

# Salesian Missionary Volunteering

## Identity & Orientations

Department for Youth Ministry

Department for Missionary Animation

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# SALESIAN MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERING

## Identity & Orientations



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## INTRODUCTION



The Rector Major and his Council, in the Plan of animation and government for the six years (2014-2020), have asked the Departments for Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation to review the document "Volunteering in the Salesian Mission Manual of Guidance and Orientations" of 2008, with the intention of updating this instrument in the light of the "Frame of Reference of Youth Ministry". The departments have guided the process of reflection and analysis of the praxis, together with the Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry and the DIAM (Provincial Delegates of the Missionary Animation). For this process, the joint regional meetings of the Delegates for Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation between 2015 and 2016 were held in all regions of the Congregation (Addis Ababa, Quito, Bangalore, Seoul, , Compostela, Rome). From these meetings the richness and challenges of volunteering have been verified in the present Salesian mission in the diverse cultural contexts. An analysis of the various volunteering experiences in the Congregation and their respective expectations has emerged.

### 1. Stimulus for further reflection on volunteering.

In addition to the motivation of the Rector Major's programming and the regional meetings of the Youth Ministry and the Missionary Animation, there are other elements that stimulate us to reflect on volunteering.

The **Social, cultural, economic and religious situations** are always in constant flux: The growth of the phenomenon of globalization in the various fields and paradoxically the affirmation of nationalisms and common people; The unprecedented and impressive phenomenon of migration, especially forced by armed conflicts, human rights violations, climate change, human trafficking, the flight from misery; the growth of the arms race; The various cultural currents that defy Christian anthropology, such as the ideology of gender; the spread of various forms of secularism, being indifferent or even hostile to the religious phenomenon; The development of postmodern religious forms, with marked fragmentary subjectivism, as well as various types of fundamentalisms. All these require a contextualized reflection.

- **Reflections and studies on volunteering.** Among the immense literature produced in these 10 years, in the various fields: sociology, psychology, education, law, economics, development, theology, etc., the first global reports on the status of volunteering prepared by the United Nations (2011, 2015) stand out. In particular, a long-term sociological study of volunteering in the last decade that has been promoted in the Congregation and given to 427 former volunteers, offers extremely interesting conclusions.

- The **Changing the geography of volunteering.** Volunteering was traditionally regarded as an expression of the developed countries of Europe and North America, but now there is a growing awareness, expressions and varied experiences of volunteering in the various continents.

- The **rich Magisterium** of Saint John Paul II on volunteering, enriched by Benedict XVII, now by Pope Francis offers us stimuli of commitment and reflection for a **church that goes forth**, as expressed in the *Evangelii Gaudium*. It also offers us a patron for Volunteering: St. Teresa of Calcutta, giving a tone of volunteering promoted by the Catholic Church.

- **The Salesian Congregation** in its previous General Chapters (GC 26 and GC27), in continuity with GC 24, insisted on volunteering, particularly linked to the theme of evangelization and missionary spirit to which the church and Congregation are called by their vocation .

- **The bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco** has offered us the opportunity of a greater knowledge of Don Bosco's history, pedagogy and spirituality, opening new charismatic insights in relation to youth ministry and volunteering.

- **The pastoral journeys** in the provinces in the last 10 years have been notably changed. There are places in which the voluntary proposal has significantly diminished, or changed its modality and in others, it has grown or has maintained with great vitality.

## 2. Options and Priorities

As a result of the regional meetings of the departments of Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation and consultations with those involved in missionary volunteering, some options, priorities and operational orientations for our mission have emerged. These elements are not new, but they have been indicated to take them into account as priorities.

**Volunteering within the process of Youth Ministry.** The fecundity or failure of volunteering will depend on the extent to which the experience is a mature fruit of the Youth Ministry. Therefore there is an urgent need for an organic ministry in which the Missionary Animation walks in synergy with the Youth Ministry that knows how to make valid proposals with continuity. This involves looking at volunteering as a process with 'a before', 'a during' and 'an after'.

**Formation and Accompaniment;** are two key words in this process. Long-term formation starting from pre-adolescent mission groups to committed university students. An intense immediate formation, from the psychological, socio-political-cultural, theological-pastoral, Salesian point of view.

In this process the theme of **gradualness** has been emphasized. One can not approve any type of volunteering experience. It is necessary to respect the processes, offering progressive experiences according to the freedom of young people. This implies, particularly for a long-term international volunteering. There is a need for a previous journey of local volunteering, to help young people to mature from a human, Christian, Salesian and professional point of view.

**To insist on clear Salesian identity,** it has been decided to give priority to Salesian Missionary Volunteering. This indicates the importance of the acquaintance of the volunteers with the Salesian identity. In the countries traditionally called "missionaries", where volunteers were welcomed, there has been much insistence on the need for the witness of Christian life, the oratorian heart and the missionary passion of the volunteers. Therefore the life of faith of the volunteer is not just a random element, but a constituent of the experience and its mission. In view of the previous document, which offered general guidelines for various types of volunteering work in the Salesian mission, there has been a need for greater specification and clarification for a SMV, thus avoiding pastoral genericism.

In this sense, the theme of volunteering **cannot be reduced to the subjective experience of the volunteer**, which normally ends up being very enriching. It is necessary to consider the educational impact on the beneficiaries of our mission. This requires maturity, the testimony of faith and the professionalism of volunteers. At the same time, the Salesian mission has a repercussion on the styles, values and models of life that the volunteers are carrying.

Volunteering has been spoken of as a privileged form of education to the faith that leads to the higher degree of Christian life, helping young people to mature **a project of life, a vocational choice**. A sign of this, has led some provinces to take responsibility to unify vocation animation, missionary animation and volunteering. This means that a deliberate quality is offered to the SMV proposal.

A **Province Plan** of volunteering and in particular of the SMV, with a clear directory (practical rules), persons responsible at the provincial and local level, province criteria for selection, training, accompaniment of volunteers, criteria for relations with other voluntary institutions and NGOs is needed. This provincial organization has been seen as very important to give life to a coherent and continuous project of volunteering. The volunteering project is an instrument for both the sending and the receiving provinces. It must be a project that is organically inserted in the provincial and local community.

The **local communities and the directors**, have been a emphasized subject. The importance of welcoming, witnessing and accompanying the volunteer by the Salesian community has been

felt. It is necessary to create a welcoming culture in our homes for the young volunteers, who are both **beneficiaries and collaborators** of our mission. The presence of young people in our communities as a wealth, demands from the Salesian community a religious life that is coherent, stable and given to young people.

Focusing on the Salesian Missionary Volunteering, we focus on the one that is realized in a Salesian presence, or in relation to it, for at least a year. This document will take into account this perspective of **long-term volunteering**.

### 3. A volunteer with a clear and inclusive identity

These options and priorities could give the impression of a certain elitism in the face of the issue of Salesian volunteering. It is not so. Volunteering is an instrument, a dynamic, highly educational, capable of adapting to any environment and to any type of target audience, as in strongly secularized contexts, places of non-Catholic or Christian religious majority, in contexts of young people who are just abandoning the marginalized situations.

Volunteering is and continues to be an excellent **opportunity for dialogue with the world and the cultural diversity**. So that through free, generous and volunteering free service, bridges of encounter, solidarity and dialogue are established.

This educational and solidarity proposal must be carried out and encouraged in every context and to any young person as a fundamental educational journey and as a way of proclaiming the Gospel of solidarity and human dignity that gradually prepares for the "Gospel".

This complete educational-pastoral openness does not contradict, a diversified proposal. A volunteer, within an educational process respects the gradualness, the identity and the options of the diverse beneficiaries. Considering that the universe of volunteering is vast, a Salesian community will be able to find the right place, according to the opportunity, for various proposals and styles of volunteering or other realities of cooperation and solidarity.

The proposal of SMV is not opposed to other realities, which are a wealth for the Salesian mission, such as exclusively social volunteering, cooperation, civil service, cultural exchange, recruitment of qualified staff, professional practices, etc. In all this, it is necessary to have a clear identification of the diverse realities that coexist in the mission, knowing to give due space and accompaniment, according to its own nature. Each local and provincial community will study the time and modalities of these various contributions and to what extent they can help to carry out faithfully the Salesian mission.

This typical attitude of Don Bosco is of knowing how to involve various people and initiatives in his project in favor of young people. To do the best that is possible, does not contradict a intense proposal of Salesian missionary volunteering for young people seeking to live the "highest degree of Christian life" in generous service. And to us Salesians, to be able to spread the joy of evangelizing and to propose with apostolic passion the pedagogy of holiness, of love for Jesus Christ and for the needy young people according to the dream of Don Bosco.

### 4. The recipients of the document

This document is intended for all those who in one way or another are committed to the Salesian mission to offer young people projects of life that fulfill their human and Christian vocation.

First of all, the **Salesians** of Don Bosco, the charismatic animators of the Educative pastoral Communities. They are called to know and promote volunteering in general and the charismatic richness of the SMV in particular. In this way, it will be a valuable tool to help discernment in sending and receiving of volunteers, particularly for a long time, as well as for their formation and accompaniment.



All **educators and pastoral agents** who are committed to the youth, so that they present this valuable proposal to the recipients of the mission.

Lastly, the **young people** themselves who are asked for giving something more to others and to the Lord, to young people who want to live intensely their vocation of service through volunteering, building their project of life.

This document aims to offer **formative elements** to understand better and encourage the phenomenon of volunteering, in its Christian and Salesian specificity. It also offers concrete **guidelines** to implement in the pastoral proposals of Salesian presences.

## I) THE VOLUNTEERING TODAY

### 1. The present phenomenon of volunteering

The awareness of the phenomenon of volunteering has seen a **great development** in recent decades. In 2011, more than 140 million were estimated in some organized way. This reality is being the object of several studies from different interdisciplinary perspectives (sociology, education, economics, psychology, theology, politics, law, anthropology, etc.).

One aspect which has become more aware is the **universality of volunteering** and its various expressions in the most varied cultures. Volunteering has been more identified as an initiative and socio-cultural expression of the industrialized West. New studies extend the analysis of volunteering to most countries, evidencing the richness of this phenomenon, for example, in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Another note of this universality is found in the valorization of expressions of solidarity in different cultures. As the "tequio" (community service) between the Mixes of Oaxaca, Mexico, the "tatawa'a" (charitable activity) in the Arab world, "ubuntu" (the person in solidarity with others) African; The "baranguay" in the Philippines the "gotong royong" of Indonesia, the "harambé" of Kenya, the "shramadana" in India.

Although the phenomenon of organized volunteering is growing in developing countries, some notes of concern may arise, in countries that have traditionally been rich in this expression, which is beginning to decline. The causes can be diverse (demographic, economic, technological), but the most outstanding is the cultural change, in which solidarity and the sense of community belonging, is giving rise to a more individualistic, competitive and anonymous cultural model, where volunteering does not appear as a social value. In short, we are faced with a process of impoverishment of "humanity". This makes a decisive investment in volunteering as "education to humanism" even more urgent. It is also very significant, as indicated by various sociological studies, the relationship between volunteering and religious practice. Although the relationship is complex, there is a clear proportionality, indicating that a decrease in religious belonging and motivation corresponds to a decrease in volunteering work

The year 2001 had been a significant year since it was declared by the United Nations as the **International Year of Volunteering**. The objectives pursued can be reduced to four: greater recognition, facilitation of action, networking and promotion of volunteering. The reflection on volunteering in governments and civil society has generated studies, sensitivity, political actions and various initiatives. We recall three of the final recommendations made by all Governments in 2002.

- If volunteering is neglected in the formulation and implementation of policies, there is a risk of discarding a **valuable resource that holds communities together**.

- There is no universal model of best practices, depending on different cultures and traditions.
- Support for volunteering activities **does not imply support for the reduction** of government work or for activities to replace paid employment.

After ten years later, in Europe, it declared the year of European volunteering. Their world report is the first report on the state of volunteering. This is a rich and profound study that gives many clues for reflection, clarification and action. The report indicated three new clues for volunteering: **New Information Technologies** have opened up new perspectives through information exchange and democratization. **International volunteering** particularly among students and professionals has helped transfer knowledge. Volunteering in the **private sector** supported by most companies has grown in recent years.

Volunteering is seen as a **fundamental contribution to society**:

- It promotes **development**. Values of volunteering are of great importance in strengthening the capacity of the most vulnerable to secure livelihoods and improving their social well-being by reducing social exclusion. It represents, therefore, a way of access to **inclusion**.
- It promotes civic values, **social connections** and conflict resolutions.
- It creates bonds of trust and a **feeling of common identity and destiny**.
- It is a highly effective and practical means of harnessing the **capacities of the population** in all societies and at all levels.

The inherent values of volunteering endow the latter with far-reaching consequences for **human development**. This new concept of development includes factors such as solidarity, social inclusion, empowerment, life satisfaction and individual and social well-being. The well-being of people is intrinsically linked to the contribution these people make to the lives of others.

## 2. Criticisms, risks, misunderstandings and opportunities.

The issue of volunteering has provoked many criticisms, because it is considered a "**slim solidarity**", neither attentive nor active in the structural dimension of injustice that generates poverty and inequality, falling into a form of superficial paternalistic assistance, lacking a critical vision that is able to denounce the injustices that hurt the elementary rights of the person and not generating the processes of social transformation.

There are many masks of volunteering under which are hidden many other strongly selfish **motivations**, namely an apparent solidarity that hides personal interests: tourist (voluntarourist), curriculum requirement, cultural enrichment and personal experiences, work possibilities. We must not ignore the "**business**" of **humanitarian aid** where projects are sought not so much by the needs of the beneficiaries but rather to make institutions survive. It is evident when government funding is finished, NGOs are also closed and volunteering ends. It is not to be ignored the sad chapter, which under the facade of volunteerism, humanitarian aid, humanitarian agencies, peace corps, NGOs, civil and religious institutions, including the Church, have committed or commit abuses to vulnerable people.

There are some misconceptions about volunteering that United Nations Volunteerism clarifies from many concrete experiences in the world:

- a. Volunteering occurs only through legally recognized, formal and structured NGOs, usually in developed countries, In reality it is a much more diffused and in unofficial structures.

- b. Volunteering takes place only in the civil society sector (third sector). It is false because volunteering has developed a lot in some contexts in the public sector as well as in the private sector.
- c. Volunteering is the preserve of the well-off and well-educated, What is perceived is that solidarity in communities with few resources is very strong.
- d. Volunteering is the domain of amateurs who are unskilled and in-experienced. Professionalism at the service of volunteering is common.
- e. Women make up the bulk of volunteering. Although women dominate in certain areas, men dominate in other areas of voluntary work.
- f. Young people do not volunteer. Quite the contrary, the youth involvement is great, although currently they do not prefer official organizations.
- g. Volunteering is a face-to-face activity. The remarkable evolution of IT (Information Technology) implies that volunteering is not limited to direct contact actions.
- h. Volunteering should be off-limits for state intervention. It is not so. But certain policies may favor or hinder volunteering.
- i. Volunteering is free. It is true that the volunteer performs his service free of charge, but involves costs of logistics, organization and maintenance

### 3. The volunteering and education

One of the most significant elements that has been reflected on, is the **educational dimension of volunteering**, as a school of civic values and building of the personality. The volunteering experience is highly valued at the time of job search, for the various social skills it contributes. In fact in a *currivulum vitae* there is substantial importance for volunteering service.

This education makes volunteering a social transforming agent and builder of the culture of solidarity, provides physical-social-emotional intelligence, educational and operative criteria that guide the integral formation of the young person. It enables one to discover his/her potential resources and empower his/her leadership skills. These educational processes are achieved through concrete experience.

Social volunteering education and social complexity broaden the critical view of roles and responsibilities shared with other social agents in order to promote real social transformations. It educates to intervene that enhances local community development from within. In this way volunteering becomes an activity for development education, forming awareness, building networks of commitment to the causes of suffering of so many people abandoned by public entities.

### 4. The volunteering and Human Rights

Volunteering, in its various expressions, is closely related to the issue of human rights, social inclusion and active citizenship. At the Salesian level, we have reflected on the close relationship between human rights and the Preventive System. This relationship is rooted in the perspective of the integral salvation of youth. The Gospel and our charism call for a journey along the path of human rights. The Preventive System and human rights interact and enrich each other. The Preventive System offers Human Rights a unique and innovative educational approach to the movement for the promotion and protection of human rights. In the same way, Human Rights Declarations offer the Preventive System new frontiers and opportunities for social and cultural impact as an effective response to the drama of the split between education and society, school and citizenship. In this way, the educational and Salesian volunteering finds a rich and current perspective in the promotion of human rights.

## 5. The volunteering and religion

Volunteering as a citizen participation is often associated with the religion that carries a series of values related to solidarity, justice and self-surrender. The UN report makes a strong statement "Various studies indicate that religious people generally show a greater degree of commitment than people who are not." In fact, sociological research on religion indicates a greater propensity for volunteering to members belonging to a religious community. And in particular, Christianity increases civic commitment and among the various communities, the Catholic community stands out. In the United States, for example, people who volunteer for religious reasons are twice as many as secular.

There are various examples of how "churches" are significantly involved in programs and organization of volunteering. Volunteering gives a sense of belonging to the community. There are innumerable initiatives in the five continents, linked to religious organizations, attentive to extreme poverty, health, education, rural development. The UN report cites Caritas, with 440,000 employees and 625,000 volunteers worldwide.

It should be noted that various indicators of voluntary growth and decline are related in direct proportion to the growth and decline of religious practice.

## 6. The volunteering in the Church

Volunteering in the Catholic Church is widely disseminated and internationally recognized. It is enough to think of the presence of volunteers in the 115,352 charitable and assistance institutes (5,158 hospitals, 16,523 clinics, 612 leprosariums, 15,679 nursing homes and chronic patients, 9,492 orphanages, 14,576 matrimonial offices, 3,782 social re-education centers and 37,601 social services); 12,637 Nursery schools, 73,580 kindergartens, 96,283 primary schools, 46,339 secondary secondary schools. It is worth noting the presence of 368,520 lay missionaries. Certainly, the presence of Catholic volunteers is not limited to Catholic institutions.

The references of volunteering in the pontificate of **St. John Paul II** are quite abundant. There are more than 200 interventions between encyclicals (as in *Centesimus Anus*, *Evangelium vitae*), apostolic exhortations (*Christifideles laici*, *Ecclesia in Europe*), speeches, homilies, messages and *Angelus*. The volunteer contributes to the construction of a more humane culture and finds its fullness in charity- "volunteer work is a special factor that contributes to humanization. Thanks to the many forms of solidarity and of service that they promote and make concrete, volunteer workers make society more attentive to the dignity of the human person and his/her many expectations. Through their activity, volunteers come to realize that, only if one loves and gives himself to others, does the human creature reach perfect fulfillment [...] Through volunteer work, the Christian becomes a witness of this divine charity; he proclaims it and makes it tangible with courageous and prophetic contributions".

**Benedict XVI** in *Deus Caritas Est* presents volunteering as a school of life against a counter-culture of death.

*"For young people this widespread involvement constitutes a school of life which offers them a formation in solidarity and in readiness to offer others not simply material aid but their very selves. The anti-culture of death, which finds expression for example in drug use, is thus countered by an unselfish love which shows itself to be a culture of life by the very willingness to "lose itself" (cf. Lk 17:33 et passim) for others". (Deus caritas est. 30 b)*

**Pope Francis** had various interventions in relation to volunteering. In emblematic form leaves us to *Santa Teresa of Calcutta*, like patron of the volunteer:

*"The volunteers, who out of love of Jesus serve the poor and the needy, do not expect any thanks or recompense; rather they renounce all this because they have discovered true love.. Her mission (of Mother Theresa) to the urban and existential*

*peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God's closeness to the poorest of the poor. Today, I pass on this emblematic figure of womanhood and of consecrated life to the whole world of volunteers: may she be your model of holiness!... May this tireless worker of mercy help us increasingly to understand that our only criterion for action is gratuitous love, free from every ideology and all obligations, offered freely to everyone without distinction of language, culture, race or religion".*

## 7. The volunteering in the Congregation

The theme of missionary volunteering begins to be discussed in the Congregation in **GC21** (n.147) without using the term, indicating the participation of the laity in the missionary renewal of the Congregation. **GG22** (n.10), in the light of the Africa Project, indicates that "youth and salesian volunteering" should come to life. In **GC23**, in the context of the education of young people in the faith, civil and missionary volunteers are seen as a fundamental means for their human and Christian maturation and their social and ecclesial commitment (n.1, 179, 180, 252, 274).

It was the GC 24, that went deeper into the subject of volunteering, reflecting on "the Salesians and laity, sharing the spirit and the mission", recognizing the richness of their presence. The document makes a careful description of itself, its various modalities and typologies, its relationship with the Salesian religious community; Its accompaniment considering in particular the purpose of the service experience; Its relationship to the vast Salesian Movement; (17, 20, 26, 34, 49, 84, 112, 122, 124, 126, 141, 152).

After the third edition of document "**Voluntary Service in the Salesian mission. Handbook and Guidelines**" (Rome 2008), carried out by the departments of Youth Ministry and the Missions, the theme was continued in the last **General Chapters**: In **GC26** in relation to evangelization and the ability to call vocations (n.26, 30, 58, 67, 68); In **GC27** regarding the vocational maturity and the zeal for moving to the peripheries (n.17, 73). Finally, the terminology "Salesian Missionary Volunteering" appears in the Frame of Reference of Salesian Youth Ministry.

The concrete reality about **volunteering in the Congregation** continues to be diverse, fruitful and growing in some regions. Social volunteering, missionary, educational, long and short term continues with dynamism.

Lately in the joint **regional meetings promoted by the Departments of Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation** held in Addis Ababa (16-19 / 09/2015), Quito (17-20 / 10/2015), Bangalore (May 2, 11/2015), Seoul (10-14 / 11/2015), Compostela (01-05 / 02/2016) and Rome (09-13 / 02/2016), assessed and reflected on the actual situation of volunteering in the provinces. These encounters revealed the richness of volunteering, its challenges, limitations and vitality in various contexts. Among the various aspects raised, the following stand out: the need for volunteering to be part of the processes of Youth Ministry; The need to emphasize the missionary dimension (motivation of faith); The importance of a provincial organization with shared criteria (volunteer project, directory, local referent, provincial official, formation, accompaniment).

Finally a **sociological study** of 427 former volunteers who carried out their service in the Salesian mission between 2006 and 2015, usually dedicating a year of service, offers very interesting conclusions to read the reality of volunteering in the current Salesian mission . It must be considered that the survey, although not exhaustive of the Salesian world, since it is based only on the data of those who have responded, is nonetheless highly representative of the reality of Salesian volunteering We just offer some numbers without deepening their reading.

54.6% are women volunteers and 45.4% are men volunteers. The ages with which they did their service oscillate between the 18 to 35 years, being the greater group between the 18 to 24 years (55%). 70% have completed university studies. 45% stayed in a Salesian community and 31% in a community for volunteers. The respondents are from

28 countries: 42% in Europe, 35.5% in Latin America, 20% in North America, 1% in Africa, 1% in Asia, 0.5% in Oceania. The countries that stand out most in the study are: Ecuador (98), USA (66), Spain (51), Austria (33), Argentina (22). The main places where they have volunteered have been: Ecuador (112), Angola (69), Bolivia (41), Mexico (36), India (24). 30% have done a local volunteer and 70% international. 59.5%, as of June 2016, were single, 29% married, 5.8% divorced or living together, 5.6% in religious life. The motivations for volunteering are as follows: solidarity 31.7%, religious motivation 22.2%; Preparation for professional experience 20.1%, vocational call 10%, invitation made by another 10%.

The hardest moments during the experience were: community life and cultural challenges. Some of the riches discovered have been: self-knowledge, social awareness, relationship with God, acquisition of new skills. 93.4% feel that volunteering has helped them in their current job or vocation. 92.5% affirm that they have grown spiritually (80.3% have grown in their sacramental life). The most difficult moments have been found: before volunteering (12.9%), during volunteering (34.8%), after volunteering (52.2%). The 89% met expectations about volunteering. In 84.3% they were accompanied in the experience.

## II) IDENTITY OF SALESIAN MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERING

### 1. Definition of Salesian Missionary Volunteering (SMV)

It is solidarity service, made gratuitously with freedom by a young person, sent and welcomed by a community, integrating him/herself to the educative and pastoral project of a Salesian presence or promoted by it, with a sufficient continuity of time, motivated by the faith, with the missionary style and according to the pedagogy and spirituality of Don Bosco.

#### 1.1. Clarifications

The definition is certainly open to flexibility, but without losing the richness of an identity that gives strength and clarity to the proposal. Some clarifications:

- **Solidarity service:** It particularly implies the social-cultural-economic-professional dimension of the service offered to a particular community.
- **Freedom:** It refers to the fact that the experience is not motivated by labor or curricular requirements, but freely and generously assumed.
- **Gratuitous:** It implies the absence of salary (foreseeing the ordinary sustenance of support like any other missionary). This differentiates it from other types, also valid, of interventions in the Salesian mission: civil service, cooperation, technical support, etc.
- **Young:** (17-29 years). One must be at least 21 years old for the international SMV. Other criteria are the civil ages or the end of secondary studies or higher studies. The presence of adults and even missionary families is not excluded, but the priority focus of the SMV is young people.
- **Community:** Community experience is fundamental in the mission, both with the community of origin as well as with the host community. Community insertion can take place in various ways (permanent or occasional stay in the Salesian community, or in a house for volunteers, etc.). The volunteer is integrated into the existing local and provincial educative and pastoral project or in another non-Salesian community, but sent by the latter.
- **Sufficient continuity:** Normally the required minimum is one year of service, full time, or as the case may be, also an intermittent, regular and continuous service for long periods.
- **Faith:** It implies faith as a fundamental motivation, which consists of the centrality of Jesus Christ in his life, the reference to evangelical values, the ecclesial insertion and the evangelizing dimension of his service, particularly through his witness of life. It is characterized by a demanding missionary spirituality, which implies leaving one's environment to be sent to new contexts.
- **Don Bosco:** It implies the knowledge of the person of Don Bosco, the Salesian Congregation, the Preventive System and the practice and experience of the same as pedagogy and spirituality.

## 1.2. Three words

In the explanation of the concepts contained in the three words of the Salesian Missionary Volunteering that we outline its identity. We consider four universal aspects that distinguish volunteering:

- a. Solidarity service for the common good
- b. Freely
- c. gratuitous
- d. Sufficient continuity

**"Volunteering"** is not to be confused with collaboration or other valid and important educational and human promotion interventions (cooperation, contracting, civil service, alternative service to the military, technical support, curricular requirement, internship, cultural exchange ...). Volunteering is done **with freedom, for solidarity and free of charge**. It has a lay and professional character, particularly when it comes to international volunteering, which demands greater competence and preparation. Continuity implies, on the one hand, sufficient dedication of time, orientated for a year, and on the other hand, a sequence of the project, therefore, is carried out in an institutionally organized way.

**Missionary:** A volunteer expresses the "joy of evangelizing". The fundamental motivations spring from faith. He/she participates in the process of evangelization through his/her testimony and his/her professional intervention as a way of building the Kingdom of God. This service becomes, for those who perform it, a path of Christian maturity of youthful holiness. Its missionary dimension entails leaving one's own land to go and serve in other places witnessing and announcing the Lord.

**Salesian:** Volunteering is characterized by the affinity to the world of youth, an education guided by the Preventive System, animated by the "da mihi animas", with an oratorian heart and family spirit. It is a service linked to the Salesian religious community and inserted in an educational and pastoral community, with an educational and pastoral project. He/she is a volunteer, who has Don Bosco as an inspiring model. This charismatic typology depicts our way of being a Church and contributing to society.

## 2. Theological aspects of volunteering

### 2.1 The mission is born love

The mission has its foundation in the origin of the Trinitarian love, for that reason "the Church is by nature missionary". (AG 2). The Church is faithful to sending the missionaries and continues the mission of Jesus "to bring good news to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free," (Lk 4, 18) . Encouraged by the Holy Spirit, she is at the service of the Kingdom of God.

The mission must be attentive to the changing human reality, responding to diverse cultures, new means of communications, confronting pluralism, inculturating the Gospel and opening up to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

### 2.2 A Church which goes forth

The missionary Church must be "one that goes forth". The mission must be incarnated and contextual: it is important to be aware of the social environment so that language is adapted and becomes meaningful to people. In this sense the Church must be attentive to the process of inculturation of the Gospel, valuing the different cultures.

To this multicultural environment is added the diversity of religions, with which the Church must dialogue so that in the various beliefs, one can assume the principles of unity, especially in



social commitment and human promotion. The pilgrim Church follows the steps of her Master, being summoned to make an option for the little ones and the poor, the main recipients of their mission. The Church addresses the social and existential peripheries, seeking to respond to these challenges, being a prophetic voice and an agent of social transformation. The challenge of a Church in a state of 'going out' passes through a true process of pastoral conversion, abandoning conservation pastoral model.

### **2.3 The Missionary discipleship**

Through baptism every Christian participates in the priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ. Therefore, every Christian is a missionary disciple called to actively participate in the proclamation of the Gospel. Through the sacrament of Confirmation, the Church is more closely linked and receives a special enrichment of the Spirit in order to defend and spread faith through the word and witness of her works. Volunteering, deeply embedded in temporal human realities, manifests the lay vocation and mission transforming the world according to God's plan.

The vocation of the missionary disciple is born of an encounter: "One does not begin to be a Christian by an ethical decision or a great idea, but by the encounter with an event, with a Person, which gives a new horizon to life and, with it, a decisive orientation." The vital experience of that encounter leads to a change, to adapting life according to the project announced by Jesus. The joy of being a disciple, having received this Good News, leads him/her to be a missionary in the ordinary life, at the service of the Kingdom of God.

The community dimension of the disciple is fundamental. The Christian community, in this sense, must be the "salt and light" with their testimony. The teaching of Jesus Good Shepherd leads to a life centered in love; a love that welcomes the diversity, that goes to those in need, that overcomes legalism, that feels mercy for those who repent and carry heavy burdens, that is compassionate with those who walk without direction, that becomes poor with the poor. The great hallmark of all missionary disciples and of every Christian community is to live the commandment of love.

### **2.4 The Missionary Volunteer : an experience of love**

Through the spectrum of Christian love, let us try to reflect on the four universal characteristics of volunteering: freedom, gratuity, service and continuity.

#### **a) A free love that liberates**

The human being, created in the image and likeness of God, is free and responsible. In his immense goodness, God has a plan of love that is revealed little by little in creation and in the history of salvation. In Jesus we have the full revelation of the love of God. In his life, in his words and actions, he proclaims the Kingdom. Thus, as he has freely accepted to carry out God's saving plan, doing his will, the proposal he makes is free and requires faithfulness and conversion: "I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again (Jn 10, 17-18).

The Salesian missionary volunteer (SMV) is invited to embrace freely the project of love and happiness that comes from God. It is not an imposition or a coercion, but a co-responsibility. The SMV is an expression of this freedom, called to announce and witness the Good News in a concrete way in life, in offering oneself to others. But before offering oneself, comes the answer: "the 'yes' to a free, responsible and supportive commitment. It is a decision that makes us free and open to the needs of others, to the demands of justice, the defense of life and care of creation. In voluntary commitments comes the key dimension of the Christian image of God and of the human person: love of God and neighbor."

### **b) A love that gives itself for free**

God creates and saves gratuitously. The logic of God is not that of an "exchange" but of pure gratuity. In Jesus Good Shepherd one can recognize the merciful face of God in relation to humanity, especially to the poor and needy. The proclamation of the Kingdom and the invitation to follow, requires total and radical self-giving, The free surrender of His life has produced a new life for all mankind in his Resurrection. The disciples, precisely because they experience this love, give themselves totally to the proclamation of the Gospel. " You received without payment; give without payment" (Mt 10: 8). This dimension of gratuity is fundamental in the experience of the Salesian missionary volunteering, which leads him/her to love as God loves: Gratuitously.

It is because we have received life from God gratuitously, freely we were liberated from the blind path of sin and evil andfreely the Spirit was bestowed upon us with His manifold gifts. Love is free; It is not exercised to achieve other purposes. Whoever is in a position to help recognizes that precisely in this way is he/she also helped; It is not their merit or pride that they can help. This task is Grace. Free of charge we transmit what we receive, through our commitment, our voluntary action.

### **c) A love that becomes service**

To love God means to love brothers and sisters; that is, to welcome them and serve them. This teaching leads us to the concrete life, where the greatest testimony that can be given is the service, as an expression of Christian charity. The parable of the Good Samaritan expresses well the sense of missionary volunteering from the perspective of the service that springs from love. "The plan of the Christian, the plan of the Good Samaritan, the plan of Jesus, is a 'seeing heart'. This heart sees where there is a need for love and acts in a consistent way ". The heart that "sees" the suffering reality of so many people moves the volunteer to go to the social and existential peripheries of so many brothers and sisters in need. The criterion of fidelity to the Gospel is service to the poor and the marginalized, because in them Christians are called to experience Jesus: " Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me"(Mt 25, 40). The service is not mere philanthropy or assistance, but an operative charity. Solidarity with the poorest and most defenseless must move to the construction of a civilization of love, in collaboration with all the living forces of society, through ecumenical, interreligious dialogue, also with unbelievers, capable of being a prophetic testimony of love, of donation, of service and of promotion of life.

### **d) A love that endures**

One of the characteristics of divine love, from the Old Testament, are the inseparable terms "hesed w'emet", love (mercy) and fidelity. Often the theme of love is confused with a vague feeling of compassion that leads to specific interventions, isolated and assistential, but do not get to involve or permanently commit to a life project. Christian service is not just a simple aid that is provided in a moment of need, it is a vocation to charity with which the disciple of Christ serves with his own life, to grow day by day in love. The love of Christ speaks of this persistence "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn 13: 1). The Pauline hymn sings: "Love never ends" (1 Cor 13,8). The Salesian missionary volunteer is not interested in fleeting experiences, almost manipulating the suffering of others to make only an "experience" of self-fulfilling service.

The Church lived solidarity in a continuous and "institutionalized" way: " All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds[jj] to all, as any had need "(Acts 2,44-45). Volunteering should lead to life choices and attitudes of permanent solidarity towards others, particularly toward the needy youth. The SMV is a pedagogy that leads to assuming consistent attitudes and life projects for social transformation and ecclesial commitment. For this reason constancy, perseverance, responsibility in voluntary service in an organized and continuous form, are the characteristics that qualify love as "faithful."

## 2.5 Eucharist: Sacrament of love

The Eucharist is the sacrament of love that renews the life of the Church. In the Eucharistic celebration, the liturgy of life is celebrated and it is the Eucharistic food that renews faith and offers the strength to live intensely Christian commitment in society, as "honest citizens." Participation in the Eucharistic sacrament transforms life into a Eucharist, that is, into a life that is at the service, in a spirit of self-giving, as "broken bread". Love of neighbor, to be full and constant, needs to feed on the furnace of divine charity. This is a life that is centered on the mystery of the Eucharist. In it, each volunteer finds the energy necessary to be salt of the earth and light of the world, engaging in social transformation living a Eucharistic life.

The Eucharist commits us to service and to the poor. Significantly, in their account of the Last Supper, the three synoptic Gospels recount the institution of the Eucharist, while the Gospel of John relates, as a way of bringing out its profound meaning, the account of the "washing of the feet", in which Jesus appears as the teacher of communion and of service (cf. Jn 13:1-20). The Apostle Paul, for his part, says that it is "unworthy" of a Christian community to partake of the Lord's Supper amid division and indifference towards the poor (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-22, 27-34).

Universal love is expressed in a missionary Eucharistic heart "We cannot approach the eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life"

## 2.6 Mary: example of volunteering

In Mary we find the icon of the volunteer. Faced with God's plan, Mary abandons, believes and accepts the mission. Her free and generous "yes" moves her to the service, the availability, the sensitivity for the needs of others. Mary listens, decides and acts, being a model of Christian volunteering. The way Mary walks is the same path that all volunteers are called to journey. The Virgin Mary is faithful to God having motherly and significant presence in the life of Jesus, in the sadness of the cross, in the joy of the resurrection and in the community of disciples. In Mary, icon of the missionary volunteering, all the volunteers find a mother who welcomes, a teacher who educates and a guide that leads in the journey of life.

## 3. The volunteering in the Salesian Tradition

### 3.1 Don Bosco

The Salesian dimension of our volunteering proposal leads us to look at Don Bosco as a model. He, as a teenager, uses his time and gifts to do good to his peers. He entertains, advises, promotes them culturally through stories and readings, educates them morally and evangelizes them. Little John Bosco, offers his time, talents and small savings to encourage his "first oratory" in "Becchi", preparing the entertainment, with the material he had in his hand. This attitude and various initiatives of service towards others we also see in Chieri, helping his companions, explaining the lessons, offering healthy entertainments and particularly bringing them together in 'cheerful society' to help them grow in a human and Christian way. This eagerness to do good to the youth becomes a life project and decides to enter in the seminary to dedicate himself without limit to God and the young.

As a young priest Don Bosco volunteered his service first in prisons and later for the poor young people and immigrants who arrived in Turin becoming their father and friend. Overcoming the temptation of a comfortable life, moved by faith, he takes a free and generous choice in favor of the poorest young people. He goes to the peripheries to live in the insecurity and uncertainty for being close to the abandoned youth. He will not offer them some crumbs of time and services, but all his life: " for you, I study; for you I work, for you I live, for you I am willing to give life."

### 3.2 The lay and young as protagonists in Valdocco

His decision to do good to the young becomes expansive and contagious and thus involves many people in his adventure:

“He fostered participation and the sharing of responsibility by ecclesiastics and laity, men and women. They helped him to teach catechism and other classes, assist in church, lead the youngsters in prayer, prepare them for their first communion and confirmation, keep order in the playground where they played with the boys, and help the more needy to find employment with some honest patron. Meanwhile Don Bosco took good care of their spiritual life, with personal encounters, conferences, spiritual direction and the administration of the sacraments”. (GC XXIV, 77)

This participation and protagonism is evident in the Regulation of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales where there are several functions that are external, to which the best oratorians were invited to collaborate: assistants, sacristans, monitors (prayers leaders), young supervisors (Watch over discipline), catechists, "peacemakers" (watch to prevent fights, etc.), singers, incharge of recreation (animators, organizers, game materials). Interesting is the role of the "protectors" who, like the patronages of St. Vincent de Paul, seek to accompany the poorest, the apprentices and craftsmen to find a good patron with whom to continue to learn a good trade and begin to earn a living. The capacity of Don Bosco to involve so many people together for the realization of the good is impressive.

Through the sodalities, Don Bosco promoted youthful protagonism that educated young people and committed them to voluntary surrender in service to others. It was an organized form of associative experience, which relied on the initiative capacities of the young people themselves.

“In the apostolate the primary collaborators were the boys who had lived with him for some time and shared with him service of their neighbour in the most abandoned. Those most closely attached to Don Bosco carried out this service among their peers through the various Sodalities: those of the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Sacrament, St Aloysius and St Joseph. Everyone followed the example of Don Bosco; he in turn pointed to St Francis de Sales, principal patron of the Oratory, as a model of apostolic dedication and loving kindness. Such examples attracted some of the youngsters even to truly heroic acts of virtue. On 18 December 1859, he started up with some of them the Society of St Francis de Sales”. (GC XXIV, 72)

Like this, Don Bosco would start with them "Conferences" (St. Vincent de Paul, St. Francis de Sales), "Societies" (Mutual Help) and "Sodalities" (St. Louis, Immaculate, The Little Clergy, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Joseph) in the Oratory, which began to be organized in 1847. The sodalities enjoyed a healthy autonomy, animated by the young people themselves, and each had its own characteristics and offered possibilities to acquire human and spiritual values and commitment to life and apostolate.

The Sodality of Saint Louis was among these groups the most deeply rooted in the social and suburban milieu of Turin, and it was in direct contact with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in its charitable mission. Both gave a striking testimony of service to the sick and the poor during cholera. "The Society of Mutual Help", was created by Don Bosco for the accompaniment, the assistance and the labor advice for his small apprentices and workers. It was then merged with the conferences of St. Vincent de Paul organized in the three oratories of St. Francis de Sales, St. Louis and Guardian Angel after the cholera epidemic. It had as its main purpose, the spiritual formation of young apprentices and workers and the practice of charity.

The Conference of St. Vincent grouped people of various kinds and social belonging to enhance their charitable works consisting of popular and agricultural schools; Catechesis; Religious and social assistance to the poor.

The movement of "charitable" and educational works and activities raised by Don Bosco in Valdocco perfectly replicated the charitable movement promoted and nourished by the Society of St. Vincent, generating an army of volunteers among its collaborators and young people

### 3.3 A paradigmatic case: The cholera epidemic

The cholera epidemic of 1854 is a paradigmatic case of the generosity of Don Bosco's youth. There were few who had the courage to volunteer to heal the sick from the deadly disease. Don Bosco invited the elders among his young people. Among them was the emerging flower of the future Salesians. In response to the appeal of the civil authorities, fourteen offered themselves, and then about thirty, who devoted themselves with such zeal, self-denial, and courage, that received public admiration. On August 5, the Feast of Our Lady of Snow, Don Bosco speaking to the young people, said: "I want all of us to place our soul and body in the hands of Mary. If all of you live in the grace of God and do not commit any mortal sin, I assure you that none of you will be touched by Cholera."

They were days of scorching heat, weariness, danger, nauseating smell. Michael Rúa (17 years old) was attacked with stones by angry people. John Baptist Francesia (16 years old) recalled: "How many times I myself, young man, should encourage the elders to approach the secluded victims." John Baptist Anfossi in the process of beatification of Don Bosco revealed: "I had the fortune to accompany Don Bosco on several visits to the cholera zones. I was only 14 years old, and I remember that doing my work as a nurse proved a great tranquility, resting in the hope of being saved, a hope that Don Bosco had infused in his students. With the autumn rains the pestilence was over. Don Bosco's young volunteers were not touched by cholera.

### 3.4 A vast organized charity movement

As Don Bosco responds to the challenges posed by the social reality of the young people in the popular milieu, a movement of charity emerges which expands in concentric circles around the range of pastoral responses. Responding to the needs of young people is demanding, every now and then, new answers, involving a greater number of people and organizational initiatives.

Their project is not just a welfare scheme. But one that seeks to offer them an integral, substantially Christian education that will enable them to live and make them responsible for the transformations of society, for the good of the poorest people. This leads him/her to articulate a **rich plurality of services and presences** to achieve this goal: festive oratories, night schools, boarding schools, animation of nearby oratories, educational and pastoral publications, youth associations, training workshops, schools, parishes and missions.

All this impressive movement for youth is possible; thanks to the participation of so many people, particularly the **Salesian Cooperators**, who formed "an organized group, ready to do much good". Although Don Bosco's insistence rests on financial aid, he shows the participation of the laity in the midst of their mission by offering their time and qualities: "The Oratory was attended by these ecclesiastics. But this was not enough: the necessity increased with the night and Sunday schools ... When, behold, several lords came also to his aid. [...] I would like to tell you now, to the glory of the Turinese ladies, how many of them, although of conspicuous and delicate families, did not make disgust to take in their hands those jackets, those trousers and arrange them with their own hands, Totally ripped and perhaps never passed through the water, take them themselves, I say, and wash them, mend them and give them to the poor boys." It emphasizes its essentiality and protagonism in the Salesian work: "Here, then, thanks to

the help of many people, both men and women Cooperators, things could be done that each one of his own could never have done ... This is your work, noble Cooperators.

Don Bosco promotes justice and charity and creates the awareness to social problems, as he will say in Barcelona, April 15, 1886: "The young man who grows in your streets will first beg for alms, then he will take a revolver to demand it." He was therefore a citizen concerned for the good of all in the society, but always from his Christian commitment. He did not intend to solve the problems individually, but instead, he responded by communicating, conveying his zeal, and organizing a vast volunteer movement in his pastoral educational project, which included young people themselves as protagonists.

### 3.5 The Missionary Fire Seizes Young People

International volunteering undoubtedly awakens in many young people the enthusiasm, to certain extent similar adventure, curiosity and generosity; the same way, Don Bosco instilled enthusiasm and hope in the hearts of the Oratorians of Valdocco when he spoke and invited them to the missions.

"The chronicle warns that these words [the invitation to the missions caused a fire in the hearts of the young, so that most wanted ardently to leave even to the distant Missions".

Around the missionary expedition a very particular atmosphere was created. "A new ferment had been launched among Salesian students and young people. Vocations were multiplied to the ecclesiastical state. Significantly increased requests to join the Congregation. The missionary ardor had seized all." This was the case of the teenager Louis Versiglia, who entered the Oratory, with no intention of becoming a priest. But, because of the fascination of Don Bosco and having seen one of the missionary expeditions from the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, felt the missionary call, arriving to be a Salesian Bishop and Protomartyr in China.

Don Orione will remember with emotion: "We only dreamed of seas to pierce and souls to save ... he begged Jesus to grow fast so that we could work soon and run to save distant brethren from distant beaches."

The volunteers who were sent on the first and successive expeditions **were very young**. The first Salesian expedition had an average age of 26; The average age of the first FMA expedition was 20 years. Luis Lasagna, head of the expedition to Uruguay, was 26 years old. Think of other volunteers for the missions, saints or in process their cause of canonization: Blessed. Luis Variara at age 19 was with the lepers of Agua de Dios in Colombia. Saint Calisto Caravario to the Far East with 21 years; The Servants of God: Esteban Ferrando (28), Francisco Convertini (29) Constantine Vendrame (29) and Orestes Marengo (17) to India; Carlos della Torre (25) to China and Thailand; José Vandor, 27 to Cuba; Carlos Crespi Croci (32) to Ecuador. A significant testimony is the Salesian voluntary missionary cooperator in Brazil, the venerable Attilio Giordani, who left as an adult with his family in Mato Grosso.

From all this we can conclude that Don Bosco promotes volunteering as:

- a. **Bearing witness** in first person with his generous and total commitment for the poorest young people.
- b. Raising the **youthful protagonism**, where young people respond freely, spontaneously and generously; in doing charity, on the one hand close collaborators and, on the other hand, beneficiary for their strongly educational character;
- c. Being **able to summon** thousands of people in the evangelizing and social project.
- d. **Inspiring in the lively young people, ideals of life** that led to radical and heroic charitable options (such as the case of cholera, absolute consecration to works of charity in the Society of St. Francis de Sales, overseas missions);
- e. Finding their solid and deep motivation in the faith that becomes operative in an ardent and effective charity. The religious experience is determinant and is the force of its social courage by the human promotion.

- f. Establishing an **organized way** (regulations, companies, association of cooperators ...). The charity of Don Bosco goes beyond a feeling of compassion exercised immediately. It becomes an associated and continuous force to transform the society of its time

### 3.6 The proposal of Don Bosco continues

Throughout the 150 years of Salesian history we have seen a continuous development of the associations and various forms of voluntary service on the part of young people.

Among the many forms of Salesian youth volunteering, the missionary, opens up the social dimension of charity, a spirituality of responsible service, a firm confidence in young people, capable of launching them towards the world of those who ask for solidarity and help, the aggregation in groups that strengthen the formative path, to organic contact with those who already live a dignified experience of volunteering. With these fundamental attitudes the formation path of each type of volunteering begins, which is successively developed with specific formative itineraries, enriched by the protagonism of the young people involved.

Since the 60's we have witnessed a continuous development of experiences of young lay missionaries in our environments, in various forms. This is how missionary volunteering arises: from the experiences of volunteer missionary groups to NGOs.

From the 80's we can distinguish some phases that contributed to the qualitative growth of missionary volunteering:

- Passage of an isolated initiative to the integration in the whole of the Youth Ministry proposal of the province.
- Involvement of the ex-volunteers in the formation of the young, until the progressive assumption of responsibility.
- Growth of relations between the Provinces that send volunteers and the Provinces that accept the young missionary volunteers.
- The close link, in some provinces between volunteering and vocation ministry.
- Increase in the number of vocations in groups of the Salesian family from volunteers on all continents; thanks to an explicit and guided vocational accompaniment.
- Improvement of the quality of the preparation of young volunteers.
- Increase in the number of volunteers who come from our educational and pastoral environments.
- Expansion of the opening of the receiving communities, which recognize the wealth derived from the presence of volunteers, their lives and their mission.
- Increase in the number of volunteers who once returned from their missionary experiences commit themselves "at home". In fact, some structures of the European Provinces emerged with the support of the ex-volunteers returned from the experiences lived abroad.

Growth of missionary cooperation and lay missionary volunteerism: there is ample space for long-term volunteering. Many lay people go on a mission with the whole family. Fascinated by the missionary charism of Don Bosco, they offer the competence of their profession and the testimony of their charity with the work of the missionaries.

The Salesian missionary volunteering, proposed to young people shows the values of the Gospel with the witness of selfless service and solidarity in education and in the socio-political commitment that reaches the realities of family, work and culture. From today's experience, a Salesian volunteer emerges. Through the young people, it embraces the great areas of intervention: culture, social assistance, free time, cooperative development, group animation, education to the faith, formation of catechists and pastoral agents.

"We, the children of Don Bosco, offer our contribution to the missionary Church, which goes out to the geographical, cultural and existential peripheries to promote a culture of commitment and solidarity that helps to overcome indifference and individualism. We are determined to invest in an evangelization that knows how to intervene in the needs of humanity, especially the poorest, and a great educational work to promote the formation of a new mentality and new lifestyles. True ethical and cultural revolutions can be acted upon by people who live by cultivating a reason enlightened by love, by that perception of the world and of ourselves that only the heart can offer. To convert the mind and transform social structures the Gospel, the Word of God addressed to man for his salvation is sufficient. Changing the world is at hand. Just change the world around us, caring for the hungry, the exploited and the sick. The young volunteers of today, within the Salesian family, are called to continue the dream of Don Bosco: to be missionaries of the young, to care for the poor, to bring to them the joyful message of salvation, to make them experience the closeness of God and the sweetness of his love."

### 3.7 Salesian spirituality and volunteering

The GC24 indicated some fundamental lines of spirituality to be shared with the laity:

- Preferential love for young people, especially the poorest: the pastoral charity.
- The spirituality of the relationship: The family spirit.
- Commitment in the Church for the world.
- Spirituality of daily life and work.
- The Preventive system: in permanent listening to God and the human person.

The experience of volunteering suggests three elements that always appear in their spiritual adventure: service, communion and mysticism.

**a) The service.** It is the joy that produces a demanding mission and commitment. An intense activity, gives birth to a generous heart. It is that apostolic passion, of pastoral charity that leads to love with generosity, without setting limits and fears. It is the charity that becomes fantasy of love, full of creativity and initiatives, flexible to be able to carry out its mission. In Salesian vocabulary we can translate it as the "**oratorian heart**" (generous, open, sympathetic, creative, sensitive, personalized ...), "sanctified work". It is the "**da mihi animas caetera tolle**". The mystic of the first part: enthusiastic zeal for surrender (da mihi animas), calls for the corresponding asceticism of the second (caetera tolle): temperance, fidelity to commitments, chastity, transparency, resilience of their own time and comforts, the ability to endure unrewarding situations, such as cultural shock, failure, fatigue.

**b) Communion.** An intense element in the experience of volunteering is the strong experience of communion with the beneficiaries of the mission, who are not mere numbers but names of people with whom the volunteer is related in a rich exchange of humanity and affection; Communion is with a new reality and a new culture; The festive communion with a Christian community that dreams, realizes and celebrates; The paternal and experienced communion with the religious community that gives balance, serenity and helps to internalize the experience; The enriching community of volunteers who share experience, mission and life. All this, we can express it in the Salesian way - the "family spirit", which has nothing generic, but is the sensitive expression of God-family, of the Church-family.

**c). The mystic.** There is an impact with the reality that transforms. It implies the discovery of themselves, their limitations, their potentialities, their miseries and riches; Discovery of reality, sometimes crude and hard in the face of poverty and injustice; The discovery of great things in small ones, of the essential ones in what seemed generic; The discovery of the joy lived in the community in simplicity; The discovery of God in all this and in a personal relationship. To all this we can call, like the development of the capacity to be contemplative in the action, or better the contemplation of the open eyes, the capacity to make a believing and committed



reading of the reality, the sufferings, the injustices, the world of the young, life itself. It is the Samaritan contemplation that helps us to "see" the wounded man on the road. This mysticism helps volunteering not be a passing sentimentality, but an event of love that is nourished, rooted, that finds deep and stable reasons for the love of Christ. It is a love already experienced in the very gift of service, in communion with others, but that requires to be in 'face to face' with the source of love.

It is a love that is matured in the silence of the intimacy of the encounter, in filial prayer, in listening to the Word, in the sacraments. In Salesian spirituality, Don Bosco offers us the icon of the two columns in which the experience of volunteering is invited to be secured: In the Eucharist: that encounter with Christ who gives himself freely and with freedom "when he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion, he took bread ... "; And which establishes the eternal covenant, the expression of a stable and permanent love: "this is the cup of my Blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant that shall be poured out for you." In this way the young person is led to willingly become a food for others and to be donated (poured) with a responsible commitment. The other column, Mary, is a model of the virtues of the volunteer, icon of the motherhood of the Church and of the community that welcomes him/her.

### III) TYPES, CHARACTERISTICS AND PROFILE OF SMV

#### 1. Types

At the level of our Congregation there is an intense and broad youth commitment, which reveals new sensibilities and perspectives. This new youth involvement in the Salesian mission is born, developed and strengthened in the educational and pastoral communities that motivate young people to be missionaries of other young people.

Provinces are committed to the formation of young people in the different fields: oratories, youth centers, parishes, catechesis, schools, social works, to promote a vocational culture and concrete experiences of volunteering.

When we talk about the typology of volunteering we can see various expressions of what is called "volunteering in the Salesian mission". One of them is the Salesian Missionary Volunteering, on which this document is focused. However it is important to describe different concepts, sometimes related to volunteering, to better focus on the SMV.

#### 1.1 Various realities at times called volunteering:

There are various terminologies that, if not clarified, can create some confusion, and detract from the various proposals. Each of these realities has its identity, purpose and challenges. Sometimes, without precision, they are calls of volunteering to diverse realities. Each has its value and purpose, which may well find a place in the Salesian mission, but it is important to distinguish all these realities and forms of volunteering to respect their identities and how to integrate them into the mission.

**a) Cooperation:** Offers professional competence in some field of humanitarian development. Generally the cooperative carries out its activity outside its country of residence. Its great contribution is the professionalism that can contribute to qualify a type of international volunteering.

**b) Civil Service:** It is the service that citizens of a State can provide in favor of public or private entities. They can be carried out freely, or be alternatives to particular normative obligations, such as substitution to compulsory military service. The State assumes all the economic expenses of the citizen in service (transport, maintenance and compensation). It can be an opportune instrument to facilitate the economic sustenance of volunteering

**c) Internship** is the professional practice performed by a student to put one's knowledge and skills into practice. The trainee is the apprentice who carries out this practice with the intention of obtaining field experience, while the person in charge of guiding it is usually known as a tutor. Some of the interns, after completing the curricular requirement, choose to continue their activities in the form of voluntary service in various social works.

**d) Solidarity tourism:** It is the person or group that participates in a specific way during their vacations, as a way to know another culture, or a humanitarian project, becoming aware of the situation of the developing countries. This can be a good educational opportunity to prepare for future volunteering.

**e) Cultural Exchange:** It is the realization of a trip abroad by a student, with the aim of learning the customs, traditions and language of another country. In our particular case, one can stay in a Salesian institution, offering some voluntary service alternating with other cultural activities.

**f) Volunteering:** it is the activity in which time and qualities are dedicated to work and serve a community or group of people, in an organized way, by own decision, free and without economic remuneration, with the aim of contributing to the improvement of Their living conditions.

However, we will confine ourselves to "volunteering". Within this reality without pretending to be exhaustive there is a universe of modalities, forms, criteria, times, places, profiles, types of activities ...

## 1.2. According to the inspiring principles

### a) Lay Volunteering

It is an experience that lives and promotes alternative models of life and action, characterized by a sense of solidarity and concern for the other, particularly for the latter, for an effort of cultural understanding and acceptance, for an attitude of service, capable of generating Projects and give continuity to them. It is sensitive to issues such as human rights, development, ecology, peace, etc. It seeks a reading on the causes of poverty and marginalization with the will to actualize social justice, to spread peace and the will to build a more supportive society.

### b) Volunteer of religious background

In various cultures volunteering finds stimuli and motivations in religious values. Values such as the sacredness of life, harmony, mercy, community, are in full harmony with evangelical values, as well as with those of the secular world, enabling solidarity interventions

### c) Christian Volunteering

It is not substantially different from the previous ones by the activities that it performs, but by the inspiring values or motivations. Christian volunteerism springs from evangelical values, from the paternity of God who creates a universal fraternity giving a special dignity to every human being; The presence of Christ in each particularly vulnerable person; The importance of community life in the human and ecclesial vocation. The presence of Christ in the present day of history is considered, that moves towards the full realization of the Kingdom. From this perspective, it seeks to give a genuine response to the challenges presented by social reality. It is a privileged field for the vocation and mission of the laity called to transform the world from one's own reality and professional life.

## 1.3 According to the place

**a) Local Volunteering:** It develops in the environment in which the volunteer lives and collaborates from his family; Are usually the animators of the various educational-pastoral activities of the work.

**b) National Volunteering:** From his own country and from Salesian works, presented by other institutions or by private initiative. The internal national volunteers carry out a kind of missionary and vocational volunteer, with their respective demands, leaving their community to go to serve another. This local volunteering is developed both in the field of educational and social action as well as in the evangelizing and missionary areas.

**c) International Volunteering:** Volunteers sent or received from different countries. Some are sent directly by the Missionary Animation from one province to another. Others come from Salesian organizations of cooperation or from other institutions. In general this service is governed by contracts and agreements with the organizations of origin. This kind of volunteering is characterized by professional competencies and sufficient human maturity enriched by genuine motivations. Typically they are long-term experiences, not less than a year.

## 1.4 According to the duration

**a) Brief:** They are services, rather punctual and occasional, as an expression of direct responses to solidarity (emergencies) or educational (specific actions of young people of some institution). Being valid interventions, they still do not enter into the vision of volunteering that offers continuity in service.

**b) Continued:** These are the cases of professionals or students, or persons with family responsibilities, who, due to their commitments, dedicate some weekly hours to the local volunteer service. They are valid interventions motivated by options and permanent values of life. These are interventions that offer continuity to a project.

**c) Intense:** These are the so-called "missionary weeks" or "summer missions", or "volunteer experiences". This type of experience, in addition to doing some good in the communities they host, have a great impact force on the lives of the young people who perform them. This type of volunteering is loaded with an enormous educational and motivational force that prepares adolescents and young people for more consistent interventions in the future, as well as for their life project.

**d) Long:** These are volunteer experiences ranging from 1 to 2 years. In them the volunteer makes the experience of insertion in a community or new culture, in which he/she develops with continuity a certain service.

## 1.5 According to age

**a) Volunteer education:** Here it starts from childhood to youth, being a process with formative itineraries and short and punctual experiences that help to mature attitudes and values of volunteering.

**b) Vocational age:** It is usually the experiences around the end of high school (between 17-20) where volunteer experiences, whether short, continuous or long, help young people to develop their personal life project. It is a volunteering with a strong vocational profile. This type of experience must be carried out at local or national level, discouraging international volunteering for this period.

**c) Youth commitment age:** These are voluntary services performed by young people (aged 21-29) who already have professional skills, allowing their intervention to be more mature and incisive from the professional point of view. The volunteer proposal has proved to be a very effective means of pastoral work with adult youth, particularly in university ministry. This is an ideal period

**d) Adulthood.** While adults are not the priority recipients of our mission, they are our close collaborators. Volunteering in adulthood is usually continuous, or also international, to which they can offer a rich human experience and professionalism (think of retired people with great potential for the mission).

## 1.6 According to the insertion in the religious community

**a) Within the community:** They live in the religious community or in the different sectors that are under the responsibility of the community. They are fully integrated into the life and activities of the Salesian community (programming, fraternity, prayer). The internal volunteer to the community realizes an intense experience of life and work. The modalities may prudently

vary according to the profile of the volunteers. This integration facilitates their complete insertion in the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC).

**b) Community of volunteers:** They live with the same intensity the insertion to the mission, but they are housed in structures for volunteers, who according to the cases live community experience with a greater or less intensity. The relationship with the religious community and the participation in their activities and life, can vary according to the contexts and the profile of the volunteers.

**c) External to the community:** They live outside the religious community. They spend part of their time collaborating on specific activities as the case may be. During their stay at work they have the same requirements of the internal volunteer.

## 1.7 According to the form of organization

**a) Salesian Missionary Volunteering:** Volunteering is coordinated through local and Provincial Salesian Youth Ministry with a concrete project inserted in the Provincial SEPP. Volunteers are referred to the SMV, sent from a house, or by a Province for another Salesian presence, following the rules and criteria of the Provincial Volunteer Project.

**b) Volunteering of NGOs or other institutions related to Salesians:** Volunteering is coordinated through a volunteer organization, recognized at the civil level (NGO or similar), inserted, to a greater or lesser extent, according to the contexts, in the Salesian Educative and Pastoral of a Province. This type of volunteer can be referred to the SMV to the extent that it is identified with the Provincial Salesian Missionary Volunteer Project of the province of origin.

**c) Volunteering of NGOs or other non-Salesian civil or ecclesial institutions:** They are various organizations (NGOs) or ecclesial institutions (dioceses, movements), which according to their characteristics and identity, send volunteers to Salesian presences. The agreements are made directly between the Salesian Province and the particular institution.

## Operative criteria and norms

- "Volunteering" should not be confused with other valid forms of social promotion or cultural exchange.
- The SMV is born of motivations of faith in Jesus Christ, enriched by the Salesian charismatic characteristics
- The SMV is carried out nationally and internationally.
- The expected time for the SMV is 1 to 2 years.
- The age of SMV ranges from 17 to 29 years. The international SMV from the age of 21.
- The form of integration of the SMV into the Salesian community can be as internal, in voluntary communities, or as external to the community.

- The Salesian community, while maintaining the spirit of welcome, maintains places and moments of the religious community.
- The subject of sending and receiving SMV is the provincial community, in the person of the Provincial, who can be instrumentally assisted by various types of organizations.

## 2. Characteristics of SMV

"The Salesian missionary volunteer proposes the values of the Gospel with the witness of selfless service and solidarity in education and in the socio-political commitment that reaches the realities of family, work and culture."

The most outstanding characteristics of SMV that can be shared by all types of volunteers in the Salesian mission are:

**2.1 Lay:** Participates in the Salesian project, joining its lay identity with the religious in an educational, social and missionary movement. It is an agent of transformation of society according to the values of the Kingdom. Their professionalism is a particular richness for the mission.

**2.2 Youth :** the service is done with youthful spirit, in tune with those one serves, being sensitive to their world and problematic. It does not exclude adults who accept the characteristics of volunteering.

**2.3 Missionary:** Proposes the values of the Gospel, offers testimony and is inspired by the gospel. It is motivated by a vision of faith. Bring one's testimony and the word of God out of one's own environment. He/she is sensitive and in solidarity with the world of poverty and youthful marginalization, where the "little ones" are the presence of Christ.

**2.4 Salesian:** Have Don Bosco as a model, with the Salesian Youth Spirituality and the Preventive System as a model and pedagogy in action; The oratorian criterion is its way of being present among the recipients, animated by the spirit of "*da mihi animas*".

**2,5 Educational:** It is incorporated with preference in human promotion programs, and acts according to the Preventive System. It is primarily concerned with personal and social maturity by accepting the challenge of "educating by educating".

**2.6 Sociopolitical:** It is actively inserted in the socio-cultural, economic and political reality, and undertakes to transform it in collaboration with civil and ecclesial institutions. One knows how to make a deep and critical reading of reality.

**2.7 Community:** One lives in a religious community, with the Salesians and / or other volunteers, inserted in an Educational Community, sharing their educative and pastoral project. This allows one to experience group experiences, which helps develop the values of dialogue and self-giving. It is also sensitive to interculturality knowing how to build bridges with the various people encountered in its mission.

## 3. Possible volunteering activities

The services that volunteerism can offer to the Salesian mission are of great variety in the field of education, vocational training, evangelization and social promotion. For example:

- Education, particularly attentive to teacher training,
- psychological care, particularly with vulnerable children and adolescents,

- leisure education, sport, music, arts, languages,
- various specialties in technical and vocational training,
- civil construction, architecture, engineering,
- administration and logistics,
- agriculture, poultry, beekeeping, fish farming, water, sanitation,
- training on human rights and social activism,
- Information Technology
- social communication and editing of texts, web pages,
- health (medicine, nursing, preventive medicine),
- pastoral: catechetics, groups and youth itineraries, family pastoral.

## 4. Profile of Salesian Missionary Volunteering

Certainly the profile that delineates for the volunteer is a horizon towards which to walk with patience, respecting processes and times, having a realistic sense of the concrete of young candidates. This does not diminish a demanding proposal of volunteering that avoids leveling it down. It rather proposes challenging paths and goals for a life project.

On the other hand, placing ourselves from the point of view of the recipients of our mission, we have the right to offer them collaborators, educators, friends, models of people rich in humanity, competencies, and particularly, credible witnesses of the Lord. Although volunteering provokes a great good for those who perform it, we can not confine it to their personal and subjective experience. Its validity and opportunity must be weighed against the recipients of our mission with whom they interact.

### 4.1 The motivations

The motivational theme has been much studied in volunteering. Certainly, as in any option, there are no univocal motivations since they are complex, conscious and less conscious, explicit and implicit. What is important is that the prevailing conscious motivations are the most consonant to the mission they are called to perform.

There are motivations that without being wrong are insufficient for the SMV:

- collect new experiences,
- know new places, people, cultures,
- to spend useful time,
- Enrich the curriculum of study or work,
- seek new job opportunities,
- improve my personal skills,
- study and research cultural and social realities,
- Self-assertion,
- search for recognition,

Without discarding the previous motivations, those that must be prevalent are:

- To serve others in gratuity,
- create bridges between people and cultures through solidarity,
- to repay those who have less with what God has given me,
- entering into communion with the giving and receiving people,
- discovering one's life project by serving others,

- love Christ in one's neighbor.

The dominant motivation that should guide a SMV is none other than "loving Jesus in others" and "loving as Jesus loved." This basic attitude will take shape in various forms of social action: commitment to justice, solidarity, equality, human rights, the integral promotion of people, particularly the most vulnerable. The dominant motivation is the soul capable of giving life to an infinite number of initiatives.

## 4.2. Human maturity

As in any type of volunteering, it must be rich in human values:

- sufficient physical and mental health,
- flexibility and adaptability to the environment,
- capacity for communication, dialogue and sociability,
- availability for the free service,
- humility and desire to be educated by the environment,
- critical sense of reality and self-criticism,
- sincerity, honesty and transparency,
- respect and appreciation for local people and culture,
- ability to work as a team,
- affective maturity - sexual,
- balance, serenity and common sense,
- sympathy, optimism and good humor,
- serious dedication to work and responsibility,
- organization of one's own time, projection,
- competence and qualification in a professional area.

## 4.3. Christian maturity

- The SMV volunteer is a young person who lives and conveys the "joy of the Gospel",
- has chosen Christ in his life and lives in ecclesial communion,
- a volunteer's life is an expression of social charity, concrete and operative,
- feels sent by the Lord and a community,
- gives a coherent testimony of his/her Christian life,
- feeds one's faith by the Word of God, prayer and the sacraments,
- the Eucharist particularly lived as the sign of surrender,
- finds in volunteering a way to discover and live out his vocation in the Church and in society.

His/her missionary vocation requires him/her to reinforce some common aspects of the Christian life, which are lived with greater intensity: detachment from one's land, virtue of strength, sense of sacrifice, simplicity, sobriety, humility, patience, capacity for inculturation, A more intense life of prayer and a vision of faith, love for those most in need, a sense of community.

## 4.4 Professionalism

Particularly young people and adults offer a qualified service in a particular area. It is proper to their lay identity to place their competencies in view of an integral promotion of the person. Being a volunteer, does not diminish in any way one's professional responsibility. One is more predisposed to offer it with more dedication. Mission preparation in these areas certainly presupposes long-term training. A criterion in the various professional interventions consists in providing for continuity, offering collaboration for the training of local staff.

In this field, Salesian NGOs, with timely preparation for cooperation and development, offer a rich contribution to the professionalization of volunteer service



## 4.5 Salesianity

Experience indicates that volunteers from Salesian works, particularly if they have developed animation activities, are easily attuned to the new mission. Some characteristic features of the Salesian missionary style:

- Youth style,
- preference for the poorest young people,
- presence among and confidence in young people,
- optimism, joy and sense of humor,
- oratorian heart,
- family spirit,
- simple, ecclesial, deep and popular religiosity,
- ability to work and practicality
- creativity and flexibility,
- lives a life of chastity, as an expression of a gratuitous, transparent love and as a form of educational irradiation for the young,
- sober lifestyle.

### **OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND NORMS**

- For the sending of SMV, give special attention to the young people who have made a process in the Salesian Youth Ministry, in the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM), as animators, in groups or missionary movements.
- Specialized and appropriate training is foreseen for candidates who do not come from the Salesian presences.
- There must be clear Provincial criteria for the convocation, selection, formation and sending of Salesian missionary volunteers. Establish a volunteer project and a directory
- Let the province connect with young people from the technical-professional field, since there is a great demand in this area in the mission fronts.
- The Provincial Volunteer Project delineates itineraries, persons with particular responsibilities, modalities, criteria and times for the selection, training and accompaniment of the candidates.
- The contents, competences and formative experiences are rich of human and evangelical values
- With regard to affective maturity, the SMV undertakes to live in chastity, sobriety and availability particularly during the time of mission, motivated by a code of conduct, or even more, by an attitude of total, generous and evangelical devotion.

## IV) A PROCESS IN THE YOUTH MINISTRY

### 1. A process, a school of life

One of the characteristics of the SMV, as well as all volunteering in the Salesian area, is its educational dimension; really it is a "school of life" and for this it is necessary to support the educative and pastoral processes.

"The model is the encounter on the road to Emmaus: the missionary approaches the young person, and meets him or her with an attitude of *listening* and *welcome*, *proclaiming* the Gospel and offering to accompany the young person. Animation helps people to make the good news their own and assists them in the development of their conscience. It makes them aware of the motivations that drive their options and their critical thinking skills. It encourages their active involvement and makes them responsible agents in their own education" (FoR 130). "Salesian pastoral and educational activity is a dynamic process that unfolds in certain fundamental dimensions as integrating and complementary aspects. It is an anthropological, pedagogical and coherent spiritual frame of reference for accompanying young people in the delicate process of their growth as human beings in the faith".(FoR 148)

This process offers **gradual experiences of service** and apostolic commitment, which turns the SMV into witnesses and evangelizers and commits them to the social dimension of charity, making them protagonists of the construction of a more just, solidary and human society. In this way young people develop one of the basic characteristics of Salesian spirituality: the spirit of **responsible service**, which will make them suitable for volunteering.

The **Salesian Youth Movement** (SYM) has proved to be the most capable educator of volunteering. Through their processes and itineraries, the SYM has matured and mature many young people, identified with the pedagogy and spirituality of Don Bosco, who are placed at the service of the mission. Within the SYM, the missionary movements and groups that grow sensitive to service, interculturality and missionary are noteworthy.

On the other hand, volunteering has revealed itself as a great educational and evangelising opportunity for **many young adults, university students**, who have not gone through a Salesian itinerary, but who want to give their talents and time to the service of others. In these cases, it is necessary to envisage appropriate itineraries for them, to help them discern and mature in their options. The offering of missionary volunteering to young people from non-Salesian environments is a gift for the local Church, for society and a great opportunity to offer them a human-Christian itinerary of maturity.

It is important to carry out a process that avoids the logic of young "skydivers" in volunteering, so that there is not enough volunteering education process. The risk is that the experience closes in on itself, just as an "event" or a "new experience" "to collect, without flowering into a coherent project of life and commitment.

### 2. Stages of volunteering

Salesian missionary volunteering is an unified reality, an educational process organically integrated into the Youth Ministry. We suggest taking these four steps into account:

1st The development of a culture of volunteering and formation in its values (selfless service, openness to the other, solidarity ...) throughout the entire educative and pastoral process with teenagers and adolescents.

2nd Training for volunteering through diverse experiences of generous and disinterested service such as animation, active participation in various associations or brief volunteering experiences.

3rd The option of a more committed volunteer during a consistent period of time.

4th Along this path, and through these voluntary experiences, young people mature in conscious and lasting vocational choices.

### 3. A sending and receiving community

The community is a fundamental subject in this process of formation and accompaniment of the maturation of the volunteer.

The Educative and Pastoral community (**EPC**) is the "subject and, at the same time, object and scope of educative-pastoral action". The "**animating nucleus**" of the EPC, summons, motivates and involves the members of the EPC. In turn, the **Salesian religious community**, with its spiritual heritage, its pedagogical style, its relations of fraternity and co-responsibility in the mission, represents the reference witness for the charismatic identity.

The volunteer's community experience is experienced at various levels:

**a. With the sending community:** The Salesian community invites, welcomes the young people preparing them for volunteering. In it the candidates experience and assume the values of pedagogy and Salesian spirituality. The volunteer on mission maintains a healthy communication with their community, sharing their experience. In turn, the community supports them in their experience and, on their return, helps them in their reintegration.

**b. With the Salesian community that welcomes:** Volunteers assume the human and evangelical riches they discover in the Salesian community that welcomes them, such as a vocation for education, passion for the salvation of the young, fraternity, family style and a life characterized by the life of evangelical counsels. His/her presence enriches the Salesian community with a youthful tone, making it more sensitive to the world of young people and motivating it in its apostolic enthusiasm. The local community sees to their accompaniment and formation during the service in the mission.

**c. With the Educative and Pastoral Community:** Volunteers are inserted in the EPC, sharing their Educative and Pastoral Project, they favor personal relationships, collaboration and participation and mutual enrichment. The EPC helps to integrate the environment and the educational project.

**d. With the volunteering team and those in charge:** Volunteers are accompanied by the team, in which through its experience and ability become carriers of proposals among young people. It is the link between communities and volunteers. It accompanies the volunteers visiting them, ensuring that they establish understandings between them and the community that welcomes them. It guides the preparation, qualification and process of the volunteers through visits, internet, meetings and dialogue.

**e. With the culture that receives them and the local Church:** The volunteer with respect and humility is inserted in a new cultural and ecclesial context, and learns to know and appreciate its values, all the good and noble that the new environment offers. As a missionary, with a sense of interculturality, he/she learns patiently and earnestly the riches and cultural sensibilities inculcating the Gospel.

f. Among the **volunteers themselves**: The relationship between the volunteers, whether from the local or provincial community, are inspired by the Don Bosco family model. They share the daily work, the joys and sufferings, the moments of growth, formation and prayer. In fraternity they share their experience of volunteering.

## 4. Formation in SMV

### 4.1 Formative Criteria

To offer an **integral formation** that will enable the volunteer to carry out his/her service preferably as an educator and evangelizer of the most needy youth, in the style of Don Bosco. This formation helps:

- **to Witness** consistent attitudes and behaviors with the beneficiaries (dialogue, respect, faith, kindness, sensitivity, rightness).
- **to Know**, to have knowledge of the cultural, social, religious, youth, values, language and everything that can be useful for the mission.
- **to prepare**, acquiring the appropriate professional competences for the context and the requested service.
- **to animate**, obtaining the pedagogical-pastoral skills to interact with young people, provoking their protagonism.
- to take into account the **gradual dimension** of personal growth, through a rich itinerary of contents and experiences, knowing how to respect the times without burning stages.
- **to Insist** on the values that permeate the daily life of his/her family, community, group, study and work environment.
- to Prepare for **interculturality** and the "cultural shock", opening up to other cultures.
- **To help** to live their faith and experience of service with a Plan , elaborating their project of life and orienting their vocational choice in the Church and society.

### 4.2. Three moments in formation.

The formation that we present below has been outlined taking into account the needs of those who have volunteered. These needs were identified in the research conducted in 2016. We consider the three moments of the "before, during and after".

#### a. Formation before Volunteering

Undoubtedly, the immediate and specific formation for the SMV service is preceded by a rich, long-term formation that has matured in the educative and pastoral path it has carried out in the community of origin (SYM, groups, educational centers, Youth Centres, parishes). It presupposes interventions of one to three weeks based on previous practices of volunteering or of missions,

The **immediate formation** between the various modalities here is indicated the most common:

- **Weekly meetings**, such as pre-volunteer groups. This is possible where candidates live nearby. To these meetings can be added other activities: retreats, regional or national meetings.
- **Weekend meetings**, during a weekend of the month (from Friday to Sunday), adding between about 10 meetings. This type of proposal is more frequent when the beneficiaries live geographically in the same province. A sufficient training should not take less than 150 hours.
- **Intensive meetings**, for two or three weeks prior to departure.
- In addition to face-to-face meetings there are interesting experiences of **online training**, as a means of complementary training.

This immediate formation must be concluded with the ecclesial and provincial "**sending**", which gives relevance to the event and gives it a communitarian and missionary dimension (to be sent).

The formative itinerary must consider several dimensions: human, affective, cultural, pedagogical, Salesian, technical, relational, educational, theological-pastoral.

Particularly we underline some content that emerged from the questionnaires:

### Human Development

Need	Contents	Objectives
To know where I am, who I am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ • SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats).</li> <li>✓ • Personal Life Project.</li> </ul>	To help the volunteers get to know each other more deeply and have a plan of action to grow.
To learn to communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ • Problem solving</li> <li>✓ • Effective communication.</li> <li>✓ • Emotional intelligence.</li> </ul>	To train the volunteer in the art of communicating their thoughts and emotions.
To know how to handle interpersonal relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ • How to develop a relationship with a person.</li> <li>✓ • How to end a relationship with a person.</li> </ul>	To give tools to the volunteers so they know how to handle interpersonal relationships.
To learn to adapt to the new reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Inculturation.</li> <li>✓ Cultural Shock.</li> <li>✓ "Abandonment to God".</li> </ul>	To train volunteers to make their transition easier in another reality.
To know and channel my affectivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The feelings</li> <li>✓ Moments of solitude.</li> <li>✓ Know my sexuality.</li> <li>✓ Affective maturity.</li> </ul>	To help young people know how to handle feelings.
To know how to handle moments of crisis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What to do when I am in times of crisis.</li> <li>✓ How to recognize crises.</li> <li>✓ Psychological health (<i>Burn out</i>).</li> </ul>	To learn to handle moments of crisis.
Health & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Knowledge, prevention and cure of the most common diseases.</li> </ul>	To provide important information.
To learn to collaborate with other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Teamwork.</li> <li>✓ Be proactive.</li> <li>✓ Win and win.</li> <li>✓ Appreciate the people I work with.</li> </ul>	To provide teamwork tools.
To know volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The SMV document, criteria, profiles, rights and duties.</li> <li>✓ Legal and economic aspects.</li> </ul>	To be aware of the identity and responsibilities in the SMV.

**Educational-Pastoral Tools**

Need	Contents	Objectives
To learn to work with children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Youth / child psychology.</li> <li>✓ Conflict management.</li> <li>✓ Analysis of job description.</li> </ul>	To give tools to volunteers so they can work with beneficiaries.
To know the social responsibility of a volunteer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The volunteer in the religious community.</li> <li>✓ The volunteer with the young people.</li> <li>✓ The volunteer as a referent for the beneficiary community.</li> </ul>	To understand the social responsibility of the volunteer within the community where he/she lives.
Salesian pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Preventive System.</li> <li>✓ Assistance, Educative presence.</li> </ul>	To provide hands-on tools for working with youth and children.
To learn how to animate events and groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Steps for strategic planning</li> <li>✓ Animation of groups.</li> </ul>	To learn to animate groups and events.

**Community life**

Need	Contents	Objectives
To Know the Salesian Charism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Don Bosco.</li> <li>✓ The Salesian oratory.</li> <li>✓ Salesianity</li> </ul>	To know more who are the Salesians, their history and charism.
To Know the meaning of community life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The figure of the volunteer in the community.</li> <li>✓ Rights and Responsibilities.</li> <li>✓ Regulations for living a good community life</li> <li>✓ importance of presence.</li> </ul>	To train the volunteer in such a way that any type of conflict within the community is reduced while at the same time indicating the structures of government.
To know how to act when one is sick.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ First aid.</li> <li>✓ Basic principles of how to handle a disease.</li> <li>✓ How to use health insurance.</li> </ul>	To give tools to the volunteers on how to act when they are sick.

**Socio-Political and Cultural formation**

Need	Contents	Objectives
To know the culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Important information about the location of missions:</li> <li>✓ Local culture (religious, social, political aspects)</li> </ul>	To provide important information of the local reality where one will do mission
To know the dynamics of global injustice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Colonization - Neo colonization</li> <li>✓ Underdevelopment and its causes.</li> </ul>	To know historical, economic and political structural causes of underdevelopment.
To know the social doctrines of the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Socio-transforming vision of the Social Doctrine.</li> </ul>	To have a Christian vision of the social problems and ways of intervention
To learn the language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sufficient knowledge of the language</li> </ul>	Being able to communicate well in the mission

**Christian and Salesian values**

Need	Contents	Objectives
To know well the Catholic faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Who is and how to communicate Jesus Christ.</li> <li>✓ Elements of ecclesiology.</li> <li>✓ Knowledge of the Bible.</li> <li>✓ The Eucharist and Reconciliation.</li> </ul>	To form Catholic identity in the volunteer.
To know what it means to be a missionary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Elements of missiology and missionary spirituality.</li> <li>✓ Interaction culture - Gospel.</li> <li>✓ Ecclesial Doc: AG, EN, RM, EG.</li> </ul>	To acquire missionary criteria. To Form missionary spirit.
How to pray with the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Models of how to meditate.</li> <li>✓ How the breviary is used.</li> </ul>	To teach the volunteer how to pray with the religious community.
To develop a relationship with God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Who is God in your life?</li> <li>✓ Ways to develop a personal relationship with God.</li> <li>✓ Salesian Youth Spirituality.</li> </ul>	To encourage the development of the relationship with God.
To know the charismatic identity of volunteering.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Knowledge of the life of Don Bosco and some elements of the history of the Congregation.</li> <li>✓ The Salesian Family and its groups.</li> </ul>	To know, appreciate and participate in the Salesian charism.

These are some of the contents, skills and competencies that can be addressed in the formation process before the volunteer is assigned to a mission. It should be taken into account whether a young person comes from a process of Salesian formation, such as from the Salesian Youth Movement or comes from a secular or non-Salesian ecclesial environment. That way the formation must be personalized to the processes of the candidates.

In some Provinces, particularly for those who have not made a sufficient period of prior contact with the Salesian community, a **psychological evaluation** is carried out.

**b) Formation during the volunteering**

It is advisable that during the experience of volunteering there is a **time when volunteers can reflect on the mission** and what is happening in their lives. The moments of interiorization are important.

In the middle of the period it is convenient to make a **retreat**, which helps reflection and internalization where volunteers develop their life plan, taking into account everything they have experienced so far. It is recommended to carry out an analysis of the experience and based on that, to create a strategic plan that will help them to improve.

It is also recommended that the volunteer or group of volunteers **meet local people** who can help them understand the reality of where they are living (culture, society, economy, religious life, ecclesial life, youth world). Also have regular meetings with the rector of the community or who was entrusted as a referent of the volunteers to know how to communicate information, criteria, operation of the work, sharing and evaluating the experience, etc.

The use of **self-formation brochures** that help volunteers to meet the objectives previously proposed may be helpful.

When possible, the volunteer should participate daily in the **Eucharist** so that daily, he/she is shaped by the Word of God and the surrender of Christ.

It is recommended that the volunteer be motivated to **read** topics of Salesianity (life of Don Bosco, Preventive System, materials of Salesianity), topics of culture and history of the place, practice **Lectio Divina** as part of their ongoing formation.

### c) Formation after Volunteering

When the survey participants were asked what was the most difficult stage of the volunteer experience? we find the following answer:

Before the experience of volunteering 12.6%

During the volunteer experience 34.2%

After the experience of volunteering 53.2%

This indicates that for the volunteers the most critical **moment of all their experience is the return to their place of origin**. Therefore a formation strategy is needed for this moment of re-adaptation and re-integration. The return to an anonymous normality, where their social recognition and the stimuli for self-esteem are not so strong, having left gratifying social relations, the return to a rhythm of life of generic problems against the intense experiences already lived, the less intensity and expressiveness of the religious proposal ... All this can destabilize them, being able to reach even moments of depression. In this **destabilization** is where the person **re-invents**, where the person makes decisions to re-insert creatively, with the baggage of lived experience, in social and ecclesial life.

Some contents that can be taken into account in a post-experience formation are: Vocational and professional discernment, the Social Doctrine of the Church in view of a greater social and political commitment in society; the vocational proposals of the Salesian Family.

## OPERATIVE CRITERIA AND NORMS

- Give priority and promote the SMV among the young people of our Salesian presences, particularly among the animators.
- Make specific itineraries for the SMV candidates coming from non Salesian presences.
- Provide formation itineraries for human formation (psychological, social, human relations, interculturality, etc.), pedagogical, theological-pastoral and Salesian formation.
- Immediate training for the national SMV can not be less than 100 hours and for the international SMV of 150 hours.
- In the immediate formation, anticipate a personal reading itinerary, as well as research on the reality in which the volunteer will be inserted.
- For international volunteering, volunteer experiences or short-term missions (occasional activities, or one to three week experiences) are envisaged.



- Take care of the study of the languages of the places where volunteering will take place.
- For international volunteers, competent technical formation is planned in some of the most required areas on mission fronts.
- In the immediate formation, organize at least one spiritual retreat and a carefully prepared missionary 'sending'.
- Do the discernment and selection of the volunteers who will be sent on mission, particularly abroad, especially considering their psychological, human and spiritual profile.
- Where possible and necessary, conduct a psychological evaluation with professionals.
- During the volunteering period, at least two intense moments of spiritual exercises, formation and community living are expected during the year.
- Volunteers receive the formation of the cultural, social, economic, religious, ecclesial, and youth situation of the region by competent local people.
- At the return of the volunteering service, organize as soon as possible some days of meeting to share experiences and evaluate them, counting on the psychological and spiritual help to re-adapt to the new situation and project for the future.
- The Provincial Volunteering incharge foresees the three moments of the formation and accompaniment of volunteering: before, during and after, paying particular attention to the return.

## 5. Accompaniment in Salesian Mission Volunteering

The verb to accompany comes from the Latin term "cumpaniare" means "to share the bread with someone". It is about sharing with another or with others the purpose of reaching a goal or getting something together. Accompaniment is the encounter between two people, who, sharing similar values, look to integrate them into their own life history. This encounter makes them grow as people and as educators who identify with the Salesian way of doing and feeling.

### 5.1 The meaning of accompaniment

The accompaniment of the SMV is the process through which support, orientation, guidance and follow-up to the SMV is offered throughout the entire experience, from the beginning (selection, discernment, formation) to the return and integration into the community of reference (place of origin or new community) where he/she continues his/her life project; therefore it is not an isolated and occasional activity, but a constitutive aspect in the whole process; It is progressive, gradual and continuous, and looks at the maturation of the person of the volunteer in view of their personal growth, vocational maturation, ecclesial belonging and their active participation in society. Therefore, it is an aspect that must always be present in the life and process of every SMV.

It is a close follow-up and guides the person in every moment, from his/her personal situation, to clarify, discern and guide the life project, always closely related to the formation process. In this follow-up, who accompanies, is the person who helps the volunteer, with a great sense of empathy and facilitates a clear vision of things. The guide should be a broadminded guide to help to look at the possible horizons for decision making that the volunteer discovers and takes

on step by step. The guide is the key to respond in a personalized way to the needs that are emerging throughout the experience.

In relation to faith, it is a mutual help, in which one who accompanies (the EPC, the group, the SDB or lay person) and the accompanied together enrich each other in an exchange of values and living experiences of faith.

The accompaniment to the SMV is conceived with three different moments: the preparation, discernment and sending (before); the actual experience of volunteering (during); and return, integration into their community of origin or reference (after). And at three levels, environmental, group and personal.

## 5.2 The “before”

It is an accompaniment that is clear about what is intended, with an explicit itinerary. Primarily It has the purpose of discernment: it is the exercise of the option of missionary service as a result of a process of vocational maturation and of mature and operative faith and charity. It is an explicit and immediate preparation and a time for verification of the underlying motivations. It is a space to clarify the concerns and to strengthen the options in view of the decision making.

### a) Environmental accompaniment

Above all, accompaniment is offered by creating an educational environment. The volunteer feels at home, in a climate of mutual help, circulation of ideas and affections, receives educational proposals that encourage him/her to make choices and assume commitment. The Salesian environment is characterized by animation through structures and organizational stages; for their educational, open, fraternal relations, respect and interest for people (Salesian assistance); for the permanent qualitative formation at various spiritual, Christian, Salesian levels, through formative itineraries that, in addition to allowing them to live "for" the young, help them to grow "with" them.

The Salesian community welcomes and integrates in its life and action the people who are willing to volunteer in order to prepare them for their insertion in the future context of mission. In it the candidates experience and assume from it the values of pedagogy and Salesian spirituality.

### b) Group Accompaniment

The group is a pedagogical and educational place, through it, it accompanies people who are gradually seeking, and in various ways, within a single journey (SEPP) and thus the group responds to the interests of those concerned. Participation in a group helps young people to find their own identity more easily, and to recognize and accept the diversity of others. It is almost an obligatory step to mature an experience of community and the Church. One can think of a group of "pre-volunteers".

### c) Personal Accompaniment

At this level it is about accompanying the volunteers in their human and Christian growth and in their more personal choices. It is a "one to one" process in the respect of their individuality. It is characterized by the personalized dialogue, and the close educative relationship. The colloquy has a particular value and function. The dialogue restores pastoral attitudes. Salesian action awakens in the young an active and critical collaboration in the educational path, according to their possibilities, options and personal experiences. It enlivens the desire for dialogue and discernment; stimulates the internalization of everyday experiences, to decipher their messages; encourages confrontation and critical attitude; stimulates reconciliation with oneself and the recovery of inner calm; encourages the consolidation of personal and

Christian maturity. The times of these options and these experiences are not the same in all, and even the situations and decisions that young people encounter are not the same. The accompaniment develops an educative and pastoral service in relation to each one, valuing their personal experiences, and makes life the central theme of educative and spiritual dialogue.

### 5.3 The “during”

It is the accompaniment that is carried out during the volunteer service experience and has the objective of helping to integrate several aspects.

#### a) Environmental accompaniment

This accompaniment goes through several moments:

The moment focused on the **emotional and psychological affection** that produces a change of life in their time and rhythms, a new living space where one lives with others and share life in common spaces and perhaps at a distance from the family or friends, new relationships with new people in the Educative pastoral community, the SDB community and the beneficiaries of the volunteering mission. There is a latent desire to return home and leave the experience at any time, aggravated by crises in relationships.

It is the moment of **cultural and / or religious clash** in which one's own identity is questioned, and a great exercise of adaptation and overcoming of emotional stress and nostalgia of his house is required, and to incorporate the local dynamics in all dimensions to adapt to the new lifestyle and cultural and religious expressions.

It is the moment of **inculturation** in which the volunteer begins to feel comfortable with the culture, understands and internalizes it until assuming it what is possible.

It is the moment of the **integration**. It is usually a moment of consolidation of the experience in which the tendency is of security and autonomy that seems to ignore the need of the accompaniment so as to take hold of the situations. The desire to return home completely disappears.

Not all people live these four moments in the same way, neither with the same intensity nor duration. But at the beginning it is better to focus on more practical aspects such as physical health (housing, food ...), psychological health, ie, their moods: satisfaction-dissatisfaction, their inculturation and closeness to the people with whom they intend to work, difficulties encountered in this task, relationships with his/her colleagues and mission partners and the SDB community, how he/she manages to do one's work; the experience of their faith or expression of their religious convictions and their vocational maturity.

The rector of the Salesian community that welcomes the volunteer or someone delegated by him, plays an important role in this process of accompaniment

#### b) Group accompaniment

The permanent relationship with the group and the group accompaniment helps to maintain their vocational origin and to grow in the sense of belonging.

The mutual support between the volunteers themselves is fundamental where the communication, the daily sharing of the experience and the personal experience are a stimulus to grow and internalize the experience. The group meeting can be held at the local community level, as well as at the provincial level, with volunteers in other communities.

The volunteer also maintains a frequent relationship with the group that sent him/her, whether it is the Salesian community or the volunteer organization to which the volunteer belongs, the SYM, where he/she began his/her formation process.

### c) Personal Accompaniment

The Salesian Community that welcomes the volunteer, guarantees their personal accompaniment, appointing a salesian or lay person for this purpose during their volunteer experience. Often the rector of the community is responsible. This accompaniment will be systematic, progressive, gradual and frequent. It can become spiritual, consolidating faith as life in Christ and as a radical sense of existence. It helps to discern the personal vocation of each one in the Church and in the world, and to grow constantly in the spiritual life right up to holiness.

The **rector of the community** who sends or receives a volunteer, establishes a close and paternal relationship, depending on the fact that he is the first responsible and animator of those who constitute his community. This is why the volunteer establishes a relationship of trust and sonship with those who act as Don Bosco in the community.

The **Provincial Volunteering Team** accompanies the volunteers and explicitly the **Provincial responsible** is the link between the communities and the volunteers. The team and the provincial responsible accompany the volunteers visiting them, caring about their serene insertion in the community that welcomes them. A timely correspondence can be a great help. Whoever performs this ministry of accompanying at the provincial level must possess some qualities: personal balance, ability to empathize, personal skills for communication, knowing how to maintain a personal distance, experience of having been accompanied.

The **community of origin** also has a role in the accompaniment: Some have an ex-volunteer, who acts as a "**god father or god mother**" who accompanies him/her. Also, some organizations ask for a monthly report in which, in addition to narrating the activities and the reality in which they live, they also share their inner experiences. This communication, on the one hand helps the volunteer to internalize their experience and on the other, their testimony does much good to the young people and members of the community of origin.

As the end of the experience approaches, it is convenient to prepare the volunteer and the community in such a way as to avoid affective crises or improper relationships in staying. The reactions can be varied: satisfaction, regret, relief and even fear of change and what to do when you return. Sometimes, it is difficult to separate from a project that, after all the dedicated effort, begins to bear fruit or is in danger because there is no one to take over. It is necessary to prepare the return, giving importance to the farewell and to the welcome. It is necessary to plan in their new community, so that the convictions, the learning, the changes experienced, the existential relocation are serenely assimilated.

## 5.4 The "after"

The accompaniment at this time, as we have seen from the surveys, is the most delicate moment to which the province that sent and now to receive must pay attention. It is a time of re-adaptation and elaboration of the life project. The return must ensure that the experience lived "during" the volunteering has continuity in the choices and convictions, where the acquired learning is applied and updated in the new circumstances.

It is recommended that there be a process of re-integration into the community of origin, in which even with the psychological help, a serene maturation is ensured. In this process spiritual and pastoral support is necessary. Attention must be given to economic support, helping them resume their work activities.

### **a) Environmental accompaniment**

It will be fundamental to accompany the process of reintegration into their community, group or association of origin and to integrate into pause processes such as housing, studies, vocational discernment, profession, systematic apostolate, in such a way that there is no rupture in the vocational process, but the step to a new stage of the journey.

### **b) Group Accompaniment**

It will be very opportune to establish some communication and contact with the community, friends, the group, but above all with the companion of the previous moment "during" to continue the healthy relationship and nourish the experience from a distance and not forget what was lived. Likewise it will be very opportune to look for forums so that the volunteer can communicate his experience and testimony to other young people and candidates for volunteering in his community as well as at the provincial level. See the desirability of being reintegrated into the group of origin or another reference group, which can be one of the Salesian Family, to continue their ongoing formation and systematic accompaniment. The responsible for Provincial Volunteering can organize regular activities with the ex-volunteers, including giving it an institutional form.

### **c) Personal Accompaniment**

It will be very important to define and contact beforehand the companion who will follow the volunteer at this time "the after" and clearly establish the times and rhythms for a systematic, progressive, gradual and permanent accompaniment.

The Provincial team or the the responsible for Provincial Volunteering will offer training and follow-up as soon as the experience is completed with psychological help to assist the social reintegration. It is advisable to make further meetings between ex-volunteers.

## **OPERATIONAL CRITERIA AND NORMS**

Each province should designate a Salesian as responsible for Provincial Volunteering, who coordinates, with a team, the accompaniment of the volunteers of those who are sent and of those who are received.

- The local Salesian community follows the volunteers who provide a service in the work, taking care of their formation, making them participate in the life of the community and guiding them in the exercise of their responsibilities.
- During the experience, make at least a meeting of some days every six months with all the SMV who are in the province (spiritual exercises, live-in programmes, formation), organized by the provincial volunteering team.
- During volunteering at least once a month the director or local incharge has a relaxed conversation with the volunteer to accompany the experience.
- During the experience, when there is a community of volunteers, they meet periodically to schedule, evaluate, train, pray and relax. A weekly community *lectio divina* is recommended.
- During the mission, the volunteer will prepare a monthly report of their activities and experiences to share with their community of origin.

- The Provincial of the community of origin of volunteering, maintains a friendly communication with the volunteers in mission and with the Provincial responsible of the host community.
- Upon return, make a spiritual and psychological evaluation and accompaniment as soon as possible.
- On the return of volunteers, the local community will accompany them in the acquisition of a just psychological-affective balance, through a fraternal welcome in the family, ecclesial and social environment and taking into account the economic aspect, helping them to become part of the world of work (CG24 124)
- On the return of volunteers, the provincial and the Council encourage periodic meetings between former volunteers and other young people and adults to promote volunteering; and help them to make a critical reading of their experience and a re-planning of their lives (GC24, 125)

## V) ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF SALESIAN MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERING

In order to guide the organization of the Salesian Missionary Volunteering, there are some clues of animation and government that demand an organic plan of intervention for the Youth Ministry and the Provincial or Inter-Provincial Missionary Animation. Here are some instances that can help visualize the organization.

1. The communities that send (local and provincial); SMV and NGOs
2. The communities that receive (local and provincial);
3. Inter-provincial and world animation.

### 1. The communities that send

The Salesian communities that send (local or provincial), promote, discern, form and accompany through their life and action the young people who are willing to volunteer. The community of origin is called to spread the generosity of the gift of self, the missionary apostolate and values and Salesian pedagogy and spirituality. Every community can, at the same time, send or receive volunteers.

#### 1.1. the Local Community

The local Salesian community and the EPC are the first responsible of the Salesian mission in the territory and therefore, also of the Salesian missionary volunteer that is realized within it.

- Assume and promote the province's volunteer project. To know the diversity of the volunteer phenomenon, the identity, the priorities and the methodology of the voluntary service of the province and integrate it into their SEPP.
- Promote locally, according to the recipients, various forms of volunteering, giving a special highlight to the SMV.
- They accompany in their community the group of "pre-volunteers" of the SMV, helping them to rectify their motivations and their maturation process.
- Send candidates for volunteering are sent to the provincial, national or regional meetings of the SMV.
- Maintain contact with young volunteers during their mission, sharing their experience.
- Accompany fraternally the volunteers who return to their community, after their service, with a fraternal welcome, helping them to integrate in the community, in the Church and in the society.

When some young people from your community go on a mission, they being "sent" is marked in a local celebration.

**a) The Director:** Encourages those responsible for Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation, and in particular the Local Volunteer Reference person, to promote the SMV in their community and to involve the Salesian community and the EPC in the knowledge and accompaniment and in the welcome and hospitality of the volunteers

**b) The Local Responsible of the SMV:** could be a Salesian or lay person of the EPC suitable for the accompaniment of the candidates. Normally it is the Delegate of the local Youth Ministry, who also assumes the Missionary Animation. It is important that this reference person exists for the SMV, even if it can be, in any case, the same director. The reference person is attentive to some aspects:

Promotes volunteering in the work and in the territory. In communion with other educational agencies, He is a spokesperson for this dimension in all youth environments and encourages young people to take an interest in volunteering.

- He favors the community experience of volunteers and candidates, inserting them into the Salesian family environment, offering them the opportunity of a gradual and greater commitment in the community and in the territory and offering spaces and times of participation and co-responsibility within the EPC.
- Accompanies and forms systematically the group of "pre-volunteers" or candidates to the SMV in a group and personal way. The group of candidates can sometimes be formed with young people from various Salesian houses geographically nearby.
- Establishes contact with the families of the young candidates, accompanying them and involving them in the choices of the young people.
- Assists the candidates to develop their personal life project and guide them vocationally, indicating to them the diversity of vocations in the Salesian Family.
- Works in communion with the Provincial Volunteer Reference Person and his team, maintaining a smooth communication and coordinated action in the selection and training of the candidates.
- accompanies fraternally the volunteers who return from their mission, helping them to their insertion into ordinary life, integrating them into the life and pastoral animation, particularly in the SMV and the missionary animation, being able to assume the formation and the accompaniment of the new volunteers.

## **1.2 In the Provincial level**

### **a) The Provincial**

The Provincial with his Provincial Council is the first person in charge of Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation in the Province and, therefore, also of Salesian missionary volunteers. It is the responsibility of the Provincial, as head of the provincial community, to send the missionary volunteers to their missionary service and to accept those sent from other provinces. He and his Council assume responsibility to;

- Help the brothers and the communities to recognize the importance of volunteering for the Salesian mission.
- Implement a SMV provincial project according to Provincial SEPP.
- Approve a directory of the SMV.
- Indicate a person responsible for provincial missionary volunteering and the SMV.
- Ensure the necessary financial support.
- Conclude the discernment of sending or receiving an international volunteer.
- Get in touch with the other Provincials who welcome volunteers from his province.
- Ensure the serene integration and local insertion of the volunteer on the return from his/her mission.
- Carry out the act of missionary sending of the SMV in the context of a Eucharist.



## **b) The Provincial Plan of Salesian Missionary Volunteering:**

The project that is in full harmony with the OPP and Provincial SEPP, must:

- Expresses clearly the objectives pursued by the SMV in the province.
- Identifies those responsible for the SMV and their functions: Provincial, directors, local reference persons, responsible on a provincial, and the provincial team.
- Clarifies the volunteer profile and criteria for selection discernment.
- Indicates the itineraries and training contents, methodologies, competencies and experiences.
- Ensures accompaniment before, during and after the mission.
- Implements a directory that indicates practical elements for carrying out the volunteer service: legal, economic, logistical aspects, code of conduct

## **c) The Responsible on a Provincial level of the SMV:**

The figure of the head of the SMV is fundamental. It is the reference person placed by the Provincial for the animation of the Provincial Voluntary Service and particularly the SMV. Normally it is the Provincial Delegate of the Missionary Animation (DIAM).

Forms a Commission of animation of the SMV, normally integrated by ex-volunteers. It is a commission that works within the Missionary Animation. Participates actively in the Provincial Youth Ministry Team. In this way, he interacts with the other Provincial commissions and delegations: such as associations (SYM), schools, universities, youth centers, social services, parishes, Salesian Family, social communication, and the Salesian NGOs. Some of the competences are:

- To Promote SMV, he
  - Animates the Salesians, the EPCs and the various Commissions within the Youth Ministry Team, especially the SYM, motivating the importance of SMV and making known its identity and specificity.
  - Maintains close cooperation with the missionary groups of the province.
  - Contacts the volunteers and candidates of the Salesian communities and the NGO's of the province dedicated to the promotion of volunteerism, accompanying them in their process of discernment and formation.
  - Maintains relations of communication and collaboration with Salesian NGOs, civil and ecclesial voluntary organizations.
  - In collaboration with the Delegation of Social Communication announces the volunteer project. It is recommended a site for the SMV of the province.
- To take care of the formation and the accompaniment of the SMV
  - Implements a provincial training plan for volunteering;
  - Accompanies the selection and preparation of volunteers;
  - Organizes brief volunteer experiences (solidarity holidays, Easter missions, Christmas or vacations in general) as for a more committed service.
  - Accompanies volunteers when they start their service; keeps in touch with them and visits them when possible.
  - On the return of the volunteer mission, he accompanies the delicate moment of reintegration into the community of origin, the elaboration of his project of life and vocation and his insertion into ecclesial and social life.

- Sailing, according to the directory, of the various legal, logistical and economic aspects of the mission.
- Coordinates volunteering at the provincial level
  - Encourages and coordinates the local referents of volunteers in general and the SMV in particular, who are usually the local Youth Ministry coordinators.
  - It is the provincial and unit reference point for volunteers and voluntary organizations.
  - Visits the communities where volunteers are prepared (pre-volunteers).
  - Maintains communication with volunteer destinations and with local partners, particularly with the one responsible for volunteering, of the destined province.
  - He is part of the Youth Ministry team of the province, and maintains contacts with the Social Communication and Salesian Family.
  - Prepares the Provincial celebration of the missionary expedition
  - Regularly reports to the Provincial and his council about the activities of the SMV.
  - Takes care of the updated file of the candidates, the volunteers and ex-volunteers, as well as the evaluations of the experiences, so as to guarantee continuity and document the experiences.
  - He favors the insertion of the ex-volunteers in the teams of animation of the SMV, supporting the experiences of volunteering, collaborating in the formation of new volunteers and spreading the culture of volunteering.

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- Promote pre-volunteer missionaries groups within the various groups in the local communities.
- Indicate the Local Youth Ministry Coordinator as Local Reference person for volunteers in general and for SMV.
- Involve the families of the SMV candidates.
- The Local Reference person should see to the formation and accompaniment of the volunteers before, during and after the mission.
- That the Provincial implement a provincial plan and a directory for the SMV.
- The Provincial is the one who concludes the discernment and receives or sends the SMV to other provinces or countries.
- Indicates to the Delegate of the Missionary Animation (DIAM) as Provincial Responsible for volunteering and the SMV, possessing sufficient time to develop its mission of organization, formation, accompaniment and sending of the SMV.
- The Provincial Responsible of the SMV, form the commission of the SMV belonging to the Youth Ministry Team.
- Establishes at provincial, national, regional and global levels a database of candidates for volunteering, ex-volunteers and places where they are requested

## 2. Salesian Missionary Volunteering and NGOs

Among the various forms of organization of Salesian volunteers, there are Salesian NGOs that promote Salesian volunteerism in the social, international and missionary context. These Salesian NGOs are non-profit associations, recognized in the civil society and they promote social justice, equity, development and safeguarding of the human rights, without institutional links with governments and their policies. They work with professionally and through timely projects, try to respond to the urgencies of society with effectiveness.

NGOs operating in the Salesian mission have developed and played an important role in the promotion, formation and sending of volunteers.

As experiences and approaches of NGOs and Volunteering are different and complex, a general uniformity is not possible. This implies finding for each case the most appropriate articulation with the Salesian Youth Ministry and the Province-level Missionary Animation, which respects the identity and mission of the NGO on the one hand and on the other the charismatic identity, structure and organization of the Salesian Youth Ministry.

### 2.1 Types of NGO

The typologies are useful to understand better so as to articulate volunteering, the Youth Ministry, the Missionary Animation and NGOs. We can distinguish at least three types of NGOs.

- **Institutionally Salesian NGOs**, that is, those that belong fully to the Salesian Congregation and are institutionally integrated into it. Their statutes, identity, policies and decisions are fully in consonance with SEPP and OPP, and are animated and governed by the province, or by a group of Salesian Provinces. The Provincial, or group of Provincials and whom he / they delegate, is finally responsible for the organization and its policies.
- **Salesian-inspired NGOs**: These are those inspired by the figure and mission of Don Bosco and seek to support the Salesian mission. These organizations are autonomous to the jurisdiction of the provinces. On a case by case basis, according to their statutes, they will be more or less institutionally linked to the province or to the group of Salesian Provinces. They usually have their executive direction and assemblies made up of laypersons. The presence of Salesians in these NGOs is usually related to the charismatic counseling and accompaniment, but not always to decisions and government.
- **NGOs that collaborate with the Salesian mission**: They are those organizations of great variety that, depending on the case, find points of collaboration with the Salesian mission: In education, professional formation, marginality, migration, human promotion in general and evangelization. These organizations are completely autonomous to the Salesian organization.

### 2.2 Opportunities of NGOs in the Salesian mission

NGOs have characteristics that enrich, complement and strengthen the Salesian mission.

- They present the civic and secular face of the Salesian values of education and promote the cause of the most needy young people to civil society, governments and various realities of cooperation.
- Give greater visibility to the "Work of Don Bosco" in the world.
- Collect public and private funds to support and develop the Salesian mission.

- They disseminate the culture of solidarity, globalization and interculturality, promote human rights, social justice and development in areas and forums where the Salesians of Don Bosco are not normally present.
- Many lay people are involved in the Salesian mission, particularly in the areas of human promotion.
- They offer greater professionalism and efficiency to the educational and human promotion interventions, providing a better projection, a more orderly, efficient and transparent administration.
- They are a great help to the PDO (Project Development Office) offering technical projection and professional advice.
- They promote national and international volunteer work, both at the Provincial level and outside, by organizing volunteers, training them, accompanying them and sending them to the frontier posts of the Salesian mission.

Together with the rich contribution of NGOs to the Salesian mission, sometimes there are also some difficulties to be avoided.

- Sometimes, by introducing organizational and professional criteria, which are valid in themselves, they can gradually override the Salesian charismatic and pastoral criteria in the projection and implementation of the projects.
- In relation to volunteering, there is a risk, if there is not a proper articulation with the Salesian Province, that parallel structures and criteria are created which diverge from Youth Ministry in relation to volunteering. In this way, there is a risk of sending volunteers who are not very well identified with the Salesian mission and with little reintegration into the Salesian reality of origin, after the return of the volunteer experience.
- At times, there may be some ambivalence or terminological confusion about what is meant by volunteering. It can be mistaken for cooperation, civil service, internship, cultural exchange, solidarity tourism, a training experience, or other forms of sending young people and professionals to the Salesian mission.

## 2.3 NGOs and SMV

It is essential that every NGO develops a volunteer program. Such volunteering can have different characteristics, depending on the cultural context, recipients and identity of the NGO, which does not necessarily identify with the SMV. Such programs enjoy a clear autonomy vis-à-vis the Salesian Youth Ministry. The volunteers identified and trained can be sent by the NGO where they find it most appropriate, including the Salesian presence in common agreement with the provinces that receive them. It will depend on the typology and identity of the volunteer organization, being able to identify the modalities and criteria for selection, training for such sending. It is desirable, even though there are different types of "volunteers", to ensure a just autonomy, a fruitful collaboration between the NGOs and the Salesian Youth Ministry in the country of origin and reception, through the person responsible for Provincial Missionary Volunteering.

The Salesian missionary volunteer (SMV) is sent by a home province, usually to a Salesian presence, in agreement with another province or groups of provinces. There is a community that sends and another that receives, that is, a Provincial-level Council that discerns the sending and another that discerns the reception. The selection process and training can be perfectly carried out by one of the Salesian NGOs operating in the province, but should follow the criteria of selection, suitability and training according to the provincial guidelines and options of the SMV Provincial Project. The implementation and accompaniment is coordinated by the person responsible for Provincial volunteering, who in dialogue with the NGOs collaborates in the process.

The sending of the SMV is officially carried out by the Provincial, or whom he delegates, as a sign of the mission and communion among the provinces.

On the other hand the SMV prepared by an NGO, will be fully inserted in the voluntary project of the Province that welcomes him/her, having as the main reference the person responsible for Provincial missionary volunteering, and the local directors.

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Promote Salesian NGOs as a charismatic and supportive presence in the civil field.

- The Salesian NGOs and the Provincial Responsible for the SMV, work in a coordinated way with regard to volunteering.
- Salesian NGOs seek, as far as possible, to propose the SMV in their organization of Volunteers.
- When a Salesian NGO organizes the SMV, the process is done in a coordinated way with the person responsible for Provincial Missionary Volunteering, following the criteria and formative processes according to the province's volunteer project.
- The final judgment on the suitability of the SMV candidates, for their sending, is the responsibility of the Provincial.

## **3. The Community that welcomes**

The structure and organisation of the community that receives or hosts volunteers, should follow the same structure of the sending communities.

The religious community and the EPC that receives the volunteers must be duly informed, consulted and prepared for their reception.

The Salesian community accompanies the volunteers who offer a service to the work, taking care of their formation, making them participants in the life of the community and guiding them in the service of educational and apostolic responsibilities.

### **3.1 The director as the first local companion**

The director must be aware that the volunteer is a valuable collaborator for the mission, but he is also the beneficiary of the mission. Thus:

- Paternally accompanies in a direct manner the volunteer's mission experience, possibly with the help of a local reference person.
- Present the volunteer to the EPC and integrate him/her into their work and dynamics.
- Have a colloquium with the volunteer at least once in a month.
- Takes good care of the physical, psychological and spiritual health of the young missionary.
- Cares for the physical, psychological and spiritual health of the young missionary.

### **3.2 The Salesian Provincial**

The Provincial with his Council and in dialogue with the one responsible for the volunteers at the Province level, analyzes the volunteer candidates who request to come to the province. After studying the CV and profile of the candidate, and the service that the province needs, the provincial decides whether to invite or not to invite the candidate, to the province.

### 3.3 The Provincial Plan for SMV

As already said above, the community that receives volunteers has exactly a similar project that governs the local and international SMV. The Project should:

- Express clearly the objectives pursued by the SMV in the province.
- Identify those responsible for the SMV and their functions: Provincial, Rectors/Directors, local reference persons, those responsible on a provincial level, provincial team.
- Clarify the profile of a volunteer and criteria for selection discernment.
- Indicate the itineraries and training contents, methodologies, competencies and experiences.
- Ensure to assist and accompany the volunteer and the mission.
- Publish a directory that indicates practical guidelines for carrying out the volunteer service: Legal, economic, logistics and code of conduct.

### 3.4 The Person responsible for the Provincial Missionary Volunteering and his team

The person responsible for the volunteers at the Provincial level is a figure of great importance as he is to be the point of reference for the volunteers. He should possess human qualities that inspire confidence.

- Maintains a smooth and regular communication with the community or the organization that sent the Volunteer.
- Maintains a fraternal accompaniment and friendship with the volunteers.
- In view of their formation, at least twice in a year, organizes Spiritual exercises, Living-In experiences and sharing of experiences for about 3 to 6 days.
- Visits the Volunteers regularly in their communities to meet them and also to resolve difficulties and irregularities, if there are any.
- Maintains personal contact with them through the social media.
- Prepares a written evaluation of the experience of the volunteers to present to the Provincial Council and to the community of origin.
- Attends to the legal procedures for the volunteer to stay in the country (as per the documents required)
- Be attentive and available to solve the health problems of the volunteers.

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- The Provincial with his Council is the first person responsible for accepting volunteers from abroad in general and SMV to his province.
- The Provincial appoints a person responsible on a provincial level of the SMV, for the previous contacts of the arrival of external volunteers and also to analyze if their profile corresponds to the needs of the mission.
- The person responsible on a provincial level of the SMV helps volunteers to integrate into a community. He gives them the necessary information and communication, as well as material to better understand the local culture and situation. Assists them with his accompaniment.

- The person responsible on a provincial level of the SMV organizes the spiritual exercises for the SMV, formative meetings and living-in experience at the provincial or national level.
- The local director, as the main local companion of the volunteer, has a conversation with the volunteer at least once a month; and attends to his physical, psychological and spiritual health.

## 4. Some practical aspects

Without the pretension of dealing with everything in these practical aspects, as juridical, logistical and economic, it seems opportune to give at least some indications originating from diverse experiences.

Many of these aspects and others may be included in a **directory** for volunteering, to consider the profile, age, length of stay, modalities of reception of volunteers in Salesian presences.

### 4.2 Legal aspects

Some important aspects to keep in mind are:

- An **agreement** between the province that receives the SMV and the province that sends. This agreement establishes the duties and rights of the volunteer; indicates precisely the activities and functions he/she will carry out in the mission, moments of formation and rest, the reference persons. Certain basic norms of living in the mission are established.
- An **agreement between the volunteer and the province** that sends him/her, indicating their status as a volunteer and assuming the responsibilities and risks of such an option. Such an agreement must be ratified legally under local law.
- **Authorization of parents**, particularly considering the diversity of legislation.
- A clearly explained and accepted **code of conduct**. In it must appear the subject of the protection of the minors; respect and affective maturity in relation to lay collaborators and beneficiaries, criteria on the use of mission instruments (means of transport, etc.); on the forms of behavior in the culture in which they are integrated; reasons for which, at the initiative of the receiving community, the volunteer service could be concluded. In the formation, the volunteers study the code of conduct of the province that sends them and of the one that receives them.

### 4.2 Economic and logistical aspects

- An important principle is that the SMV is at the same time a collaborator of the mission and a recipient, who deserves attention and material and spiritual care.
- Another important principle is that a fully subsidized volunteer does not help to create dynamics of gratuity, generosity, sacrifice and participation. For this reason and depending on the cases, the costs of volunteering will have to be shared between the sending community, the receiving community and the volunteer him/herself. Everyone should generously place his/her share.

- Complete uniformity between the local SMV and the one coming from the outside is necessary. Both receive the same treatment and the same support subsidies.
- The lifestyle of the missionary volunteer is marked by simplicity and austerity, so that everything that is superfluous should be avoided in the context where it is found, giving a witness of communion of life with the people where it is lived out.
- Health insurance is assumed by the sending community. It is important to clarify how to implement it in case of need (identified assistance places, modalities), particularly in countries with health problems.
- The documentation, visas, are assumed by the sending community and/or the volunteer.
- The costs of the trip to the place where the service is offered is assumed by the sending community and/or the volunteer.
- Internal transportation costs due to the mission's service are borne by the host community.
- The host community assumes the expenses of food and lodging, ordinary health care and other normal ordinary expenses, as if the SMV was an additional Salesian in the community.
- On regular monetary expenses, the local SMV directory will set the reasonable amount according to the reality of the local communities.
- In the event that a missionary volunteer receives any money for a social project or service on the project, or a grant, he/she must put it into the common volunteer fund for the expenses of the volunteer community or be handed over to the Salesian director of the work. If necessary, this practice should be legally implemented.
- Volunteers not coming from the SMV or young people performing the civil service, or cultural exchange may, if they wish, pool their support grants, entering into the dynamic of the SMV.
- Training costs: retreats, community experiences, training of SMV are the responsibility of the host community. This particularly touches on the national or regional SMV meetings.
- The accommodation of the volunteers in the Salesian presence cannot be improvised; depending on the profile of the volunteer (man, woman, single, married couple, with or without children), number of volunteers, vocational process of the volunteer, etc ... The Provincial responsible with the local director and his council shall offer the necessary conditions.
- Regarding accommodation, consider the delicate and prudent reception of volunteers, taking into account the identity of the religious community and public testimony with caution.



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- All SMV, local and foreign, be treated with the same care and attention.
- The sending province, in agreement with the volunteer, assumes travel expenses, medical insurance and documentation.
- The community that receives receives the expenses of lodging, food and ordinary subsidies.
- The host community takes care of the formation of their SMV, sending them to the previously scheduled national or provincial meetings.
- The SMV money for some projects or services will be entered into the volunteers' common fund or delivered to the rector of the Salesian community.
- The lodgings of SMV express dignity and their living is marked by fraternity, according to one's personal characteristics.
- Receive volunteers from the SMV in the Salesian presence with paternal welcome and a balanced prudence, with the modality of accommodation, proper to the Religious Life.
- Make an agreement between the Province that receives and the Province that sends the SMV clarifying the functions and services that will realize the volunteer, as well as the rights and duties that correspond to him/her.
- At the local level, a legal agreement is concluded between the Province and the volunteer that is sent.
- Provide the SMV code of conduct to volunteers. Foreigners must receive it before coming to the country or province.

## 5. Animation of SMV at Inter-provincial and world level

### 5.1 Regional or National Animation

Provincial leaders of the SMV of a nation or a group of provinces seek to agree on a common plan, unifying criteria and collaborating in the formation of SMV, sharing information, subsidies, itineraries, experiences, good practices.

It is very useful to create a database of ex-volunteers and volunteers on mission, supply and demand of places to volunteer indicating the competencies and profiles required.

At regional or national level, missionary congresses, inter-provincial voluntary meetings, an exchange of volunteers in the same region and even a common sending of the same can be organized.

This activity can be coordinated by a Salesian indicated by the conference of the Provinces or Region, or the Regional Coordinator of Missionary Animation (CORAM).

## 5.2 At the World level

The promotion and animation of volunteering at the level of the Congregation is a shared responsibility between the Department for Youth Ministry and the Department for the Missions, making available their respective reference persons. They have as task:

- To follow the development of Salesian volunteers, in their various forms, particularly the SMV.
  - Help the Provinces to have a natural link between volunteer work, Youth Ministry and Missionary Animation.
  - Help the Provinces to know and apply the present document on the SMV and other orientations of the Congregation in relation to volunteering in the Salesian mission.
  - Encourage reflection and study on volunteering in the provinces.
  - Coordinate the various realities and organizations in the Provinces and Regions and the Salesian NGOs that promote volunteering.
  - Take special care of the quality of volunteer training proposals.
  - Encourage the creation of a database of the Congregation, both volunteers and volunteer places.
  - Promote with special attention the volunteers specifically *ad exteros*.
  - Encourage each province to have its own local SMV organization.
  - Encourage the Regions or group of Provinces to coordinate initiatives in favour of volunteering (training, sending, exchange).
  - Seek economic support for the promotion of volunteering, through appropriate projects.
  - Give visibility and interact with the Social Communication, so as to make known the good practices of volunteering, its challenges, its realizations, its consequences in the different contexts, in order to promote it.
  - Serve as a "bridge" between the provinces that prepare volunteers and the provinces prepared to host them.
  - Interact with other ecclesial and civil voluntary organizations in the international arena.
-