



## The Role of Voluntary Recreational Activities in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

\* S. Gül GÜNEŞ<sup>a</sup> , Oğuzhan PARLAK<sup>b</sup> 

<sup>a</sup> Selçuk University, Faculty of Tourism, Department of Recreation Management, Konya/Turkey

<sup>b</sup> Selçuk University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Tourism Management, Konya/Turkey

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### Abstract

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) addressed the problems of communities and identified the global problems for development under 17 goals within the “Sustainable Development Goals”. The UN member states are expected to take steps to achieve these goals in academic and applied fields each year in order to overcome these problems and achieve their goals until 2030. In this respect, the willingness of individuals to voluntary participation in efforts towards development goals guarantees social participation, deepens solidarity, and strengthens ownership of social and economic development goals. The presence of the volunteer projects is allowed the volunteers can take part in content creation and organization. In addition to that, the purpose of the voluntary projects that individuals participate in during their leisure time was to provide social benefits and to create voluntary recreational activities for the goals of acquiring intangible gains. In this study, the role of voluntary recreational activities within the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals was determined by revealing the importance and place of these activities in the context of these goals. This study is based on content analysis from qualitative research methods. The research data were collected through a review of the literature and analyzing the content of international voluntary projects. According to the results of the study, it was found out that international voluntary projects contribute directly to sustainable development goals and that the participation of individuals in voluntary recreational activities through voluntary projects has an important role in achieving the goals.

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\* Corresponding Author

E-mail: [gulgunes@selcuk.edu.tr](mailto:gulgunes@selcuk.edu.tr) (S. G. GÜNEŞ)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the 1980s, with the development of new types of tourism that were small, independent and potentially self-sustaining, new niche areas began to form in the tourism sector. By the 20th century, new types of tourism were sharply separated from popular package tours. However, the negative effects of new types of tourism and package tours on both the environment and the host community have continued to be experienced (Wearing, Benson & McGehee, 2016).

Volunteer tourism, which is among the new types of tourism, is a more recent phenomenon than other types of tourism. This type of tourism aims to make a positive impact on the areas that are missing in the host community by trying to meet the motives of individuals and societies to provide meaningful benefits. Volunteer tourism is a relatively new concept and has grown rapidly in recent years with over 800 organisations worldwide now offering volunteer tourism experiences, and 1.6 million trips made per year. Nikki White, ABTA's (Association of British Travel Agents) Director of Destinations and Sustainability, said: "Volunteer tourism can deliver fantastic benefits to local communities, and provide valuable life experiences to volunteers. We've seen hundreds of examples of this from around the world – including conserving the environment, exchanging skills with communities and providing access to education (ABTA, 2016). According to Pompurová et al. (2018); volunteer tourism, as a combination of individual interests of visitors in the tourism industry with a positive direct impact on society as well as the natural and economic environment, supports the development of solidarity and tolerance among volunteers and the community, and enables volunteers to gain experiences and skills to ensure their personal as well as professional growth.

Voluntourism can be a powerful tool for tourism and community development (APEC, 2018). The ABTA Volunteer Tourism Guidelines (2016) state that voluntourism is characterised by four key elements:

- Travel experiences that are purchased as part of a package that includes flight, accommodation and/or other elements of the trip (e.g. work placement).
- The opportunity for tourists to 'work' while on a trip.
- The expectation that work is delivered by the tourist free of charge at the point of delivery.
- The concept that the work of the traveller (or volunteer) does will benefit the recipients and the tourists at the point of delivery.

Voluntourism in its various forms is on the rise. The market for 'meaningful holidays and experiences' attracts many travellers and the forecast over the coming years is for the market to continue this expansion. Voluntourism, which allows socially-conscious holiday-makers to pay thousands of dollars to work in poor communities across South America, Asia and Africa, has become a boom sector of the global travel industry. Three main types of voluntourism products are typically offered: environmental protection oriented activities; activities with children; animal care activities (Popham, 2015; The Code, 2016).

Today, there are private, public and non-profit organizations that prepare and carry out voluntary projects to contribute to these areas in disadvantaged countries in social, economic, cultural, health, education etc. areas. In the preparation and realization of these projects, it is essential to work with volunteer participants to support human-oriented approaches to peace and development by understanding interpersonal interactions and how these interactions

occur (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). It is the common goal of volunteering individuals in the projects to support the communities that are exposed to adverse occasions such as war, natural disaster, and economic crisis to overcome these events (Mostafanezhad, 2016). In addition to the social benefits provided by the volunteering projects and volunteers to the local people, it also aims to improve the characteristics of the visitor's goals, to meet new cultures, to develop their knowledge and skills, and to acquire new experiences besides the motivation of volunteering participants. Thailand, India, Peru, South Africa, Nepal, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Tanzania, Kenya and Vietnam are favorite destinations for volunteer projects. Evie Raijmakers from The Netherlands explained her voluntary project experience in India as "My favorite moments were visiting the Taj Mahal and when the kids took us into the slum to show their houses. I recommend volunteering program as I learned so much about Indian culture and lifestyle. I think we can learn a lot about Hinduism even though we are people with a different religion, we are still welcomed in all the temples to join the ceremony. I appreciate this!" (Volunteering Solutions, 2020).

In this study, it is aimed to determine the importance of voluntary recreation activities in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The role of these activities in sustainable development goals is presented with examples.

### **Volunteering and Voluntary Recreation**

Recreation is often described as a non-essential, mental state characterized by willing optimism. This concept of "recreation" and "recreational activity" is associated with two separate definitions during the person's condition, which they describe as recreation. The concept of recreation, on the basis of the "free time", defines the time of the person that they do not carry out the work for which they are responsible for a paid or unpaid compulsory and is excluded from his compulsory needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping etc. In the definition that includes the evaluation of leisure time with an activity, the concept of recreation is encountered, and it is defined as activities with the objectives such as learning, experiencing, having a good time, and getting benefits other than housekeeping, cooking, etc., which the person does not undertake as a mandatory task during free time (Dumazedier, 1974).

Recreational activities are intended for voluntary participation. For this purpose, participants need to have physical skills and learning efforts besides their cognitive motivations. Inclusion of experience in recreation is the main approach in such activities. People's desire to live long and healthy lives leads them to recreational activities that allow relaxing physically and mentally (Sagcan, 1986). Recreational activities include evaluating leisure time with activity by going through a voluntary decision process with regards to its purpose. In the conceptualization of volunteering recreation, volunteer mobility, volunteers, voluntary institutions and organizations, and non-profit brokerage firms are involved.

The concept of volunteering was used as a term of military origin in the early 1750s to describe individuals who voluntarily joined military units in the event of mobilization for civilians who were eligible for military service (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1990; Karl, 1984). In later periods, it is seen that it was used for people who provided gratuitous assistance in religious-based charities (Cnan & Amrofell, 1994). In addition to providing physical and cognitive benefits to the person, the concept of volunteers is expected to be individuals who are free from the feeling of waiting for a benefit. It is not possible to talk about an actual volunteer understanding in the event of financial gain during the volunteer activities. The Association for Voluntary Organizations (2010) distinguishes the concepts of volunteering and voluntary service. For volunteering, it is defined as "part-time or full-time work for individuals who

are properly and officially registered, as well as appropriate health care and third-party liability insurance as well as pocket money”. For voluntary service, it is defined as “participation in full-time project-based volunteer events that are carried out continuously in limited time.”

Volunteers can gain social benefits, including knowledge and skills by using their time, energy and experience to benefit both biodiversity and social development during international volunteer activities. Voluntary recreational activities within international volunteer programs include Education and Teaching: English teaching, environmental, childcare and eldercare etc.; Construction and Renovation: Infrastructure, superstructure, religious building and structure renovation, build houses and schools etc.; Conservation and Animal Care: Lions, sea turtles, primates, elephants, giant pandas, marine animals, endangered animals etc.; Development: Political, educational, economic, healthcare, food and water supply, healthy food etc. In the voluntary recreational activities carried out during the projects, individuals can share their time and abilities to create positive opportunities for the host community (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007).

## **Method**

Using an appropriate research method for inquiry is critical to successful research. This study is based on content analysis from qualitative research methods. Qualitative content analysis a research method of textual data analysis (Patton, 2002). It is “a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data” (Schreier, 2014). Krippendorff (2013) defines content analysis generally as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”. The research data on the role of voluntary recreational activities in sustainable development goals were collected through a review of the literature and analyzing the content of different international voluntary projects. In this study, the importance of voluntary recreational activities within the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals was determined. The role of these activities in sustainable development goals is presented with examples. At the “United Nations Sustainable Development Summit” held in New York in 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs (Global Goals) were accepted with the signatures of 193 countries. The United Nation’s Global Goals aim to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for everyone by 2030. These goals have gained importance by evaluating responsible behaviors developed for the protection of nature in a social movement, equality and sustainability in social equality, justice and economic distribution, and the conscious use of the environment within the context of concepts such as responsible production, responsible consumption, and respect for communities for a healthy and natural life (UNDP, 2017). In line with these goals, volunteer projects around the world are organized by foundations, institutions, organizations and communities, and there are recreational activities carried out with the participation of volunteers in the projects of non-profit individuals who do not demand benefit.

## **Voluntary Recreational Activities in Terms of UNDP 2030 Sustainable Development Goals**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs-Global Goals), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests (United Nations, 2020).

Voluntarily participated international voluntary aid projects aim to enable the individuals to gain a place within an organization and community, while also achieving spiritual gains such as the benefit of free time and achieving mental gain (Tiessen, 2012). The volunteer can count the time spent in the area where they will perform recreational activities as an experience. Therefore, in achieving the sustainable development goals, the recreational activities of volunteers participating in international volunteer projects can be diversified with the relevant target. To relate some of the The United Nation's Global Goals to voluntary recreational activities, these are:

**Goals 1-4: “No poverty:** Eradicating all forms of poverty, wherever it may be” and **“Quality Education:** Providing inclusive and egalitarian quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,”

In countries with high poverty rates, the labor force in the country is vulnerable to exploitation due to limited access to employment, forced labor laws, lack of representation of trade unions against political authority, and general economic problems. When these factors are combined, women and young people are forced to spend their lives in conditions where they neglect their families (UN Volunteers, 2017).

Volunteers acquire supporting roles in economic empowerment of women and young people and in local economic development through projects oriented towards reducing poverty. Local volunteer recreational activities, especially in many island countries in Africa and the Far East, carry out basic education supports such as foreign language education, basic mathematics, local mother tongue, history, arts etc. by benefiting the local people with the support of volunteers in a way that assists economic development (GoEco, 2019). Education plays a leading role in the fight against poverty so that educated individuals can accelerate social development in the region, discover poverty-preventing factors and raise awareness of the region in which they reside.

**Goals 2-3: “Zero hunger:** Ending hunger, ensuring food security, improving nutrition opportunities and promoting sustainable agriculture” and **“Good health and well-being:** Ensuring that people lead a healthy life and well-being of all ages”,

As of 2018, 815 million people in worldwide are undernourished, which means 1 out of 9 people are hungry. Today, global food and agriculture system is needed a fundamental change. Thus, sustainable food production systems need to be introduced to communities in order to mitigate dangers of hunger (UN Volunteers, 2019). Access to water, cleanliness and hygiene are human rights, but billions still face challenges during the day in accessing even the most basic services (Neto, Camkin et al., 2018).

Volunteers, who wish to provide food, serve, participate in food and beverage production and provide training often supply food and drink, especially at schools and hospitals in the hardest-to-reach areas. These activities mainly include tasks such as cooking, collecting waste food, and maintaining the hygiene of food and beverages. Recreational activities organized by the participation of volunteers in water and hygiene projects involve the construction of drilling new wells, repairing existing wells, improving spring and rainwater basins, providing water tanks, building home-type toilets, to purify the rubbish, and the other voluntary activities required by communities to obtain adequate amounts of safe and clean water by refining garbage (Food Cycle, 2019).

**Goals 5-10: “Gender equality:** Reducing inequalities within and between countries”and **“Reduced inequalities:** Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.”

Inequalities related to income, gender, age, sexual preference, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and opportunity still exist today in the world. Inequality threatens long-term social and economic development while harming poverty reduction. Thus, it leads to crime, disease and environmental degradation within society.

Projects and strategies organized by voluntary charities to reduce inequality are known to provide solutions to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Voluntary organizations and individuals who organize efforts to improve quality and gender inequality in education carry out campaigns on an international level of inequality and carry out promotion processes in activities that raise awareness of communities. Volunteers participating in projects in the area of reducing inequality support for the disadvantaged community, orphanage childcare and education, women empowerment teaching, women shelter activist, etc. (Volunteer World, 2019).

**Goals 6-7: “Clean water and sanitation:** Ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water sanitation for everyone” and **“Affordable and clean energy:** Providing accessible, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for everyone.”

Energy and clean water are the basic resources needed to sustain human life. There are still many communities around the world that do not have access to sustainable sources of energy and clean water. Availability of energy and potential for access to energy are important for social and economic development in every community. Water plays an important role in the development of many energy infrastructures from extraction, purification, washing and purification of raw materials to cooling agents in nuclear or thermal power plants, as fuel for hydroelectric power plants (World Health Organization & UNICEF, 2017).

Engineers or anyone with interest in engineering and the environment are eligible candidates for voluntary accessible and clean energy projects. During the voluntary recreational activities, they participate in projects such as contributing to creating renewable and sustainable energy programs, learning the steps of creating a basic energy source with solar energy and applying it in the target destination, and power supply and water supply to the schools and hospitals in distant regions.

**Goal 8-9: “Decent work and economic growth:** Ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development, providing full and productive employment and dignity” and **“Industry, innovation and infrastructure:** Building durable infrastructure, promoting sustainable and inclusive industrialization and new inventions.”

Economic development projects and programs are becoming increasingly important to low-income communities around the world. While some countries have benefited greatly from globalization in recent years, countries that have lagged behind and are struggling to improve their economies are more in number in the world. There are voluntary activities such as financial management, project development, marketing and communication, etc., in which communities in need can explain the new job opportunities of education, social security and sector professionals to the people in the region and thus can be beneficial.

Those who volunteer in economic development projects help raise local people’s standards of life and economic growth with the aim of helping communities. Volunteer community members who participate in this area have access to valuable information resources from various countries as well as having the opportunity to interact with local people. They have the opportunity to develop their own skills by taking part in consulting, training, and organizing

workshops. They participate in voluntary activities such as sharing their talents with local people in the region and providing them with the ability to develop products through technology (Volunteer Abroad, 2019).

**Goal 11: “Sustainable cities and communities:** Making cities and human settlements safe, strong and sustainable, embracing everyone.”

It is not possible to talk about sustainable development without significant change in the strategies and management of building urban areas in safe and developed cities where people live. Many steps need to be taken, such as making cities safe and sustainable, accessing affordable housing and improving and transforming slums. Although the realization of sustainable development goals requires labour, social awareness and education should be prioritized (Butcher & Smith, 2010).

Urban sustainable place projects carried out with volunteer participants play an active role in the creation of social consciousness. Volunteer participants who can take part in projects on the design, promotion and management of sustainable cities and habitats have the opportunity to acquire their skills, development and new acquisitions in many areas by participating in such projects. In these projects, which provide the opportunity to work with engineering specialists such as construction and landscaping, the learning of the region or new cultures from which development is acquired is not ignored. Developing detailed designs with architects and providing new acquisitions and developments in computer programs to be used during these designs are possible opportunities (AIESEC, 2019).

**Goal 12-13: “Responsible consumption and production:** Ensuring sustainable consumption and production” and **“Climate action:** Urgent action to tackle climate change and its impacts.”

The socially conscious consumer is defined as a consumer who considers the public consequences of their private consumption or tries to use their purchasing power to drive social change (Webster, 1975). Sustainable consumption, production, resource and energy efficiency are all related to promoting sustainable infrastructure and accessing basic services, making green and nature sustainable, and aiming to provide a better quality of life for everyone (Gilg, Barr & Ford, 2005). Nowadays, climate change affects every country as an international problem. While it affects national economies in terms of production activities, it also negatively affects human social life. Both the food and agriculture sectors are among the areas most affected by climate change. This change obliges international policies to change, develop and media agendas to emerge (Newell & Taylor, 2018).

Voluntary organizations and participants carry out awareness-raising campaigns to reduce consumption while continuing their assistance to areas experiencing difficulty in accessing food. Also, climate change volunteers assist in the analysis and production of research abstracts for policy development in the areas of clean energy and climate change. Volunteer researchers conduct research and analysis by examining the results of the financing of coal and various mines, which increase emission and pollution, and other research tasks related to the campaign area. Volunteers present alternative and re-consumption examples aiming to prevent waste with “know-how” to increase green energy sources and reduce food waste to local people through various seminars and events. Activities carried out include voluntary activities in the field of sustainable production, such as ecological farming, agro-ecological farming, green building, and recycling (GoEco, 2019).

**Goal 14-15: “Life below water:** Protecting and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” and **“Life on land:** Preserving, restoring and ensuring sustainable use of terrestrial

ecosystems, ensuring sustainable use of forests, combating desertification, stopping and reversing soil fertility, and stopping biodiversity loss.”

With the increase in water temperature in the oceans as a result of global warming, the amount of snow and ice decreases and the sea level rises, leading to the deterioration of the balance of natural habitat in the region. In order to improve coastal and aquatic life, mitigation of negative impacts and to maintain ecological balance, volunteer programs are aimed at carrying out their activities in a wide range of areas (Ripple et al. 2019).

Wildlife conservation volunteering is seen as an opportunity to protect endangered species from extinction. Volunteer projects include recreational activities with sea turtles, lions, primates, elephants, giant pandas, marine animals and endangered animals, and aim to make positive contributions in the areas of care, health and cleanliness for the sustainability of natural life (Volunteer World, 2019). Volunteers have the opportunity to get to know exotic and native wildlife and the care, and treatment of different species of animals are the objectives of the volunteer projects that take place in this area.

## **Conclusion**

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside of one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. The combined act of tourism and volunteering, where volunteer services are delivered free at the point of delivery at the destination. The duration of volunteering can last from a few hours to up to one year, and can be undertaken by domestic or international tourists. Voluntourism is a complex and diverse industry, covering a variety of activities in different cultural contexts. Voluntourism activity/program is a particular activity or longer-term program that voluntourists are involved in during their stay. Nowadays, Voluntourism is one of the fastest growing tourism niche markets in the world. Globally, more than 10 million voluntourists are estimated to have spent between USD 1.6 to 2.8 billion in 2016. Voluntourism has positive impacts on communities, for instance in the protection of wildlife and the broader environment, and the contribution of tourist spend to local economies. Economic benefits can be enhanced by linking voluntourism activities to local supply chains in transport, hospitality, and tourism (APEC, 2018).

The number of studies about the rise of this niche market in tourism has rapidly expanded. United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are among the largest sending regions and Peru, Mexico, Thailand, the Philippines are some of the greatest receiving areas of voluntourism. There is a need to share insights on best practices that will contribute to policy-making and the enrichment of living standards of local communities. If managed well, voluntourism can bring a range of social, economic and environmental benefits. Because voluntourism often takes place in communities that are removed from major tourism flows there is potential to generate growth that is more inclusive. However, when not done well, there can be unintended consequences that can effect both the community, host economy and the voluntourist negatively. This niche tourism offering must be developed appropriately, and be linked as much as possible to local economic development. Voluntourism has the potential to facilitate cultural exchange across the countries and different cultures, enhance people-to-people connectivity and mobility, and aid in skill transfer (APEC, 2018).



According to Sin (2009); volunteer tourism (a form of tourism where the tourists volunteer in local communities as part of his or her travel) is becoming increasingly available and popular amongst everyday tourists in different parts of the World. Central to volunteer tourism is the idea that tourism ventures can and should bring about positive impacts to locals in host-destinations (Sin, 2009). Driven by the desire to deeply understand and experience the place they are visiting, tourists are seeking more hands-on travel opportunities. Volunteer tourism, an emerging new trend, seeks to fulfil this desire to visit, experience and give back. Tourists seeking to provide a volunteer service as part of their holiday experience are part of a growing trend. In fact, industry statistics and media reports suggest that it is one of the most promising trends in travel. Many find that tourism and volunteering are two important ways to spend leisure time. It is not hard to imagine, in today's fast-paced world, demand that combines these two activities. As the global community shrinks in size, the notion of 'helping your neighbour' is expanding. People are seeking ways to give back – within their local community as well as throughout the world. However, time is a significant factor, with tourists seeking ways to travel, experience the local culture as much as possible and still do something to help others. Additionally, some tourists are more comfortable with enjoying their experience in a destination if they feel that they are helping in some way. At its most basic, volunteer tourism has evolved from what some would call volunteer travel (Mintel, 2008). Beside volunteer tourism, voluntary recreation activities have emerged in line with the purposes of voluntary projects in which individuals participate in their spare time, such as providing social benefits and obtaining intangible gains.

The year (2017) marked the UN Year of International Sustainable Development. In September 2015, the UN confirmed its support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through to 2030. In this study, the role and importance of voluntary recreation activities in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals were presented. In the study based on content analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, international volunteer projects related to the following SDGs are exemplified:

- **Goals 1-4:** “**No poverty:** Eradicating all forms of poverty, wherever it may be” and “**Quality Education:** Providing inclusive and egalitarian quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,”
- **Goals 2-3:** “**Zero hunger:** Ending hunger, ensuring food security, improving nutrition opportunities and promoting sustainable agriculture” and “**Good health and well-being:** Ensuring that people lead a healthy life and well-being of all ages”,
- **Goals 5-10:** “**Gender equality:** Reducing inequalities within and between countries” and “**Reduced inequalities:** Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.”
- **Goals 6-7:** “**Clean water and sanitation:** Ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water sanitation for everyone” and “**Affordable and clean energy:** Providing accessible, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for everyone.”
- **Goal 8-9:** “**Decent work and economic growth:** Ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development, providing full and productive employment and dignity” and “**Industry, innovation and infrastructure:** Building durable infrastructure, promoting sustainable and inclusive industrialization and new inventions.”

- **Goal 11: “Sustainable cities and communities:** Making cities and human settlements safe, strong and sustainable, embracing everyone.”
- **Goal 12-13: “Responsible consumption and production:** Ensuring sustainable consumption and production” and **“Climate action:** Urgent action to tackle climate change and its impacts.”
- **Goal 14-15: “Life below water:** Protecting and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” and **“Life on land:** Preserving, restoring and ensuring sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, ensuring sustainable use of forests, combating desertification, stopping and reversing soil fertility, and stopping biodiversity loss.”

According to the results of the study, it was found out that international voluntary projects contribute directly to sustainable development goals and that the participation of individuals in voluntary recreational activities through voluntary projects has an important role in achieving the goals. In this respect, it was concluded that the aims of individuals today, such as increasing voluntary support and providing social benefits in destinations during their trips and this is in line with the understanding of responsible tourists. Increasing the responsible tourist approach towards underdeveloped international destinations through international voluntary projects and supporting social development as the main objective of these projects were found to be the key factor in order to achieve sustainable development goals.

The Tips for a Responsible Traveller were developed by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics and are based on the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. According to this document, volunteer tourists can follow these practical steps for responsible travel (UNWTO, 2020):

#### 1. Honour your hosts and our common heritage

- Research your destination to learn about local customs, traditions, and social conditions. It is a great way to build understanding of the local community and excitement for your adventure ahead.
- Learn to speak a few words in the local language. This can help you connect with the local community and its people in a more meaningful way.
- Experience and respect all that makes a tourism destination different and unique, from its history, architecture, religion, dress, and communication codes, to its music, art, and cuisine.
- Always ask before taking photographs of other people as their privacy matter as much as yours. Do not offer money to get the desired picture.
- Pause and reflect before criticizing local living conditions or customs. Learn to listen and leave your preconceptions at home.
- Treat with courtesy and respect staff and service providers at all tourism facilities.

#### 2. Protect our planet

- Reduce your environmental impact by being a guardian of natural resources, especially forests and wetlands.
- Respect wildlife and their natural habitats. Animal attractions may imply cruelty.
- Do not purchase products made of endangered plants, animals, or non-sustainable hardwood.
- In protected areas, access only the places open to visitors. Do not offer money to locals to discover “no-go areas”.

- Sleep green and go rural as countryside has so much to offer.
- Reduce waste, single-use plastic, water & energy consumption and plan your transport to cut carbon emissions.
- Leave a minimum footprint and a good impression behind.

### 3. Support the Local Economy

- Buy locally made handicrafts and products. Respect livelihoods of local artisans by paying a fair price.
- Do not buy counterfeit products or items prohibited by national and international regulations.
- Hire local guides, spend locally, and find out about tipping practices.
- Support businesses embracing diversity and equality.
- Slow down and spend more time in less visited areas.

### 4. Travel safely

- Take health and safety precautions and consult your national authorities in case of doubts.
- Read the small print in visa requirements and your travel insurance.
- Be aware of cancellation policies and your passenger rights.
- Practice “social distancing” during epidemics. Avoid crowds and sign up for security alerts.
- Know how to access medical care or contact your embassy in case of an emergency

### 5. Be an Informed Traveler

- Research well before engaging into voluntary tourism.
- Choose tourism operators with environmental policies and community projects. Some initiatives may seem green or ethical but do not provide decent working conditions.
- Observe national laws and regulations. Follow the rules at religious sites and respect “private spaces”.
- Observe human rights and protect children from exploitation. Abusing children is a crime.
- Refrain from giving money and gifts to begging children. Support community projects instead.
- Have fun but respect the locals and their lifestyle. Interact with them to understand their culture.
- Take photos of protected cultural artefacts as mementos of your trip

### 6. Use Digital Platforms Wisely

- Before embarking on your travels, browse online reviews and blogs.
- Provide honest reviews upon your return and promote your travel experiences on social media.
- Think twice before posting selfies and pictures of other people. They may disapprove and your likes can wait.
- Advocate for non-profit and community projects you have learned about.
- Report injustice, exploitation, and discrimination (UNWTO, 2020).

Proper positioning of volunteer recreational activities within volunteer projects in achieving sustainable development goals is an effective step both in developing the skills of participants and in transforming destinations. In the preparation phase of international voluntary projects, it is important to determine the knowledge and skills of potential participants correctly and to prepare for the inadequacies of society through a preliminary study and to set up activities. It is important for official agencies and intermediary agencies to identify weaknesses in the regions and to plan jointly with local agencies and government agencies for the execution and coordination of voluntary projects.

It is also significant in terms of reaching the goals of the projects that the volunteer participants take part in the projects without the purpose of earning financially and act with the motivation of supporting. The tourist attractions of the disadvantaged communities in the destinations, as well as the recreational activities which are made attractive to the participants of the voluntary projects, can be directed to the benefit of the local community. Coordination of transportation, accommodation, and food and beverage activities with local stakeholders within the projects examined were seen to be important for the sustainability of the projects. These activities can be called invisible tourism promotion ambassadors thanks to the announcement and sharing of the activities of the volunteer projects to the environment as a marketing element by the volunteer participants.

Infrastructure investments, transport, irrigation, energy, information and communication technologies are crucial for strengthening communities by ensuring sustainable development in many countries. Health and education improvements not only increase social efficiency but also trigger an increase in economic income in a linear direction. The tourist attraction of the destinations increases participation in voluntary projects as well as the fact that the participants will gain knowledge, skills, and new cultural achievements is an important criterion in the participation factor. It makes it possible for the next project to be the same or more developable. Thus, the recreational activities within the projects attract the attention of the participants and can serve as sustainable agents to achieve a positive win-win situation. The inclusion of the projects in the travel and holiday plans by the tourists who make travel plans at both national and international levels and realizing social benefit activities within these plans can increase the awareness of the local and regional touristic attractions at the international level as well as raising awareness of the destinations. It allows tourists travelling to nearby destinations to visit at the same time. Therefore, it is recommended to increase and participate in these activities by increasing and diversifying recreational activities. Sharing trips, events, blogs, and photos covering the project process attract new volunteer candidates and provide sustainable awareness of participation in these projects.

Thanks to the participation of the volunteers in the projects and their recreational activities, they can attract the attention of businessmen who can invest in the region, and they can examine the investment opportunity thanks to the volunteers' resources and access to the reports they have prepared. In addition, issues such as preparing reports for the evaluation of job opportunities in the region and ensuring that women and young people in the region get experience outside the region with the possibility of internships can be shared with local organizations. Thus, it is foreseen that by creating a cross-interaction, it can be possible to achieve both the Sustainable Development Goals and to acquire an improvement above the expected improvement.

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