Horizontality: The ignored particularity of African Volunteering

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Abstract
Volunteerism is celebrated as a universal age-old tradition invoked by humankind in helping or assisting each other. Yet, differences in social, cultural, and political histories around the globe have co-produced forms of volunteering that are particularly diverse, highly contextualised and complex. Nonetheless, this complexity and diversity is hardly celebrated especially by the dominant theories, which tend to privilege volunteering practices from the industrialised countries in their conceptions of volunteerism. This paper reviews literature on volunteering in Africa to argue that in addition to the common association of horizontal African volunteering as an expression of informal people-to-people engagement, horizontality is also prevalent in emergent formal national and international volunteer schemes as well as in various community-based development actions. African social, economic, cultural and political realities have, therefore, co-produced a volunteering culture and practice that is manifestly horizontal.

Introduction

Volunteerism is celebrated in both academic and practitioner literature as a universal age-old tradition, invoked by humankind in helping or assisting each other. Yet, different social, cultural, and political histories have produced forms of volunteering that are particularly diverse and highly contextualised (Caprara et al. 2012; Curtis, Grabb, and Baer 1992; Einolf and Chambré 2011; Everatt et al. 2005; Graham et al. 2013; Grizzle and Yusuf 2015; Leigh et al. 2011; Omoto and Snyder 2002; Patel et al. 2007; Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016). These have produced what Baille Smith, Hazeldine and Thomas (2016) call 'volunteering cultures.' While multiple volunteering cultures are acknowledged, the prevailing conceptions especially in the academia and the international development arena tend to privilege conceptions and practices of volunteering mostly dominant in the industrialised countries of the Northern hemisphere, despite their obvious limitations.

An example of such limitation is illustrated in writings that exclude forms of helping driven by prior obligations or are directed towards relatives (however distant). Omoto and Snyder (2002, p. 846) who study the American context, epitomize this when they argue 'volunteers typically help people with whom they have no prior contact or association, it is a form of helping that occurs without any bonds of prior obligation or commitment to the recipients of volunteer

services.' Clearly, as illustrated in this paper, this is not always the case in Africa. Indeed, scholars of African giving and helping behaviour (which includes volunteering) are in agreement that social relations matter; and that Africans are more likely to give/help people with whom they share blood and social identity, place of origin or have close physical proximity, such as clan, socioeconomic class, place of origin, than total strangers (see for example, Atibil 2014; Commission for Africa 2005; Everatt and Solanki 2004; 2008; Everatt et al. 2005; Wilkinson-Maposa 2005; Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005; Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler 2009). This specificity of African pro-sociality has been explained by among others, the Commission for Africa report (2005, p. 126), which observed:

> For many people, their primary loyalty remains with the family, clan, tribe or other social networks, including, increasingly, religious groups. Africa's strength lies in these networks. Africans survive – and some prosper – in the face of low incomes and few formal economy jobs. The networks create social capital, which is crucial in their survival strategies.

It follows from the foregoing that the academic debate on what constitutes volunteering in different sociocultural contexts, as well as the forms it takes, is far from concluded (Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010; Wilson, 2010; 2012). Besides disciplinary divisions identified by among others, Hooghe, Reeskens and Stolle (2007), Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010), Einolf and Chambré (2011), Wilson (2012), and Grizzle and Yusuf (2015), the conceptual challenge is further accentuated by the inability of existing theories, due to their Western sociocultural and political contextual orientations to adequately capture the complexity of volunteering in non-Western contexts. For instance, a major overlooked feature of African volunteering in dominant literature, and which in effect affects the representation of African agency and structure is its horizontality.[1] Yet, as findings of a research in four southern African countries by Wilkinson-Maposa et al. (2005) shows, helping phenomenon (including volunteering) in Africa has a perverse horizontal as well as vertical element to it. These findings are reinforced by a study by Everatt and Solanki's (2004) on the levels of individual giving behaviour (including volunteer time) among South Africans, which revealed that the income poor as well as non-poor respondents equally give their time in helping each other as well as strangers. Writing about the findings of this survey a few years later, Everatt and Solanki (2008) indicated that poor South

[1] I use 'African volunteering' purposefully as distinct from 'volunteering in Africa'. While volunteering in Africa may involve non-Africans doing volunteer work in Africa, African volunteering involves Africans volunteering in Africa.

Africans and those in rural areas are more likely to volunteer than non-poor or respondents from urban areas in South Africa.

Moreover, another overlooked feature of volunteering is its complexity. As Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016), and Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010), among others argue, 'volunteering is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon involving symbolic, social and economic exchange and value (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016, p. 2). Yet, rarely do existing conceptual perspectives of volunteering phenomenon acknowledge this complexity, instead, choosing 'narrow functionalist and egocentric viewpoints, focused on identifying personality traits (e.g., extroversion), demographic categories (e.g., race, age, education), and social resources (e.g., different types of capital) to predict who volunteers and on what conditions' (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016, p. 2). Such approaches fail to acknowledge that social conditions and cultural orientations are also important determinants of existence of volunteering in some societies. The presence of widespread socioeconomic hardships can, for example, trigger mutual aid and solidarity type of self-help volunteerism, among the population facing the same.

Given their shortcomings, existing theoretical and conceptual approaches have attracted a wide range of criticism (see for example, Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010; Wilson, 2012; Haski-Leventhal, 2009; Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016). Some of the criticism is directed at the tendency to treat volunteering as a one-dimensional activity where 'volunteer exchange […is] reduced to one of its various dimensions …suggesting definitions of the phenomenon as an "either/or"'(Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016, p. 2). Relatedly, there has been a tendency, especially in Western literature, to view volunteerism as a one-direction activity (Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005; Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler 2009).

This paper makes modest contributions to conceptual and theoretical debates on volunteering by reviewing literature on African volunteerism with a view to demonstrate its complexity and multi-dimensionality. The principal argument advanced is that African socioeconomic structures, cultural dynamics and political histories have incubated a complex volunteering phenomenon. The most pervasive form of volunteering on the continent is horizontal and informal in nature. Specifically, African volunteerism involves direct interpersonal contacts between servers and beneficiaries with similar socio-economic characteristics and is often based on collectivist solidarity and survivalist mutual aid goals (Caprara et al. 2012; Mati 2016b; Perold and Graham 2014; Graham et al. 2013).

Further, the paper argues that African volunteerism's horizontality transcends the informal. The embryonic formal South-South volunteer programmes, as well as many other community development programmes of both state and civil society organisations that have formal community based volunteering elements in their development work, are illustrative of formal horizontality in African volunteering. In this regard, it is argued that among others, the Southern African Trust's SayXchange and the African Union Youth Volunteer Service Corps, as are the Community health worker (CHW) programmes in many African countries, exemplify African volunteerism's ubiquitous horizontality (Mati 2016a; Mati and Perold 2012). Unlike the classic North-South volunteering which is seen as vertical because servers are likely to be from privileged socio-economic backgrounds, the South-South formal volunteering model has evolved a new category of a formal African volunteer whose socio-economic profile is not dramatically different from those that they serve. Unlike the horizontality in informal volunteering, in formal horizontal volunteering, the volunteer action is mediated through a formal organisation. In many instances, this can be either through a non-governmental or a governmental agency.

Given the foregoing, this paper suggests that while it is yet to receive adequate attention, horizontality is a useful concept for helping us understand the idiosyncrasy of volunteering in Africa but also has implications on theory and practice of volunteerism for development. This is because the organic and deeply embedded features of African social life can also be successfully tapped even in formal volunteering arenas. This is not to ignore the existence of vertical forms of volunteering in Africa. Rather, the argument here is that the most widespread manifestation of volunteerism in Africa is manifestly horizontal in nature.

The remainder of this paper has three sections. The first section below reviews scholarly debates on hybridity, complexity and multi-dimensionality of volunteerism (as especially advanced in Einolf and Chambré 2011; Grizzle and Yusuf 2015; Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy 2010; Omoto and Snyder 2002; Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016; and Wilson 2012). The aim here is to point to the usefulness of these concepts in surfacing the various manifestations of volunteering cultures and at the same time, highlight their failure to look into empirical African inspirations in the construction of a hybrid theory of volunteerism. Following this, the paper utilises literature on manifestation of volunteerism in Africa to illustrate how horizontality has been ignored in the conception of the hybridity, complexity and multi-dimensionality of volunteerism.

Hybridity, complexity, multidimensionality of volunteering

What is volunteering? More so, given the claim of its universalism, is African volunteering the same as elsewhere in the world? What are the drivers of African volunteering? These questions are the starting point for this discussion.

One of the largest volunteer involving and promoting institutions in the world, the United Nations Volunteers, in its 2011 *State of the World's Volunteerism Report* advanced three criteria for determining whether or not, an act is voluntary: 'free will, non-pecuniary motivation, and of benefit to others' (Leigh et al. 2011, p. 4). Specifically, volunteering is a pro-social behaviour undertaken by people characterized by three main features. First, volunteering is non-compulsory, and thus, not coerced or forced externally by law, contract, academic requirement, or other powerful social influences. However, Leigh et al. (2011, p. 3) note that the 'decision to volunteer may be influenced by peer pressure, personal values or cultural or social obligations but the individual must be able to choose whether or not to act.' Second, while in the act of volunteering, a volunteer may receive some reimbursement or other financial payments, it is not done primarily for monetary gain, and the payments in monetary terms are usually less than the economic value of the volunteer work done (Leigh et al. 2011). Last but not least, volunteering is useful as "service" or "productive work," not purely enjoyment for its own sake. In this regard, Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016, p. 3) stresses that volunteering has some economic value, which is constituted as a symbolic resource, and can be motivated by social drivers.

While there are agreements among scholars that the three criteria define what constitutes volunteering, this phenomenon is more complex. However, as some scholars have argued, existing dominant theories and conceptual frameworks used in the study of volunteering based on Western Euro-American contexts have been 'normalised' and rendered as 'neutral' and universal (Baille Smith, Hazeldine and Thomas, 2016, p. 1; Anheier and Salamon, 1999). However, such normalisation has resulted in theories with limited heuristic value in explaining the differentiated sociocultural and institutional contexts within which volunteering occurs around the globe (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016). In addition, existing theories are unable to capture and explain the hybridity, 'complexity and multidimensionality of this phenomenon' in different contexts (Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy 2010, p. 428; Grizzle and Yusuf, 2015; Baille Smith, Hazeldine and Thomas, 2016; Wilson, 2012; 2010). This emanates, in part, from the fact that more often than not, the variety of behaviours and actions that count as volunteering are contextual. Moreover, as table 1 below shows, disciplines interested in volunteering have

differing interests and emphasis on this phenomenon. As would be expected, these competing approaches and emphasis are criticized on various accounts.

Table 1: Summary of interests/concerns, emphasis and approaches of different disciplines studying volunteering phenomenon.

Discipline	Key concern/approaches
Sociology	- Concerned with symbolic aspects of volunteering (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010; Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016) - Treats volunteering as: i) among social ties that bind members of a society to one another; ii) an expression of solidarity that enhances social cohesion, social capital, democracy, participation; iii) a behaviour that enhances social relationships and interactions among individuals, groups, and associations/organizations; iv) part of a discourse giving meaning to and helping to shape behaviour (Wilson, 2000; Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010. - Concerned with 'ways in which organizational processes and volunteer practices contribute in producing welfare and tackling various social problems' (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 417). - 'Preoccupied with understanding who volunteers, (i.e. the social profile of volunteers' (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 417); looks at social-economic determinants of systematic in- or exclusion from volunteer participation (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 417); Focuses on individual sociodemographic characteristics such as race, gender, age, and social class, and ecological variables such as social networks and community characteristics as determinant of who volunteers (Wilson, 2012). - Treats volunteers as agents of social change, in detecting unmet societal needs, fighting against social injustice, and empowering disadvantaged groups (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 418). - Concerned with social determinants of prosocial behavior (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 418). - Sceptical of the 'motivations' for volunteering approaches prevalent in psychology (Wilson, 2000).
Psychology	- Emphasizes intra-psychic phenomena such as personality traits, self-concepts and motivations (Wilson, 2012; 2000; Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010; Grizzle and Yusuf, 2015). - Concerned with helping behaviour that is unplanned, immediate, and low-cost bystander intervention to a stranger in physical distress (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 418; Haski-Leventhal, 2009). - Volunteering as a sustained and planned form of prosocial behavior that typically results from deliberate consideration and choice (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 418). - Calls attention to psychological characteristics of those who volunteer ('Specific traits characteristic of volunteers are social value orientation, empathic concern, perspective taking, self-efficacy, and positive self-esteem' (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 418)).
Economics	- Concentrates on non-pecuniary interest (i.e. volunteerism is a form of unpaid labor, consuming resources and motivated by the promise of rewards" (Wilson 2012, p. 178). - Assumes that 'people are motivated by self-interest in rewards, either in the form of utilitarian goods such as business contacts and skills … or psychological rewards … people volunteer for an activity only if it is in their interest to do so' (Wilson 2012, p. 182). - People are more likely to volunteer if their opportunity costs are low…[therefore] if people are provided with incentives to volunteer (such as coverage of expenses) they volunteer more time (Wilson 2012, p. 182).
Political science	- Looks at volunteering as an expression of core societal principles such as solidarity, social cohesion, and democracy (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 417). - Social integration through volunteer participation at the individual level (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 417). - Volunteerism is a major requirement for active civic society and democracy (Hastinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010, p. 418).

The differences in emphasis and concerns have resulted in theories of volunteerism that emphasize certain aspects. These include individual characteristic theories that emphasize values, personality traits, and motivations of those who volunteer; the social context theories that stress the important of social context within which volunteering happens and roles of volunteerism, and

resource theories that focus on skills, free time and value of volunteers (Einolf and Chambré 2011). It needs to be noted here that African examples are rarely if ever, taken into account in the development of these theories. Even then, there are differing emphases even within each of these paradigms. Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016, p. 2), for example, suggests that there are at least three schools of thought when it comes to motivations for volunteering:

1. Scholars who emphasize on the 'altruistic motives of volunteerism…' (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016, p. 2);
2. Those that 'emphasize the economic aspect of the exchange, originating from considering it as an unpaid work activity …' (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016, p. 2);
3. Those that focus on 'instrumental-based actions motivated by the desire for personal development …' (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016, p. 2).

Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016, p. 2) following Bachman, Backman and Norman (2014) further argue that volunteers' motivations are 'context-situated.' This means that there are many different motivations for volunteering. For example, symbolic non-material dimensions such as 'the enjoyable environment, friendship, and feelings of community' can influence individuals to volunteer at festivals. Others may be motivated by 'economic considerations (e.g., using volunteering as a career development strategy or seeing volunteering as a commercial transaction)' (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016, p. 2). On the other hand, volunteers may be motivated by socio-cultural factors such as a shared philosophy of life, like *Ubuntu* in southern Africa. Volunteerism is therefore, as Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016, p. 16) argue, 'Janus-faced…. This Janus characterization illustrates the ambiguity and yet impossibility to dissolve the paradox of the volunteering concept' because it can, for example, be motivated by both symbolic values as well as altruistic values (see also Haski-Leventhal 2009). Volunteering is therefore inherently hybrid, complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon. This is something scholarship on African manifestations of volunteering as a social phenomenon readily surfaces. I turn to illustrate this using literature on African volunteering.

Volunteering: The universal and the African particular

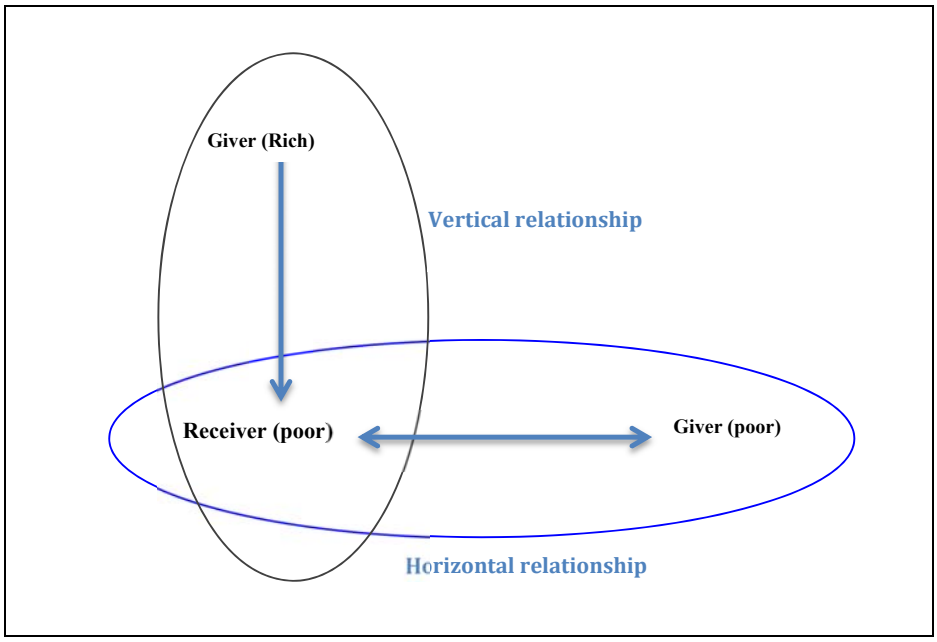
Volunteerism in Africa is deeply ingrained in community activities and long-established traditions of sharing and reciprocal exchanges among the continent's people. Most studies of African volunteerism see this phenomenon as predicated on the social-cultural and economic context of African societies. Further, volunteerism in the continent is expressed through formal groups or informally outside of any organised context. What constitutes formal and informal expressions of volunteering is, of course, contextual and debatable. However, Taniguchi (2012,

p. 922) offers a useful distinction between formal and informal volunteering on the basis of 'whether one engages in unpaid labor in a formal organizational setting (e.g., food bank, school, church, animal shelter) or as part of informal networks of extended families, friends, and neighbors.' This distinction is useful in helping us highlight the over-abundance of the 'formal' and relative neglect of the 'informal' in existing research, even in Africa. This is particularly so for international comparative studies. Part of the reason for this is that manifestations of formal volunteering are easier to measure and compare. Moreover, for most Western-oriented scholarship, the informal cannot change anything in society and is therefore, inconsequential. In addition, in many instances, informal types of volunteering are 'often so embedded in cultures and traditions that they may not even be considered volunteering' (Leigh et al. 2011, p. 40).

Many endogenous studies on African volunteerism and giving behaviour have been able to debunk some of these views, by diverting from the formal gaze of the academies in the West and looking at both formal and informal manifestation of volunteerism (see for example Maposa et al. 2005; Russell 2016; Perold and Graham 2014; Graham et al. 2013; Patel and Mupedziswa 2007; Gillette 2003; Everatt and Solanki 2004; 2008). Such studies have been able to show that unlike in Western industrial societies where literature suggests that volunteers are more likely to come from more privileged socio-economic and educational backgrounds such as middle class, slightly older women with a university education (Voicu and Voicu 2003; Einolf and Chambré 2011), in Africa, there is a higher prevalence of volunteering among the income poor. These studies have also been able to show that the Western pre-conception of volunteers as people seeking self-actualisation (in Maslow's term) can be misleading and people are motivated by much wider reasons beyond self-actualization.

Indeed, empirical evidence provided from Africa shows that the income poor give help enormously, especially to extended family, neighbours, clansmen etc. Such mutual aid and self-help type of volunteering and helping has been the bulwark in securing the financial and human capital assets of the income poor in Africa (Bebbington 2010; Everatt and Solanki 2004; 2008; Everatt et al. 2005; Gillette 2003; Mati 2016a; Patel and Mupedziswa 2007; Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler 2009; Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005). This accounts for the prevalence of volunteering among the poor (especially informally) in resource-constrained societies in Africa (Patel and Mupedziswa 2007; Everatt and Solanki 2004; 2008; Everatt et al. 2005; Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005; Kunljian 2005). Wilkinson-Maposa et al. (2005) conceptualise this as horizontal form of helping/generosity behaviour in Southern Africa.

This ubiquitous horizontality of volunteering in Africa is explained by stressing on the social-economic context of African societies (see for example Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005; Patel et al. 2007). Specifically, the prevalence of horizontal volunteerism and others forms of helping at the community level are said to be both a manifestation and a result of the social context of high incidences of poverty and diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS, as well as the prevalence of humanistic life philosophies such as *Ubuntu* in southern Africa, *Harambee* in Kenya, *Ujamaa* in Tanzania, *Umuganda* in Rwanda, or *Edir* in Ethiopia, which act as forms of guaranteed social insurance for mutual assistance in these communities. These horizontal forms of helping behaviour coexist with vertical forms of helping. Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler (2009) graphically illustrate these two forms of helping behaviour at community levels in Africa as below.



Volunteering in Africa (adapted from Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler (2009, p. 8).

Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler (2009) model is a useful attempt at building a theory of African giving and volunteering behaviour. Using literature on volunteering in Africa, in next section, I explain how this model illustrates both informal and formal volunteerism.

From existing literature, we discern that among the basic features of informal African volunteerisms horizontality is that it is premised on 'deeply embedded, morally grounded' African values and philosophies of life that privilege collective wellbeing over selfishness and 'operates as a vital element for both survival and progress…It is neither random nor disorganized, but exists within proven, clear, unwritten, acculturated rules' (Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005, p.

x) even when it appears as opaque, disorganised and invisible. This is especially so in its informal manifestations. The informal horizontal volunteerism operates on the basis of reciprocity and counter-obligation; it exhibits strong interpersonal, face-to-face interactions devoid of institutional intermediation; close connections and affiliations between volunteers and the people as they may be distant relatives, people from common place of origin, shared ethnicity, religion, etc. (Mati 2016b; Atibil 2014; Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005; Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler, 2009; Everatt et al. 2005).

Even in formal institutionalised forms, African volunteering can be less visible, operating below the waterline of visibility, can also be temporal, established to address a need and once that is achieved, the said organisation dissolves. Moreover, in some cases, actions that would count as volunteering elsewhere may not be referred as such in Africa. This is typically the case for *harambee* in Kenya, for example. In formal *harambee* practice, a formal committee is usually set for the purposes of mobilisation of volunteers and financial resources. Once resources needed to handle the case are realised, and the issue resolved, such a committee naturally dissolves. The question in this case then is, where does this form of helping fall: is it formal or informal? Moreover, Hacker, Picken and Lewis (2016), argue that while *harambee* has all the hallmarks of volunteerism, it is hardly seen or referred as such.

The more perverse formal horizontal volunteerism is a contemporary development in Africa. It has been mainly utilised in the 'development industry' especially by governmental, intergovernmental and even Non-governmental development interventions. Some of the prominent manifestations of this are the formal volunteer schemes. These include the Southern African Trust's SayXchange, the African Union Youth Volunteer Service Corps programme, the Canada World Youth sponsored Youth Leaders in Action programme, the VSO Jitolee volunteer scheme, etc. These programmes have been categorised under the South-South model of formal volunteer involvement (see for example Mati 2016b). Under this model, volunteers are recruited from one developing country and placed to work with communities in another developing country (Fulbrook, 2007). The objectives of such South-South programmes include skills sharing, reciprocity, mutual learning and understanding. They are also geared towards the promotion of development co-operation amongst developing countries and the utilisation of southern agency in development efforts (Mati 2016b). The South-South volunteering model is not only challenging the dominance of the North in aid and development but is also 'helping reduce the ethical pitfalls of instrumentalising southern communities as only useful in providing

privileged Northern volunteers with opportunities for gaining experience in development work (Plewes and Stuart, 2007)' (Mati 2016b, p. 132).

A more prevalent manifestation of horizontality in formal volunteering sphere is found in the various community development and welfare projects across Africa. Among these, those concerned with health have received most attention, as arguably, they are also the most visible ones. These programmes qualify as horizontal because, as I have noted elsewhere, the socio-economic profile of volunteers corresponds closely with those of beneficiaries (Mati 2016b).

The question then is why is there a prevalence of horizontal volunteerism in Africa contexts? The answer to this question can be gleaned from a mix set of motivations for volunteering as well as the socioeconomic and political contexts within which this happens.

Drivers/motivations of volunteering

Motivations to volunteer, as already noted, have attracted wide scholarly attention, especially from psychologists. For psychologists motivations for volunteering are both internal as well as external to the volunteer and can be driven by diverse reasons. In the West, Omoto and Snyder (2002) who study motivations for HIV/AIDS volunteers in the United States, for instance, report a variety of reasons:

> people volunteer to express their personal values or to satisfy felt humanitarian obligations to help others…[others] volunteer in search of greater understanding of AIDS and how people live with HIV disease, some for reasons related to personal development such as to challenge themselves or enlarge their social networks, and some to fulfill esteem enhancement needs (e.g., to feel better about themselves or escape other pressures' (p. 851).

Some scholars argue that volunteering is an altruistic behaviour, while other studies argue that it is driven by some selfish desire such as purposive personal material or symbolic self-interests (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016).[2] Still, other studies explain volunteer motivations using individual personality characteristics and circumstances of people who volunteer (Omoto and Snyder, 2002; Grizzle and Yusuf, 2015). In this regard, at the individual level, volunteers are said to be driven by 'altruistic individualism, goodness, and mutual support goals' (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016; Clohesy, 2000; Haski-Leventhal, 2009). Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016, p. 15) continue to argue that the altruistic spirit is sometimes, 'intertwined in the volunteer

[2] Toraldo, Contu and Mangia (2016) argue it is not useful to accord greater relevance to either egotism or altruism motivations. Rather, motivations need to be understood as a continuum. This way, we can appreciate that egotism and altruism motivations can co-exist.

exchange with more personal motives.' Under altruistic motives, research in different contexts has shown a great many examples where volunteer actions have impacted on other people without a reciprocal expectation. Nonetheless, as already indicted, research on volunteerism in Africa has shown strong manifestations of connections between servers and recipients of the volunteer act and in a sense, volunteering does reinforce a sense of community or as Turner (1969) calls it, *communitas*.

In Africa, an individual's decision to volunteer/help, therefore, can be motivated by his/her affiliation to a group. Further, both self-interests, as well as interests of the collective can motivate volunteering. This becomes evident in Africa when one looks at self-help and mutual aid practices and organisations through which volunteering is expressed. Wilkinson-Maposa et al. (2005) as already noted, illustrates how deeply embedded, morally grounded, and widespread mutual aid practices in poor communities serve as vital elements for survival and progress. Religion also plays a major role in inducing obligations to volunteer (Everatt and Solanki 2004; 2008; Everatt et al. 2005). Further, Wilkinson-Maposa et al. (2005) found that there is a high social value attributed to non-material contribution of time and skills in helping others. They further noted that "help follows a cardinal rule: 'if you have, you must give, no matter how little.' Poor people place value on the act of helping and not necessarily on the quantum. Help exhibits the adages, 'give so that you can be given too', and, 'I help those who help me.' (Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005, p. x).

It follows therefore, that the line between obligation and choice as drivers of volunteer act in African societies is not always clearly defined (Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005). These practices in Southern Africa have been captured under communal philosophies such as *ubuntu* which embodies a worldview that privileges the wellbeing of the collective over individualism. Ingrained in *ubuntu* are principles such as reciprocity, counter-obligation, collaboration/cooperation and altruism. This points to an obligation for all to help each other as a social norm in these societies. Such help can be direct (informal) between servers and recipients of volunteer acts, but can also be mediated by formal institutions. Expressions of obligatory volunteerism in African societies are found in for instance, the phenomenon of Hometown mutual aid associations (Tchouassi 2011; Tchoussi and Sikod 2010). Volunteerism in these circumstances has promoted solidarity and a sense of community. Such solidarity and even sympathy has been manifested in volunteering especially in times of humanitarian crisis. In Kenya for instance, there were many spontaneous volunteers during the 2008 post-election violence (Kimenyi and Kimenyi 2011; Lough and Mati 2012).

Besides psychologists, economists have also been concerned with self-interest or egotistic economic motivations for volunteerism. These are expressed in terms of rewards that volunteers get from the act or process of volunteering. These egotistic motivations can be either in the form of material goods, career building skills and experience, or psychological rewards (Toraldo, Contu and Mangia 2016). In this regard, Delany and Perold (2016) argue that volunteering can serve as a means for enhancing youth employability in many African countries. This is because in some cases, some volunteers in post-volunteering period have even been hired as paid workers by the same organisation they volunteered for, or in other similar organisations and roles (Mati 2016b; Wiechowska 2007). Wiechowska (2007, p. 34) in a comparative study of young mothers' experiences of voluntary work in poor urban neighbourhoods in Zambia and South Africa for instance, noted that the hope that taking part in volunteering would open doors for employment in the future was a motive for getting engaged in volunteering:

> Young women were very aware that they needed to do voluntary work in order to get work. When a new post is announced by the councillor in the township, the employer will ask applicants if they have done any voluntary work in the community. If she or he has not done any unpaid community work in the past, the chances of getting work diminish. […] The work experience and the training they got as a volunteer was stressed as an important factor to get a future job. They placed hope in some degree that their new skills would eventually generate an income.

Whatever the reasons advanced, without looking at the opportunity structure presented by the socioeconomic and political context/conditions, motives alone cannot explain the absence or presence of volunteerism in Africa. It is to these that we turn to next in our search for explanations of horizontal volunteerism in Africa.

Context (socioeconomic and political) determinants of forms of African volunteering

African social structural conditions have incentivised the emergence of both formal and informal volunteerism. Specifically, as already mentioned, besides the collectivist approaches to life, the existence of mass poverty and diseases, have provided contextual and structural opportunities for both vertical and horizontal volunteerism to thrive. Regarding horizontal volunteerism, Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler (2009, p. 21) observe that 'unmet needs or unresolved problems' [in society and at individual levels] are a quintessential aspect of poverty that drives people to seek and provide help to each other especially in situations where service delivery in poor communities is lacking, and government cannot deliver welfare services. Further, the social and economic situation, especially unemployment and HIV and AIDS and increasing poverty pushes people to help one another (see Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005: Perold, Caraphina and Mohamed

2006). The poor survive in such circumstances mainly by helping each other through community-based social networks, such as family, clan, neighbours, and kin. Poor people therefore invest heavily in social relations for psychological, cultural, and economic well-being through self-organising for collective action and as a result, enhance their livelihood assets. These community-based initiatives often serve not only as coping mechanisms, but sometimes have substituted the role of the state rather than as a complement to state efforts.

Besides the survivalist informal volunteerism, local volunteers have also been key to the successful in formal humanitarian responses as well as in the promotion of public health, including prevention, public health awareness raising, and care of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, seeing sick neighbours and orphaned children, in family planning, as birth attendants, traditional healers, and in meeting welfare needs for many in resource-constrained communities in Africa (Yates 2003; Nyau 2000; Kalila, Wilson and Noyoo 2006; Ngatia 2010; Flaherty and Kipp 2004; Mathambo and Richter 2007; International HIV/AIDS Alliance 2003). This is consistent with Omoto and Snyder's (2000, p. 849) argument that 'a critical component of the societal response to the HIV epidemic in the United States has been community-based organizations of volunteers involved in caring for PWAs (patients with AIDS) and in educating the public about HIV and PWAs...' Likewise, in many Sub-Saharan countries, HIV/AIDS service organisations have emerged in great numbers in the last three decades. Many of these African organisations, unlike the American ones, might be externally funded. Nonetheless, some of these, just as in the USA, involve volunteers in the provision of psychosocial support to people living with HIV/AIDS. Such volunteers have greatly reduced the cost of caring for PWAs in many parts of the world.

Volunteerism has also been used in Africa to advance causes that would otherwise have been very difficult to advance (Ngatia 2010; Maes 2010). Maes (2010) for instance argues that volunteers have uniquely been capable of providing culturally congruent and compassionate chronic disease care. Emerging evidence also shows that the high rates of antiretroviral therapy adherence in sub-Saharan Africa have been, at least partly, attributed to the contributions of volunteers as treatment supporters, counsellors and mediators of patients' access to resources. Over the past few decades, Ministries of Health in countries like Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Mozambique, and Malawi have introduced or strengthened their Community health worker (CHW) programmes as part of their primary health care policy (Ngatia 2010; Hacker, Picken and Lewis 2016). These CHWs illustrate how formal public health institutions have utilised horizontal volunteerism to make a significant contribution to increasing access to HIV

and other health services in these countries (see for example Hacker, Picken and Lewis 2016 chapter on the role of community volunteers in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Mozambique and Kenya).

Moreover, similarities have been noted between industrial and developing societies in relation to gender differences in these forms of volunteering. Specifically, women tend to be more involved in social care and social services than men, who are more involved in committee work and decision-making activities (Moleni and Gallagher 2006; Nthara 2004; Bacon 2002; Anheier and Salamon 1999). As study by Wiechowska (2007) exploring voluntary participation of women in poor urban neighbourhoods in Zambia and South Africa for example, found that women give much of their time to various social and community development initiatives.

Another study by CIVICUS in several African countries that looked at formal volunteering in civil society organisations further collaborates observations made about the likelihood of those that are economically relatively better off to volunteer in formal organisations (see for example the Egyptian Civil Society Index report (CDS 2006); the Ghanaian Civil Society Index report (Darkwa, Amponsah and Gyampoh 2006); the Sierra Leone CIVICUS CSI report (CGG with Christian Aid 2006)). These studies also revealed rather low levels of formal volunteering in civil society organisations. These findings are consistent with other studies in Africa that show low levels of African citizen's membership in formal voluntary associations (see for example, Mati 2016a; Akesbi with Meknassi and Bouja 2011; Afrobarometer 2014-15). Nonetheless, civil society organisations in these same countries indicated that they rely heavily on volunteers to carry out their work (see for example CDS 2006). Researchers pursuing the curious inconsistency between the numbers of volunteers reported in these studies and the fact that organisations rely on volunteers have attributed this phenomenon faulty international measurement tools inspired by non-pecuniary orientation in economic theories used in these studies (Russell 2016).

The inconsistency has also been attributed to increasing payment of stipends to volunteers which leaves many whom organisations treat as volunteers, not self-identifying themselves as such (Hacker, Picken and Lewis 2016; Russell 2016). This has led to a persistent criticism on the high prevalence of horizontal volunteerism among the poor in the resource constrained African societies as basically 'survival' strategy. This is especially so as people engage in mutual aid, reciprocity and counter-obligation volunteering activities due to absence of formal state capacity to provide for welfare services, especially in light of increased economic neoliberalism. Africans therefore assist each other, as an investment, a kin to a social insurance policy and they can expect

that those they help will reciprocate should the need arise. A growing number of commentators have also attacked the morality of formal institutional dependency on unpaid volunteers to provide social services to poor communities, while volunteers are unable to support their own families (see for example Kalila, Wilson and Noyoo 2006; Maes 2010; Ngatia 2010; WHO 2008; Hacker, Picken and Lewis 2016). This is particularly pertinent, as volunteers tend to be persons of low socio-economic status who are engaged in their own daily existential struggles. In countries such as Mozambique and Kenya, Hacker, Picken and Lewis (2016) argue, there has been some backlash against formal community development schemes that use volunteers, unless these are compensated. In these cases, the question emerges as to whether those who volunteer are really volunteers in the classic use of the term, or they are simply poorly paid and exploited workers.

Despite the criticism, what is interesting about these programmes is that they exhibit the same horizontality as the widespread informal ones in Africa, albeit with increasing institutionalisation. Specifically, while these programmes are formal, volunteers serving in them are of similar socioeconomic and demographic profiles as those they serve (Mati 2016b; Mati and Perold 2012; Hacker, Picken and Lewis 2016). These programmes, as well as other forms of volunteerism in Africa direct us to the fact that people facing different forms of exclusion are increasingly forging their own futures and those of their societies at large by breaking new ground through voluntary service (Gillette 2003; Bebbington 2010). Those interested in understanding African volunteerism as well as its role in development had better take heed of this in their programming of interventions.

Conclusion

Differences in patterns of volunteerism among the poor in the developed and developing countries points to the difficulty of uncritically adopting trends in international literature where the research is based on service and volunteering in industrial societies with some commentary on the developing world (Anheier and Salamon 1999). Volunteerism is a complex phenomenon that involves interactive variables of individual motivations, social structure and context. By focussing on the horizontality aspects of this phenomenon in Africa, this paper has illustrated one of its underlying layers of complexity, which often is ignored in theory building. By reviewing existing studies of expressions of African volunteering, the paper has demonstrated that the African socioeconomic and political realities have incubated a horizontal form of volunteering that is largely informal; involves interpersonal contacts between servers and

beneficiaries with similar socio-economic characteristics; and is often based on collectivist solidarity and survivalist mutual aid goals. However, African volunteerism's horizontality transcends the informal. The embryonic formal South-South volunteer programmes, as well as the widespread use of volunteers in formal community development interventions (by the state, civil society and private sector) exemplify African volunteerism's ubiquitous horizontality. Given the foregoing, the paper suggests that horizontality is useful not only for its heuristic value on understanding the idiosyncrasy of African volunteering, but has implications on theory and practice of volunteerism for development; organically evolved features can be successfully tapped even in formal volunteering arenas.

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