Baladi CAP
Volunteers’ Management in Civil Society Organizations in Lebanon

Community of Practice Workshop
September 20, 2014- Padova Hotel, Sin El Fil

Report
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Introduction
Within the capacity development program on internal management and governance for partner CSOs in cohort 1, BALADI CAP organized a community of practice workshop on volunteers’ management for CSOs. The workshop was attended by representatives of partner organizations and guest speakers from three big non-profit organizations in Lebanon. The workshop was held at Padova Hotel in Sin El Fil on September 20, 2014 and was facilitated by Mr. Richard Bteich. The present report relates the process and results of the workshop.

Objectives
Expose BALADI CAP partner organizations to practices in volunteer management in the context of Lebanese CSOs and identify with them the challenges of volunteerism through exchange of experiences.

Workshop Methodology
The workshop consisted of two main sessions:
- Session 1: Presentation of volunteer management experiences in three national NGOS: Scouts du Liban, The Lebanese Red Cross and Caritas. Each of the organizations made a presentation of 30 minutes followed by discussion with participants.
- Session 2: Identifying challenges and needs of partner CSOs with volunteers and volunteering through individual intervention by each organization in plenary followed by general discussion.

Results

Session 1:
Guest speakers shared with the participants the reality of volunteering within their organizations, by explaining the existing system of volunteer management from recruitment to retention, with details of methods and tools applied and the challenges facing them.

1. The “Scouts du Liban” as all scout organizations is essentially a volunteer organization, where volunteers conduct all tasks.

2. The Lebanese Red Cross relies essentially in its activities, mainly the first aid and emergency services, on volunteers. The volunteer management is the responsibility of the central administration composed of remunerated staff.
3. Caritas is more of an employment structure where most of the work is done by employees. The volunteering is centered on the youth. A special volunteering body called “Caritas Youth” is in place with specific mission and action plan related to the organization core values.

Through the presentations and discussions, participants were exposed to different organizations with different volunteering models, discovering hence, operation modalities and processes with volunteers, covering the complete lifecycle of volunteering in each model along with challenges.

**Session 2:**

In the second session, participants were asked to share with the group their own experience with volunteers, focusing on specific challenges they are facing.

**Key findings:**

- All the organizations have no clear plan for volunteer management, whether they are fully functioning on volunteer basis or have salaried staff.
- Most of the organizations have the capacity to mobilize volunteers with different profiles and expertise but do not know how to properly assign them tasks, involve them in the fulfillment of the organization mission and retain them.
- Most of the organizations find the recruitment of volunteers a burden as they do not know what to do with them, or do not have the time (the management members being volunteers themselves) to guide them.
- The key challenge to volunteers’ commitment is the ever-growing lack of time for volunteering with the pressuring economic needs.
- In most of the cases, volunteers are volatile, especially among the young persons, they quickly move away as job opportunity calls or moving to college or university happens.
- Volunteer work falls always on the very same few individuals, mainly the founders, who are “eternally” overwhelmed.

**Analysis:**

The common problem of volunteer mobilization and retention in all the participating organizations is essentially structural rather than technical related to volunteer management per se.

It could be summarized in the following main points

1. Lack of proper planning: not all organizations have clear strategy and clear action plan upon which they can define precisely their needs for volunteers and consequently develop a volunteer management plan.

2. Lack of management capacities: The organizations show flaws in their basic organizational and management systems coupled with lack of know-how and expertise. Such reality disables them from dealing properly with volunteering.
3. Lack of funds: proper volunteer management requires sustained follow up and commitment. In the absence of minimum funds to commit for managing the volunteers work, it becomes difficult to organize properly the work.

Recommendations

All organizations need primarily to solve above-mentioned problems. Solving the structural problems will create the environment that enables efficient participation of the volunteers in the fulfillment of the organization mission.