

Partnering in a Humanitarian Crisis: An Analysis of INGO-Volunteer Relationships

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Abstract

Responses to humanitarian crises involve many different actors. During the European refugee crisis in 2015/2016, national and international public and nongovernmental organizations, as well as volunteers, provided services for refugees and asylum seekers. We analysed the perceptions and interactions between different actors operating along the Balkan refugee route. In particular, we concentrate on the relationships between international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and volunteers at different stages of the response. Large numbers of volunteers are not common in humanitarian responses. Our results show that partnering is often limited by differences in ideology and perception, slow bureaucratic processes in INGOs, and the lack of accountability for volunteers. Interestingly, there is a change in perceptions over time. During the early stages of the response, volunteers were perceived by INGOs as helpful, flexible and quick in responding to urgent needs, but over time the risk posed by volunteers working with vulnerable populations emerged.

Keywords: *NGOs/INGOs; Volunteering; International*

Introduction

Disasters, terrorist activities, and wars, amongst other factors, triggered large streams of refugees, fleeing regions of crisis and seeking refuge inside or outside their home country. These flows reached a peak in Europe from 2015 to the present (UNHCR, 2017).

National and international public and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are typically the first responders in such political and social humanitarian crises (Ansell et al., 2000; Brändström et al., 2004; Donahue and O'Keefe, 2007, Garkisch et al., 2017). Various academic research streams have addressed subsequent cross-sectoral collaboration (as well as the inability to do so) in crisis and humanitarian relief settings (e.g. Comfort 2007; Kapucu 2006; Kent, 2004), most concentrating on developing countries (e.g. Kilby, 2008; Nolte and Boenigk, 2011; Raju and Becker, 2103).

Insights from these lines of research, however, do not account for collaborations involving informally organized volunteers. Moreover, research on collaborations during

humanitarian crises in industrialized countries is scarce (see Moynihan, 2008; Noordegraaf and Newman 2011 for exceptions). Finally, limited research focuses on transboundary crises, making this work unique in several ways. This particular transboundary humanitarian response took place in Europe and informally organized volunteers from all over the world were instrumental in the response.

We analysed the volunteers, informal organizations and NGOs active along the Balkan refugee route providing services for refugees and asylum seekers. For this manuscript, we focused on three main research questions: 1) What motivated volunteers in this particular refugee response; 2) How are INGOs and volunteers perceived by each other; and 3) What perceptions lead to positive and negative predispositions to cooperate? To do so, we analysed INGO-volunteer relationships across five response phases of the Balkan Refugee crisis in Europe from 2015-2017; from a response to large transitory refugee populations in the beginning to more permanent populations seeking integration in-country at the later stages.

We conducted over 50 interviews, eight site visits and seven focus groups with members of a large INGO, their organizational partners active along the route and informal, non-aligned volunteers. Our most significant finding, unique to this crisis in Europe, is the prominent role played by the large number of these informal volunteers who arrived at the scene to help refugees. Based on insights from these qualitative results, we released a survey for volunteers who responded to the crisis.

This manuscript proceeds as follows: First, we review relevant literature on cross-sectoral partnering during crises and the role of volunteers and present our research framework. Next, we explain the study setting and methodological approach. We then present the results of both our qualitative and quantitative analyses, followed by a discussion of implication for researchers and practitioners and some concluding thoughts.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Partnering Across Sectors in Disasters and Crises

Existing literature on partnering in disasters and crises focuses primarily on formal partners, e.g. organizations from the public, private, and/or nonprofit sector (e.g. Ahmad, 2006; Clarke, 2015; Lindenberg, 2001). Inter-organizational partnerships in many areas of public interest, e.g. emergency and disaster management, take place frequently and have been thoroughly analyzed elsewhere (Comfort, 2007; Kapucu, 2006; Waugh and Streib, 2007).

Sectoral differences clearly seem to have an impact on partnering in humanitarian and disaster relief settings. Dworken (1995) found in a study of coordination between military and humanitarian organizations that the bureaucracy of the military and its fear of mission creep prevented more effective partnering with humanitarian organizations. Gajewski et al. (2011) reported that NGOs and faith-based organizations proved highly motivated, flexible and creative in their response to Hurricane Katrina, but the response faced limitations due to limited resources, equity, accountability, and coordination issues with and by governmental partners. Winslow (2006) in an article entitled, “Strange Bedfellows: NGOs and the Military in Humanitarian Crisis,” concluded, “as in any couple relationship they have to continuously work at improving communication, building bridges and developing mutual respect if they are to coexist and cooperate. Otherwise they will find themselves working at counter purposes to each other” (p. 15).

Roberts (2010) concluded in her study of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance that “one of the most striking developments in contemporary warfare is how the dividing line between soldiers and civilians has blurred” (p. 213). We feel the same dynamic may hold true between professional humanitarian staff and volunteers. We explore this in more depth below.

Volunteers in Disasters and Crises

In a recent literature review, Garkisch et al. (2017) demonstrated that NGOs active in the field of migration and refugees concentrate on four main areas: (1) the provision of basic services and social welfare, (2) capacity development, (3) advocacy, and (4) complementary research activities. They suggested that addressing migration and refugees is “a holistic challenge that requires contributions by different actors on different levels” (Garkisch et al., 2017, p. 1839) and called for collaboration and communication between different stakeholders in the field, including NGOs and volunteers.

The recent refugee crisis affecting Europe suggests the need for research on crises affecting industrialized countries. It also highlights the need to look at non-traditional forms of partnership, in particular partnerships with informal volunteers. Volunteers refer to people unaffiliated with any local or international NGO. Many came on their own to this crisis and they had a significant impact on the overall response.

Limited research addresses the role of volunteers in disasters and complex humanitarian emergencies. This may be in part because large-scale disasters and humanitarian emergencies often occur in some of the least developed countries or in countries of war and crisis, where individual volunteers may face security constraints and difficulty gaining access. Regardless, we find it a critical area for study and, importantly, practitioner-oriented publications have stressed the presence of volunteers as a vital element of the European refugee response (Borton and Collinson, 2017; Francart and Borton, 2016).

The differences across sectors, highlighted above, can help us begin to understand perceptions of and by volunteers, who conceptually might be generally more aligned with the NGO sector. But, interestingly, we found in our case that this was not the situation. In fact, we found major obstacles to cooperative action due to perceptual differences between volunteers and NGOs. Below we explore the role of volunteers in more depth.

Volunteers in the Balkan Crisis were seen as “flexible; needs-based; holistic; trusted; connected; value for money; and committed ... (while) the limitations of the community sector ... (include) accountability, lack of influence and uneven coverage” (Borton and Collinson, 2017). Francart and Borton (2016) found the key descriptors of civil society volunteers along the Balkan Route were flexibility, informality, commitment, self-organization, fragility and instability. They concluded, however, that the “unpredictability present in many volunteer groups should *not* be a reason for NGOs not to engage and collaborate with them, because it is an inherent part of their make-up and something which, for the most part, they are able to manage” (p. 34). They proposed a set of questions for NGOs to consider: How can NGOs retain neutrality when working with volunteers with strong political opinions? How can NGOs cope with administrative demands without stifling spontaneity and innovation? How can they manage risk in working with volunteers? And how can they effectively serve as advocates and be critical of host governments? These practitioner-driven insights aligned well with our research questions.

The dichotomy of NGOs being seen as organisations bound by accountability and risk reduction compared with the flexible and spontaneous needs-based volunteer will seem ironic to those who recognize this argument as the basis for obstacles to partnering between NGOs and governments. Here it is the NGO serving as the more bureaucratic player. In part, of course, NGOs are concerned with donor relations and public perception. A recent *Economist* article titled “Defrauding the do-gooders” suggested the highly visible need for transparency in humanitarian work exposed by the media and its importance for NGO income streams from donors. Partnering with informal volunteers presents difficulties in this respect.

Sanders and McClellan (2014) described the tension between nonprofits’ pursuit of a values-based mission and descriptions of their organizations as ‘business-like.’ This acknowledgement perpetuates a bias against volunteers since, “the very practices that

constitute volunteering can be understood as forms of unpaid, amateur, and low-status labor. Most analyses have assumed that volunteers are not professional because, unlike elite occupational groups, volunteers receive limited training, possess no disciplinary knowledge, and have little power even if their work has significant social consequences” (p. 153).

In one of the few studies of volunteers working with refugees, McAllum (2017) reported, “Insufficient ties to the organization ... led volunteers to detach themselves from the organization” (p. 1) and that volunteer coordinators and the nature of their clients (refugees) mitigated the situation, suggesting a form of institutional, centralized and perhaps bureaucratic coordination, which volunteers seem to reject.

However, existing literature on partnerships between volunteers and NGOs shows that forms of collaboration between these actors exist, despite the apparent distance between them (Glasius and Ishkanian, 2014). Similar to Roberts’ (2010) findings in military and humanitarian partnerships, Glasius and Ishkanian (2014) suggested, “The boundaries between formal NGOs and informal groups of activists are blurred and there is much cross-over and collaboration” (p. 2620). Partnerships can range from very loose, informal mechanisms of aligning one’s actions with others, e.g. through communication of activities and needs, to a more formalized or strong form, where organizations collaborate intensively to provide joint tasks and services (Martin et al., 2016). In some contexts, informality is critical in the sense that organizations may be unable or unwilling to formally register or formally participate in coordination meetings (Krasynska and Martin, 2016). However, those unofficial organizations of volunteers may still have high levels of formality (Krasynska and Martin, 2016). Roberts (2010) found, “communities of practice are emerging as informal mechanisms of coordination among civilian and military organizations” (p. 212). Partnering is difficult enough in disaster situations. But it becomes even more complex when applied across sectors and includes large numbers of informally organized volunteers.

A Framework to Assess Volunteer Partnering along the Balkan Refugee Route

Volunteering is often explained with self-determination theory, where individuals strive for personal growth (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Individuals decide to volunteer time and/or resources out of a combination of different, underlying motivations. These different motivations, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, controlled types of motivation and autonomous motivation, have been frequently studied as reasons for volunteering (Clary et al., 1998; Weinstein and Ryan, 2010; Bidee et al., 2013; Nencini et al., 2016). Our theoretical framework is shown in Figure 1. We know that volunteers come to help in the refugee response due to a variety of reasons and assume that different underlying motivations may shape perceptions of other actors and predispositions to partner. “[T]he early stages of collaboration can be undermined relatively easily because suspicions amplify setbacks’ effects” (McCaffrey, Faerman and VanSlyke, 1995).

Thus, we assess how different types of volunteers, driven by different motivations, perceive INGOs as potential partners. We specifically explore the factors that lead to their predispositions to collaborate with INGOs. As shown in Figure 1, we assume that different types of volunteers, who were active in different phases of the response, perceived INGOs differently in the field. Some may be critical towards INGOs due to their bureaucratic structure and the INGOs’ hesitance to work with volunteers at later stages of the response. Others may be more supportive of INGO work, appreciating expert knowledge and advocacy activities in the field. We assume that these distinct motivations and perceptions of INGOs affect the volunteers’ predisposition to partner with INGOs.

Predisposition to partner, while perhaps obvious, plays an important role in participative systems (McCaffrey, Faerman and Van Slyke, 1995). In studies of the disaster response in Haiti, Nolte and Boenigk (2012) found that a general openness to collaborate,

coupled with experience collaborating as well as a sense of mutuality, improved networked responses to disasters. Nolte, Martin and Boenigk (2012) added that a perceived degree of equality among those collaborating improved perceived coordination.

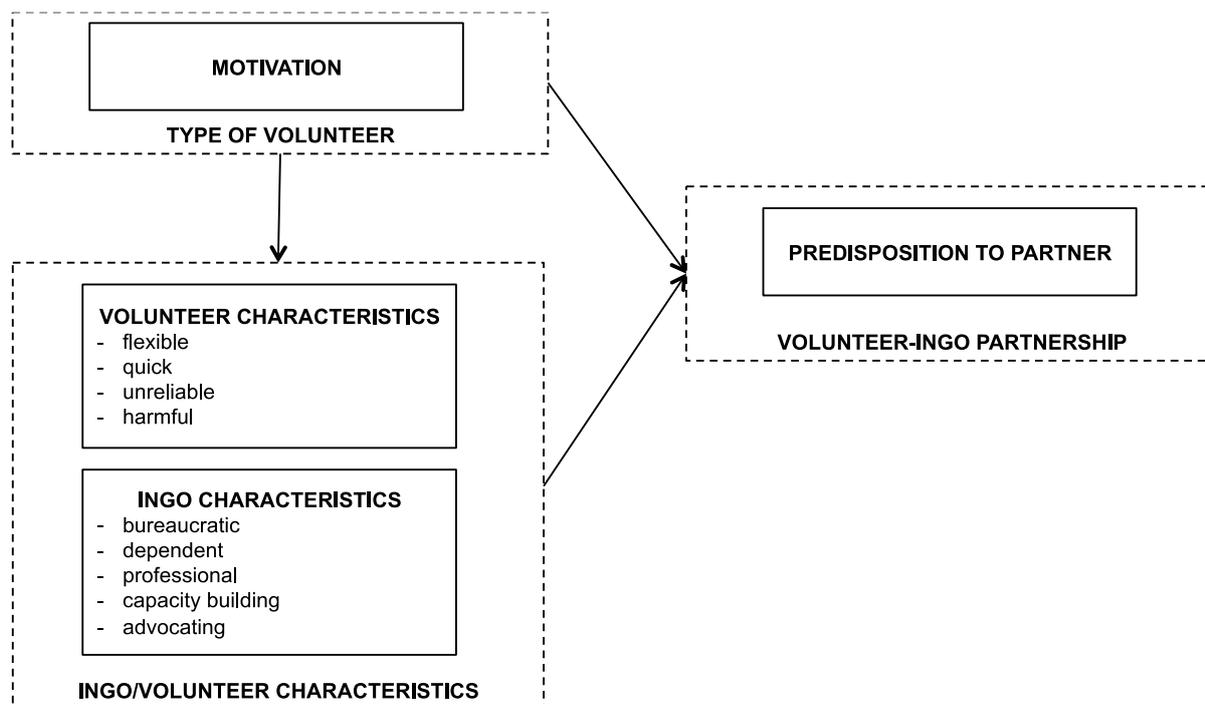


Figure 1: Research framework

Studying the Refugee Response along the Balkan Route

In 2016, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide reached 65.6 million, the largest number ever recorded (UNHCR, 2017). Massive numbers of refugees fled regions of crises and war, such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and many more left Northern Africa and the Middle East as economic migrants. One of the routes taken by refugees to reach destinations in north-western Europe was the “Balkan Route”, where refugees transited through Greece, FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and Serbia, amongst other countries. A massive response involving organizations from the public and nonprofit-sector, as well as volunteers, ensued, forming one of the largest humanitarian actions in

Europe since the Second World War, and certainly since the Balkans Wars in the mid to late Nineties.

From 2015-2017, estimates vary, but nearly a million refugees and asylum seekers travelled through Greece, and over 50,000 remain there. Over 800,000 travelled through FYROM and 600,000 through Croatia and Serbia. Sizeable populations remained in each country after borders closed in 2016 (these estimates based on a Save The Children report, 2016). This influx had a significant impact on all of these countries.

The response to the refugee crisis along the Balkan route can be divided into a number of different and somewhat distinct phases. From our field study, we learned that respondents referred to the ‘pre-phase,’ as the period before 2015. Refugees have always been using this route, so this response did not ‘start’ in the summer of 2015, it intensified. The period from Summer to Winter in 2015 represented the first phase of this crisis, with massive streams of refugees and far-reaching media attention. In this phase, formal organizations were overwhelmed and volunteers were seen as a welcomed help, e.g. to rescue refugees from boats, distribute food and blankets, etc. Winter 2015 into 2016 represented the second phase, primarily characterized by border closings to some economic migrant populations. This second phase marked a time with a huge transient refugee population, where volunteers and INGOs coordinated services such as food, health, and clothing for beneficiaries who would be in the region for only a few hours or days, while other refugees and migrants were beginning to remain in country, unable to move further along the route. That period was followed by a third phase of massive static populations and changes in programming as camps were built up primarily as a result of the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016 which effectively shut down borders to all flows of refugees and economic migrants alike. Consequently, the response to the refugee crisis in camps and other settings needed to address a much more static population of refugees, many being stranded in a certain location

along the route for months or even years. The fourth phase began in the Winter of 2017 with an overt move by INGOs and governments towards urban placement and integration, where refugee numbers in camps and settlements were beginning to decrease as asylum seekers were moved, where possible, to more permanent housing. The final phase is the international exit and plan to turn over activities to locals beginning in the summer of 2017. We label these phases “emergency response,” “transit camp development,” “static camp programming,” “urban programming,” and “exit”.

Method

This study combines results from an exploratory field study with survey data, strengthening the power of the findings. As a first step, an interview guideline was designed and data collected during a field visit in early 2017. In a second step, an online survey was developed, taking into consideration the results of the field visit. This survey was shared with volunteers who participated in the refugee response along the Balkan refugee route.

During the first step, we were granted access to members of staff and partners of a large INGO active along the Balkan refugee route. Semi-structured interviews in Greece, Serbia, and Macedonia were conducted with INGO staff, members of their partner organizations, local governmental and NGO representatives, other INGOs and volunteers. Initial meetings in each location were arranged by the Balkan/Greece Sub-Regional Communications officer of the INGO, snowball sampling followed as respondents connected the interviewer with other stakeholders.

A total of 50 interviews and seven focus groups ranging from three to eight individuals were conducted at the field level. Interviews and focus groups ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Respondents represented multiple organizational levels (field staff, mid-management, senior leadership). All interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed,

and coded using NVivo software for qualitative data analysis. During the field phase, in addition to the interviews, we conducted eight site visits to get tours and perspectives on formal refugee centers, informal camps, open air shelters and gathering areas and resource centers for refugees in urban areas.

One major finding from this field phase related to the large number of informal volunteers who arrived at the scene to help refugees. Therefore, the results from the initial field visit were used to design a survey targeting volunteers who were active along the Balkan refugee route. The survey consisted of sections relating to the engagement of volunteers during the different phases of the response, the motivations to volunteer during the crisis, perceptions of INGOs active along the route and the predisposition of volunteers to collaborate with INGOs.

The predisposition to collaborate with INGOs was measured by considering different degrees of embeddedness, ranging from very loose forms of partnering, e.g. through receiving information via e-mail lists, through stronger forms of partnering by exchanging information in meetings or sharing resources such as meeting space, to a high degree of embeddedness, where activities are conducted jointly. A snowball sampling approach was used to collect responses from volunteers. Links to the survey were also shared in a number of Facebook groups focusing on volunteer activities for refugees in countries along the Balkan route.

The survey is ongoing at the time of submission of this manuscript, and an initial 56 responses from volunteers who were engaged in the response to the refugee crisis are analyzed for this study. The respondents to the survey volunteered in one or more countries along the refugee route, with over 60 percent of them having volunteered in Greece, followed by Serbia (23%), Hungary, and Bulgaria (each seven percent). Most volunteers reported they were active in either humanitarian aid operations (68%) and/or education (57%). Many of the

surveyed volunteers were still engaged in the refugee response at the time of the survey, and volunteers with experience in each of the different phases we defined earlier were represented in the sample. Over 80 percent of the volunteers who responded to the survey were female, different age groups were well represented, ranging from 18-24 to 65-74 years.

Results from the Field Study

The results of our initial field study show that volunteers and other stakeholders in the field indeed have different perceptions of each other. Interestingly, volunteers, local NGO representatives, government officials and INGO representatives generally agree on the factors described below, even the criticisms of themselves, that serve to help or hurt predisposition to partner. But for most professionals it was a surprise to see so many volunteers doing so much work. Some praised these efforts, however, many raised concerns about their involvement. Below we discuss the major themes that emerged in our interviews with respect to volunteers.

Volunteer Motivations

Crisis Proximity

First and foremost, there was widespread recognition that geographic location played a major role in their presence. “Greece is in our backyard,” noted one volunteer. “We are close, we are in a safe country, ... it’s easy you can be inside the situation for 10 days and come back to your life so you can find, a refugees camp where you can work. In South Sudan it’s not so easy.”

In Athens there are two refugee camps you can get to by metro, it is insane.

I didn’t see any volunteers in Central African Republic. This is the first time I have seen this.

This situation is very unique in having so many volunteers taking on many of the roles that NGOs would normally take on.

There is a bit of that narrative, like after the tsunami, where all the amateurs show up and bring their surfboards, sometimes we talk shit like that.

Volunteers arrived soon after the beginning of the crisis, before even many of the INGOs arrived. One professional reported a unique reversal of logic compared to previous work she had experienced with respect to volunteers. “Some of them interestingly saw themselves as first phase responders, which is what (we) would do, well very much like MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières], STC [Save the Children] or Oxfam, we have emergency teams that arrive in 72, 48 hours, but actually it was the volunteers that we discovered who were there doing that. For example, when I tried to set up education programs in September, they were like, ‘oh, that is great, we are phasing out and have been here for three months and were planning to hand it over to you.’ That is interesting dynamic.”

Thus, we concluded that proximity and pragmatism function as motivations to volunteer along the refugee route. We therefore included items to measure “*proximity/pragmatism*” into our survey.

Volunteer Altruism

One professional remarked, “I saw many 20 years old, 19, 21, 24, young people to be so good and I say to myself there is hope, yes there is hope because if you see these people and most of them are educated so they are, there is hope.” And when asked whether this was good for their resume or CV, the response was often, “That is not what I am doing it for.” They were there for more social reasons. “You know the populism rising and Trump getting power and with us we have Wilders in Holland. Maybe it is also a way to say I don’t agree with that and I want to be there for people.” And their funding was equally grassroots in nature. “We had people turn up and say let me pay for this, and it will be like \$4000, people are very generous, it restores your faith in humanity.”

Some of those compassion-initiated activities turned into quite sizable activities over time. One single volunteer reported that she, “sends them a list now of all the things I want and the quantities, and I know the prices now, on Wednesday night and Thursday they have it ready for me at a specific time, and I put it all in a cab. Right now I am delivering anywhere between 700 and 1000 Euro a week of food.”

This finding is contradictory to previous studies that highlight that career-related aspects motivate volunteers, assuming that volunteering experience can help them get into certain jobs in the future (Clary et al., 1998). This crisis context may be the difference, therefore, items to measure the *career focus* of volunteers engaged in the refugee response were included in the survey.

Volunteer Political Views

Political and religious orientations at times seemed problematic to humanitarian professionals.

Some of these groups of anarchists, they wanted to support the refugees, and at the same time they wanted to promote their political message, so we have categorization of squats, some are run completely by anarchists, and they will not let, which is not very democratic, they will not let other people in, like NGOs. It is an open question whether it is good for refugees, there are a lot of question marks.

There are very political groups of activists, who are totally against NGOs, who are usually not informed, so they were claiming that when we were working to relocate people from these barracks to camps, they were going around and claiming that the camp is a closed camp that no refugees should go there, do not go, [INGOs] are fascists.

There is a very big squat managed by anarchist Germans, we try to get them to ask for support, most of them very few children, there is a lot of drugs, but we contact them to provide them support, in the beginning they say yes, but then they change mind they don't want NGOs inside. They don't want us checking on them. It is very dirty, it is disgusting.

Sometimes I have experience that they are fighting for the rights just to fight, without real purpose.

Consequently, *political activism* is included as one type of motivation that affects volunteers in a crisis setting (Maki and Snyder, 2017). We assume that volunteers decide to join the response as they want to protest against the current response and against political decisions shaping the crisis.

Volunteer Skills

Many volunteers admitted they lacked specific skills, but felt that their energy and presence could still be useful. Others, such as midwives, for example, felt they did have a useful skill to provide. One professional responded a bit skeptically,

There were midwives, but they came from smart hospitals in nice areas. They aren't used to working in these settings, and you can't have a C-section in the field, you need to connect with Greek hospitals, those who don't do this for a living have no idea how to make that work.

One volunteer reported that her colleagues “[w]ent into a camp in the north and they found out that a stream of people can be compared to a festival crowd, so they got friends of theirs who organize festivals and got them to give tips on how to manage a camp or a stream, so they came back with heaters and tents and fences, systems, that sort of stuff.” This type of logic exposes the professionals’ primary issue with the volunteers, their lack of skills in this context; refugee flows are much more complex than the comparison to a music festival suggests.

Anyone can do NFIs [non-food items], but social psychology? You need talent and skills.

All those people from around the world come. That was great. But now, if you don't have maybe skills that are really needed, if you are not a medical person, or whatever, I think that makes our job difficult. In the end, I feel really uncomfortable just, you don't know who these people are. I am sure most of them are good, but you cannot, I mean the risk is too high.

We don't necessarily want enthusiastic but not trained volunteers going into a situation.

Some hoped experiences in the past might have helped build capacity in the country of operation before the current crisis. For example, the Balkans received extensive international support in the 90s and early 2000s.

We have unfortunately the refugee experience as a country, from the 1990s basically. The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, they are the institution that at the end of the day became relevant and was established because of the crisis, these are the people that were in charge, working for years, for decades for refugees from Bosnia, Croatia, so in that sense there was the institutional and personal memory of the people that were working, so we were prepared in that sense. Of course this situation is completely different.

When asked if such capacity did indeed exist, one respondent suggested:

There was, we didn't use it. I don't know why we didn't use it, maybe there isn't any handbook or evidence or something for support. But there were involved organizations, institutions and people and they know how to respond. But in this crisis they didn't show up. And because of this, I want to make some database of people that were trained, field workers, specialist trained in certain areas that can be used in the future.

Several volunteers and small local NGOs were highly critical of the attitude INGOs seemed to have of their skillsets and their work. One commented, "Don't come tell us what to do, we have been working with unaccompanied children for the last 25 years." Another stressed, "We had 20 years more than that experience in child protection, so who are experts?"

They consider us experts [in this country], we knew exactly what was happening, how is the procedure, how to approach the authorities, blah blah but the internationals didn't know what was going on here, so it was rather difficult, you have to explain to them, you have to explain that we know things, but maybe sometimes you could explain to the headquarters, but those coming to the field couldn't realize it. That you are not my boss. I am running the activities. I know what I am doing. You don't have to look after me.

Previous studies highlight how persons with expert knowledge are motivated to engage in volunteering (Maki and Snyder, 2017). Again, this is contradictory to our finding from the field and we include a motivation relating to skills, where volunteers believe they possess *expert knowledge* that can be helpful in the response.

Volunteer Characteristics

Volunteer Access

Volunteers were particularly important in the informal camps and unofficial settings where they had unfettered access. For example, in the “squats, and then in informal places, I mean they saved the situation one year ago, without these kinds of groups, people didn’t have a meal. And those people, international informal groups, they provided thousands of meals every day.” And professional staff on occasion would refer beneficiaries to such people and places. “We use these facilities unofficially when we face a really difficult situation, we send people, if there is no room.”

It is very difficult for NGOs to access the squats because they don’t want international or national NGOs going in. They want to do it themselves, it is a very community based effort.

They enjoyed greater access for a variety of reasons, compared to formal NGOs, “You can get into the squats that they can’t, they can’t be seen.” And the volunteers were necessary, “We couldn’t cover many people, but the volunteers could.”

Volunteer Flexibility

Flexibility was critical for the situation, something INGOs typically did not have. There were many reports regarding the ability for volunteers to provide basic needs where NGOs felt their hands were tied.

This organization comes in with a van and somehow is able to cook fresh hot foods and that is something we couldn’t do, and so they built up their reputation. We automatically thought the authorities would kick them out in no time, but they didn’t. They have been around for months providing food, lunch every single day and they have again the flexibility to do that kind of stuff that we don’t have.

The other day I saw this hand washing station and it was like ground was painted blue and they had little sinks and there were toilets which weren’t there before and I was like wow, how did this all get here? The volunteers put it in, the volunteers have a lot

more flexibility. They are not at risk. They can't really be kicked out, because there is nothing to kick out. As an international NGO we don't have that flexibility.

The notion of flexibility proved important especially on smaller "one-off" items and requests.

We cannot just buy shoes for one man who is lacking shoes. But they can do anything, so whatever a refugee needs they can respond to that, because their funds don't have any kind of restrictions and they can do it immediately, they can go to a shop and buy whatever.

They played a crucial role in transportation and covering transportation costs. We don't have cash vouchers, money for transportation. Volunteers were the ones paying. We go to the volunteers and say listen we have a family of five they don't have money. They are desperate, can you help? And they pay for them.

There was a young Afghan girl who needed glasses, I had a little extra donation money and some volunteer said this girl needed glasses and I went over to that little shop over there and I got her some glasses. It's not really fair, but you can't help everybody as much as they need to be helped, so I sort of identify people, and I just try to help them.

Examples such as those above were plenty. These are very small acts of charity and kindness that professionals and bureaucracies simply would not have been able to address. Many times professionals would refer refugees to volunteer groups to fulfill such requests. But there was no formal mechanism for doing so. It was informal, based on personal relationships.

Some of those activities would be considered perhaps as mission creep, but volunteers and small local NGOs reported that they were simply helping wherever they could.

Now we have solar stations, the ones you see there. We do NFI support, we have two warehouses. We gave bugaboos, baby strollers, lights, many clothes and shoes that sort of stuff. And we have a football program. We do women's dancing night, children's arts and crafts, sewing circles, reading afternoon, and some other activities. We have the food truck that is standing there, it is also ours. We serve soup three times a week.

We are search and rescue team, but now we do not have much work, so we expanded our activities and help everywhere where we can. We are looking for ways to help to expand, provide general support to help people, to help anywhere anytime. Now we are looking for maybe to send humanitarian aid to other places.

Volunteer Responsiveness

There was considerable discussion and reflection on the speed with which volunteers were able to get things done. This was greatly appreciated by professionals who readily admitted that even as quickly as they acted in the emergency phase, the informal volunteers could operate even more quickly.

A friend brought me to a circus tent in the middle of a field. Inside was a Dutch doctor, who didn't go through a NGO so he could do something quick. But he knew what he was doing, a rare gem, he had a mother baby area, the principles we work from, he followed. It was set up exactly as we would have liked to have set it up, we were very jealous, just him and some friends.

Volunteers and some of the national NGOs were significantly quicker at responding than the international NGOs and I don't know if that is because they just had money and started, or we were slow. We have a way, we have to talk to government, we have to talk to our donor, so by the time we get through the bureaucracy it can be months, and they just went straight in.

By and large, the volunteers were praised for the energy and compassion. "All sorts of people were just arriving with their cars full of donations, from all sorts of places, with things they have collected."

I sat next to this girl from Slovenia. She was there on her own, with her own money. She is not part attached to any other organization. She had her own project which was interesting. She bought a lot of whistles, and gave them to children and girls to alarm the community if something happens to them in the ports. She told me that she had a problem in the beginning to make a connection, to trust, and then women and girls agreed to help her, and there were a few situations where they used it and it worked.

There were mixed feelings almost always when we spoke with professionals about volunteers. "I have a split opinion, when I was younger I used that energy, I know what it is to be an activist."

I have been a volunteer myself, my way into humanitarian relief was through volunteer work to begin with so I have a good appreciation for that, and obviously as a humanitarian you can get annoyed at volunteers, but at the same time there is a respect and appreciation and respect that they are doing it for free, we are getting paid for it, there are people who have been here for 6 months working for free, and some of the volunteers that are left now are the better ones.

Volunteer Reliability

Turnover among volunteers was a major issue for professionals looking for longer term partnering. “We will stay here for three days we leave on Sunday.” “I just came here on my own, learned about it from people that came before me. I will stay as long as I can, a few days or weeks, as long as they need, but I cannot stay that much.” “It depends, 10 days, two weeks, 3, 6, months, it depends.” Such short-term presence is an issue, though for volunteers, the short stays are justified to some extent. “Short term people can put all their energy in for a week then return, long term, self-preservation is key.” But that does not excuse the lack of accountability in terms of turnover. “A NGO who had taken part of our work working with kids, then they disappeared completely and never came back, we were calling them. This is a problem, leaving others to cover a gap.”

At the same time, volunteers were critical of INGO turnover. There was some recognition that the constant inflow of international staff that come into these hotspots do help, “They bring some knowledge,” but high rates of staff rotation in INGOs were seen critically: “[T]his is the common disease of INGOs, it’s this kind of never ending turnover of people with different experience, different views, different approaches, and at the end, [...] you cannot guarantee a common approach.” This turnover may lead to a certain loss of focus as to what is actually happening on the ground.

Maybe they need to speak more with the people [laughs], they need to spend more time, I notice actually that most of the people that are writing proposals for the donors and say what we are doing, they never spend time in the camp or in the field, they need to. Because sometimes a project is so far from the needs of the people and I understand why, but it is too much. Be in the field.

Volunteer Accountability

This accountability was a major theme for many professionals. The informal and unofficial flows of money, people and resources simply are not appropriate in the professional humanitarian sector, “Because you need to be registered to be by the book.

When you receive some money you need to file receipts, and everything, where this money went, where it goes and will go, you must have a plan.”

The formality slowed things down a bit. “I understand that we are in need of compliance, and we need to be checking, and reporting, we have rules that need to be followed, we cannot escape this, but sometimes all these rules, all these layers make things very slow.” But more important were the risks unaccountable volunteers posed to NGOs and their constituents.

It may be dangerous, I mean, I can imagine an informal group of volunteers, child protection policy, but if this informal group of volunteers make something and the press or whatever discovered that they were informally partnering with (us)...

They make problem between NGOs and government, we get a call from the government, ‘Did you do this?’ ‘We didn’t, volunteers did that.’

For example, we have had some volunteers working directly with us and we provide child protection training we explain why we have these procedures and safeguarding rules in place and yet we still find that they will put photographs on their Facebook pages of children they are working with even though we make it very clear that a) they are not allowed to take photographs of children and b) they shouldn’t be putting them on their Facebook pages. When you discuss that they seem to understand that, but they still go ahead and do it.

These statements exemplify the concerns NGOs have in working with volunteers regarding their own organizational reputation. These larger more sophisticated NGOs, “Have also the name of the organization to uphold and they have to adjust their activities to their image.” As a result, restrictions emerged, for example it is the “policy (that) you cannot have other actors near to the children in our activities.”

Absolutely the largest area of concern was the risk volunteers posed to beneficiaries, especially children.

One Swedish volunteer actually was hiding an unaccompanied boy in her hotel room because otherwise he would go to detention. It is very difficult to reason with someone like that, because she volunteers, is driven by emotions and I am trying to approach this from a professional point of view but it is very difficult. Then she said that she wants to take this boy in a car to Sweden and we have to stop her, in the end we said if you are going to do this you will end up in prison. This is against the law, but someone like that would have never done that in Sweden.

But there are other areas of concern that volunteers with even the best of intentions may do harm, albeit unknowingly. For example, “Rumors in this context spread quickly away, so if you say something wrong you can change really the life of people, it is dangerous, very dangerous so I have respect for people that are choosing to have experience here, it is important, but, think, you need to have I mean you need to have experience for serious stuff, as legal advice, protection, working with people.”

They were for example building chimneys and wasting plenty of money on this kind of action in barracks instead of supporting relocation of refugees because refugees should not stay in the barracks, even with a chimney, they should not be there, also they do some kind of directly risky actions. They bought plenty of axes for refugees to cut wood and heat, because that is a serious thing. But 2000 men, consuming alcohol, that was not a good idea.

One egregious example was cited by several professionals. “There was a volunteer organization and they started to do protection but they had no experience in that, and they went tent by tent and put a P for protection on the tent of all the protection cases. Talk about stigmatization, increasing risks for children, or people that are already marginalized, this was obviously like very concerning. They had the right intentions, but...”

You can see some horrendous potential for massive abuse and violations in this situation. We are now seeing where volunteers are running children’s centers and there is one example where there were unaccompanied children sleeping in this place with one male volunteer at night. So a huge potential for problems and risk in this situation.

They would sell food, and they did exactly what we did, but without any checks and balances. There was a pharmacy and I had never seen so many drugs, including controlled drugs, in my life. People just kept bringing stuff, it was out of control, out of control, it was not a help.

Perhaps less damning, but concerning to professionals, were, “Incidents where, not intentionally, but you would see potentially volunteers favoring some children over others, which is great for them, but other children are left behind.”

The media is doing stories about hungry mothers and babies and the first thing you want to do is run out and buy formula, it’s a natural human response and perfectly normal and understandable. But it is the worst thing to do. We can’t control this, but

we can direct. Maybe [they] can buy nappies, you can never have enough nappies and they aren't cheap. But formula, we need to know she can make it properly, there are sanitation issues, and dangers with that, and rations, so you need to show her how to do it carefully. And they say, when you tell them, 'Oh right, I never thought about that, ok, we'll do that.' But that is easier than just cursing them, right?

Common solutions include trainings and background checks for volunteers, but that is not always feasible during the height of an emergency. "It is very hard to insure accountability."

For all of our staff we run police checks on them, they do child safeguarding training. But this is not possible with all the volunteers to do all these checks. We try to make them aware about these issues, and when they work with us, under our umbrella, which doesn't really happen, it's more of an exception, but they have to receive lots of child safeguarding introductions.

INGO Characteristics

INGO Bureaucracy

The biggest criticism levelled against the international NGOs were their bureaucratic structures and lack of flexibility. "Process can be very complicated, they have to have four levels of meetings to take an action. Sometimes it can take months."

At some point [people in] the field were like, "oh, can you do some food?" and immediately my brain goes, oh no, I have to get permission from this and this and this and this and this. And we are like, 'ok, can you find someone else because this will take like three months before I get the food in the camp.' Sometimes I did that and sometimes I just did it on my own, and then I don't do the procedures.

While there were a lot of complaints about bureaucratic structures within INGOs, members of INGOs also saw the need for a certain degree of bureaucracy, ensuring accountability:

Because we are very slow and need to be quite bureaucratic, and that is a good thing in some ways, but it can also mean that, you know the reason we have all these policies and procedures is we want to be accountable and to have good quality in our programs and that is not always easy to insure through the volunteers so there is a great variation in the quality.

Several volunteers reported quite negative perceptions of INGOs as part of the 'system.' One story about unaffiliated volunteers wearing lanyards provides an example, since locals felt that only official NGO representatives wore such lanyards.

One of the first time we were there we wearing lanyards (where we kept scissors, because we couldn't let the kids have them, so they were in these lanyards around our neck). One of these dudes from the squat was disgusted. 'What group are you with?' accusatory in English, and I answered in Greek, 'I am not with a group, I just live here. Why do you think I am with a group?' And he was like, 'Oh, because of this,' (motioning to my lanyard around neck). And I said, 'This is my friends, she is a poet, and we were cool.' But he was ready to kick us out. He suspected us as being part of an organizations and stuff like that, so there is a huge suspicion.

Other volunteers were much more critical of the INGOs.

The word on the street with independent volunteers and little NGOs is that you can't trust those guys because they come in and they set up their tents, they put their name on the side then they leave.

The rumor is they have a very little investment in the individuals, and if there are problems and they are getting off work at 5, they are off work, and so that kind of sucks.

The international NGOs are the biggest problem here, the foreigners working here have found out what a corrupt system we are and instead of pushing us to improve it, they are willingly supporting us in our corruption.

There was recognition that perceptions of each other played a role in their inability to work well together. "Many times it was kind of antagonistic, NGOs against the volunteers." Others suggested, "Some groups are fully against NGOs." Such attitudes created obvious obstacles to the notion of working together. "Local partners' difficulties are in our policies. We are too much of the system. They might have trouble agreeing with our child protection policy for example." Another reported, "Some of them would not like to partner with us, because of ideological positions."

Ideology and Advocacy

A constant source of tension seemed to be the desire on the part of volunteers to criticize national governments for not being more responsive. INGO representatives explained that they worked in these countries under the permission of government, but were accused of not being forthright in their criticism and advocacy. "The challenge is if you are

too outspoken, and (INGO) has been outspoken in media and critical of government, the problem is you lose access.”

People who attack the government will be thrown out of the process, which is problematic, there will be no one to advocate for the at risk children, we lose the voice.

We need to be very careful with advocacy here because if we piss off the authorities you are done.

I remember we wrote something at one point about praising the Serbian authorities at how well they did thus far considering this region ..., and this (volunteer) was like, ‘this is appalling I am not going to sign this. How dare you say they are doing a good job when people are being treated so poorly?’ He was up in arms and outraged and I was sitting there and thinking, seriously you don’t realize what you are doing, we know nothing is perfect, but if we just completely insult and criticize them none of us will be here.

Some talked about remaining critical, but keeping authorities in the loop.

We published an advocacy brief on unaccompanied minors, talking about detention, pushbacks, all of that. But before we sent it to Brussels I insisted to send it to local Ministry of Social Welfare, and we said, ‘Ok this is regional, critical, sensitive, but we didn’t want to send it without you having a chance to look at it.’ And even though he disagreed with majority, he knows that he can come up and say, ‘Yes, I am aware of the report and we disagree with this part or that part.’ And you keep them involved.

Volunteers were less affected by such concerns. “They are not afraid of, if they get kicked out they get kicked out, it is not a big deal to them. If they want to speak up they speak up.”

Results from the Volunteer Survey

Volunteer Motivations

Our statistical results build on the initial results collected in the field. In a first step, we analyzed volunteer motivations. We found that most of the respondents to our online survey volunteered because they had some expert knowledge that they thought was useful for the response. Out of all the respondents, 47 percent responded with five points or more on a seven-point Likert scale when asked whether they volunteered because they had expert knowledge (ranging from 1=not at all because of this reason to 7=exactly because of this reason). This is in line with previous literature (Maki and Snyder, 2017), however, it is somewhat contradictory to how volunteers were perceived by our respondents in the field, where members of nonprofit organizations reported they found that volunteers lacked necessary skills to respond to the crisis.

As mentioned before, it seems as if some volunteer capacity existed, however, more formal actors in the field did not tap into it effectively. This survey result underlines the impression we got from the interviews: There seems to be disagreement between volunteers and more formal actors as to who is experienced and thus should coordinate and exert power. Power struggles between the different groups resulted as a consequence, hindering collaboration.

About a quarter of the respondents noted that they volunteered either because of the proximity of the crisis (with 27% of respondents marking 5 points or more on the scale), or out of political reasons (with 25% of respondents marking 5 points or more on the scale). Contradictory to previous studies, and in line with our interview results, only a small proportion mentioned they volunteered out of career motivations (only 6% answered 5 or more on the scale).

Volunteer Characteristics

Volunteers who responded to our online survey were asked how they felt they were perceived by INGOs, rating four statements on a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). Some volunteers felt that INGOs appreciated their activities, agreeing to statements relating to flexibility (with 52% of respondents marking 5 points or more on the scale) and responsiveness (with 60% of respondents marking 5 points or more on the scale) of volunteers. This is in line with our interview results, where respondents working for NGOs found that volunteers were more flexible in their activities than they could be, resulting in some referrals of refugees to volunteer groups to fulfill requests. Volunteers were also aware that INGOs greatly appreciated the speed with which volunteers could address emerging needs.

As our interviews have shown, negative perceptions of volunteers in the field also exist and are noted by volunteers. In our survey, 52 percent of the respondents found that INGOs avoided working together with volunteers (marking 5 points or more on the seven-point scale). 39 percent felt that INGOs thought volunteers would create harm with their activities (marking 5 points or more on the scale). Reasons that were mentioned in the previous part, including high numbers of turnover among volunteers, a lack of accountability, and anecdotal stories of volunteers posing a threat to vulnerable populations, may have fueled these negative perceptions.

INGO Characteristics

The online survey provided more insights into volunteer perceptions of INGOs. As highlighted in our interview results, volunteers criticized bureaucratic structures prevailing in INGOs. Out of the 56 initial respondents, 59 percent had a mean value of 5 points or more on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) when

talking about bureaucratic structures prevailing in INGOs, including reporting requirements and responsiveness to the crisis. An even higher percentage of 81 found that INGOs were afraid to speak out against government organizations (marking 5 points or more on the seven-point scale). Thus, and in line with our interview results, INGOs are perceived as ‘part of the system’, and volunteers mistrusted them and feared corruption and a high degree of dependency on political stakeholders.

Only 25 percent of our survey respondents found that INGOs were committed to capacity building and advocacy activities (receiving a mean value of 5 points or more on the scale for these two statements). As shown in our interview section, and linked to our previous finding on dependency, volunteers found that INGOs were afraid to speak out against authorities, thus not fulfilling one of the tasks INGOs are frequently associated with. While 49 percent of the volunteers responding to the survey agreed to a statement that described INGO employees as skillful (marking 5 points or more on a seven-point scale), many found that INGOs did not know what was actually needed in the field. Only 10 percent of the respondents found that INGOs knew what exactly was needed to respond to the crisis (marking 5 points or more on the scale). Thus, despite the fact of employing very skilled experts, perceptions are that services are often misguided, not providing what is actually needed to respond to the crisis.

Predispositions to Partner

Volunteers were asked whether they were willing to interact with INGOs across a number of activities, ranging from very loose forms of partnering to a complete embeddedness. More than 80 percent of the respondents noted that they were willing to partner with INGOs when it came to exchanging information and resources, including the

attendance of joint meetings and trainings for volunteers. 55 percent of the volunteers said they would be willing to closely partner with INGOs across all of their activities.

Implications for Research on Disaster Response

The case and findings presented above are important, conceptually for research in disaster and humanitarian response for five main reasons. First, there is limited research on humanitarian responses set in more developed countries. Much literature is based, logically, on INGO interventions in less developed countries, as those are contexts that require more assistance from outside. However, this case included humanitarian response in EU member and EU ascension countries, presenting a unique situation to most INGO representatives who claimed an added layer of complexity not found in much less developed countries. The proximity of the crisis and that it took place in a relatively developed and safe environment, opened the door to a massive influx of informal unorganized volunteers.

The now massive literature on partnering including studies of communication, cooperation, coordination and collaboration in disaster and humanitarian settings largely avoids coverage of informal and volunteer stakeholders. Perhaps this case is unique, given the location in Europe that helped spur volunteering. But more attention could be paid to including informal voluntary action in coordination studies since this large and underrepresented population played an important role in first response, but is rarely studied in network, organizational and managerial research on humanitarian response.

We found that a seemingly obvious connection based on the goals of INGOs and volunteers, was not realized. We expected them to work together more effectively and instead found substantial negative predispositions to do so. Some of those negative predispositions might be addressed with better impression management and more overt open lines of communication which would likely begin with the INGOs. We discuss this in more depth

below under “Implications for Practitioners.” But overall, we found that efforts to minimize risk, improve transparency, hold themselves accountable, and be good stewards of donor funding hurt their relationship with an important and potentially sympathetic constituency.

In some ways, the pressure on INGOs for accountability has actually hindered better impression management. INGOs were seen as bureaucratic quasi-governmental agencies. They were viewed as unable and unwilling to criticize host governments. As one respondent mentioned, “It is the failure of the N in NGO!” Lessons learned from the extensive research on NGO/GO (governmental organization) partnering might prove helpful in this regard. Professionalization of nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations indeed changed their relationships with government. Similar logic might apply to the relationship between NGOs and informal organizations or volunteers. Literature on volunteer and social movements and the importance of informal or non-official organizing can be instructive.

Finally, we find the INGO reluctance to work with volunteers to be particularly problematic in terms of INGOs serving as exemplars for the development of a vibrant civil society. The general message from INGOs, passed on to their local partners, was a skepticism of volunteers, rather than a more open and enthusiastic acceptance. Clearly there are lines that should be drawn between professionals and volunteers. But much work was done effectively by volunteers in this response. Coordination can take place without professionalizing volunteers by clearly articulating the needs, skills and capacities of all involved.

Implications for Practitioners in Disaster Response

Our findings can help improve future responses by better equipping humanitarian INGOs to work with informal volunteers. Below we include some insights drawn from our work that might improve relationships between INGOs and volunteers in humanitarian response.

We heard from many volunteers that INGOs were patronizing and dismissive of their skill sets. By far the number one concern was the risk posed by these players working with vulnerable populations. INGOs might consider online pre-arrival ‘certifications’ in the form of online courses. They might teach volunteers in the field about the complexities and risks of working with vulnerable populations, and share best practices as consultants. And they might differentiate between activities that require more training (legal advice, medical assistance, child protection) and for example, NFI or food distribution.

There is some need to clarify the mission of INGOs in humanitarian response where local capacity development is not the ultimate goal. INGOs might also position themselves as experts in refugee response and niche areas like child protection or search and rescue, rather than as development institutions. They might draw sharper distinctions between their advocacy, research and lobbying roles and service provision actions and explain more clearly the difference between serving a more critical vocal short term role compared with the need to build long term relationships necessary for development partnerships.

The slow bureaucratic processes of INGOs were a source of frustration for many. There was recognition that INGOs bring skills and experience, but frustration at times about capacity building efforts that seemed bureaucratic in nature and less about more effective programming. Empowering field representative to make more decisions and providing small amounts of flexible discretionary funding to field personnel could help. Perhaps INGOs could encourage field to take on personal projects of interest for a given period each week or provide minimal funding and mini-grant opportunities to volunteers without extensive reporting requirements.

INGOs might consider bringing volunteers more overtly into the assistance process through meetings, online platforms and employment where possible. They could identify volunteer liaisons and INGO liaisons who could work with each other more closely. And

perhaps they could allow and encourage volunteers to attend more coordination meetings. INGOs also might develop online platforms and volunteer portals on webpages, connecting international volunteers with local NGO opportunities. INGOs could list needed items, skills and locations for them to be delivered on webpages listservs, and mobile phone applications, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Slack. INGOs could monitor those forums, learn from these first responders, share information, highlight concerns about risk, and offer trainings and best practices.

Finally, INGOs might serve to foster (rather than avoid) local volunteering with an eye toward longer-term development of civil society. INGOs not working with volunteers could send the wrong signal. The presence of untrained and passionate young volunteers in such situations is likely to be a new normal in future responses. In many cases INGOs would be training volunteers and local NGO field staff for careers in the humanitarian field. They might consider investing more in such trainings. Many spoke of the power this response had in cultivating careers in humanitarian work, especially among the young volunteers who might not even be doing so intentionally. INGOs might think of capacity building of individuals (volunteers and local NGO staff) in addition to organizational capacity building, recognizing the power of volunteers and their potential value into the future after positive and very powerful experiences.

Conclusions

In summary, we return to our three main research questions. 1) What motivated volunteers in this particular refugee response; 2) How are INGOs and volunteers perceived by each other; and 3) What perceptions lead to positive and negative predispositions to cooperate? With respect to our first question, it seems altruism, politics and perceived skills they had to offer were important motivators. But proximity, while not stated as the primary

motivation, certainly helped potential volunteers realize their ambitions. We believe it was necessary, though not sufficient.

Regarding our second and third research questions, taken together, volunteers perceived INGOs as bureaucratic and somewhat handcuffed in terms of advocacy. INGOs were seen as part of the system that motivated many volunteered to engage. They were seen as having lost their ability to provide basic needs in a responsive compassionate fashion. They had become institutions. And these perception inhibited more partnering.

Meanwhile, INGO professionals perceived volunteers as being energetic, altruistic, flexible and responsive to needs on the ground. They were particular struck with the access volunteers had to some of the most vulnerable population, perhaps precisely because they were unaffiliated with ore formal institutions. These factors led many professionals to be interested in finding ways to cooperate more intimately, but perhaps if and when some of the negative perceptions could be overcome. They found their political motivations and ideological inflexibility to be off-putting. They felt that volunteers didn't understand their need to work with governments as opposed to protesting against them (and that this was a strategic choice to enhance effectiveness). They felt volunteers lacked skills or perhaps more accurately, lacked experience applying those skills in a refugee context. Finally, professionals found them unreliable and unaccountable and thus were concerned with the risks they posed to beneficiaries as well as INGO reputations.

We believe that future research, organizational learning and reflection on this case by many of the bigger players, and some initial steps outlined in our 'Implications for Practitioners' section, could certainly lead to an improved dynamic in future situations where volunteers might find themselves working alongside INGOs on humanitarian relief in developed transborder settings.

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