary action is spontaneous, informal and unstructured and because it lies outside the formal market, it tends to go unrecorded, unregistered and recognized.

The 1995 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program acknowledged the fact that there was complete disregard of the estimated value of other economic activities and this refers to the unpaid productive activities of women and men for household use, for the benefit of the community, or for the non-monetarized exchange. It further reported that "globally,

only slightly more than half of the total time spent on "economically productive activities" was going through formal markets and reported in the standard income measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The productive contribution of home, family, community is not included in any of the economists' measurements of the GDP.

To cite a particular case, South Australia believes that calculating the economic value of volunteering is important because it can

- emphasize to government and policy makers that voluntary work makes significant contribution to the community
- encourage the citizens to become volunteers by demonstrating the economic benefits of volunteering; and
- inform the media and the community about the value of volunteer time to the national economy (Ironmonger 2002).

In a study on the public reception and perception of volunteer services in the Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, volunteers across the life course suggested that if their services were to be given a monetary value it would be HK\$76 (RM38) per hour on the average. In the case of Malaysia, aside from accounting the value of voluntary work, perhaps, organized and unorganized volunteering should consider to provide minimal food and transportation allowance to the would-be volunteers during their "working days". Some charity organizations in Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley have been practicing this to most of their volunteers.

#### *Ways to Assign Monetary Value to Volunteer Contributions*

The United States has established an Independent Sector group that monitors the volunteer programme in the country, while Canada has instituted the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI). Similarly, Australia, Europe and United Kingdom also promote volunteerism and have strongly emphasized the role of volunteering work outside the market economy, arguing that most human transactions are found outside

TABLE 4  
Input-based methods of estimating dollar value of volunteer time

Approach	Feature	Advantages	Disadvantages
Generalist Approach to Replacement Costs	It uses one global figure for all organizations	Useful for surveys of volunteer value	Too general for application to a particular organization or a particular task
Specialist Approach to Replacement Costs	It evaluates volunteer contributions to the organization by comparing them with similar jobtasks in the market	Very precise and likely to result in the most accurate estimate	Necessary information may be difficult to obtain for some organizations
Modified Specialist Approach to Replacement Costs	It evaluates volunteer contributions to the organization by comparing them to the general market value of jobs within a particular field of endeavour	Not as precise as the specialist approach, but more practical	For organizations with a broad range of tasks, could be too approximate

Source: Mook and Quarter 2003

the lure of the market forces in the most cases. In many occasions, voluntary action is considered as co-production (Brudney 1990; Ferris 1984 as cited in Mook and Quarter 2003).

Based on the experience of Canada, as well as reflected in South Australia and Europe, three major approaches, viz, generalist, specialist and modified specialist, are adopted based on replacement costs, that is, how much it would cost if an organization was to pay for the service provided by a volunteer (Mook and Quarter 2003). Table 4 details the different approaches of estimating volunteer time in dollar terms. As is happening in Canada, the type of work is usually classified under a certain category in such a way that its roles are more or less the same or those which likely produce the same end result are placed in the same category. For instance, clerical or administration or secretarial task; consultancy and training of youth; religious or charity work;

house-cleaning, child-minding and care for the elderly, etc. In countries cited above, it seems rather convenient to make an estimate of replacement cost considering that they have readily available data across voluntary work and age cohorts. However, in Malaysia, the paucity of available statistics on volunteering makes the estimation an uphill task. Tables 5 and 6 are theoretical formulation of the estimations and these figures imply that a substantial monetary contribution of volunteers remained unnoticed and unrecognized by the national establishment. This does not bode well as far as accounting the overall national assets of Malaysia is considered.

Table 5 illustrates how the various types of voluntary work can be estimated based on the number of hours spent per volunteer. The generalist approach provides a more general view of the volunteer tasks irrespective of task specificity, time and space. On the other hand,

TABLE 5  
Estimated cost of volunteer work per volunteer

Type of work	Hourly Rate* (RM)	Hours per week	Cost per month (RM)	Annual Value (RM)
Training	10.00	3	120.00	1,440.00
Clerical/admin work	5.00	3	60.00	720.00
Tutoring	10.00	3	120.00	1,400.00
Religious	5.00	3	60.00	720.00
Child-minding	5.00	5	100.00	1,200.00
House-cleaning	5.00	5	100.00	1,200.00

\* Estimate of hourly value of type of work is theoretically derived

TABLE 6  
Estimated total value of work per given year

Type of Work	Total # of (RM)	Hourly rate (RM)	Hours per week	Annual Value Volunteers*
Training	2000	10.00	3	2,880,000
Clerical/admin Work	2000	5.00	3	1,440,000
Tutoring	2000	10.00	3	2,880,000
Religious	2500	5.00	3	1,800,000
Child-minding	1500	5.00	5	1,800,000
House-cleaning	621	5.00	5	447,120
Total Annual Value				8,367,120

\* It is assumed that 50% of the total retirees (21,242) as of 2003 would engage in voluntary work. The figure is based on the present empirical study.

the specialist approach demands that the organization tasks and responsibilities are clearly spelled out so as to ascribe the monetary value to the time spent. What is thought to be more practical and effective is the modified specialist approach which takes into consideration the general situation of the job market.

In Table 6, the estimated total value of voluntary work in a given year based on an estimated total number of volunteers in Malaysia is illustrated. In a way, this looks like a very minimal amount especially when taken individually, however, when taken as a group of workers, the scenario would change as reflected in the table. Based on our 2003 data, it is conservatively estimated that about RM8.3

million is contributed by 50% of retirees to the GDP of Malaysia annually.

The total annual monetary value of voluntary work is calculated this way:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Total numbers of volunteers per type of work} \times \\ & \text{Hourly Rate} \times \text{Hours} \\ & \text{per week} \times 4 \text{ weeks} \times 12 \text{ months} = \text{Total annual} \\ & \text{value} \end{aligned}$$

Now, if this figure is to be recognized and accounted for in our national statistics as part of the gross national product (GNP) of Malaysia, this would make a great contribution from the older population alone. This means that despite the fact that the public views retirees as a group of elderly needing help, the

TABLE 7  
Contribution of hours of voluntary service by organization and level of responsibility (n=136)

Organization	Responsibility (Hours) Levels				Total Service Involvement (hrs/month)
	1	2	3	4	
Health	13	22	8	41	84
Welfare	197	9	73	82	361
Social	40	56	128	233	457
Education	187	82	127	202	598
Religious	125	263	457	794	1639
Service club/group	9	18	90	57	174
Community	48	69	131	171	419
Youth	0	3	9	33	45
Politic	4	18	38	199	259
Work-related	25	15	25	11	76
Arts & Culture	0	16	58	14	88
Societal benefit	28	35	12	40	115
Recreation	0	11	93	0	104
Sports	41	38	24	55	158
Total Hours	718	657	1276	1936	4577
Currency (RM)	X5	X10	X15	X20	
Total Value (RM)	3590	6570	19140	38720	68,020

study shows that, retirees could indeed be a great potential resource for the development of our communities. By rendering service to the community in various ways and forms and when such services are duly accorded with monetary value, this would make their contribution more visible to the national development plan of Malaysia.

Table 7 shows the contribution of retirees in volunteer work based on the actual number of volunteer retirees (n=136) in the study. The value of their contribution is calculated from the number of hours they put into the organization identified as the responsibility level. From the table, it is safe to say that when a certain volunteer task is quantified by the number of hours one spends volunteering and that when there is a standard of measuring it, the value of volunteer retiree's time and contribution could be well-accounted for. What this strongly implies is the visible and tangible contribution of our older population

in the community affairs as shown in their involvement in various types of organization, which is translated into figures as part of the Gross Domestic Product of Malaysia.

Table 8 shows the distribution of educated Malaysians throughout the country who are 55 years or more and have retired from their field of expertise and so if this can be harnessed properly, their potential will not go to waste. For example, the retirees in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur could well be utilized for various volunteer works such as in charitable organizations, among others.

#### *Policy Implications and Recommendations*

1. A national or state/community level Voluntary Work Survey (VWS) across ages must be conducted to determine the economic contribution of the volunteer workers, specifically to include their contributions as the national assets of Malaysia, thereby rendering voluntary

TABLE 8  
Population distribution of older Malaysians by state based on educational qualification

State	Certificate (college polytechnic)	Diploma (college polytechnic)	Degree Advanced diploma	Postgraduate certificate/ diploma	Postgraduate degree	
Johor	683	800	993	201	427	
Kedah	439	435	544	88	276	
Kelantan	349	354	497	91	166	
Malacca	249	275	374	57	185	
Negeri Sembilan	255	395	475	96	205	
Pahang	291	303	278	61	127	
Perak	806	696	1046	225	535	
Perlis	119	99	103	13	33	
Penang	485	715	1080	288	575	
Sabah	319	458	774	190	428	
Sarawak	228	372	535	150	425	
Selangor	1154	2806	4973	618	2662	
Terengganu	166	185	254	40	102	
Kuala Lumpur	331	1155	2533	450	1727	
Labuan	7	13	17	5	4	
Total	5881	9061	14476	2573	7877	39868

Source: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000

work visible. The survey would include disaggregate data based on gender, age cohorts and the type of voluntary work from both organized and the unorganized groups.

2. It is now timely to conceive of voluntary work more broadly by encompassing every prosocial act within the domain of both unorganized and organized volunteering such as helping, caring and reciprocating.
3. In a multi-ethnic society like Malaysia, volunteering promotes and facilitates cultural understanding and tolerance when volunteer programmes cut across races or ethnicity.
4. The monetisation of work will usher in new emerging issues that are relevant to recognizing voluntary work.
5. There is a need for a disaggregate data based on gender, ethnicity and class.
6. A tripartite council or commission must be established to consist of representative from the government bodies, non-government organizations and the

religious and civic groups and to act as an umbrella organization that initiates, monitors, promotes as well as strengthens volunteerism.

### CONCLUSION

Still much remains to be desired as far as making voluntary work a visible social action that carries monetary value in Malaysia. This is based on the fact that volunteerism, firstly, is not given due recognition, especially those engaged by retirees; and secondly, voluntary work is considered as an unpaid employment thereby does not have to be reflected in the national records. The move to document and recognize volunteerism and to accord it with monetary value is a demonstration of the national acknowledgement as well as an expression of tacit recognition that volunteers from all walks of life contribute to the community development. In this way, volunteering becomes a visible feature in the national scene and volunteers as a valuable human capital that the national leadership helps to sustain.

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