

2002 SURVEY ON  
VOLUNTEERISM IN SINGAPORE

2002 - 12

# National Volunteer Centre

## **Mission**

To promote and develop volunteerism across all sectors and at all levels of society

## **Vision**

To be the premier volunteer centre in the region and a leading people sector developer promoting volunteerism as a way of life in Singapore



## **Foreword**

One of the first tasks that the National Volunteer Centre (NVC) undertook following our establishment in 1999 was to commission a national benchmark study on the state of volunteerism in Singapore. The results of this survey, conducted in 2000, were first released at the official opening of the Centre by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on 7 July 2000. The survey results provided NVC a good foundation to base our volunteer promotion and development strategies on. In 2002, we commissioned an interim study to see if we were on track. The results of the survey, done by Precision Research Services, were released in July 2002. We present in this booklet a snapshot of the survey findings to help interested parties better understand the volunteer scene in Singapore.

Mrs Tan Chee Koon  
*Executive Director*



## **Scope**

The target respondents of the 2002 NVC Survey comprised of Singapore residents (i.e. Singapore citizens and permanent residents) and working expatriates, both aged 15 years and over. A total of 1,500 respondents were successfully interviewed (face to face) in the survey. Stratified sampling methodology helped ensure that the profile of survey respondents closely resembled that of the total target population. In simple terms, the findings can be generalised for the whole population.

The full survey report is available for sale at the National Volunteer Centre (see page 24 for details).

## Definition

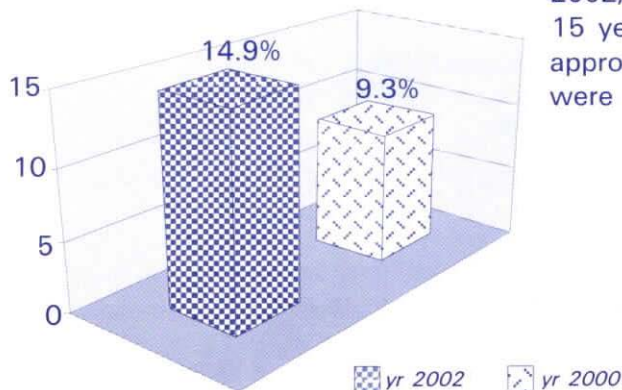
*"A volunteer is one who works out of free will for the benefit of the community without financial gains."*

- NVC, 2002

## Volunteer Participation Rates

Singapore's volunteer participation rate increased 60% from 9.3% in 2000 to 14.9%.

In other words, in the year 2002, for every 100 residents 15 years old and above, approximately 15 of them were volunteers.





## How About Other Countries?

Country	Rates
Singapore (2002)	15%
UK (1997)	48%
US (2001)	44%
Canada (2000)	27%
Australia (2000)	32%
Korea (2000)	14%

The US and the UK have traditionally been countries of high volunteer participation

### True or False?

*"Singaporeans cannot be bothered about volunteering."*

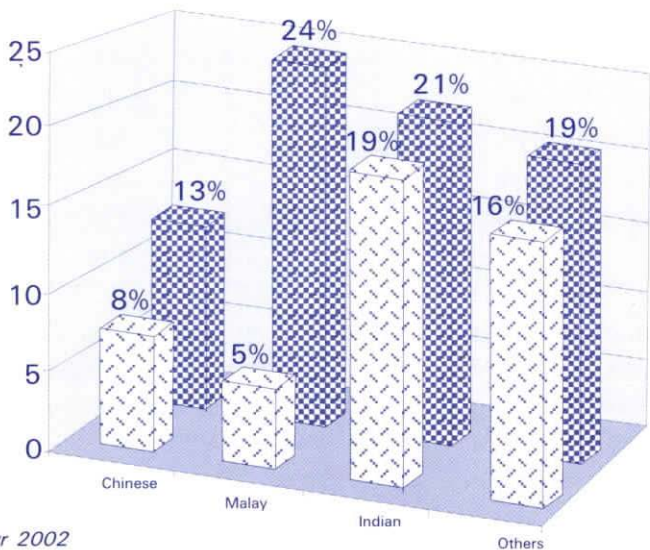
BUT this was what we found:

- \* 15% of all surveyed said that they were likely to volunteer in the future.
- \* 41% said they would be more inclined to volunteer if more flexible projects were made available to them.
- \* 31% said that they would be more inclined to volunteer if they had the relevant information.



## Ethnic Groups

Volunteering amongst all ethnic groups increased over the last two years. Volunteers did not restrict themselves to serving their own communities; the spirit of volunteerism transcended ethnic boundaries. For example, there were Chinese volunteers at the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA).



## Age Groups

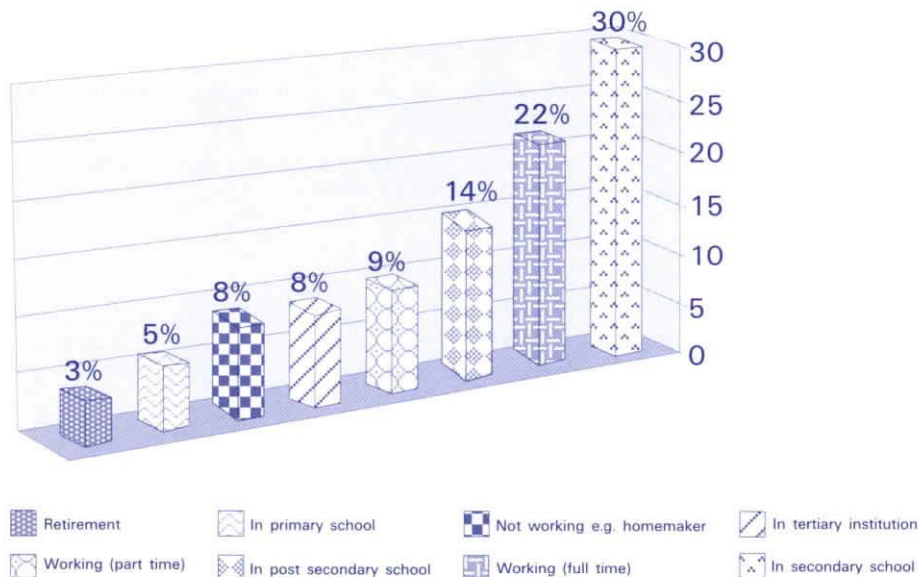
	Current Volunteers 2002	Current Volunteers 2000	Difference (%-points)
<b>Overall</b>	15%	9%	+6%
<b>Age Group</b>			
15 - < 20 yrs	23%	16%	+7%
20 - < 25 yrs	12%	8%	+4%
25 - < 30 yrs	12%	6%	+6%
30 - < 35 yrs	13%	6%	+7%
35 - < 40 yrs	11%	9%	+2%
40 - < 45 yrs	9%	10%	-1%
45 - < 50 yrs	17%	8%	+9%
50 - < 60 yrs	25%	11%	+14%
> = 60 yrs	15%	11%	+4%

Volunteers were of all ages, with those from 15 to less than 20 years old, and those from 50 to less than 60 years old the most active. Those in the 40 to less than 45 years age bracket were generally the least likely to be volunteers.



## Stage of Life When One First Began Volunteering

Most volunteers started volunteering at an early age – while studying in secondary school. The next largest group came from those who began volunteering while working full-time.

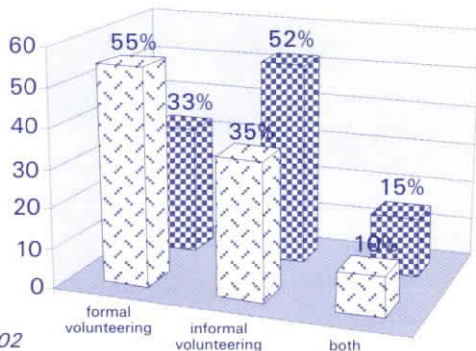


## Formal and Informal Volunteerism

Over the last two years, there was a shift from formal volunteering to informal volunteering. Examples of informal groups are:

- Children's Voice: set up to help children related charities, by raising their awareness amongst the public through organising fun and meaningful events.
- Asia Parents List: an email Discussion & Support Group on Pregnancy, Preparing for Parenthood, Breastfeeding, Childcare & Parenting in general.
- Caring Clown Unit: a group of volunteers dressing up as clowns to spread cheer to the elderly sick and children in hospitals.
- Digital Compassion: set up to highlight the need for compassion, especially for those who have been marginalised in a digital world.

- \* Formal volunteering refers to activities that are carried out for or through an organisation.
- \* Informal volunteering refers to activities that take place individually or in an informal/casual group.



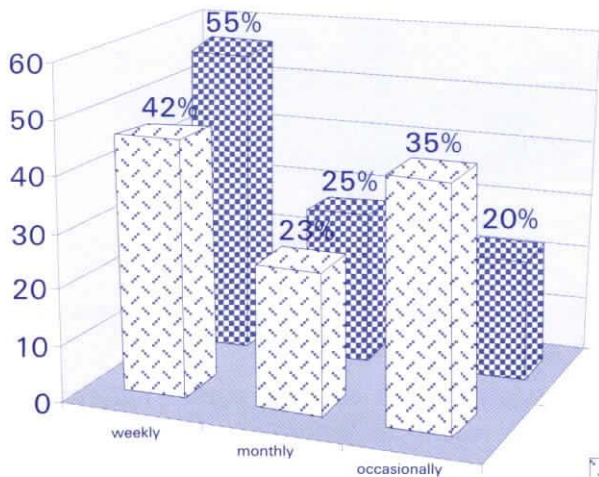
## Regularity

### Volunteers

Volunteering both on a weekly and a monthly basis increased over the previous study.

There appeared to be a shift from occasional to regular volunteering with a greater intensity of hours.

	2002	2000
Weekly	5.5 hrs	3.8 hrs
Monthly	8.4 hrs	6.1 hrs
Occasionally	11.1 hrs	28.3 hrs

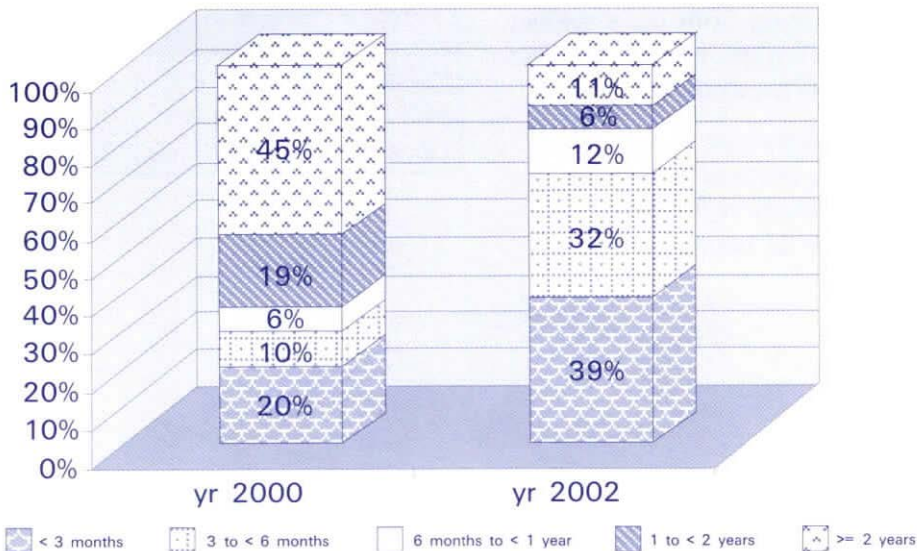


yr 2000

yr 2002



## Commitment Volunteers



However, there was a shift towards shorter commitments of less than 6 months (71%) from the previous 30%.

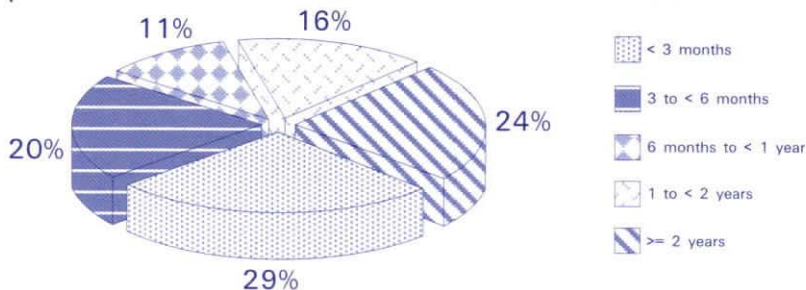
Hence, it would appear that while current volunteers preferred shorter-term commitments, they were willing to commit longer hours, and with greater frequency.



## Commitment

### Non-volunteers

Similarly, for non-volunteers who expressed an interest in volunteering, 29% preferred commitments of less than 3 months and another 20% preferred commitments of between 3 to 6 months.



### Did you know?

- ★ An overwhelming 96% of volunteers said that they wanted to continue volunteering.
- ★ 75% of former volunteers said that they would volunteer again in the future.
- ★ 92% of volunteers were satisfied with their volunteering experience.



## **The Many Faces of Volunteering – Some Highlights in 2002**

### **“Cabbies with a kind heart”**

15 Feb 02, Fri, *Lianhe Zaobao*

### **“Volunteer Coach nominated for Singapore Sports Council award”**

19 Apr 02, Fri, *Streets*

### **“Volunteers collect 300 bags of rubbish in 90 minutes from Kranji mangroves”**

15 Sep 02, Sun, *Lianhe Zaobao*

**“He grants perfect strangers their dying wishes”  
“Good Samaritan looks out for those who are elderly and alone,  
and takes it upon himself to plan and pay for their funerals.”**

1 Sep 02, Sun, *The Sunday Times*



**"Young volunteers go to Cambodia  
to conserve ocean life."**

29 Jan 02, Tues, *Lianhe Zaobao*

**"Volunteer patrols are formed to  
keep crime at bay in car parks."**

19 Aug 02, Mon, *The Straits Times*

**"80 corporations take part in "Volunteer a Day" activities."**

6 Sep 02, Fri, *Lianhe Zaobao*

**"A new meaning to family time"**

**No time for community work because it takes you away from home?**

**Take the home along with you...**

**Families As Volunteers (FaV), a new project by  
National Volunteer Centre and MCDS..."**

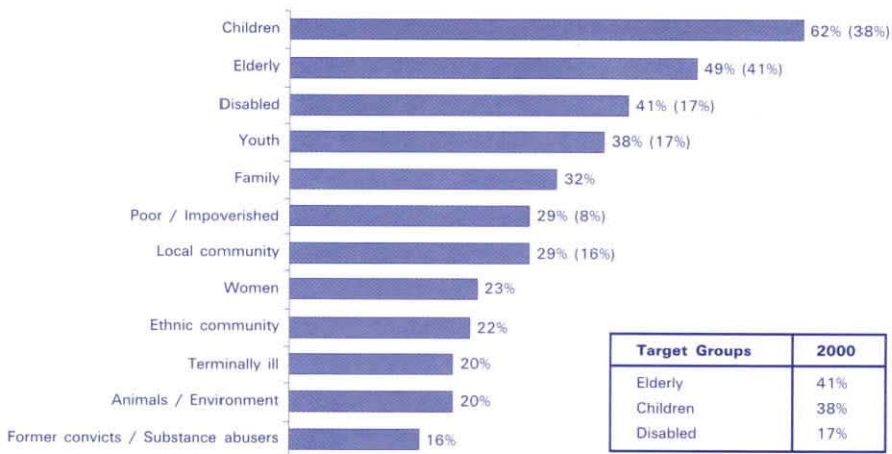
2 Jun 02, Sun, *The Sunday Times*

**"They are glad to help HIV patients"**

6 Sep 02, Fri, *The New Paper*

## Target Groups

The three most popular target groups amongst current volunteers remained largely unchanged over the two years. They revolved around children, elderly and the disabled.



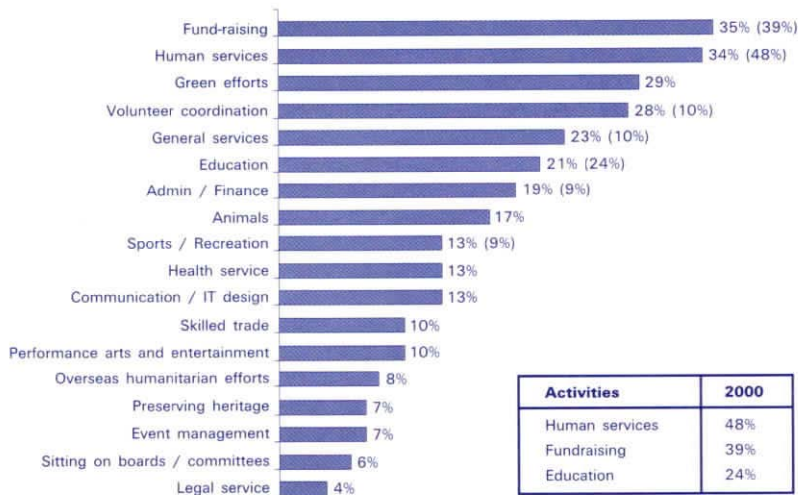
Target Groups	2000
Elderly	41%
Children	38%
Disabled	17%

*Figures in brackets refer to 2000 data*

## Activities

As to the choice of volunteering activities, the three most popular ones were fund-raising (35%), human services (34%) and green efforts (29%).

This differed slightly from the 2000 study, where the three most popular activities were human services (48%), fund-raising (39%), and education (24%).



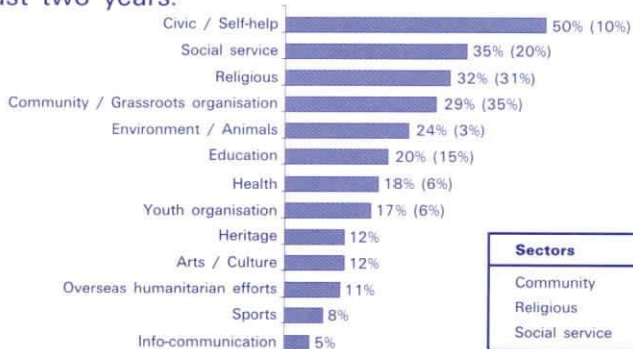
*Figures in brackets refer to 2000 data*

## Sectors

The three most popular sectors amongst current volunteers were civic/self-help (50%), social service (35%), and religious (32%).

Comparatively, the three most popular sectors in 2000 were community (35%), religious (31%), and social service (20%).

There was a definite shift towards services in civic/self-help sector, like SINDA, Mendaki & CDAC in the last two years.



*Figures in brackets refer to 2000 data*

## Did you know?

- ★ Sports had become more popular as a sector for volunteering (8% in 2002 as compared to negligible occurrence in 2000).
- ★ There was a growing interest to volunteer in the environment/ animals sector (24% in 2002 as compared to 3% in 2000).

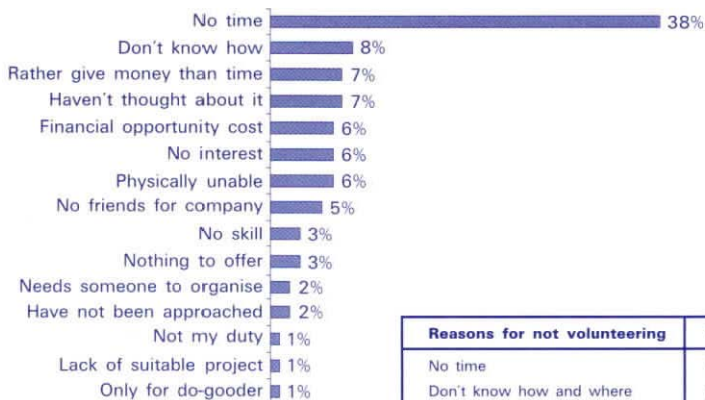
Sectors	2000
Community	35%
Religious	31%
Social service	20%



## Obstacles to Volunteering

### Why people do not volunteer

Lack of time was the most frequent reason given by non-volunteers for not volunteering. Nevertheless, the proportion of people answering 'no time' dropped significantly to 38% from the previous figure of 74%.



Reasons for not volunteering	2002	2000
No time	38%	74%
Don't know how and where	8%	6%
Haven't thought about it	7%	3%
Rather give money than time	7%	Not reflected
No interest	6%	3%
Need to make a living	6%	2%
Physically unable	6%	Not reflected
No friends for company	5%	2%
Have not been approached	2%	2%

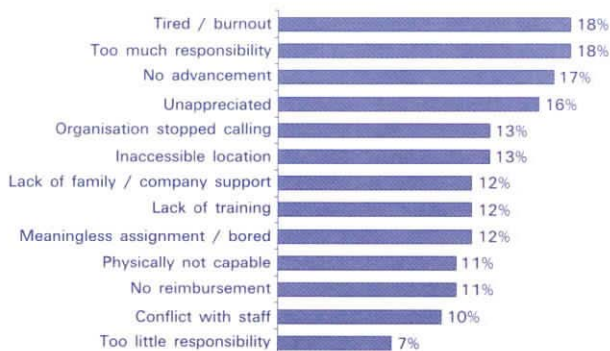
## Why 'no time'

Work/career (52%) and family commitments (35%) were cited as the top two concerns impinging on the time of Singaporeans.

The next most frequently given reasons for not volunteering was not knowing how and where to volunteer (8%), not having thought about it and preferring to give money rather than time (both 7%).

## Why people stopped volunteering

The four most common reasons former volunteers gave for stopping their volunteering were: having too much responsibility, tired/burnt out (both 18%), lack of advancement (17%), and feeling unappreciated (16%).





## True or False?

*"Even if I am interested in volunteering, it is difficult to get started."*

However, the survey showed that:

Over the last two years, the proportion of the population which found it easy/ very easy to get started in volunteering rose from 24% to 57%. Conversely, those who found it difficult/ very difficult to get started dropped from 37% to 21%.

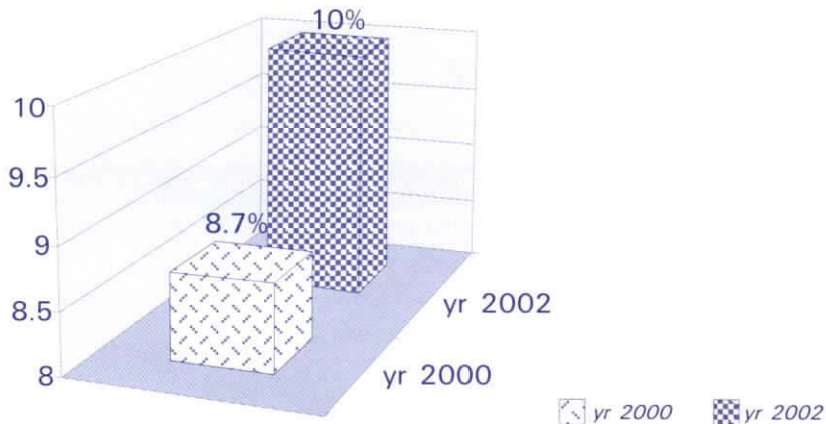
## Where Can I Volunteer?

Volunteering opportunities can be found ***across all sectors***.

Sectors	Examples of volunteering opportunities
Arts & Culture	Making props, singing, performing, sound & lighting, marketing
Education	Software design, tuition
Environment	Reforestation, nature trail guides, public education, animal care
Health	Visitation, hydrotherapy, public education
Heritage	Museum guides
Sports	Coaching, timekeepers, managing sports events
Civic/ Self-help	Reading, manning hotlines
Community	Organising events, probation services
Youth	Camps, mentoring
Volunteering overseas	Building roads & schools, teaching, medical assistance

## Who Can Volunteer?

As mentioned earlier, volunteers cut across ethnicity and age. Likewise, foreigners and non-residents have also been very active as volunteers. Many foreign associations have done their part for the local community by adopting homes, volunteering their time and raising funds for them. Amongst foreigners and non-residents, the volunteering rate rose in the last two years from 8.7% to 10%.



### Did you know?

- ★ One's social network had considerable influence over one's likelihood and willingness to volunteer.

## **Before You Volunteer, Ask...**

- \* What are my hobbies or interests?
- \* Which of my skills & knowledge do I wish to share?
- \* Which group of people or activity can I contribute to?
- \* How much time am I willing to spare?
- \* Would I prefer to volunteer alone, or with my family and/ or friends?

***For the ideal volunteer activity or organisation that fits you, know your preferences.***

**Bring out the**



**in you!**

## **About the National Volunteer Centre**

The National Volunteer Centre (NVC) is the national coordinating body to promote and develop volunteerism across all sectors in Singapore. NVC plays a vital role in promoting volunteerism as 'a way of life' in Singapore, in furtherance of the SINGAPORE 21 VISION of an active citizenry. In practice, NVC promotes volunteerism across all sectors, from the arts & culture to sports, environment/animal, health and the social service sector.

## **Other Information**

At NVC, we provide the following key services. They can be found at NVC's website @ [www.nvc.org.sg](http://www.nvc.org.sg)

### ***Volunteer eMatch***

An interactive online volunteer referral service for both volunteers and volunteer agencies. Volunteers can select volunteering opportunities according to interests and preferences while volunteer agencies can readily tap on a databank of volunteers and publicise their call for volunteers. Best of all, this service is free!

### ***Volunteer Management System Training and Consultancy***

NVC offers a range of training modules, both in-house and customised, for the people sector. The modules aim to provide practical and relevant workplace knowledge and skills for staff and volunteers involved in the management and/or coordination of volunteer groups. Our training mission is to level up and build capacities in the people sector through quality training and consultancy services.

### ***Volunteer Initiative Grant***

NVC encourages volunteer initiatives and new volunteer programmes. The Grant provides development funds for new and creative ways of volunteering.

### ***Volunteer Training Grant***

A co-funding grant administered by NVC towards the training of volunteer managers, staff and volunteers of non-profit organisations in the people sector. This is for courses, seminars and workshops conducted by NVC or offered by NVC in partnership with external training providers.



## Feedback

We are INTERESTED in your feedback. Please help us answer the following questions by sending an email to [feedback@nvc.org.sg](mailto:feedback@nvc.org.sg) entitled "v-booklet feedback"

1. Was the information useful in helping you understand the volunteer scene in Singapore?
2. What other kinds of information would you find useful?

If you are interested in ordering a copy of our full survey report, it is available in black & white (\$20) as well as colour (\$60). You can download the order form from our website and fax it to us, or call us.

We can be contacted at the following:

1800 325 0965 (Toll-free)

6325 0955 (General)

6221 0625 (Fax)

[feedback@nvc.org.sg](mailto:feedback@nvc.org.sg)





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