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# Volunteering among immigrants

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# Abstract

**I**n this study, a qualitative research method is used in data gathering and analysis. Five volunteer coordinators and ten immigrant volunteers are interviewed. The study focuses on describing and analyzing the state of formal volunteering among immigrants in mainstream volunteer-involving organizations, and the value of volunteering in promoting the integration of immigrants into society. Immigrants in the metropolitan area of Helsinki are the subject of this study. The metropolitan area is where nearly forty percent of the 339 925 immigrants and people with an immigrant background in Finland reside.

Needless to say, immigrants lose their social and human capital when they immigrate and settle down in a new country where the language and culture are quite different from their own. Volunteering helps immigrants to develop their social and human capital, and acquire other manifold benefits. But in this region immigrants are underrepresented in mainstream volunteer-involving organizations. Volunteering for immigrants is not just about fulfilling altruistic social obligations, it is also an important tool of integration. Immigrant organizations, local and national government, volunteer-involving organizations and organizations that promote volunteerism should make every effort to increase the demand for and supply of volunteering opportunities for immigrants to promote the social and economic inclusion of immigrants.

# Tiivistelmä

**T**ässä tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin laadullisen tutkimuksen menetelmiä aineiston keruuseen ja analyysiin. Tutkimuksessa haastateltiin viittä vapaaehtoistoiminnan koordinaattoria ja kymmentä maahanmuuttajataustaista vapaaehtoista. Tutkimus keskittyy kuvaamaan ja analysoimaan muodollisen vapaaehtoistoiminnan asemaa maahanmuuttajien keskuudessa tunnetuissa vapaaehtoistoiminnan järjestöissä. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan vapaaehtoistoiminnan merkitystä maahanmuuttajien kotoutumiselle. Tutkimuksen kohteena ovat pääkaupunkiseudulla asuvat maahanmuuttajat. Pääkaupunkiseudulla asuu lähes neljäkymmentä prosenttia Suomen 339 925:stä maahanmuuttajasta ja maahanmuuttajataustaisesta henkilöstä.

Maahanmuuttajien asettuessa uuteen maahan jonka kieli ja kulttuuri poikkeavat heidän omistaan, heidän sosiaalinen ja inhimillinen pääomaansa vähenee. Vapaaehtoistoiminta auttaa maahanmuuttajia kehittämään sosiaalista ja inhimillistä pääomaansa ja saamaan samalla muita lukuisia hyötyjä. Pääkaupunkiseudulla maahanmuuttajat ovat kuitenkin aliedustettuja tunnetuissa vapaaehtoistoiminnan järjestöissä. Maahanmuuttajille vapaaehtoistoiminta ei ole pelkästään epäitsestä sosiaalisten normien noudattamista, vaan tärkeä väline kotoutumisprosessissa. Maahanmuuttajajärjestöjen, paikallishallinnon ja valtion, vapaaehtoisjärjestöjen ja vapaaehtoistoimintaa tukevien järjestöjen pitäisi pyrkiä kasvattamaan maahanmuuttajien vapaaehtoistoiminnan kysyntää ja tarjontaa edistääkseen maahanmuuttajien sosiaalista ja taloudellista yhdenvertaisuutta.

# Introduction

**T**his study focuses on analyzing the state of immigrants' formal volunteering in mainstream organizations<sup>1</sup>, and the value of volunteering in promoting the integration of immigrants into society. Questions like, what is formal voluntary work or simply Volunteering? who is a volunteer? are answered variously, but for this study we use the following definitions: formal volunteering is "a non-spontaneous form of helping behavior offered by individuals to others within the context of an organization in a coordinated way, without coercion, remuneration, or direct financial rewards" (Behina, 2012 P.7) Volunteers are "individuals who carry out unpaid activities of their own free will, often in support of an activity or initiative serving the general interest of the wider society, and without replicating or substituting the work of paid staff"<sup>2</sup>.

Formal Voluntary work is a very common practice in western society. The culture of organized or formal volunteering in Finland dates back to 1840s<sup>3</sup>. Helping relatives, neighbors and community members out of cultural and religious duties is not something new for immigrants. For most new immigrants and new Finns, who are from the developing world, working for free for an organization might be unusual as they immigrated mainly to improve their lot. Studies show that people generally volunteer for altruistic reasons, but in immigration countries like Canada, the youth and new immigrants engage in volunteer activities mainly for the purposes of finding paid employment<sup>4</sup>. Various studies have shown the wide-ranging benefits of Volunteering for immigrants, especially in developing social and human capital.

About six percent of the population of Finland is made up of immigrants and people with immigrant background<sup>5</sup>. In Finland about 70 percent of the 339 925 immigrants and people with an immigrant background have European and Asian backgrounds<sup>6</sup>. Estonians, Russians, and people

<sup>1</sup> Organizations open to all sectors of society.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/Volunteering%20for%20Refugee%20Integration\\_SHARE%20Toolkit\\_1015\\_0.pdf](http://www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/Volunteering%20for%20Refugee%20Integration_SHARE%20Toolkit_1015_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Study on Volunteering in the European Union Country Report Finland [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/national\\_report\\_fi\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/national_report_fi_en.pdf) accessed 2 March 2017

<sup>4</sup> a wealth of literature is available on volunteering in Canada. <http://www.wallnetwork.ca/inequity/LL&W2005/SchugurenskyPaper.pdf> Accessed 2 March

<sup>5</sup> All individuals born in Finland from both parents who are immigrants.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa> visited in March 2017

from both backgrounds account for nearly one-third of the immigrants and people with immigrant backgrounds living in Finland. The Helsinki metropolitan area consists of four cities/municipalities: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, and Kauniainen<sup>7</sup>. By the end of 2015, the metropolitan area was home for 1.2 million residents, that is about 22.4 percent of the total population of Finland<sup>8</sup>. In the beginning of 2015, the percentage of foreign language speakers out of the total population of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa was 14.3, 14.3 and 15.8, respectively<sup>9</sup>. By the end of 2016, about 38 percent of the total foreign language speakers in Finland were living in the metropolitan area of Helsinki.

This study does not include immigrants from Estonia, EU, EFTA (European Free Trade Area) and North America; according to a report by Statistics Finland, immigrants from these groups are economically well integrated - the employment rate of men from this group is higher than Finnish men, the women's employment rate is also not much lower than Finnish women<sup>10</sup>. I believe studying and identifying the challenges that should be overcome and opportunities that should be pursued helps not only to promote volunteering among immigrants but also to scrutinize the role volunteering plays in improving the social and economic participation or the inclusion of immigrants from nations other than the ones mentioned above.

In this study the word 'Immigrant', unless otherwise stated, would include those who migrated to Finland to live permanently regardless of the reasons that brought them to Finland. This study focuses on analyzing immigrants' formal volunteering in mainstream organizations.

The study is organized as follows. Section two provides a short statement of the goal of the study followed by a background information that focuses on general information about the state of immigration and in-

<sup>7</sup> As Kauniainen is a small city enclosed in Espoo with less than 10000 residents, we will focus only on the three cities of the metropolitan area.

<sup>8</sup> 2016 Yearbook of Statistics Finland, section 24.4 population.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa.html>

<sup>10</sup> [http://tietotrendit.stat.fi/mag/article/167/#\\_ga=1.165355581.388903841.1481545156](http://tietotrendit.stat.fi/mag/article/167/#_ga=1.165355581.388903841.1481545156)

tegration in Finland, in section three. In section four, literature on volunteering opportunities for immigrants, and its benefits and challenges in promoting integration are briefly discussed. In section five the method applied for data gathering and analysis is presented. In section six the findings of the study are discussed, and finally conclusion and recommendations in section seven.

## ***OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY***

A lot has been talked about the role of volunteering as a complimentary and non-negligible means of promoting the integration of immigrants into society. Studies also show that volunteering is being taken as an indicator of social and economic integration. Though discussions on the value of volunteering in promoting integration are not new in Finland, the studies done are limited in number and quality. This exploratory study focuses on two main issues: firstly, discussing the state of volunteering among immigrants in general – the challenges and opportunities of volunteering among immigrants in Finland. Reflecting on the role of volunteering on the social and economic inclusion of immigrants is the other objective of this study. Volunteering for immigrants is not just about fulfilling altruistic social obligations, it is an important tool of integration that should be studied and applied to promote the social and economic inclusion of immigrants.



## BACKGROUND

### Immigration and integration in Finland

This section doesn't discuss the immigration and integration policies of Finland, but attempts to bring to attention some facts that would cast some light on the current state of affairs of immigration and integration in Finland.

### Immigration

The immigrant community in Finland is made up of refugees, asylum seekers and people who immigrated to Finland for various other reasons. An asylum seeker is someone who has moved to a foreign country and whose request or application for asylum is being processed. Whereas a refugee is someone who fled persecution or conflict and is granted the right to reside in a foreign country. Starting from the year 2001 the Finnish government has been accepting 750 quota refugees annually – the figure was raised to 1050 in 2014 and 2015 <sup>11</sup>. While waiting for their applications to be processed asylum seekers have the right to volunteer or do paid work three months after they applied for asylum<sup>12</sup>.

Though Finland had received a large number of refugees from Eastern Karelia and the Soviet Union in the early 1920s, and later at the end of the continuation war (1941), Finland is a new immigration country. The arrival of refugees from Chile and Vietnam in the 1970s<sup>13</sup> through the UNHCR can be taken as the first reception of refugees from afar. In the beginning of the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russians and Estonians have migrated to Finland. In that period Students, from fellow communist and pro-soviet countries, who were studying in the ex-Soviet Union crossed the border to Finland seeking asylum. In 1991 the col-



**Finland is  
a new  
immigration  
country.**

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.migri.fi/asylum\\_in\\_finland/quota\\_refugees](http://www.migri.fi/asylum_in_finland/quota_refugees)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.migri.fi/asylum\\_in\\_finland/right\\_to\\_employment](http://www.migri.fi/asylum_in_finland/right_to_employment)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.migri.fi/about\\_us/history\\_of\\_immigration/history\\_nutshell/1/0/the\\_nineties\\_somalians\\_and\\_ingrians\\_59160](http://www.migri.fi/about_us/history_of_immigration/history_nutshell/1/0/the_nineties_somalians_and_ingrians_59160)

lapse of the central government of Somalia and the Soviet Union led to the fleeing and arrival of a large number of Somali refugees from Somalia and other East African countries, through Russia to Finland, and later many more came through family reunification. In the 1990s the wars in Iraq, former Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan have forced the flight of a large number of refugees and asylum seekers to Finland, as it did to most European countries. According to Finnish Immigration Service, 2015 was the year in which there was a record number of asylum seekers, 32476, entered Finland; when adjusted to population size it was the fourth largest in the European Union – in 2009 the arrival of 5988 asylum seekers was the previous record in Finland. The three largest groups in 2015 were from Iraq, Somalia, and Afghanistan, of which Iraqis constitute about 63 percent of the total asylum seekers in that year<sup>14</sup>.

Origin and Background	Population	First Language	population
Russia (form. Soviet Union)	79016	Russian	72436
Estonia	46960	Estonian	48087
Somali	17761	Somali	17871
Iraq	13967	English	17784
Former Yugoslavia	11295	Arabic	16713
China	10172	Kurdish	11271
Vietnam	9218	Chinese	10722
Thailand	8254	Albania	9233
Iran	6990	Persia	8745
Afghanistan	6248	Thai	8582

Table 1. The ten largest immigrant groups in Finland according to origin, background and first language.  
Source: 2016-yearbook of Statistics Finland.

Finland's immigration policy promotes a controlled and efficient immigration of labour to meet the needs of employers and offset population decline and aging. It is also based on the EU migration and asylum policy and other international agreements<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.migri.fi/download/65019\\_Tilastograafit\\_2015\\_EN\\_final.pdf?ddef4aa0d380d488](http://www.migri.fi/download/65019_Tilastograafit_2015_EN_final.pdf?ddef4aa0d380d488)

<sup>15</sup> <http://intermin.fi/en/migration/migration-and-asylum-policy> Finland's immigration policy

## Integration

The Integration of immigrants is defined by the 2004 Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy in the EU (CBPs) as “a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States”<sup>16</sup>. Presently the main integration policy instrument in Finland is the government integration programme for 2016–2019<sup>17</sup>. General integration monitoring is undertaken by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö). The Finnish integration policy promotes employment, one of the main principles mentioned in the CBPs, as a central and key factor for the economic integration of immigrants.

Revisiting and examining the Integration policies and strategies of Finland is not the issue of this section, but rather to show the state of immigrants' labour market integration, using Matti Sarvimäki's (2017) statistical analysis. The analysis mainly focuses on refugees and asylum seekers from three major refugee-sending countries: Iraq, Somalia, and Afghanistan. The statistical analysis is carried out in order to study how people from these countries fared in the Finnish labour market in 1990–2013, and the results are gloomy. At the end of their first-year men born in Iraq, Somali and Afghanistan had about 70 percentage point lower employment rate than Finnish native men of the same age. After ten years of their arrival men from Iraq and Somalia had an employment rate of 48 percentage point lower than that of the same aged native men; the corresponding figure for men from Afghanistan was a 37 percentage point lower rate; the unemployment rate of women from these countries is higher than that of men. The average earnings of men from these countries are only 22–38 percent of the average earnings of native men, women's

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles\\_en.pdf](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles_en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79156/TEMjul\\_47\\_2016\\_verkko.pdf?sequence=1](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79156/TEMjul_47_2016_verkko.pdf?sequence=1)  
government integration programme for 2016–2019 and “Government Resolution on a Government Integration Programme”

<sup>18</sup> the integration action of Finnish Government, read on 15.3.2017. <http://vnk.fi/documents/10616/1266558/>

earnings were even smaller, this group has received more social benefits than other immigrant groups. Sarvimäki states that the main cause for the dismal result in labour market integration is the failure of strategies and policies followed so far. He hopes that the new integration policy (2016-2019) might solve bottlenecks of the old one.

Finland has recently received a large number of asylum seekers, integrating the recent arrivals and the old ones calls for new strategies. The arrival of a large number of asylum seekers in 2015, eighty-four percent of whom are under 34 years old<sup>18</sup>, has forced the authorities to come up with new policies and strategies. The new plan of action drafted in 2016 revamps the old strategies with six new measures that have detailed procedures expected to improve and speed up the integration process. The action plans may not eliminate all the labour market integration bottlenecks, but, it is a positive step as it attempts to deal with the problem from all possible approaches. Though the plan of action has not directly mentioned the role volunteering should and could play, one of the six measures deals with actions that should be taken to enhance intercultural dialogue through art, culture, and sports in order to help refugees avoid the feelings of being an outsider and hence feeling, lonely and insecure, especially in their early days in Finland.

Immigrants' integration into the host society is a process of social and economic inclusion. The process could be a long one calling for adjustment and accommodation from both immigrants and the host society. In his widely cited theory of acculturation, John Berry (1980) states that minorities acculturate in one of the following ways.

<sup>18</sup> the integration action of Finnish Government, read on 15.3.2017. <http://vnk.fi/documents/10616/1266558/Kotouttamisen-toimintasuunnitelma-030516.pdf/c600bd8f-7c5c-43b6-aba4-5aade9aafe0d>

Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)

Maintenance of heritage culture	High	Low	High
		Separation	Integration
Low		Marginalization	Assimilation

Figure 1. The two-dimensional acculturation model of Berry modified by Kiyioglu, Levent & Wimmer, Heinz (2015)

Failing to socially and economically integrate immigrants would not only bring economic burden to the host society, but also bring social exclusion/separation with its social ills; it is also against basic values of democracy.

## LITERATURE ON VOLUNTEERING

Formal volunteering has become a part of life in Finland. A survey conducted in 2009 by statistics Finland showed that nearly forty percent of Finns were volunteering in the last 12 months preceding the survey<sup>19</sup>. Sixty-two percent of Finnish volunteers were involved in an organized or formal form of volunteering, such as carrying out voluntary work for a voluntary association or organization. The three most popular volunteering sectors are: sport 30%, social and health 25% and children and young

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.stat.fi/til/akay/2009/04/akay\\_2009\\_04\\_2011-09-16\\_kat\\_002\\_fi.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/akay/2009/04/akay_2009_04_2011-09-16_kat_002_fi.html)

people 22% (Yeung, A. B 2002). The participation of young people aged 15-24 is very much diminishing, and participation in voluntary work is very high among people who have high socio-economic and education levels. Though she does not discuss the state of immigrants, Riitta Hanifi states that the participation of the unemployed, those with ill health and pensioners – those who are economically weak – is less than other groups (Hanifi:2013).

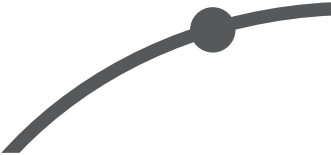
As Finland is a new immigrant destination country we find very limited research works on volunteering among immigrants in mainstream organizations. By reviewing studies carried out in Canada and England which are more traditional countries of immigration, we can find valuable information. The value in building human and social capital will also be discussed.

### **Building human and social capital**


Human capital is defined as “the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (OECD, 2001). Immigrants and refugees, especially from poor countries, hold relatively less human capital and often face difficulties in transferring their skills into the labour market of the host country. Human capital transferability depends on the closeness, in education and labour market standards, between the host and source countries (Basilo & Bauer, 2010)<sup>20</sup>.

Volunteering helps to build human capital by enabling immigrants to informally learn new skills and also to get acquainted with the work culture of the host country.

Literature nowadays very commonly associate volunteering with building social capital. An author named Lyda Hanifan is believed to be the



**Volunteering helps to build human capital by enabling immigrants to informally learn new skills and get acquainted with the work culture of the host country.**



<sup>20</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/site/worldforum/33703702.pdf>. The Well-being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital. OECD 2001

first person to define social capital in a book published in the United States in 1916. He described social capital as “those tangible assets that count for most in the daily lives of people: namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit”<sup>21</sup>. In his discussion on forms of capital Pierre Bourdieu (1986)<sup>22</sup>, defines social capital as the sum of potential resources possessed by or linked to a durable network of relationships; members of the network are entitled to utilize the capital. For Robert Putnam social capital refers to “social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity” (2000:21). Social capital is defined by the OECD as “networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.”<sup>23</sup> Putnam (2000) discusses two forms of social capital. The first one is bonding social capital, which is the solidarity (strong ties), trust and reciprocity as resources for meeting social, psychological, and economic needs. The second one is bridging social capital which is an inclusive network that is outward looking and involves people across social cleavages – social ties that cut across differences such as race, class or ethnicity.

Immigrant associations and religious communities can create a space that would enable immigrants to develop social capital. When we visit websites of ethnic associations and immigrant religious communities, we may see a list of activities aimed at promoting integration – in addition to their primary tasks of providing social, religious and cultural services. The INVOLVE project (2006)<sup>24</sup> recommends that immigrant association should be assisted to develop their capacity to provide both bonding and bridging social capital – the links, trust and shared values that make helping each other possible; and, as most immigrants may not know about volunteering and its various advantages, immigrant associa-

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Bourdieu-Forms-of-Capital.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Involve project: Involvement of third-country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration a report by CEV 2006

tions could provide bonding social capital by serving as a link and sources of information that could help immigrants to volunteer in mainstream organizations.

Immigrants can join volunteering organizations through various means and motives, but the acquaintances they make with staff, clients and fellow volunteers, could be potential bridging social capital. Putnam elaborates bridging social capital, quoting Economic sociologist Mark Granovetter, “when seeking jobs, or political allies, the ‘weak’ ties that link me to distant acquaintances who move in different circles from mine are actually more valuable than the ‘strong’ ties that link me to relatives and intimate friends whose sociological niches is very like my own” (Putnam, 2000: Ps.22-23).

The OECD (2001) report states that developing human capital, like gaining teamwork and communication skills, boosts social capital. Generally, Improving or developing skills leads to the development of both human and social capital.

### **How and why do immigrants volunteer?**

Immigrants are motivated to volunteer by a number of reasons, and also get volunteering opportunities through various ways. Handy & Greenspan (2009), argue that immigrants tend to volunteer for religious associations; mainly for non-mainstream religious associations affiliated with their own cultural and linguistic groups. Immigrants give larger volunteer hours to religious associations compared to Canadian born people. Surveys show that local volunteers relatively contribute in large number more time to sports and recreation groups (Statistics Canada, 2012; Statistics Finland, 2009). Handy & Greenspan believe that it is not the norms immigrants brought from their homeland that encouraged them to give



more volunteer time for religious organizations, it is rather the opportunity that the venues created for immigrants to meet and socialize with fellow immigrants from their own cultural and linguistic groups.

For Immigrants, especially for the newly arrived, finding volunteering opportunities isn't easy. Ashton et al (2006) pointed out that the most common source of information about volunteering opportunities is social connections or informal and formal networks. When it comes to motivation for volunteering, there is no definitive explanation about what motivates immigrants to volunteer. Studies done in Canada indicated that immigrants volunteer mainly because of their strong wish to support causes they believe in (Ashton et al, 2006; Handy & Greenspan, 2009). On the other hand, Statistics Canada reported a substantial increase in volunteering among the youth and immigrants, believing that volunteering could improve their chances of finding employment (Statistics Canada, 2001). Schugurensky et al, (2005) analyzing the data from Canada's National Survey of Learning and Work, indicated that about 58 percent of immigrants who had been in Canada six to ten years and about 45 percent of immigrants who lived in Canada for less than 5 years volunteered mainly to improve their job opportunities. Volunteer coordinators believe, although helping others and meeting new people are some of the reasons that motivate immigrants to volunteer, the two main motives are: improving English language skills and developing or gaining job skills. Ashton et al. put the reasons that motivate volunteers to volunteer into three groups: "1. Personal /practical 2. Personal/social 3. Universal duty/values-driven volunteering" (Ashton et al, P.15, 2006)

## WHY DO IMMIGRANTS VOLUNTEER?

When we discuss the benefits immigrant volunteers acquire through volunteering, the following reasons are usually mentioned:

- meeting new friends
- advance ones physical and psychological wellbeing
- learning new skills
- making social connections
- an opportunity to support a cause one feels strongly about
- learning about the host country and its work culture
- improving language skills
- getting job reference/improve chances of getting a job

Feelings of usefulness and keeping oneself busy are also mentioned (Wilson and Lewis, 2006; Ashton et al., 2006; Handy and Greenspan, 2009)

## Barriers to volunteering

Strauß is puzzled by the fact that unemployed immigrants and the average citizen are not volunteering in large numbers despite having ample time to spend, and lack social networks because of their social and economic status. Whereas those who are doing economically well lack time, and have no problem of social connections, but still volunteer in large numbers (Strauß, 2008). Poor knowledge of the host community language, cultural misunderstandings and racism are some of the most commonly mentioned Barriers of volunteering. Studies also show that one of the main factors that explains the limited participation of immigrants (refugees and asylum seekers) is immigrants' lack of knowledge about formal volunteering and its multifaceted benefits. In addition to that the restricted social networks they have – absence of people who already volunteer and who can act as an intermediary – and the Perceived lack of

education and skills needed for volunteer placements have limited their participation. The other reason that should be given attention is the lack of consideration and sometimes belief - by officials, voluntary organizations and agencies that promote volunteering - that migrants especially refugees and asylum seekers could be potential volunteers. (Wilson & Lewis, 2006; Schugurensky, 2005; INVOLVE, 2006). Finding out about volunteering – the difficulty of accessing full and organized information on volunteer opportunities; and, the cost of volunteering like transport expenses to and from volunteering are also mentioned as main obstacles (Ashton et al, 2006). Given the high value of volunteering for vulnerable groups like immigrants and refugees, the challenges and barriers should be identified and solved in order to smoothen the inclusion of immigrants.

### **Integration through volunteering**

Aycan & Berry (1996) in Handy & Greenspan (2009) discuss that the inability of immigrants to fully integrate into the labor market is mainly attributed to lack of language competency, difficulty in getting credentials recognized and lack of the host countries job experience. Many countries have been encouraging volunteering among immigrants, especially among the low-educated and among women taking into account the vulnerability and difficulties they face to economically integrate themselves (European Commission, 2012; OECD, 2008 in Baert & Vujić). Much has been and is being discussed about the wide-ranging benefits of volunteering, and also the challenges faced in promoting the social and economic participation of immigrants through volunteering.

Volunteering is mentioned as an instrument and one of the indicators of immigrants' integration into the host society. Britain has named vo-

lunteering in its 2005 integration policy strategy as one of the indicators of integration; In addition to that in Britain, third sector organizations are encouraged to create new volunteering projects that would give opportunities to especially the disadvantaged and excluded groups by making available volunteering support grants (funds)<sup>25</sup>. The fund can be used to cover costs of appropriate insurance, travel and lunch costs. If there is a need, the fund can be used to cover the salary of an assistant coordinator. Immigrants, especially new immigrants, should not be expected to undertake volunteering just out of simple goodwill; rather, they should be advised, informed and encouraged to volunteer as volunteering can open opportunities that would help them to take steps that would make their social and economic participation possible.

Wilson & Lewis (2006), concluded from their case studies involving ten organizations in the UK that the role of volunteer managers or coordinators is pivotal in promoting diversity and inclusion by raising awareness within their organization, developing new volunteering opportunities and removing possible barriers that affect the inclusion and retention of refugees and asylum seekers. The writers believe that senior managers of volunteering organizations and funders should encourage and enable volunteer coordinators to facilitate the participation of refugees and asylum seekers in volunteering activities that would give them a worthwhile experience. They have also mentioned that social workers and advocates of volunteering should take extra steps in this direction.

The INVOLVE project report (2006) considers volunteering as an instrument of integration. The report states that volunteering enables;

- immigrants to participate in society through non-formal and informal education.

<sup>25</sup> INVOLVE project (2006): indicators of integration.

- immigrants to improve his / her employability on the labour market.
- immigrants and non-immigrants to meet and to take civic action on community issues that matter to both of them.
- the host society to deal with increasing diversity and accommodate change.
- Frequent interaction between immigrants and citizens.

Some authors claim that social integration could be achieved through volunteering, but they believe there is little evidence that shows the role of volunteering in enhancing the labour market inclusion of both immigrants and natives (Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi; StrauB, 2008). But, the fact of the matter is that volunteering brings multifaceted benefits which enhance the prospects of immigrants' labour market integration – benefits like being able to safeguard psychological and physiological well-being, gaining language and other skills, gaining social networks, getting newcomers their first work experience etc... Though economic integration is mentioned in most cases as the main goal of volunteering, the overall benefits of volunteering for immigrants are enormous. If volunteering is understood as a package with its multifaceted benefits, promoting voluntary work among immigrants would be a crucial task that needs the attention of all actors. Failing to integrate immigrants could lead to social exclusion or separation. Giménez and Malgesini, in Crespo et al, have defined social exclusion as “a social process in which a person or social group does not develop in an integrated manner within a given society, generally due to compulsory reasons which have so determined it. The lack of political, economic, social and cultural participation is one of the visible symptoms of this exclusion... (2003, P.22)”<sup>26</sup>. As the finan-

**Though economic integration is mentioned in most cases as the main goal on volunteering, the overall benefits of volunteering for immigrants are enormous.**

<sup>26</sup> chapter 1. The social exclusion of immigrants: theoretical and methodological premise Rafael Crespo, Lola López, Mattia Vitiello.

cial and social cost of social exclusion is too big to be ignored, supporting immigrants to socially and economically participate, or assisting immigrants to find their place in society helps to avoid the ill effects of exclusion/separation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Data gathering**

The qualitative research method is applied in data gathering and analysis. Using semi-structured questions, the face to face interview method is used to gather data. Five volunteer coordinators and ten immigrant volunteers were interviewed. The volunteers were selected from the metropolitan area of Helsinki; an attempt is made to come up with a sample representative adequate in terms of gender and country of origin. The fact that nearly one half of the immigrants in Finland live in the metropolitan area of Helsinki is a positive factor that made finding representative interviewees possible. Four of the ten interviewees are male asylum seekers as the majority of asylum seekers are young men. The Selected interviewees have also served as informants about their communities. The number of interviewees is limited to this number because of saturation of data. Working for Citizen Forum<sup>27</sup> has made it easier to get volunteer coordinator interviewees from the Finnish Red Cross and member organizations of Citizen Forum. I was able to find most of the immigrant volunteer interviewees through the coordinators.

<sup>27</sup> Kansalaisareena-Citizen forum is a national information and development center for voluntary activities in Finland.

Country of origin	Number	Age	Gender	Status
Russia	1	25-35	F	Immigrant
Somali	1	25+	F	Refugee
Iraq	3	28-35	M	Refugee & A. seeker
Afghanistan	2	25-30	M	Asylum seekers
Indonesia	1	25	M	Immigrant
Kenya	1	40+	F	Immigrant
Ethiopia	1	50+	F	Immigrant

Table 2. volunteers' particulars

All the interviewees speak good English except one Afghani and one Iraqi asylum seekers; their fellow volunteers who speak the same language have served as interpreters. When we come to the Finnish language all the asylum seekers have very rudimentary skills while the others have reported a varying degree of proficiency. Eight of the interviewees have bachelor's degree, one holds a Master's degree and one has completed high school.

Discussions were held with two officials responsible for integration and multiculturalism affairs in the city of Vantaa and Espoo. The main goal of the discussion is to gather information about the perception of their office on the value of volunteering in promoting integration. Information was also gathered about the activities of immigrant associations in promoting integration through their websites and holding a discussion with people in charge of integration projects.

## Analysis

The data is analyzed using the thematic analysis method of qualitative research. Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within data. It minimally organizes

and describes the data set in detail" (Boyatzis, 1998 in Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis has six phases: familiarizing yourself with your data - repeated reading; generating initial list codes - organizing your data into meaningful groups; searching for themes; reviewing themes, defining and naming themes; and writing the report. Using the thematic analysis method, the data is allowed to create categories and themes. The goal is to come up with themes that would lead us to answer our questions. The data collected from the interviewees has been analyzed in order to answer questions this study aimed to consider:

- a) How and why do new immigrants become volunteers in mainstream organizations? What motivates them to volunteer? Are immigrants informed about the opportunities and benefits of volunteering? What have immigrants benefited from volunteering?
- b) What motivates organizations to recruit immigrant volunteers? What do immigrants and their volunteer coordinators think of the challenges and opportunities of volunteering? What are the opportunities and challenges of volunteering for those who speak neither English nor Finnish?
- c) To what extent does volunteering promote the social and economic participation of immigrants.

## ***STUDY FINDINGS***

In this section, we will discuss the state of volunteering among immigrants, and the role of volunteering in promoting the integration of immigrants into society by analyzing the interview data obtained from volunteer coordinators and immigrant volunteers, immigrants on the street,



leaders of immigrant associations, metropolitan area immigrants' service officials.

### **Volunteer coordinators' view**

Having volunteer coordinators' views on volunteering among immigrants helps us to get a closer look at the state of affairs. The Five volunteer coordinators interviewed are from Helsinki city social and health bureau (two coordinators as it is the largest employer in the metropolitan area), Finnish Red Cross district of Helsinki and Uusimaa, Helsinki Deaconess Institute and Helsinki Metropolitan Area Reuse Centre. These four organizations are among the largest volunteer-involving organizations in Finland.

When the coordinators discussed the recruitment process of immigrant volunteers, they mentioned that mostly asylum seekers come for screening interviews referred by the staff of reception centers, whereas refugees and other immigrants get information about volunteering opportunities through their websites, social media and through networks. The coordinators stated that immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees don't necessarily need to have special skills – even those who speak neither Finnish nor English are welcome to volunteer.

*"For us what counts is being motivated and having the right attitude towards the staff and clients. Having a good heart and respect to our clients makes applicants acceptable regardless of their Finnish language skills"*

*(one of the coordinators)*

The coordinators stated that as social enterprises their organizations recruit immigrants, irrespective of their language and other skills, to con-

**"Having a good heart and respect to our clients makes applicants acceptable regardless of their Finnish language skills".**

**One of the coordinators**

tribute their share to the social and economic inclusion of immigrants. The coordinators believe that for their organizations giving volunteering opportunities for immigrant, refugee and asylum seekers serves multiple purposes: it accelerates their social integration (meeting Finns on a regular basis helps them to improve their language skills); it makes available helping hands in areas that doesn't need professional skills; it enhances and enriches the cultural awareness of clients and staff.

Prospective volunteers who fulfilled the requirements would get orientation and in some cases training, and then they would get an assignment suitable for their conditions. Those who speak neither Finnish nor English are assigned to work with or under the supervision of their compatriots who speak Finnish or English. For instance, volunteers with no language skills are assigned in the cafeterias of seniors' service centers to do basic tasks like carrying lunch trays to the tables of those with rolling walkers, and later collecting the trays to the dishwashers. Generally, most of the tasks offered for volunteers are ordinary ones e.g. taking the weak and elderly out for a walk; pushing the wheelchairs of care home residents for fresh air; helping in painting and renovation works, visiting lonely seniors ... The Helsinki Metropolitan Area Reuse Center requires at least basic Finnish or English language skills; those with good Finnish skills are eligible for most of the tasks.

About 15 percent of residents in the metropolitan area of Helsinki are immigrants and people with an immigrant background, but immigrant volunteers are underrepresented in mainstream volunteer-involving organizations. In one of the largest health and social services organization, the number of immigrant volunteers is about 50 out of nearly 1300 volunteers. According to estimates of the other coordinators, the number of immigrant volunteers is less than 2% of the total number of volunteers.

## IMMIGRANTS IN HELSINKI

- About 15 percent of residents in the metropolitan area of Helsinki are immigrants and people with an immigrant background
- Immigrant volunteers are underrepresented in mainstream volunteer-involving organizations.

Among the volunteers, young male asylum seekers and refugees are predominantly represented. Compared to other organizations the social and health sector is giving more opportunities to immigrant volunteers. As their work and schedules are diversified, it was difficult for the coordinators to give the average work hour immigrant volunteers do. When asked to explain what motivates immigrants to volunteer they believe, though immigrants give a list of factors like the wish to improve their language skills and giving back to society as motivating factors, the most likely reason is the prospect that volunteering could open a door of opportunity to secure employment.

When we discuss the benefits of volunteering for immigrants what apparently comes out first is the opportunity to improve Finnish language skills through communication with staff and clients. The Finnish Red cross district of Helsinki and Uusimaa, and Helsinki Metropolitan Area Reuse Centre arrange Finnish language classes for volunteers. In addition, those who volunteered for a long period of time have managed to develop networks that could help their social and economic inclusion into society. Though their number is not significant, very few of them have managed to secure employment directly from the volunteering organization or hired by the organizations in collaboration with employment office. Two coordinators have mentioned that recently two very active and motivated volunteers, young men from Iraq and Afghanistan, have been hired as project workers. The coordinator from Helsinki city has said that a young woman who has been an active volunteer was given an opportunity to work as a full-time apprentice. Volunteers get a certificate, that recognizes the task they were involved in and the number of hours they spent, which they could include in their resume as their first Finnish work experience. Though volunteering is primarily about giving back to socie-



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Volunteering is an opportunity to improve Finnish language skills through communication with staff and clients.

ty and getting various rewards in return, in some very rare cases it could help to secure employment in the volunteer-involving organization.

Volunteering costs money. Apart from the Metropolitan Area Reuse Center, the other organizations do not reimburse travel costs of even asylum seekers and unemployed refugees. One of the coordinators said that because of the tax law her organization does not reimburse volunteers' transportation costs and lunch expenses. Volunteer coordinators of Helsinki city social and the health bureau said that their organization does not reimburse expenses of asylum seekers and refugees as their organization considers all volunteers uniformly regardless of their status; it also tries to assign volunteers to work in service centers not very far from their residences. The Reuse Center and Deaconess institute offer lunch coupons to volunteers who work for more than five hours in a day.

When discussing the challenges of working with immigrant volunteers, the coordinators put lack of language skills, though it is tolerated, as a major challenge for staff and clients. Helping and guiding volunteers is also a burden and more work for the staff. For some of the staff, volunteers are considered a possible threat to their job. The other challenge mentioned was that most of the time the tasks offered are very basic and ordinary regardless of the language and other skills of volunteers; this might not satisfy the needs of some volunteers who want to learn new skills. One of the coordinators is concerned that sometimes her organization does not have enough work to be done by volunteers.

### **Immigrant volunteers**

The analyzed qualitative data, gathered from 10 volunteers who are immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, has led to the development of

the following topics under this subsection. Unless specifically stated the word immigrants would include both refugees and asylum seekers.

### **What motivates immigrants and how do they get the opportunity to volunteer?**

In the literature review, we have seen a list of factors that motivate immigrants to volunteer. Some of the main motivating factors that could be on the top of the list are their strong wishes to secure employment or improve their employability, learning the language of the host country, and altruism. In this study among the ten interviewees except for one immigrant student all the interviewees were unemployed. Since nine out of the ten are unemployed, for most of them their prior objective is – though they have reported other motivating factors as well – improving their employment opportunity by getting Finnish work experience, improving their Finnish language skills, and if possible securing employment within the organization they are volunteering for. Some of the immigrants have lived in Finland for more than 10 years, and they indicated that they volunteered mainly to increase their chance of getting employed. An unemployed Russian immigrant who has lived in Finland for over ten years said,

*“I am unemployed and have a passion for working on antique objects, I started volunteering nearly a year ago just to get my feet in the door”*

*(A Russian immigrant volunteering for Helsinki metropolitan area Reuse Centre)*

Especially the asylum seekers volunteered not only to secure employment but also to get references that could positively affect their eligibility for asylum. The other motivating factors for most of the interviewees

are the desire to be involved in causes that are important to them and giving back to society. An Indonesian immigrant who sells Red Cross membership subscriptions in a shopping mall, and an Iraqi asylum seeker volunteering at a care home had the following to say:

*"The Finnish Red Cross and the people of Finland have helped us during the tsunami catastrophe, I am happy I have been able to help this organization"*  
(An Indonesian immigrant)

*"In our journey from Greece to Finland through Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany and by ship to Sweden, we have been assisted all the way by volunteers, and it is the humanity that I saw in them that motivated me to volunteer"*  
(An Iraqi asylum seeker)

For some of the asylum seekers, though the tasks offered are very basic, spending their time by doing something good and keeping themselves busy is an additional motivating factor.

*"it is better to be here than sleeping day and night at the reception center. We would like to show that we are ready and willing to work"*  
(An Afghan asylum seeker)

*"I was a pharmacist in Iraq, my wish was to work as a volunteer for a pharmacy, my social worker tried her best to help me, but it was not possible for various reasons. I am happy with what I am doing now"*

(An Iraqi asylum seeker volunteering in a care home for the elderly)

Most of the volunteers were not well aware of the manifold and multi-faceted benefits of volunteering; mostly unemployment was the main cause that drove them to look for volunteering opportunities. According to three of the four coordinators, asylum seekers mostly come for screening interviews referred by the staff of reception centers, but three of the four asylum seeker volunteers in this study managed to find volunteering opportunities through Finnish people they accidentally met at public events and in a church. The immigrants got information about volunteering opportunities through websites, social media, pamphlets and by word of mouth.

### **Benefits and challenges**

In the literature review, a list of benefits of volunteering are stated. The experiences gained through volunteering generally help in the development of social and economic skills that would smoothen the integration process. Of all the interviewees only three volunteers have managed to work in areas close to their profession or the profession they would like to pursue. However, most of the volunteers have been able to gain something out of their experience in addition to developing social networks with staff, coordinators, and clients.

*"I have been able to improve my Finnish skill. I have learned new techniques in woodwork and working with people, and also how the whole system of recycling works. I am working on a project with a Finnish volunteer, I have learned a lot from him and vice versa. I can depend on this guy; in the future, we might be able to work together on our own projects."*

*(A Russian immigrant volunteer)*

*"I used to volunteer informally for a church at Munkkiniemi, by helping out during an after-service coffee time. I became friends with an old couple, and they have been helping me financially. I asked the wife to find me a job or anything that can keep me busy, and she suggested this place; she called and asked the people here to get me a voluntary work."*

*(An Iraqi asylum seeker)*

Abdullah Al-Ani, one of the interviewees, is a 28 years old refugee from Iraq. He came to Finland seeking asylum in December 2014. He has a master's degree from Russia in electrical power engineering, but had no work experience. He has been volunteering for the Laajasalo branch of Finnish Red Cross for nearly two years, working as English –Arabic, and English –Russian interpreter and translator, among other activities. After developing his Finnish language skills, through an intensive language course and practicing what he learned with friends and volunteers, he has been able to serve in various capacities; presently, he is serving as vice chairman of the same local branch of Red cross. Al-Ani is attending a training that would get him a certificate of qualification to do electrical works – it was a Finnish friend of his who recommended this training. Al-Ani said,

*"volunteering for Red Cross has enabled me to attend courses and training that are useful for my future career. I have never been employed, but through volunteering, I have been able to develop communication and teamwork and leadership skills"*



The above quotes clearly indicate the importance of volunteering in developing social and Human capital – experience, skills, and links are developed. The Russian volunteer has been able to improve her skills and has also met a possible partner with whom she might open her own business. The Iraqi asylum seeker has managed at least to get a better volunteering opportunity with the help of a woman he met while volunteering for a church. In both cases, though they are on their initial steps, the volunteers have managed to build social and human capital.

Seven out of the ten volunteers are doing ordinary and menial activities, but they still have been able to improve their Finnish language skills and get emotional satisfaction. It has also given them an opportunity to get out and improve their physical and psychological well-being. A Kenyan volunteer who lives in Kannelmäki stated that she was troubled by the alcohol-related problems she observed daily in that area. When she joined the rehabilitation center run by the Deaconess Institute, being able to help alcoholic and drug-addicted people and also being able to give back to society, has given her altruistic satisfaction. She has also decided to study sociology so that she could work professionally in this field.

Differences in culture, race, skin colour, and lack of language skills are reported by the volunteers as hindrances to developing trust and good relationships; but, through time they have been able to witness the gap being narrowed. Though lack of language skills did not disqualify applicants from joining voluntary organizations, it has very much limited their activities and minimized their interaction with staff and clients. Two asylum seekers from Afghanistan and an Iraqi who speak only rudimentary Finnish and English, get guidance and interpretation from their fellow volunteers who are from the same country or speak a common language.



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Volunteering offers an opportunity to improve physical and psychological well-being, and a chance to get new social contacts.

Most of the volunteers were not able to learn specialized skills as most of the work is very menial.

The other challenge is the high cost of volunteering. Three of the five coordinators stated that their organizations don't offer free meals or coupons; they do not even reimburse transport costs of refugees and asylum seekers. Two asylum seekers from Afghanistan work for one hour every day at the Riistavuori care home, they live in a reception center that provides an under 100-euro monthly allowance plus daily meals. They pay from their meagre allowance for transport to and from the care home. Some of the reception centers that do not provide a meal service, give a monthly allowance of about 300 euro. Unlike the refugees and immigrants, asylum seekers see themselves as the most vulnerable group as they do not have a resident permit and also get the lowest social benefits. The interviewed asylum seekers believe that volunteering could open a door to employment opportunity, and being employed or supporting themselves is not only taken as a major step to overcome their financial limitations but also could have a positive impact on their resident permit application.

Despite the challenges all the interviewees are happy for having a volunteering opportunity as it has helped them, among other things, to improve their Finnish language skills, to get Finnish work experience, to stay active and feel as if being part of the community.

### **The role of immigrant organizations and religious associations**

Immigrant organizations or associations are run mostly on a voluntary basis. Promoting the integration of their members into Finnish society is one of their major tasks. According to Saksela-Bergholm almost one-

half of the 32 immigrant organizations studied in the metropolitan area of Helsinki focus on the integration of their group into society. Most immigrant organizations focus on promoting and keeping their ethnic identity, culture, and religion (2009). There are dozens of Russian, Somalian, and Kurdish immigrant associations in Finland. Most of these associations are members of their respective national leagues or federations. The associations carry out integration projects, programmes, and information and advice services to their compatriots. Most of the immigrant associations and federations are members of the network of multicultural associations called Moniheli.

Immigrant religious associations and communities are very near and dear to immigrants compared to non-religious associations; most immigrants visit their ethnic or denominational religious places more frequently. It is a place where immigrants get a social and spiritual support that other institutions might not be able to give them. According to a study done on the role of religious communities in promoting the integration of immigrants into Finnish society, out of 95 respondent religious organizations and associations about 38 percent are actively involved in giving training, seminars and courses on public services, education and job opportunities in Finland. About 35% of the associations and organizations give Finnish language courses formally and informally - the Evangelical Lutheran church parishes are the main actors (Timonen 2014).

Based on the information, that was gathered from email and personal discussions, and facts checked from websites of immigrant organizations, federations and religious associations, I have not come across an activity that deals with the promotion of volunteering among immigrants –volunteering for mainstream volunteer-involving organizations. The federations, Moniheli, and immigrant religious and other associations could

be used as channels to reach out and raise awareness of immigrants in terms of the multifaceted benefits of volunteering and where to look for volunteering opportunities.

### **Metropolitan area immigrant services**

As stated in the introduction, nearly 40 percent of the total foreign language speakers in Finland reside in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. The Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo city immigration service offices - in addition to giving social and health services - have an integration support team that works with refugees and immigrants. The advisory board for immigration and integration affairs in Helsinki, the advisory board for multicultural affairs in Espoo and Vantaa promote integration among ethnic groups and follow the implementation of immigration and integration policies of their respective municipalities.

According to the discussion, I had with representatives of multicultural affairs office of Vantaa and the chairman of the advisory board for multicultural affairs of Espoo, volunteering among immigrants is not considered as one of the instruments of integration. Rather, they believe that volunteering among unemployed immigrants is perceived by some sectors as an exploitation of labour. The officials are open-minded and willing to study and consider the value of volunteering in promoting integration.

## ***CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

The aim of this study was to discuss the opportunities, benefits and challenges of formal volunteering among immigrants in mainstream organizations in the metropolitan area of Helsinki; and the role of immigrant

organizations, religious communities, municipalities and volunteer-involving organizations in promoting volunteering as an instrument of integration into society.

Volunteering gives a favorable opportunity for both immigrants and the host society to meet, directly interact, get to know each other, avoid prejudices and build trust. Volunteering plays a role in building social and human capital that would lead to the social and economic inclusion of immigrants into society. Though volunteering gives multifaceted benefits, we cannot be far from the truth if we say that immigrants in Finland, who are from non-EU and EFTA countries, volunteer predominantly to improve their job opportunities.

The participation of immigrants in formal volunteering is low – the estimated number of immigrant volunteers in most of the organizations is approximately under 2% of the total volunteers. Factors like cultural and racial differences and lack of understanding- about the benefits of formal volunteering – and lack of access to relevant information on opportunities for volunteering are the more likely reasons for the existing low demand for volunteering opportunities.

This study has tried to shed light on the importance of volunteering in promoting the integration of immigrants into society and the need to increase the demand for and supply of volunteering opportunities. For immigrants volunteering is not just about giving back to society or being altruistic, it is an essential instrument that can play its fair share in the endeavor to find their place in society. Immigrants should be well aware of what volunteering is all about – that volunteering is not about the exploitation of free labour – and the various benefits of volunteering. All possible measures must be taken to raise awareness among immigrants. Immigrant organizations, religious communities, municipalities and vo-

lunteer-involving organizations should play their respective roles to raise the demand for volunteering opportunities among immigrants. Especial attention must be given to immigrant associations and faith organizations that work on integration; these associations should be trained and assisted to help their fellow countrymen find volunteering opportunities by serving as mini volunteer centers.

Volunteering calls for not only the dedication of time and energy but also costs money. Some volunteers are covering their transport fees to and from the volunteering organizations. Volunteer-involving organizations should consider reimbursing transport expenses of asylum seekers and the unemployed, as it should not cause a financial problem and deter them from volunteering. Especial funds should be sought to cover costs of volunteering like lunch coupons, reimbursement of transport fees and hiring assistant voluntary coordinators, particularly for smaller mainstream organizations. The tax law should also be favourable to volunteers and easily understandable to volunteer-involving organizations.

In order to increase the supply of volunteering opportunities, staff and leaders of volunteer-involving organisations should be well aware of the national benefit of the social and economic inclusion of immigrants. Coordinators have to make volunteering more accessible to immigrants by removing possible barriers. Taking into consideration the essential values of volunteering in promoting the integration of immigrants, peace, and justice; funders like STEA, municipalities, government and promoters of volunteering should play their respective active roles to create more volunteering opportunities for immigrants.

The integration policy of Finland focuses on preparing immigrants to the labour market in their first three years, but studies have shown that a large number of immigrants, mainly refugees, are unemployed even af-

ter staying in Finland for more than ten years. From the discussion with immigrant associations, municipal officials concerned with multicultural affairs and immigrant integration, volunteering is not considered as an instrument of integration. Volunteering should be included as an essential part of the government integration programme and municipal integration policies.

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# Appendixes

## Interview questions

### 1. Volunteers

- Age, nationality, how long have you stayed in Finland
- Previous education or profession
- Language proficiency
- Are you employed/student?
- Have you had previous experience of volunteering?
- How did you become a volunteer to this organization, why this organization / for how long you volunteered?
- What motivated you to volunteer?
- What do you have to offer as a volunteer? How many hrs./week, skills?
- What are the experience and skill that you got?
- How many of your friends are Finnish, have you developed any friendship with? How is your relationship with coordinators, other volunteers, staff and clients (social capital/bonding and bridging)
- Have you learned something new (skills) from voluntary work?
- What has been positive about volunteering?
- What are the challenges, what has been negative about volunteering
- Has volunteering affected your life in any way, and if yes, how?
- What kind of support would you have needed from the organization?
- Are you a member of an ethnic or religious association? What is your experience?
- Do people from your country volunteer?

### 2. Coordinators

- How long have you been working as a coordinator?
- What is the organization's/project' working on?
- How many volunteers? How many of them are immigrants?

# Appendixes

- The percentage of females in volunteering
- How did the recruitment take place? what are the requirements, criminal records checking? criteria of selection
- What do you expect of applicants?
- Volunteers English and Finnish language skills. How limiting is lack of Finnish and English proficiency?
- Do you accept immigrants who have neither Finnish nor English language skills? if so how do you deal with them? How do you communicate?
- Volunteers sex, age and skills
- How and why do new immigrants become volunteers in mainstream institutions? What motivates them to volunteer? Are new immigrants informed about the opportunities and benefits of volunteering? What have immigrants benefited from volunteering?
- Do you compensate their expenses e.g transport fees?
- How many hours of voluntary work per week or month?
- How worthy is their contribution to your organization?
- Do they stay long enough with you, what makes them stay?
- What are the skills and advantages volunteers get out of this experience? Have they developed social networks (social capital), skills and job prospects
- What are the main challenges of working with immigrants?
- How equipped are you to handle cultural differences?
- Do you devise opportunities based on what volunteers wanted to do, what kind of voluntary activity do you encourage the immigrants to get involved in?
- What motivates organizations to recruit immigrant volunteers? What do new immigrants and their volunteer coordinators think of the challenges and opportunities of volunteering?

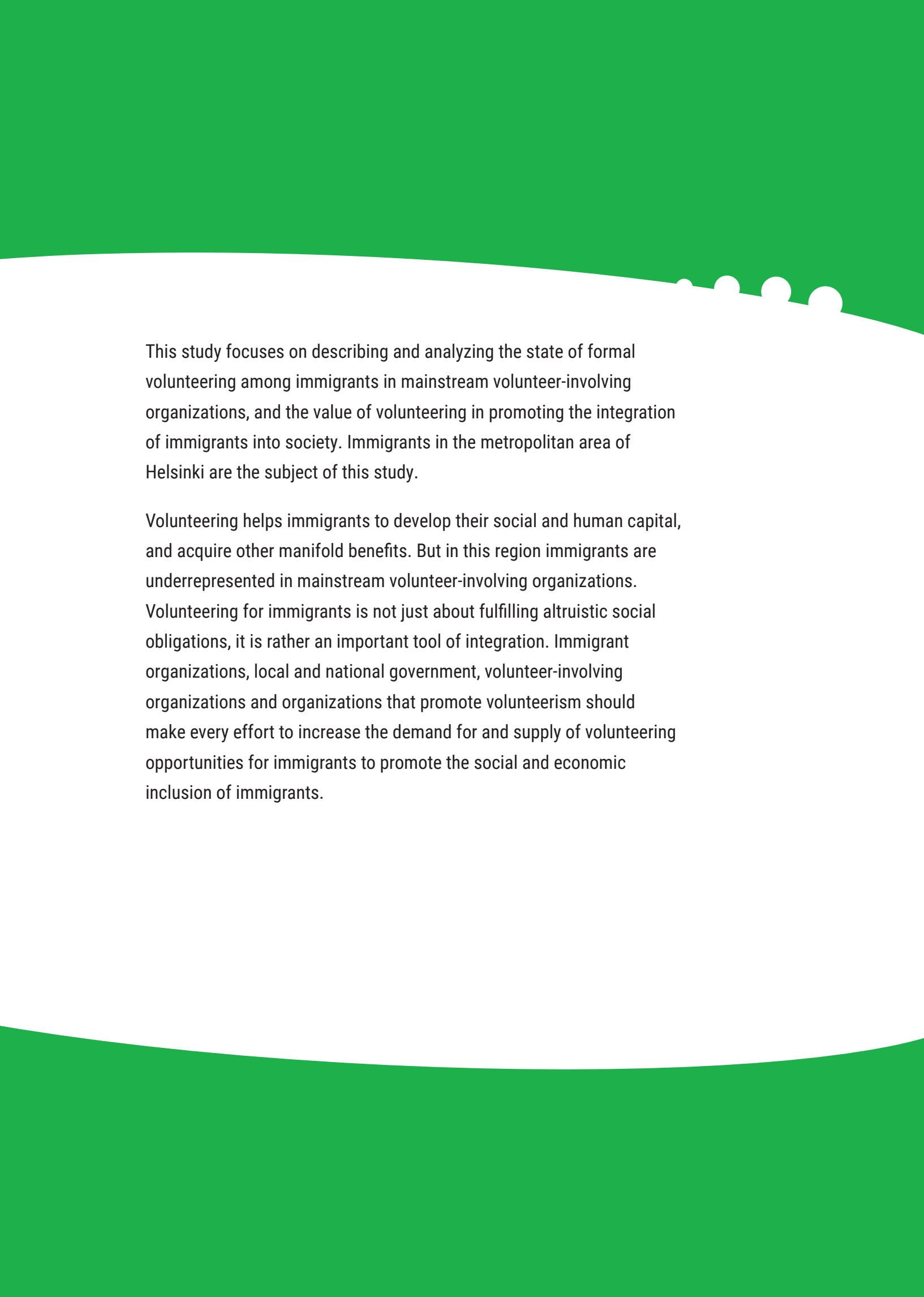
**Discussion questions**

## Municipal officials

- Does your city promote volunteering as a beneficial instrument of integration?
- What does volunteering offer for immigrants?
- How do you assess the impact of volunteering for refugee integration?
- How does your city assess the integration needs and priorities of refugees, and identify gaps in current integration programmes that volunteering could fill?

## Immigrant associations and organizations

- The objective of the association and areas that it focuses
- Number of members and active members
- Networking and partnership with other immigrant organizations
- Relation with mainstream volunteering organizations, other organizations and institutions
- Does your association promote volunteering as a beneficial instrument of integration?
- Is your association willing or ready to consider volunteering as a good instrument of integrating your members into society?

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This study focuses on describing and analyzing the state of formal volunteering among immigrants in mainstream volunteer-involving organizations, and the value of volunteering in promoting the integration of immigrants into society. Immigrants in the metropolitan area of Helsinki are the subject of this study.

Volunteering helps immigrants to develop their social and human capital, and acquire other manifold benefits. But in this region immigrants are underrepresented in mainstream volunteer-involving organizations. Volunteering for immigrants is not just about fulfilling altruistic social obligations, it is rather an important tool of integration. Immigrant organizations, local and national government, volunteer-involving organizations and organizations that promote volunteerism should make every effort to increase the demand for and supply of volunteering opportunities for immigrants to promote the social and economic inclusion of immigrants.