

We need you

LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 9

 Learning Object 2: *Volunteer buddies*

Exercise 1

Sample answers:

1.1 Have you ever volunteered to provide unpaid work for someone, or for an organisation? Why did you volunteer?

Although I wouldn't necessarily define it as volunteer work, I have always helped out around the home where I can, doing things such as bringing in the washing, or helping my little sister with her homework.

I do these things to support my family, especially my mother, who works very hard. I help my sister with her homework because she asks for my help, and I don't mind doing it.

At school, I volunteered to be part of the organising committee for the school fête. I volunteered because I think raising money to provide resources for the school is a good cause, and because of the opportunity to learn valuable leadership and cooperation skills, to gain experience working on a committee, and to be part of a fun project.

During the floods in Brisbane in 2011, my family and I volunteered to help out as part of the 'Mud Army'. We helped by filling sandbags and building sandbag walls, mopping and cleaning houses and businesses, taking damaged furniture to the tip, and delivering food and other supplies to people whose houses were affected.

1.2 What types of volunteering opportunities are available in your area? How do you know about these opportunities?

If you aren't aware of any opportunities, how could you find out about what is available?

In my area there is a range of opportunities to do volunteer work. For example, there is an animal shelter near where I live, where you can volunteer to help.

The aged-care home near my house often seeks volunteers to help in the gardens, in the kitchens, or in the office.

The local council sometimes advertises tree-planting days, where you can volunteer to go along and help replant native species. I hear about these opportunities by email, at the local library, and through the Land for Wildlife newsletter.

I am aware of some of these opportunities because my friends or family have done work for the organisations concerned. Some opportunities are advertised in our school newsletter. There is a noticeboard outside the careers counsellor's office that includes announcements about volunteering opportunities both here and abroad.

1.3 What values, attitudes or beliefs influence the types of work people volunteer to do in Australia? Give reasons to support your answer.

I think many Australians believe that everyone should have a 'fair go', and that some forms of volunteer work are about providing opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enjoy the same opportunities as those who are more fortunate.

I think most Australians believe in the value of hard work, and particularly the need for young people to gain real-life experiences. Sometimes volunteer work is promoted to young people as a way to gain skills and experience that they can use in their working life.

I believe that many Australians care about the environment, and that many types of volunteer work available in Australia reflect this attitude. For example, non-profit organisations such as Land for Wildlife, Australian Conservation Foundation, and WIRES encourage people to donate their time and money to support the protection of the environment.

I think that Australians value the concept of community and caring for others. This is reflected in the way people in Brisbane helped each other during the floods in January, 2011. For most Australians, being part of a supportive and friendly local community is important.

Exercise 2

Sample answers:

2.1 What opportunities are there for young people to do volunteer work in Indonesia?

If you aren't aware of many opportunities, how could you find more information?

There are not as many opportunities for young people to do volunteering work in Indonesia as in Australia, but young people can be involved in *kerjabakti* to clean their neighbourhoods or their schools. If they have particular skills, they can also volunteer for a non-government organisation that deals with street kids, or with other social problems. People interested in volunteering can search the Internet for names and locations of these NGOs and contact them directly.

2.2 What types of organisations use volunteer support in Indonesia?

Many non-government organisations that are actually established with the help of overseas organisations or form a part of larger international organisations such as The Indonesian Red Cross (*Palang Merah Indonesia*) rely primarily on local Indonesian volunteers.

Smaller organisations which help street kids, people who are socially and economically disadvantaged, and even *orang-utans*, and may or may not rely on help from overseas organisations, also use local volunteer support.

2.3 What values, attitudes or beliefs influence the types of volunteer work done by people in Indonesia? Give reasons to support your answer.

Traditionally, Indonesia has had a concept of mutual assistance which informs the obligations of the individual towards the community, so I think Indonesians are prepared to provide unpaid work where or when it is needed. The concept of *gotong royong* is imbued in young people from an early age, and they understand that it is part of their social responsibility. I think that, like Australians, Indonesians value the concept of community. This was illustrated when people from all over Indonesia came to Aceh after the tsunami of 2004 to help the survivors, and in the subsequent clean-up and rebuilding of Aceh.

Exercise 3

Sample answers:

3.1 What similarities or differences are there between the types of volunteer work done by people from Australia and people from Indonesia?

As the concept of volunteering in Indonesia is best seen in the practice of *gotong royong* and *kerja bakti*, the main difference is in the extent to which Indonesians volunteer to help in their immediate community. This type of volunteering tends to be much more localised, and members of the community

are encouraged to participate in a sense of mutual obligation. In other words, each member of the community is expected to contribute to helping other members, and each can also expect to be helped out by the same community at some point. In one sense this is volunteering as we know it in Australia, because members of the community help out for no financial reward. However, it differs in the fact that there is also an obligation to contribute one's time and energy for the good of the local community. To not partake would be seen as shirking one's responsibilities as a member of that community.

The existence of an increasing number of non-government organisations set up to provide aid and support to various facets of society and the environment shows that Indonesians also share a willingness to contribute their time and energy to more wide-reaching causes beyond their local communities. Organisations such as *Palang Merah Indonesia* and smaller organisations that support street kids or help *orang-utans* rely on Indonesian volunteers who share the same willingness to help as Australians who volunteer in similar organisations here.

3.2 How does your answer to Exercise 3.1 reflect differences or similarities between Indonesian and Australian values, attitudes and beliefs?

I think in a lot of cases Indonesians and Australians have the same values, attitudes and beliefs when it comes to helping or giving assistance to other people. There is a shared belief in the value of helping out for no financial or material reward. Indonesians and Australians both value the idea of helping the community for the greater good.

On the other hand, the long-standing tradition of *gotong royong* in Indonesia contains an element of obligation and reciprocation that is not necessarily present in Australia. Although Australians have demonstrated a willingness to get out and lend a hand in their local communities — for example, the mud army during the Brisbane floods of 2011 — this is often driven by a sense of mateship and a personal and community desire to assist those affected by misfortune.

Exercise 4

Sample answers:

4.1 Volunteer work is unpaid labour. Why do you think some types of work are unpaid, or working for some types of organisations is unpaid?

I think these decisions are made at least partly on the basis of the economic value we place on particular kinds of services and labour, and on value judgements about what kinds of work are 'important'.

I also believe that 'caring' work has traditionally been associated with volunteering, both in the community and in the home. Traditionally, in Australia as in many countries, volunteer work has been performed by religious organisations and by women: people whose labour was often under-valued in a market economy. As a result, many caring occupations remain either unpaid or relatively poorly paid compared to work that has a more direct economic benefit, like making or selling produce.

Most volunteer work is done for not-for-profit organisations. Such organisations often have limited budgets, and rely on volunteers. The labour volunteers provide means that more of the organisation's budget is available for other products and services. For example, if an organisation like Meals on Wheels can call on volunteers to deliver or prepare meals, the money that would have gone on paying staff can be put into actual services. I think there is a widely-held perception that most of a non-government organisation's money should go into tangible goods and services rather than paying for staff, where possible.

4.2 Why do you think signing up to serve in the Army, Navy or Air Force is sometimes described as 'volunteering'?

The term 'volunteer' is used to distinguish between soldiers who sign up for the military, and those who are conscripted or 'called up'. In Australia, there have been heated public debates, as well as several referendums, regarding conscription. These debates have centred around the tension between the duty to serve one's country, and the right to choose not to serve. 'Volunteering', then, is used to refer to people who sign up to serve in the military of their own free

will, rather than serving because they are required to do so by law.

I think the use of the term 'volunteering' could also be perceived as an acknowledgment that there is an extra dimension of themselves that soldiers 'give' to their work and, by extension, to their community, including the potential loss of liberty, health and even their life.

The word 'volunteering' suggests self-sacrifice and duty towards the community, which are values strongly associated with military service. By extension, calling someone who signs up for military service a 'volunteer' suggests that they have, through their actions, demonstrated a belief in Australian and military values such as mateship, patriotism, and self-sacrifice for a greater good.