Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation.

Young volunteers in Mumbai, India are leading the fight against Hepatitis B. More than 9,000 college students and others are stepping up to be trained as volunteer health educators, and in turn educating some 1.2 million people about hepatitis infections. In the last three years, students have gone into Mumbai’s toughest neighborhoods to test more than 10,000 people and vaccinate nearly 9,000. Nonprofits, health educators, academics and the government are working together, but it’s volunteers who are fueling this critical work. United Way Mumbai aims to expand its health education and awareness program to 2 million people by fall 2014. With 40 million people in India suffering from Hepatitis B, it’s literally a fight for the future.

Grand Rapids, Michigan is a 21-hour flight from Mumbai, but people here are leading a fight for the future, too. Some 500 volunteers – including students and retirees – spend 30 minutes a week tutoring 450 struggling elementary school children from the poorest neighborhoods. And it’s paying off: kids being tutored are showing stronger reading skills. Research shows that kids who read well by 3rd grade are 95% more likely to graduate high school.

In small towns and big cities around the world, people from all walks of life are giving their time and working in extraordinary new ways to drive solutions. While U.S. volunteer rates are declining, United Way, the world’s largest privately-funded nonprofit, is seeing a dramatic increase in volunteering – with more than double the rate of growth in volunteers compared to the U.S. overall.
UNITED WAY VOLUNTEERING GROWTH RATE OUTPACES U.S.

A survey of 74 U.S. and international United Way CEOs, conducted by United Way Worldwide’s research team in May 2014, found three key insights:

• United Ways in the U.S. are seeing a bigger increase in the growth rate of volunteering than the nation as a whole.

• There’s a gap between what most volunteers are doing and the kind of volunteer activities United Way leaders say is most needed in building stronger communities.

• The role of businesses, schools and faith institutions in engaging volunteers has great potential for solving community challenges, community leaders say.

America’s volunteer rate is at its lowest point since the federal government started collecting data 12 years ago, down from 27.5% in 2002 to 25.4% in 2013. Despite the declining proportion of people volunteering, population growth still translated into a 9% gain in actual volunteers from 2002 through 2012. Over the same time period, however, United Way saw a 23.8% increase in volunteers.  (See Table 1 in Survey Panel Findings.)

Moreover, 73% of a global panel of United Way CEOs predict volunteering will continue to rise in the next year.

Why is United Way seeing so many more volunteers and a dramatically bigger rate of volunteer growth?

These results are a reflection of United Way’s unique role in bringing people together to create community solutions that drive lasting change around the world. United Way is the only nonprofit in most communities that focuses on the three cornerstones of education, financial stability and health – the foundation of individual and collective success.

While other nonprofits may focus on a single issue, United Way seeks measurable community outcomes in the inter-connected issues of education, income and health. Volunteers who engage with United Way recognize that it takes multi-faceted, coordinated efforts to solve community problems.
With more than 2.6 million volunteers and 9.3 million donors worldwide, and more than $5 billion raised every year, United Way is working in nearly 1,800 communities across 41 countries and territories to create community solutions that improve life for everyone.

Across the world, United Way partners include global, national and local businesses, nonprofits, civic and faith organizations, as well as educators, labor, health organizations, government and more. United Way believes no single sector can solve community problems alone, and recruits people with the passion, expertise and resources needed to make real change. The end game is stronger communities that offer opportunity for all: long-lasting change that goes beyond short-term charity.

**UNITED WAY DAY OF ACTION**

The breadth and depth of United Way's impact is on display every year on June 21, the organization's annual volunteer Day of Action. On this day, hundreds of United Ways across the world bring thousands of volunteers together in a worldwide effort to improve people's lives and strengthen communities. This year, some 270 United Ways in all 50 states and 8 countries are mobilizing volunteers for projects focused on education, income and health.

This event alone has brought ever-more volunteers together. In 2009, United Way had engaged 488,000 volunteers in its Days of Action, but by 2012 more than 657,000 volunteers had been engaged in the U.S. – an increase of 34%.

Volunteers are collecting books and school supplies for kids who don't have any, building community gardens and playgrounds in the poorest neighborhoods, and offering financial counseling and other support to help people get on more solid financial ground. (Learn more at www.unitedway.org/dayofaction)

When that volunteer effort is part of a broader community change strategy (often led or powered by United Way), people accept the invitation to become a part of lasting, local solutions. The result is a ripple of positive change that lifts up all segments of society.

For example, with volunteers and corporate support, United Way Nigeria used its Day of Action project last year to launch environmental improvements that are bettering health in the struggling community of Ijora. Abandoned community water taps were rehabilitated and 3,000-gallon water tanks were installed to provide free potable water to over 800 residents. Volunteers cleaned trash from blocked drains and gutters, giving free flow to sewage and run-off water and helping reduce the outbreak and spread of diseases.
MENTORING AND TUTORING MATTER MOST

Day of Action is a significant opportunity to engage more people in the mission of community change, but United Way encourages a long-term commitment to volunteering.

The act of volunteering that yields the most lasting results for individuals and communities, according to 89% of United Way CEOs, is spending time as a mentor – providing support and encouragement for struggling young people. Research shows that the right mentoring match (over at least one year) can help youth see their path forward in school, work and life more clearly. But only 7% of American volunteers’ main activities revolved around mentoring last year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Tutoring and teaching struggling students is also critical, according to 62% of the United Way CEOs. That one-on-one academic help, supported by teachers and a solid curriculum, can help students build their skills. Last year, 10% of volunteer activity was related to tutoring or teaching, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Other top volunteer activities include: collecting, preparing, distributing or serving food, 11%, fundraising, 10%, general labor or transportation, 8%, serving on boards, 7%.

Nationally, United Way has been working to recruit volunteer readers, tutors and mentors for struggling students. So far, more than 307,000 people have signed up at www.unitedway.org/volunteer.

United Way of San Diego County has worked with 74 partner agencies to recruit 5,000 volunteer readers, tutors and mentors as part of its Volunteer Challenge. Elementary school children who have been part of the community-wide initiative are doing better in reading, math and science. Volunteers are taking part in innovative approaches, like “speed mentoring” sessions with teens after school. United Way volunteers from local businesses coach youth in developing interview skills and soft skills, such as direct eye contact and firm handshakes, and offer tips for the college application process.

San Diego County Credit Union’s Melissa Watkins signed up to help with mock interviews. She interviewed Diego, one of six young people in her group, and was so impressed with him that she set up a real interview with SDCCU. In less than a month, SDCCU had a new employee.

On the other side of the world, United Way Australia has brought together more than 3,000 volunteers to fuel improvements in education. That includes helping more than 200 children in Melbourne and Sydney enter school ready to learn, partnering with seven schools to improve the quality of career training for students and providing more than 500 youth access to mental health services in the innovative form of art therapy.

Volunteering and Civic Life in America, an annual research report issued by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the National Conference on Citizenship, estimated that Americans volunteered nearly 7.9 billion hours in 2012. The estimated value of this volunteer service is nearly $175 billion, based on the Independent Sector’s estimate of the average value of a volunteer hour. Volunteers are almost twice as likely to donate to charity as non-volunteers. Eight in 10 (79.2%) volunteers donated to charity, compared to four in 10 (40.4%) non-volunteers. Overall, half of all citizens (50.7%) donated at least $25 to charity in 2012. (See more at www.volunteeringinamerica.gov)
BUSINESS, SCHOOLS AND FAITH COMMUNITIES CAN UP THE GAME

Businesses, schools (including universities) and faith institutions have the potential to significantly boost volunteering and build stronger communities. Some 61% of United Way CEOs say local employers are the best source for boosting volunteering and creating opportunities at a scale where communities actually improve.

United Way community leaders say their corporate partners support employee volunteering because “it’s good for company reputation” and “it helps employee productivity/retention/morale.” According to United Way leaders, corporate partners also see volunteering as “part of the company culture” and “good for the community.”

The question that United Ways must consider is how to make it easy for employers to get their employees more plugged into volunteer opportunities. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, top-down requests from employers are less effective than volunteer requests from co-workers or from people within the volunteer organizations. People are about as likely to become involved with a volunteer organization through personal outreach and exploration as through someone asking them to get involved. Yet of those being asked to volunteer, 9 out of 10 will become a regular volunteer when asked by a relative, friend or someone in the volunteer organization. Businesses should take note about how best to facilitate a connection between their employees and an organization where they can become a regular volunteer.

There’s also the question of meeting people where they are, and taking full advantage of all the skills and experience volunteers have to offer. The Volunteering in the United States survey says “providing professional or management assistance, including serving on a board or committee” is the second most popular form of volunteering for Americans over 55. As Forbes said in a recent column, this suggests “revving up” skills-based volunteering. “Fortunately, nonprofits and government agencies are starting to get it,” Forbes wrote, citing efforts by the United Way for Southeastern Michigan in Detroit. “They’re increasingly targeting boomers with what’s known as ‘skills-based volunteering,’ opportunities whose jobs are valued at $40 to $500 an hour, far more than traditional volunteering’s $18 to $20 an hour, according to a blog post by Emily Ferstle of United Way for Southeastern Michigan.”
According to The State of Health of Corporate Volunteering, an international snapshot compiled by the International Association for Volunteer Effort, companies across the globe are increasingly seeking to focus their volunteer efforts on specific priorities, leveraging all of their resources – human, financial, in-kind and relational – to maximize their impact across a broad range of human, social and environmental problems.

An inspiring example of cross-sector collaboration can be found in Memphis, Tennessee. United Way of the Mid-South partnered with Memphis City Schools to create “Team Read,” pairing reading volunteers with 2nd graders. United Way recruited volunteers through corporate partners like FedEx, whose global corporate headquarters is based in Memphis. FedEx provided volunteer tutors for one hour a week over 22 weeks, and contributed financially for desks, chairs and other student supplies. After seeing improvements in tutored students’ standardized test scores at the pilot school, Team Read was expanded to 13 additional elementary schools.

Fed Ex, one of United Way’s 100+ global partner companies, is among The Civic 50. That’s an effort by the Points of Light Foundation to identify the 50 most community-minded companies in the nation. Last year, more than a third of the companies featured in the Civic 50 were United Way corporate partners.

Across the world, corporations are seeing non-profit partners as great sources for expertise that can guide corporate involvement. That includes opportunities for corporate volunteers to put their personal and professional skills to work in the most impactful way, according to The State of Health of Corporate Volunteering.

The report notes: “Many companies are seeking global partners that align with their company-wide focus areas and that can both guide and support their volunteer engagement on a relatively larger scale. At the country and community levels, they seek to partner with NGOs that bring expertise about needs, culture, acceptable roles for volunteers and opportunities for involvement. NGOs also may take on volunteer program management responsibilities that companies want to outsource.”

Increasingly, companies and NGOs are moving toward “transformational partnerships” in which they work together intimately and comprehensively to achieve shared objectives through a mutual sharing of people, expertise, learning and resources. As the value of the partnerships grows, companies are willing to invest in capacity building for their partner NGOs.

– The State of Health of Corporate Volunteering, 2011
SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS ROCK!

In the United Way Worldwide survey, some 50% of the United Way CEOs pointed to educational institutions as crucial players in the effort to scale up volunteerism. Today, Student United Ways operate on 80 campuses across the United States, Australia, Canada and India, including technical and trade schools, junior and community colleges, colleges and universities, and several high schools.

Many students take part in United Way’s annual Alternative Spring Break Program, with collaborations between United Way and partners like Deloitte, MTV and Participant Media helping students give back during their spring break. Since the program’s inception, over 3,500 students have traded in their swimsuits for tool belts and participated in Alternative Spring Break in dozens of communities across the country, contributing more than 112,000 hours of volunteer service.

The volunteerism of young people in Mumbai, Grand Rapids and Student United Ways is an indicator of a positive trend among youth. Millennials are more likely to be civically engaged than their immediate predecessors, Generation X, based on voting turnout and volunteer rates. Youth volunteer rates are higher in the 2000’s than in the 1990’s. And compared to Baby Boomers when they were young adults, Millennials are more likely to volunteer, according to the National Conference on Citizenship.

FAITH COMMUNITIES AND VOLUNTEERING

United Way CEOs also see faith communities as great allies in strategic volunteering and community improvement. Some 43% pointed to religious communities as strong partners in this area.

This follows a U.S. trend. A third of Americans volunteer most of their hours through their faith communities, more so for older volunteers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “[o]f volunteers age 65 and over, 42.9% did their service mainly through or for a religious organization, compared with 26.8% of volunteers age 16 to 24.”

One trend to keep an eye on, therefore, may be regular religious attendance. As religious attendance has been slowing somewhat over the decades, might there be a corresponding downward pressure on volunteering, too?
Nearly four in 10 Americans tell Gallup that they attended religious services in the past seven days. Americans’ report of their weekly church attendance has varied over the years, but it is close now to where it was between 1940 and 1950.

**WOMEN VOLUNTEER MORE THAN MEN**

Women continue to volunteer more than men, across all demographic divides, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service and the National Conference on Citizenship.

Working mothers continue to volunteer at a significantly higher rate than the population as a whole. The volunteer rate of parents with children under age 18 (33.5%) remained higher than the population as a whole (26.5%) and for persons without children (23.8%).
This data affirms United Way’s experience with its Women’s Leadership Council, a global network of women working to strengthen local communities by giving, advocating and volunteering. The 12-year old network now includes more than 55,000 volunteer women leaders in 143 communities worldwide.

Created and led by women, the United Way Women’s Leadership Council has become one of the most successful philanthropic efforts of its kind. Members have given more than $1 billion to United Way and often become personally involved in the strategies their financial support funds.

The United Way Women’s Leadership Council’s unique size and shared commitment enables the network to drive change at a bigger scale. While each local Women’s Leadership Council sets its own community-level agenda, more than 75% advocate for improved education outcomes for young people. These women are moving the needle in areas like school readiness, academic achievement and greater parental engagement.

In Asheville, North Carolina, the Women’s Leadership Council is a new undertaking for the United Way of Asheville-Buncombe County. Organized around United Way’s impact initiative, Middle School Success, this Women’s Leadership Council is focused on creating success-ready 9th graders by improving the quality and quantity of learning opportunities for middle school students outside the classroom. Volunteers have stuffed hundreds of backpacks with school supplies and wrapped a warehouse full of books as holiday gifts. Some are mentoring middle school girls. Others are getting trained to evaluate after-school programs. And the group is also helping launch an early warning system, to help kids get back on track after the first “red flag.”

* * *

Good start, right direction, more to do. That’s the takeaway when United Way looks at its current state of volunteerism.

An unprecedented number of people are now engaged in meaningful acts of volunteering that go beyond short-term charity to drive lasting change, by focusing on the cornerstones of education, financial stability and health. And the numbers of committed volunteers continue to rise.

While United Way is uniquely positioned to drive community solutions across the world, the research, data and stories in this report serve as a reminder. United Way must continue to engage ever more people in community solutions – and to continue to tap into people’s passions, skills and expertise as a way to change the world.
**OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS**

- The rate of volunteering in the United States has been ebbing slowly since 2002, when 27.5% of the population 16 and over volunteered. The latest figures show the rate at 25.4% in 2013.

- Across the world the story and method of measurement varies. In Canada, the rate of volunteering is inching upward from 45% in 2004 to 47% by 2010. In Australia’s measure of volunteering, the rate has also increased from 32% in 2000 to 35% in 2006.\(^viii\)

- United Way leaders report a more favorable picture – the number of people volunteering through United Way is up:
  
  - When looking at both direct volunteers and through community referrals, the number is up from 2.32 million in 2006 to 2.67 million in 2012, a 15.1% increase compared to 5.4% over the same time for all U.S. volunteers.
  
  - When just looking at direct volunteers to United Ways, the increase is also higher than the national rate – 23.8% growth for United Way vs. 9.0% for the U.S.

**TABLE 1. U.S. Volunteers and United Way Volunteers (direct and through partner referrals)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>United States Volunteers</th>
<th>United Way Volunteers (Direct and through Referrals)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COUNT</td>
<td>VOLUNTEER RATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>61,199,000</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>64,512,846</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>62,615,000</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change 2006–2012</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
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</table>

**TABLE 2. U.S. Volunteers and Direct United Way Volunteers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>United States Volunteers</th>
<th>United Way Volunteers (Direct)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COUNT</td>
<td>VOLUNTEER RATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>59,163,000</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>64,512,846</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>62,615,000</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change 2002–2012</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Volunteering in the Future

Thinking about your community in general, do you anticipate volunteering will increase, decrease, or stay about the same in the near future?

(Respondents could only choose a single response)

- Three quarters (73%) of CEO panelists predicted volunteering will increase in the near term. Most of the remainder felt volunteering would hold steady.

2. Volunteer Types Most Needed

What types of volunteer activities are the most needed in your community? Please select your top three from the types listed below.

(Respondents were required to select their top three) •

- Mentor Youth: 89%
- Provide Professional Management Assistance, Including Serving on a Board or Committee: 65%
- Tutor or Teach: 62%
- Fundraise or Sell Items to Raise Money: 42%
- Engage in General Labor or Supply Transportation to People: 22%
- Collect, Prepare, Distribute or Serve Food: 20%
• 89% of panelists identified mentoring youth as the most needed. Selected by almost two-thirds of leaders were professional management assistance, including serving on a board or committee (65%) and tutoring or teaching (62%).

• According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the activities most performed for volunteers’ main organization were “collecting, preparing, distributing, or serving food” (10.9%), “fundraising” (10.0%), “tutoring or teaching” (9.8%), “engaging in general labor; supply transportation to people” (8.2%), “providing professional or management assistance, including serving on board or committee” (6.9%) and “mentoring youth” (6.8%).

3. Groups with Most Potential

In your opinion, which of the following groups hold the most potential to create opportunities at a scale where it can make your community a better place?

(Respondents were required to select their top three)

- 84% of United Way community leaders see the non-profit sector or civil society, as one of the top three groups with the most potential for boosting volunteering and creating opportunities at a scale where it can help make communities better places to live.

- Businesses (local media excluded) and the education system – schools and universities – are viewed as the next most likely partners to help transform communities.
4. Benefits to Business for Allowing Employees to Volunteer

In your experience, which of the following do businesses perceive as the biggest benefits of allowing their employees to volunteer? Please select your top three from the benefits listed below.

(Respondents were required to select their top three)

- The leading benefit United Way community leaders perceive for businesses in allowing their employees to volunteer is that “it’s good for company reputation.” There are three benefits that are perceived by community leaders at about the same rate: “It’s part of the company culture,” “It helps employee productivity/retention/morale,” and “It’s good for the community.”

Background on Community Leader Survey Participants and Methodology

Of the 277 United Way CEOS invited to participate in the panel, 125 were selected at random to receive invitations and 125 were selected randomly weighted by the population within their solicitation areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Selected to Receive Invitation</th>
<th>Accepted Invitation to be on Panel</th>
<th>Completed First Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey was open from 5/21 to 5/30/2014.
Participants were CEOs from the following United Ways:

Fondo Unido De Guatemala
United Way of Central Jersey
United Way of Central Louisiana
Heart of Florida United Way
United Way of Enid & Northwest Oklahoma
United Way of Manatee County
United Way of Franklin County
United Way of Southwest Georgia
United Way of Tulare County
United Way of Yuma County
United Way of Norman
United Way Romania
United Way of Adams County
United Way of the Mark Twain Area
United Way of the Quad Cities Area
United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
United Way of Licking County
United Way of Southern Chester County
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
United Way of Southwest Louisiana, Inc.
United Way of Forsyth County
United Way of Steele County
Eroforras Alapitvany - United Way Magyarorszag
United Way of Iredell County
United Way of King County
United Way & Volunteer Services of Greater Yankton
United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley
United Way of Monmouth County
United Way of Southwest Oregon
United Way of Greater Stark County
United Way of Ocean County
United Way of Porter County
Capital Area United Way
River Region United Way
United Way of Door County
United Way of Southeast Missouri
United Way Silicon Valley
United Way of Mid & South Jefferson County
United Way of Albany County
Trident United Way
United Way of the Lower Eastern Shore
The United Way of Union County
United Way of Central New York
United Way of Washington County, Tennessee
Asociacion Empresarial para el Desarrollo
United Way of Superior-Douglass County
United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region
United Way of Noble County
United Way of Anderson County
United Way of Benton & Lincoln Counties
United Way of Bamberg, Colleton & Hampton
United Way of Central Indiana
United Way of Greater Attleboro/Taunton
United Way of Pioneer Valley
United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County
United Way of Cascade County
United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg
United Way of Danville Area, Inc.
Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services
United Way of Central New Mexico
United Way of Southern Nevada
United Way of Roanoke Valley
United Way of Beaver County
United Way of Washkenaw County
United Way of Monroe County
United Way of Franklin County
United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley
United Way of Snohomish County
United Way of Southern Cameron County
United Way of Central Kentucky
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette
United Way of Northern California
United Way of Greater Milwaukee
United Way of Jamaica

Article at www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2013/04/01/can-we-get-some-volunteers-please/
www.iave.org/content/state-health-corporate-volunteering
http://www.ncoc.net/226
Table 5. Main volunteer activity for main organization for which activities were performed and selected characteristics, September, 2013.
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