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# Volunteering Hierarchies in the Global South: Remuneration and Livelihoods

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**Abstract** This paper explores volunteering and inequality in the global South through an analysis of volunteering remuneration. We argue that the growing remuneration of volunteers reflects an increasing financialisation of volunteering by aid and development donors to match labour to project and sectoral objectives. We examine how these remuneration strategies shape volunteering economies and (re)produce hierarchies and inequalities in contexts in the global South where volunteers are often from marginalised communities. We analyse data collected in Africa and the Middle East as part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Global Review on Volunteering to explore these interweaving volunteering hierarchies and how they articulate with existing social stratifications. In these contexts, we argue that a livelihoods and capabilities approach across macro-, national and local levels provides an alternative and more nuanced way of accounting for volunteer remuneration within the range of assets that communities have to build their lives and future. When oriented towards catalysing these community assets, and away from rewarding particular kinds of individual labour, remuneration has the potential to enable rather than undermine sustained volunteering activity by and within marginalised communities.

**Keywords** Livelihoods · Remuneration · Local volunteering · Global South · Financialisation

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## Introduction

The global inequalities that shape humanitarian and development activity have often been under-theorised within volunteering studies, remaining as a broad backdrop and context. However, most volunteers working in humanitarian and development contexts, often characterised by widespread and persistent poverty, come from the very communities experiencing inequality and marginalisation. While some research does address local volunteering in the global South, notably in relation to community health workers (Jenkins 2011; Mays et al. 2017), and volunteering by low-income individuals in the global North (Benenson 2017), conceptualisation of volunteering in the context of development activities is dominated by the experiences of volunteers from the global North temporarily placed in global South settings (Devereux 2008; Laurie and Baillie Smith 2017). Consequently, we lack a significant empirical or conceptual base for understanding how community-based volunteering articulates with inequalities in global South settings (Graham et al. 2013). In this paper, we explore volunteering and inequalities through an analysis of volunteer remuneration in the global South and its relationships to livelihoods. To do this, we analyse data collected as part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies’ (IFRC) Global Review on Volunteering (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015).

How volunteers are remunerated has been subject to increasing academic and policy attention; however, this has often focused on its implications for volunteer recruitment and retention. Scholars have paid less attention to contexts in the global South where volunteers are often from marginalised communities, and to impacts of volunteer remuneration in aid and donor activities in those settings. In this

paper, we bring together debates around volunteering, livelihoods, financialisation and development to suggest a new framework for exploring volunteering remuneration in the global South. We do this in order to: explore the ways aid and donor remuneration strategies can inadvertently shape patterns and forms of volunteering in the global South; reveal the volunteering hierarchies produced by particular forms of remuneration; and begin to develop an account of volunteer remuneration that locates it within the range of assets that communities have to help build their livelihoods and futures.

The paper proceeds in three main sections. In the first, we introduce relevant literatures on volunteering and remuneration. Volunteers have played increasingly important roles in providing low-cost delivery of development services—such as around community health—in the global South (Jenkins 2009). Mobilising these cheap armies of labour has been increasingly reliant on diverse forms of payment to volunteers, meaning what were perhaps seen as everyday forms of care or giving have become increasingly ‘financialised’ (Epstein 2005; Mawdsley 2018). However, much existing research is either based on volunteering experiences in the global North, focused on international volunteers, or is developed from the perspective of donors. This risks conceptualising volunteering remuneration as a deviation from established norms and simply not proper volunteering.

In section two, we develop the case for a new conceptual framework for analysing volunteering remuneration through a focus on livelihoods and we detail our research methodology, including the data set on which the paper draws, and its limitations. Since many volunteers in the global South experience significant vulnerabilities themselves, we suggest that the livelihoods frameworks offer a more adequate lens on volunteering and remuneration. Livelihoods frameworks are concerned with the capabilities and assets necessary for a means of making a living (Chambers and Conway 1992; Moser 1998; Bebbington 1999; Rakodi 2002). Unsustainable livelihood systems are not only a symptom but also a contributing factor to inequality at the local level. Overcoming vulnerabilities and building resilience must be deeply rooted in community assets in order to allow for sustainable means of living, and volunteering plays a key role in this sense.

As we show in section three, current patterns of volunteer remuneration can increase inequality and exacerbate vulnerability which is “linked to reliance on a monetised economy” (Beall and Fox 2009, p. 115). We analyse our data to show that volunteer remuneration as a form of financialisation creates interweaving hierarchies between volunteers, forms of volunteering, development actors, and sites of volunteer and development activity, and these hierarchies articulate with existing social stratifications.

In the conclusion, we suggest that further research is needed to assess the impact on community asset mobilisation from donors’ financialisation strategies when engaging with volunteers in the global South within particular project time frames. We argue that understanding volunteering remuneration through a livelihoods and asset-based framework provides an alternative way to explore how it can support inclusive and sustainable approaches to tackling inequalities in the global South.

## Volunteering and Remuneration in Current Literatures

Volunteering is increasingly celebrated and analysed as a crucial feature of enhancing aid and development in the global South (Devereux 2008; Georgeou 2012; Burns et al. 2015; Baillie Smith, Laurie and Griffiths 2017; United Nations Volunteers 2018). For the purposes of this paper, we explore development in terms of Hart’s definition of big ‘D’ development: the post-Second World War project of intervention in the ‘third world’ that emerged in the context of decolonisation and the Cold War (2001, p. 650).

Recent years have seen a proliferation of volunteer-involving organisations, with diverse forms of management, funding, historical and cultural roots and locations within broader systems of aid governance. Volunteers have long been part of development initiatives and activities at different scales, but this has been increasingly drawn out as a ‘named’ practice which is more specific than generalised references to voluntarism rooted in the promotion of civil societies. As Hustinx et al. note, volunteering is a social construct (2010, p. 410) with multiple definitions, rooted in different disciplines and shaped by diverse contexts, making a single conceptualisation of it both flawed and unhelpful (Wilson 2000, p. 233). Baillie Smith et al. (2019) argue that despite apparent commitments to recognising diversity, much of the debate and practice around volunteering and development is characterised by the dominance of ideas of volunteering rooted in North America and Europe (Rehberg 2005; MacNeela 2008). Most work on volunteering and development and, in particular, its conceptualisation and theorisation has been based on research that reflects the particular trajectories of now neoliberal economies in the global North (Anheier and Salamon 1999).

Although recent studies have been critically looking at volunteering within Northern contexts through an asset-based approach (Benenson and Stagg 2016) and exploring tensions between volunteering and employment (Simonet 2005), international volunteers from the North placed in the South have received disproportionate scholarly attention (Laurie and Baillie Smith 2017). Within this grouping, the

focus has been on volunteers from Europe, North America and Australia and, in particular, their professional development and employability (Jones 2011), ‘learning’ (Diprose 2012) and citizenship (Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011; Lough and McBride 2014). More recent work disaggregates this group more, including through work on religious volunteers (Baillie Smith et al. 2013) and diaspora volunteers (Laurie and Baillie Smith 2017). On the one hand, studies have focused on the perspectives of ‘host’ communities (e.g. Sin 2010); however, this has largely developed separately from a growing body of work on volunteering in the global South (Patel et al. 2007; Graham et al. 2013), including on issues such as youth volunteering (Wijeyesekera 2011; Caprara et al. 2012) and community health workers (Cherrington et al. 2010; Maes et al. 2011; South et al. 2014). Furthermore, much of this scholarship has been separate from work on the changing contours of volunteering in the neoliberal economies of the global North (Milligan and Fyfe 2005; Milligan et al. 2008; Birdwell 2011; Benenson 2017) as well as key conceptual literatures on volunteering (Wilson 2000; Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Hustinx et al. 2010).

Despite disciplinary and geographical silos in volunteering literatures, a common thread has been the central role of volunteering in the delivery of welfare and service provision in a neoliberal global economy as states have reduced public spending and outsourced their work to the voluntary sector. As part of this, volunteering has become professionalised and located within models of individual responsibility and accountability. A key lens on volunteering and inequality is how neoliberalism has engaged volunteers in dealing with the inequalities it produces, and what consequences this has for understandings of volunteering and the experiences of volunteers. The framing of volunteers as a cheap army of labour for service delivery has then underpinned an emphasis on recruitment and motivation in both research and practice. This instrumental approach has sidelined analysis of wider articulations between volunteering and inequalities, such as between different groups of volunteers, where some groups—such as women—face particular challenges to volunteer (Cadesky et al. 2019), or between forms of volunteering, where some forms are privileged over others. In this paper, we bring these foci together—volunteers as service deliverers, inequalities among volunteers, volunteering and social inequalities—by exploring the hierarchies that are produced and exacerbated by donor-funded remuneration of volunteers in the global South.

Remuneration in volunteering is a growing feature of the policy and practice landscape of volunteering in the global South and has been subject to scholarly and policy makers’ attention in recent years (Hunter and Ross 2013; Lough et al. 2016; Prince and Brown 2016; Butcher and

Einolf 2017). Within this, there has been a strong focus on motivation and retention (Tschirhart et al. 2001; McBride et al. 2011; South et al. 2014; Colvin 2016), although work in the area tends to be fragmented across disciplines and sectors, with most work concentrated in the health sector (Pfeffer and DeVoe 2009; Sunkutu and Nampanya-Serpell 2009; Graham et al. 2013; South et al. 2014; Kasteng et al. 2016). Ellis Paine et al. (2010, p. 11) identify a spectrum of forms of remuneration from “incurred expenses” to “enhanced expenses” or “incentives and rewards” and “payments”. But what counts as ‘expenses’, for example, is not clear-cut, and we can see a blurring of definitions that makes forming distinctions between ‘per diems’, ‘reimbursements’, ‘salaries’ and ‘payments’ less than straightforward within and across settings. However, the language is critically important; calling something a ‘payment’ and ‘salary’ while keeping the label of ‘volunteer’ challenges established Euro-American definitions of volunteering.

The labelling is part of the politics of how work and volunteering are constructed and not just about technical and legal description. We argue that it is helpful to explore the remuneration of volunteers by understanding it in terms of processes of financialisation. As Mawdsley (2018) rightly notes, financialisation is a complex and contested area, but many authors start from Epstein’s useful definition of it as “the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of the domestic and international economies” (2005, p. 3). Scholars have explored the impacts of financialisation in a range of domains. For example, Sullivan (2013, p. 199) notes how the “business and finance sectors, in collaboration with conservation organisations, conservation biologists and environmental economists, are engaging in an intensified financialisation of discourses and endeavours associated with environmental conservation and sustainability”. Thümler (2014, p. 19) identifies a growing financialisation of philanthropy and argues that “the language of impact investment will increasingly only be used for reasons of legitimacy, thus erecting philanthropic facades behind which the quest for maximum financial returns rather than social purposes will be pursued”. Across financialisation scholarship, there is growing attention to the articulation of global and ‘everyday’ financialisation and how micro-level practices are connected to global processes of financialisation and their associated institutions, languages and rationalities.

Therefore, we can understand volunteer remuneration as part of “converting the ‘mundane’ into investible objects and tradable commodities” (Mawdsley 2018, p. 271). Through this, we can conceptualise current patterns of volunteer remuneration in the global South as part of the ways the global aid and development industry creates economies at different scales to foster transactions that

support its aims and objectives; particular forms of remuneration privilege and incentivise forms of volunteering and types of volunteers to align them with the labour needs of donors in particular places. As we show in this paper, these processes articulate with existing social hierarchies and inequalities. So while volunteering may be framed as supporting development efforts for vulnerable communities, current forms of volunteer remuneration can in fact undermine livelihoods' strategies and efforts to reduce inequalities.

Despite the increasingly prominent roles of volunteers in policy making for development, there has been relatively limited attention to the relationships between volunteering and livelihoods. There is a large body of work on the related topics of asset accumulation, sustainable livelihoods, social protection and vulnerability, beginning with the work on entitlements of Sen (1981), and developed and supplemented by later work including Chambers and Conway (1992), Chambers (1995) and Rakodi and Lloyd Jones (2002). Chambers defines 'livelihood' as "adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs and to support well-being; [...] sustainable livelihoods maintain or enhance resource productivity on a long-term basis and equitable livelihoods maintain or enhance the livelihoods and well-being of others" (1997, p. 10). This approach has been adopted, in various guises, in humanitarian and development practice, with international NGOs such as Oxfam linking its sustainable livelihoods analysis to a rights-based approach since 1994 (Moser and Norton 2001), most recently updated with its Rights in Crisis Campaign (Oxfam International 2015). This large body of work has led to "conceptual confusions" (Moser 1998, p. 3) and an increasingly complex and interlinked plethora of frameworks regarding these topics. More recently, the literature on volunteering has begun to recognise asset-based approaches in order to gain some new insights on low-income volunteers in particular, as indicated in recent work by Benenson and Stagg (2016), Benenson (2017) and Simonet (2005, 2009). Benenson and Stagg argue that "asset-based frameworks enable researchers to generate different kinds of questions [...] which may yield new policy-based findings" (2016, p. 141), while Benenson (2017) later suggests that adopting these approaches makes it easier to quantify and acknowledge when types of civic engagement such as volunteering are taking place.

## Theoretical Framework and Methodology

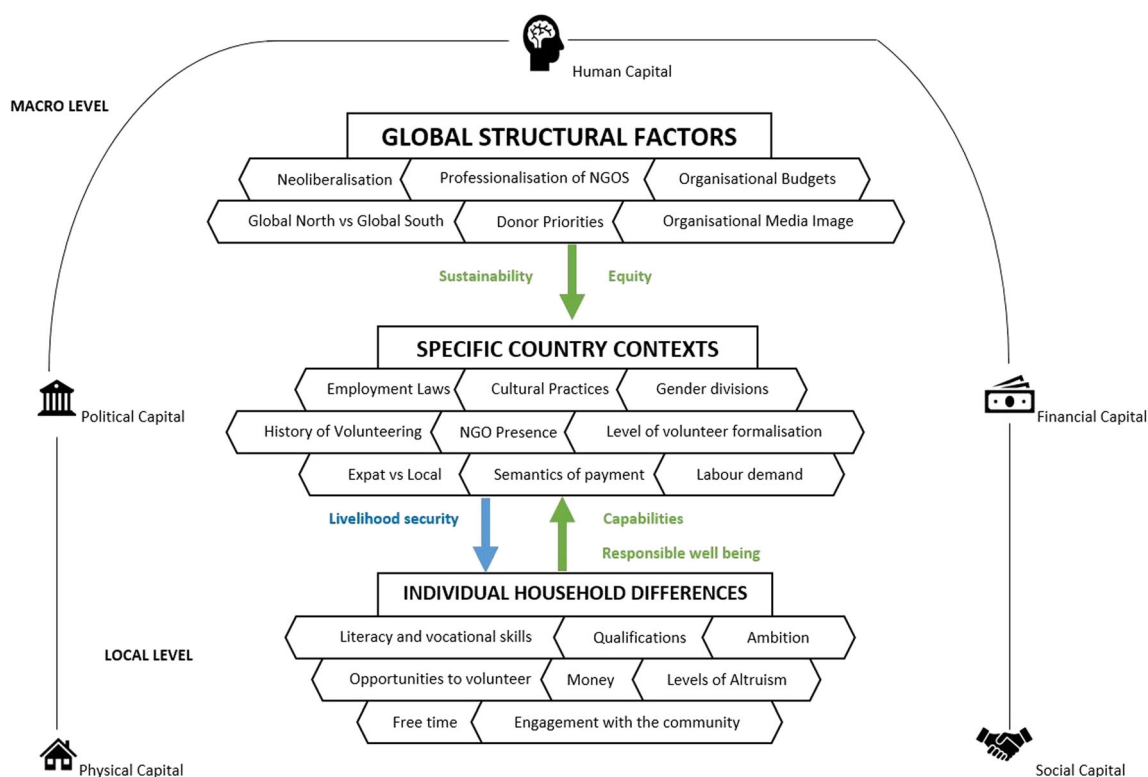
### Theoretical Framework

In this paper, we use a livelihoods lens for two key purposes: to critically analyse volunteer remuneration in the

context of aid and donor interventions and the financialisation of development and to explore if a reconfigured approach to remuneration can help volunteering act as a vehicle through which volunteers can bolster their asset portfolios and improve their lives. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of how we locate volunteering remuneration within the different scales through which development is operationalised and livelihoods shaped (Chambers 1997), as well as its relation to the five assets most commonly cited in asset-based approaches: human, social, physical, natural and financial capital. We have replaced natural capital with political capital within this framework due to its crucial role in volunteers' lives, as "an asset [that] uniquely provides a route to equitable political representation and the distribution of political resources, which supplements the work of volunteers with material and symbolic political support for community well-being" (Benenson and Stagg 2016, p. 140).

The dynamic forces and drivers at work within the lives of volunteers are particularly evident across different macro-, regional and local levels. For example, decisions about budgetary policies and constraints at the global level can have unforeseen consequences, changing what resources accrue to what kinds of actors, therefore impacting individual volunteers and the ways volunteering is organised in a particular place. A donor's need to demonstrate particular forms of intervention to its global North publics can articulate with country labour legislation, shaping the time periods for which remuneration is provided so that it aligns with global advocacy interests rather than local sustainability. Global dynamics are mediated by specific country contexts which can vary significantly in their approach to everything from gender divisions to what types of remuneration are legal or permissible. How volunteering is remunerated is then produced through a complex interplay of global structural factors, country contexts and individual household assets. We can see through this framework how volunteering can be used and remunerated to deliver particular, often externally shaped, development agendas and projects, and how this approach will articulate with a range of different institutions, legal frameworks and capabilities. It is through this interplay that we can also understand how certain forms of remuneration produce interweaving volunteering hierarchies.

Here, we focus less on the specific needs of a community and instead consider the broader implications of using a livelihoods frame for volunteering and its remuneration in diverse settings. Research suggests that offering even a small financial incentive or stipend increases the likelihood that people will engage in volunteering in their local communities (Wig 2016; Mays et al. 2017). However, financial incentives are not the only motivating factor for volunteers, and indeed, it is unhelpful to isolate any one



**Fig. 1** The nexus of an asset-based approach to volunteering and livelihoods frameworks

factor or ignore how they may interact with each other and the wider context in which people live their lives. The framework outlined above allows us to locate volunteer remuneration within a more complex understanding of livelihoods and development. If designed through a bottom-up approach, remuneration constitutes a strategy to potentially enable volunteering to enhance volunteers' abilities to develop their individual portfolio of assets while building local sustainability and thereby reducing vulnerability within communities in equitable ways. Volunteering can provide access to “non-monetary benefits [...] that provide training to enhance their future livelihoods, such as improving literacy levels, income-generation, and vocational and life skills” (Moleni and Gallagher 2007, p. 49), and can form one pillar within a wider portfolio to help establish livelihood security. How the interplay of the factors in our conceptual diagram shapes remuneration is then critical to volunteers' abilities to develop their individual portfolio of assets and thereby reduce their levels of inequality. In the next section, we discuss our data to explore some of the ways in which contemporary patterns of remuneration shape volunteering practices in different settings in the global South and, hence, influence volunteering's potential contribution to livelihood strategies and to tackling inequalities.

## Data and Methods

This paper analyses data collected from 2013 to 2015 as part of the IFRC Global Review on Volunteering (Hazel-dine and Baillie Smith 2015). The study was conducted within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and involved more than 600 participants across 158 countries. Participants were purposively sampled on the basis of their institutional affiliation (volunteers; volunteer managers; and wider stakeholders, such as development professionals and technical experts from other volunteer-involving organisations and academia) and their region of origin (as identified by the IFRC: Americas; Africa; Middle East North Africa; Europe and Central Asia; Asia-Pacific).

The methodological approach was qualitative and involved a combination of methods in two distinct stages: semi-structured interviews and qualitative surveys conducted online and face to face; and subsequent purposive sampling of eight in-depth case studies. Each case study involved members of the research team visiting field sites and conducting semi-structured interviews with volunteers, staff and at times external organisations, government officials and policy makers.

In total, 288 interviews and 340 surveys were conducted by the research team composed principally of researchers working within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement who had a practical background in volunteering.

Participants also had past or simultaneous roles as volunteers themselves within the Movement and those with more than eight years of paid work experience are referred to as senior staff members. This paper analyses data from countries in Africa and the Middle East North Africa. Interviews were recorded and transcribed whenever possible or documented through handwritten notes when necessary or where recording was not approved; names and precise titles and roles have been removed to guarantee anonymity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality and privacy were fully respected.

Data were analysed using a thematic coding frame developed upon completion of data collection through dialogue between the lead author and an advisory board comprised of a selection of academics and volunteering experts from the humanitarian and development sectors (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015). An initial set of codes was constructed inductively based on dialogues between the field teams, advisory boards and report authors, focused particularly on identifying and exploring common challenges facing Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies across global South and North. This led to the identification of ‘volunteering economies’ as a key area for policy debate and further research and action, with volunteering remuneration and rewards identified as a “critical feature of the changing meanings and practices of volunteering” (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015, p. 11). Key sets of data were, therefore, re-analysed in more depth for this paper by the authors, focusing particularly on deepening our understanding of volunteering economies in relation to livelihoods. We have revisited the data set to explore conceptual implications of an asset-based approach to volunteering and theorise the broader meanings of remuneration in relation to current literatures.

### Context and Limitations

This paper’s data set was collected within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which is the world’s largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, currently accounting for 13.7 million volunteers and 465,000 paid staff in 192 countries (IFRC 2019, p. 11). In this context, a Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteer is understood to be “a person who carries out volunteering activities for a National Society, occasionally or regularly [...] motivated by free will, and not by a desire for material or financial gain, or by external social, economic or political pressure” (IFRC 2011b). According to IFRC Volunteering Policy, the best practice is for volunteers to be reimbursed for “pre-approved expenditure related to their volunteering tasks” (IFRC 2011b) meaning that “volunteers should neither gain nor lose out financially as a result of their voluntary

activity” (IFRC 2007, p. 23). Implementation of the policy at country level, however, recognisably varies according to national contexts, laws and practices.

In some countries, volunteers are allowed payment that goes beyond the reimbursement of expenses in which case “National Societies will have to develop practice based on the nature of the contradiction, and the best interests of their volunteers” (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2011a). On the other hand, basic reimbursement to all volunteers can be unrealistic when National Societies have larger volunteer bases operating within resource-constricted environments in the global South (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015, p. 56). Rather than homogenising the meanings of remuneration and livelihoods across these diverse settings, this paper explores how practices named as such by respondents are shaping volunteering practices, notably in the global South.

This paper has potential limitations. First, we recognise that by developing the research within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, findings are representative but not necessarily generalisable. The wide international network and the unique roles of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies as auxiliaries of the public government on the basis of the Geneva Conventions often place staff members and volunteers in particular positions at local levels, compared to other volunteer-involving organisations. Second, the fact that this article derives from data collected in multiple countries poses challenges to the degrees of comparability. This motivated our specific focus on data collected in Africa and the Middle East North Africa, regions found to be most affected by the practice of payment to volunteers beyond expenses and that were also facing comparable institutional challenges in terms of volunteering development. Due to our focus on aid and donor-led remuneration of volunteering, the sample of data analysed here is largely based on the perspectives and experiences of paid staff members who are at the interface of these forms of remuneration and mobilising volunteers. These limitations do not undermine the study’s validity, but call for findings to be contextualised. Further research is necessary to interpret the meanings and impacts of remuneration in terms of livelihoods in different volunteer-involving spaces and according to the experience of different actors in those spaces.

### Volunteer Remuneration: Labour, Hierarchies and Livelihoods

While ‘payment’ may not fit well with global norms of volunteering, as Patel et al. note (2007, p. 8), there is a need for a broader understanding of how it works in the context of the challenges of poverty being faced in the global



South. Butcher and Einolf argue that “the issue of whether volunteering can be paid is more contested in the global South [...] unlike in developed countries, in developing countries volunteers are more likely to come from the poorer classes, and stipends become an important motivation and even a necessity for survival” (2017, p. 266). Remuneration is part of enabling individuals from often poor or marginalised communities to volunteer (Patel et al. 2007; Wig 2016; Butcher and Einolf 2017) and plays a role in organisational strategies for inclusive approaches to volunteering. In this context, it is critically important to connect remuneration debates to a livelihood framework. Nevertheless, as detailed in the previous section, remuneration patterns are shaped by a diverse set of factors at global, national and household levels. Exploring remuneration in the context of single settings, sectors or projects, means we are unable to see how volunteer remuneration fits within and shapes broader economies of volunteering and development across different scales.

In this section, we bring our data into dialogue with the conceptual framework outlined in section two to analyse how donor-funded remuneration of volunteering is shaping volunteer economies in the global South. We do this in three main subsections. First, we explore how remuneration enables donors and development actors to exercise power in relation to the kinds of labour mobilised to meet their objectives. Secondly, we show how contemporary remuneration reflects a form of financialisation that is undermining existing volunteering practices in particular places. Finally, we argue that these impacts result from the ways remuneration creates a set of volunteering hierarchies that articulate with, and can reinforce, existing social inequalities if disconnected from a more nuanced livelihoods approach.

### Remuneration, Labour and Power

Remuneration is intimately bound up with the ways donors and development actors exercise power to mobilise labour to meet their objectives. How remuneration is defined, organised and disbursed reflects how organisations position themselves and their volunteers’ work in relation to existing hierarchies and definitions of work. The politics of this positioning is perhaps most stark in relation to international volunteers. For some international volunteers, the language of the ‘salary’ is denied, but the remuneration packages closely resemble a benefits package one might associate with a job. For example, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme offers their international volunteers allowances comprising “volunteer living allowance (not a salary)”, “travel expenses”, “settling-in grant”, “insurances”, “annual leave” and a “resettlement allowance” (United Nations Volunteers 2017). Other forms of

stipended transnational volunteering are also recognised by the literature (Lough et al. 2016) as indicated earlier. This sleight of hand is not neutral and not confined to international volunteering. Most respondents in our research use the language of reimbursements, reflecting a focus on covering costs incurred: “not for service, but, yes, for any expenses that need to be incurred” (Staff member, Maldives, 12 February 2014). Jenkins notes how health promoters in Peru were given a ‘tip’, “reinforcing the voluntary and ‘non-work’ nature of their activities” and in a way that “does not suggest recognition of the skills and ongoing commitment that their roles require” (Jenkins 2009, p. 24). One respondent from our study who is based in Jordan explains that the label of volunteer helps them navigate national labour laws:

I think it’s harder to make them formal staff, even on short term contracts, there is a lot of paperwork involved and it can sometimes be hard to get them off the contract once the project is finished. It is just more complicated, it’s easier to call them volunteers (Senior staff member, Jordan, 9 September 2014).

Here, the label of volunteer enables the bypassing of formal employment contracts, with a ‘salary’ then constructed in ways to fit the volunteering label and bypass state legislation. In doing so, volunteering as a label works to effectively undermine the rights of people engaged in work. Similarly, an interviewee in Togo explained how permissible volunteering time is limited to disrupt the sense that volunteering is a job (8 July 2013). Our data show how different forms of remuneration (e.g. money, training, clothing, food)—codified in strategic ways by organisations—can flow into each other, and are likely to be experienced by volunteers at household level in inter-related and more complicated ways than organisations can predict at global level. The different labels afforded to volunteering in particular moments are critical to its relationship to work, development and the state. This creates an increasingly complex and flexible volunteering economy for volunteers themselves, but also for volunteer-involving organisations and donors. Data from Lebanon highlight the ways remuneration for activities relates to the particular context and needs, but also changes for individuals even as they do the same activities:

But there is one thing to provide ambulance services during the day, during weekdays where people are busy at work or in university, there are some volunteers that, because we have to maintain ambulance services during the day, some volunteers are paid on a per diem basis for the day, but these are about 100 out of 2700 volunteers in the EMS department and it’s called a per diem basis, but they actually are

employed during the day, they volunteer at night and they are employed during the day (Senior staff member, Lebanon, 12 March 2014).

This provides an additional layer of “interchangeability” to Handy et al.’s (2008) discussion of shifts between paid and volunteer work; we can see fluidity across and between volunteering categories and the ways remuneration may attach differently to them at different moments. This example also serves to highlight the complex landscape in which volunteers go about building their portfolio of assets—be it skills, cash or professional networks. The line between a fruitful professional opportunity and somewhat exploitative working practices is evident in the quotation above. In addition, this example highlights the difficult calculations and decisions which volunteers must make when trying to consolidate their assets—it is not always obvious whether such volunteering positions will be beneficial to them in the long run, and this must also be considered within the wider social context; in this case, that volunteers are considered valuable enough to be paid only some of the time, when no other option is available to the organisation.

Different forms and distributions of remuneration then reflect but also produce particular volunteering economies as well as configurations of development. For example, the ‘tip’ for women volunteers in Peru reflects interlocking gender relations, historical ideas of whose labour counts, funding priorities for donors and their relations with NGOs at country level (Jenkins 2009). In the process, it reproduces and reinforces existing hierarchies and dependencies between development actors and communities even while it appears to be supporting local livelihoods and gendered empowerment. As McWha (2011) notes, hierarchies between different job categorisations, linked to issues and perceptions of pay, are connected to relationship building in aid work. While there has been research exploring relations between volunteers and paid staff, relations between volunteers are also important and often overlooked. This was clear from the perspective of one respondent based in Tanzania, who highlighted existing tensions between local and international volunteers, exacerbating the macro/local divide:

OK, the challenge is, one, because the international volunteers, they are well packaged, these are the international, they are well packaged. And when they are working together with our volunteers who are not packaged this becomes a very big challenge because you have now the, like a different, different scenarios, because they are working on the same but we find these are well packaged, they can afford their food, their meals, their transport, their whatever, but you are local volunteer, they are not affording, they

cannot afford such, you find you, they are demoralised somehow and they feel inferior anyway when you are experiencing the same volunteering principle (Staff member, Tanzania, 27 June 2013).

This offers a stark illustration of the way donor prioritisation and resourcing of international volunteers create a hierarchy with local volunteers who are less well resourced. This reflects a much broader issue of unequal South–North resourcing of development activity. But we can also see more complex interlocking hierarchies produced among local volunteers. Remuneration plays a key role in aligning flexible, disposable and proximate labour with development priorities and needs, while also providing a public discourse of voluntarism that evokes local ownership and cost efficiency. This can produce a set of interlocking volunteering hierarchies since these alignment activities privilege particular kinds of volunteering in certain places and over particular time frames. In this way, forms of remuneration are not only critical to exploring where volunteering is well remunerated but also relationally, since remuneration practices affect the wider volunteering economy within the country or setting.

This is illustrated in the mid-level, specific country context of the theoretical framework, highlighting that the country context in which volunteers operate strongly influences their abilities to develop financial capital, as clearly evidenced in the quotation above. The local volunteers’ lack of access to adequate resources not only reinforces historically rooted and unequal global South/North relations, but also serves to devalue and undermine the very important contribution they are making. It is a clear example of how decisions taken at the macro-level by organisations can impact negatively at the local level. The striking inequality exhibited between the international and local volunteers in this instance resulted in the local volunteers questioning their value and lessening their confidence and can also inevitably lead to some local volunteers leaving their positions.

### **Remuneration, Financialisation and Existing Volunteering Economies**

In the preceding section, we have shown how remuneration can enable the exercise of power by aid and development actors to produce particular volunteer and development economies. It is perhaps unsurprising that this can produce unequal relations between local and international volunteers. But our data show how it can impact negatively on wider local volunteering economies and how the growing use of volunteers by aid donors and development actors might be harmful to volunteering:

We came to implement this project in a branch that was already existing and was delivering a lot of activities in the community. It was an extremely rural area and very impoverished, our project was quite large, it provided a lot of funding and we gave per diems to the volunteers. The project brought a lot of good to the community and was able to achieve a lot but when we went back 6 months after the project had finished, the branch was doing almost no activities anymore. When we asked ‘why’ the response was that they didn’t have any money or resources to do anything and couldn’t get people to volunteer. But when we looked at it, prior to our implementing our project there were a lot of activities going on, with lots of volunteers, they just mobilised resources from within their own community, getting by with what they had. Our project upset that dynamic and seemed to have reduced their resilience in the long run as a result (Senior staff member, Norway, 23 February 2015).

In this example, we can see how project-based remuneration from an external actor helped deliver a particular set of activities, but inadvertently de-stabilised an existing volunteering economy. Analysis that focused on immediate project delivery and processes of volunteer recruitment might have offered a positive assessment of this project and its impacts. However, looking over a longer time period reveals how remuneration shapes voluntary activity beyond conventional project time frames and objectives. One respondent from Jordan identified the growth of volunteer payment with the arrival of international organisations in the country to address the growing refugee crisis:

You know it was you the foreign organisations who started this practice of paying volunteers, before that we didn’t have a problem with it, now all the volunteers want to get paid (Senior staff member, Jordan, 9 September 2014).

A global policy logic around volunteering and an urgent need to support refugees articulates with local labour availabilities through a financialisation process, to produce unintended negative consequences for the local volunteering economy. Taken on their own, remuneration approaches may seem effective to meet other demands for engaging locals rather than international staff. But the impacts extend across the wider volunteering and development economy within particular places. Remuneration can create hierarchies which privilege some kinds of volunteering but undermine others. As interviewees from Burundi and Sierra Leone noted:

This type of volunteering [paying volunteers beyond expenses], is at best distorting community

volunteerism and at worst undermining it (Senior staff member, Burundi, 16th August 2013).

The concept of volunteerism [without financial incentive] seems to be slipping not only in our country but in Africa as a whole (Senior staff member, Sierra Leone, 10 December 2013).

The growing financialisation of volunteering may be helping mobilise and mainstream volunteering within aid and development practices so that donors meet their labour needs. As well as meeting global structural demands, as outlined in our model, this approach may also meet country needs in the context of reduced budgets for state spending. It may also, in the short term, support individual and community assets through the provision of an income source. But we can see how it is undermining a livelihood asset by changing or reducing forms of volunteering that are embedded in and support communities.

The process of disrupting and undermining historically rooted and active volunteer practices, and consequently the livelihood, social and community assets they bring, is troubling, but not surprising, given the neoliberal professionalism of volunteering (Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011). But what is key here is that to date, insufficient attention has been paid to the livelihoods impacts of these processes in the global South. The financialisation of volunteering must also be understood in the context of calls to shift resources from NGOs and development actors in the global North, to organisations in the global South. While rhetorics may point to the engagement of ‘local’ volunteers as an example of change, the financialisation of volunteering effectively enables the repurposing of social and community action to meet externally defined agendas and in ways that undermine local resources and assets.

None of this is to suggest that volunteering lacks hierarchies and inequalities without remuneration nor is it to suggest that remuneration strategies can determine volunteering. As volunteer managers in Syria and Sierra Leone comment:

Yes, we do [pay per diems], but they are motivated regardless. At the end of the day, the volunteer needs to feel valued, they are important and that they are cherished (Senior staff member, Sierra Leone, 10 December 2013)

Yes they do get paid, but I don’t think this is the only reason they are doing it, they are also upset by the numbers of their people dying and want to make a contribution (Former senior staff member in Syria, 15 April 2015).

These comments show that motivation may link to remuneration, but cannot be reduced to it (Pawlby 2003, p. 69; Wilson 2007). Research conducted by Hunter and

Ross (2013) supports this, suggesting that while the stipend received by volunteers in South Africa did assist them as a survival strategy in some cases, it was by no means the only reason they volunteered. For many, the primary motivating factor was the work they were doing within their communities and its social capital: “I believe that the stipend-paid volunteers that are here are here because they want to be here and normally if a person is here because of money, I can tell you from experience, they don’t last because this is not a place where you can come and earn money without giving back (Manager 1, O3)” (Hunter and Ross 2013, p. 753). It was commonly acknowledged that while the stipend was welcome, it was often too small to have a significant impact on their financial precarity overall and so was seen as a way to initially attract volunteers, and make the act of volunteering somewhat easier for people in their situation, but rarely the reason that they continued to be involved in volunteering activities. This conclusion is supported by recent work conducted on health volunteers working in rural communities in Northern Uganda (Singh et al. 2016). There too, volunteers received financial aid such as transport stipends, but their length of service (over 20 years in some instances) supports findings that volunteers do not approach volunteering where stipends are offered as simply a low-paying job (Hunter and Ross 2013), but as a means of strengthening different pillars of their lives. For this reason, we turn to explore how volunteer remuneration produces volunteer hierarchies that intersect with existing social hierarchies and struggles for livelihoods.

### Volunteering Hierarchies and Social Inequalities

In this section, we argue that the uneven distribution of development and aid interventions (Bebbington 2004) results in varied capacities to offer reimbursement. In turn, this can exacerbate inequalities to produce a series of overlapping and interweaving volunteering hierarchies in planned and accidental ways within and between settings and sectors. The logics driving particular aid and development objectives and associated mobilisations of labour intersect with national level and household inequalities and social cleavages to create unintended volunteering hierarchies.

Remuneration works unevenly in settings, impacting people and organisations differently. The quote below captures perfectly the interplay at work between macro- and local levels, and the reciprocal effects of asset accumulation:

We are in competition with other humanitarian organisations that motivate their volunteers by giving them money. This is contrary to what the Red Cross

does. Most young people of this generation are also job seekers, so if they find better work somewhere else, they will leave. This is the challenge we are facing today (Staff member, Togo, 8 July 2013).

Intervention linked remuneration of volunteering then articulates with employment pressures in rapidly changing economies, with humanitarian actors drawing upon those pressures to mobilise volunteers in particular ways. As one respondent from Central Africa noted: “when we have an activity, projects which can give them a small per diem, the volunteers are very motivated, and arrive *en masse*” (Senior volunteer leader, Congo, 13 August 2013). Volunteers who are spatially and socially mobile, or have in-demand professional skills, are more likely to be able to take advantage of better-remunerated volunteering. These groups can then also benefit from the skills and employability enhancement associated with volunteering activity:

Basically, the payment of incentives depends on the nature and the consideration of the volunteer. For example, for the regular volunteers, this normally, they are not paid as such but they get some incentives through either a box of soap, some protective gear, but if it’s in terms of emergency for example, because it is, it consumes a lot of time and they, some, for engagement of somebody, they are paid a kind of allowances, money which can afford them to, either transport, but also it can afford to get some meals, yeah. And for professional (Staff member, Tanzania, 27 June 2013).

Set in the context of increased earning pressures, the desire for career development and the challenges of recruiting and retaining volunteers in a competitive volunteering economy, aid-funded remuneration becomes particularly important in attracting professional volunteers, producing volunteer hierarchies that mirror unequal patterns of reward for employment and accumulation of financial capital.

Volunteer remuneration is also part of the spatial hierarchies of development:

When we ask a volunteer to do humanitarian work in an area, as in the West for example where humanitarian action is well established because of the different crisis that occurred, when we ask a volunteer to do social work in these areas, he tends to ask for money because other humanitarian organisations would give allowances or even salaries to people from village for the same social work. Therefore they expect the same from us although we do not work like that (Staff member, Ivory Coast, 23 July 2013).

The places that donors and humanitarian actors choose to prioritise in their work, as well as the organisations they choose to work through, shapes who then volunteers in those places as well as how they volunteer. Individuals who are more ‘fixed’ in areas of less project interest, and who are unable to cover basic expenses such as food and transport, are less likely to be remunerated since they cannot access well-remunerated volunteering activities. In this way, framing volunteering to support the delivery of development projects or externally set objectives can reinforce socio-economic hierarchies. When volunteering is a “legitimate means of survival”, individuals might not be able to afford to volunteer as expected by external counterparts (Wig 2016, p. 84).

Volunteering in a place and form that does not fit global aid and development logics can also intensify existing hierarchies and exclusions:

Yes, it’s not fair, if you work on a project you can get some money, but if you are what we call community-based, then you don’t get anything, not even reimbursements (Volunteer, Sierra Leone, 8 December 2013).

Seen in the context of the prioritisation of professional volunteers, remuneration can undermine the role volunteering plays in building community assets. Existing hierarchies between professionalised and mainstreamed development activities, with their associated timelines and auditing processes, and community owned and driven strategies, are exacerbated by the ways volunteering is remunerated. This can also produce further hierarchies between types of labour at household levels:

Because the volunteers we use at local branch level are not permanent, we use them when there is an activity when there is a project, but when it is finished they are no longer used as salaried staff but as volunteers (Senior staff member, Benin, 18 July 2013).

A similar issue is presented by a staff member in Madagascar, who notes how salaried roles closely resemble volunteer work, as in the case of government-funded ‘community organisers’ in Madagascar, but “operate a bit like our volunteers, they work and carry out activities in the community but they also receive per diems” (Senior staff member, Madagascar, 15 July 2013). Again, different hierarchies interweave as remuneration privileges and defines particular forms of labour for development. In these processes, claims for volunteering’s positive impacts on development are consequently undermined.

## Conclusion

Volunteer remuneration is an important emerging issue for scholars, practitioners and policy makers, but has received relatively little scholarly attention to date. Where it has been addressed, it has often been in the context of particular projects or settings or shaped by organisational interests in improving the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Scholars have rightly noted that remuneration has particular significance in global South settings where volunteers are often drawn from marginalised communities themselves, and are struggling to build their own livelihoods as well as committing to support others (Patel et al. 2007; Wig 2016; Butcher and Einolf 2017). In this paper, we have sought to move beyond a focus on particular projects and donors’ time frames to explore volunteer remuneration in the context of struggles for livelihoods and multiple assets in promoting development. To do this, we have attempted to navigate between, on the one hand, questioning the suitability of remuneration practices based on Euro-American understandings of volunteering in global South settings and, on the other, recognition of how payment practices can enable donors and others to use remuneration to meet their ends in sustainable ways. This has required us to challenge established thinking about the development benefits of volunteering by proposing a new framework for understanding and analysing volunteer remuneration in the global South. We have brought together debates around volunteering, livelihoods, financialisation and development, to reveal the ways aid and donor remuneration can shape volunteering hierarchies in the global South, not only exacerbating existing tensions but also producing inequalities. We have argued that this has implications for claims for volunteering’s contribution to development, since contemporary patterns of remuneration can be seen to undermine livelihood strategies and community assets.

In light of our proposed nexus of an asset-based approach to volunteering and livelihoods frameworks, exploring remuneration practices shifts the debate away from whether it distorts or undermines volunteering. This also allows for the consideration of volunteering as an asset in its own right, as part of the complex portfolio of assets which both individual volunteers and communities manage. In addition, it starts to disconnect it from financialisation processes and, instead, moves towards an understanding of remuneration centred on how it can enable volunteering to play a role in developing inclusive strategies and efforts to tackle inequality, a livelihoods approach which connects inequalities *in* volunteering and the ways volunteering can help tackle those inequalities at household level. This has important implications for how

we conceptualise volunteer remuneration. We argue that livelihoods and capabilities frameworks have the potential to highlight broader sets of values from volunteering. This approach not only emphasises the positive impact that remuneration can have in relation to volunteers' well-being but also its role in reinforcing community assets, acting as both an asset in itself and as a facilitator to communities developing their wider asset portfolios. This has important ramifications for volunteer-involving organisations when considering how volunteers are recruited, and also what type of benefits should accrue to them during their time in service. In this approach, remuneration is not framed as a proxy for a salary, or as partial recompense for labour, in line with current processes of financialisation. Rather, it is located within an understanding of the way that promoting volunteering can support livelihood strategies and community assets in itself. Remuneration is then about enabling a role for volunteering in development strategies predicated on sustained activity by and within marginalised communities. It needs then to be oriented towards catalysing inclusive and community asset-improving volunteering strategies, and away from an exclusive focus on financial capital and rewards for particular kinds of individual labour. In so doing, it can potentially have a positive impact on reducing inequality and fortifying the livelihood strategies of volunteering communities, as evidenced in the conceptual framework.

The first step towards such an approach requires building a more conceptually and empirically rich and robust understanding of volunteer remuneration in diverse settings and appropriate tools to assess the impact in community asset mobilisation of donor strategies when engaging with volunteers at household level. The development of a new framework of engaging with volunteers based on a more holistic vision of volunteers' needs and the potential of remuneration in tackling volunteering inequalities in the global South is an area ripe for further research. Currently, the understanding of how such a framework might operate within existing hierarchies remains a lacuna in both academic and practitioner circles. This largely reflects the dominance of approaches to volunteering in development which see it as a form of service delivery oriented to externally defined objectives of aid and development organisations. In this context, financialising volunteering provides a means to meet project time frames, but it is also having lasting and deeper effects that are poorly understood. Developing an approach that locates remuneration within livelihoods demands a radical rethink of volunteering in development. It means approaching volunteering not as a resource that can be mobilised for external agendas, but as a critically important community asset to be equitably and effectively mobilised towards more inclusive, sustainable and locally determined approaches to development. This moves away from remunerating for

labour and towards understanding remuneration as part of a process of investing in and strengthening communities' assets and, hence, their futures.

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#### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest and that this manuscript has not been published or is under consideration elsewhere.

**Ethical Approval** All procedures in the study were undertaken in accordance with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' ethical standards.

**Informed consent** Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality and privacy were fully respected.

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