

FACTORS THAT DRIVE ACTIVITY IN ASSOCIATIONS HELP TO MAINTAIN VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Currently, young volunteers for environmental protection play a key role in the non-formal sector. However, the lack of dynamic action within environmental associations is an obstacle. The objective of the research is to establish a specific operational program for volunteers in environmental protection associations. To this end, field studies were carried out in four associations spread across four regions of Madagascar, followed by a two-year case study in one of the associations. Observations, bilateral interviews, and focus groups were conducted using questionnaires to obtain the results. The research made it possible to distinguish the different types of priority activities that enable greater dynamism in environmental protection. It also highlighted the outcomes of volunteering, which also strengthens young people's commitment. To ensure the sustainability of volunteering, the research results also show the activities that need to be carried out in environmental protection associations to ensure their long-term viability. The case study carried out in Antananarivo produced a specific breakdown of activities promoting environmental protection and a cumulative number of participants per activity over two years. The development of internal and external activities promotes young people's enthusiasm for volunteering for environmental protection. Although revitalizing volunteering is essential for its sustainability, this must be supported by a reference document specific to the environmental protection association.

Keywords: Volunteering, Association, Environmental protection, Activity, Theme, Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

According to France volunteers, global environmental concerns began in the 1970s. Today, they play a major role in society for every citizen [1]. Over the decades, the irreversible consequences of human activities on the environment have become apparent. The deterioration of the earth's capacity has led to the development of awareness of responsible environmental behavior with the ultimate goal of environmental education [2]. In Madagascar, one such initiative is non-formal education, where young people join environmental associations as volunteers to contribute to environmental protection [3]. According to the PEDD, "The main actors in awareness-raising and information are public authorities, associations, and the mass media" [2]. Environmental associations made up of young volunteers play a major role in restoring the environment, disseminating information, and implementing projects. Following the concept of the need for achievement, Dweck and Leggett developed the theory

of achievement goals in 1988, which is considered a major motivational theory aimed at understanding individuals who seek to demonstrate their skills in activities [4]. Through the dynamism of an association, in 1996, Elliot and Harackiewicz demonstrated that competitive performance-seeking behaviors accompany intrinsic motivation. Where the desire to learn reinforces the pursuit of performance in tasks. The perception of the value of the task is an essential dimension of motivational dynamics [5]. In France, the social purpose of a 1901 law association is the reason for its creation. Clarification of the association's project is essential for communication among its members in order to understand and become familiar with the association's vision. It is an opportunity to train together and learn. Knowledge sharing among members stimulates understanding of the reasons behind the association's various activities [6]. The lack of competence of association members in carrying out activities is an obstacle. Appropriate skills are necessary for productive structural transformation that paves the way for a greener economy and creation [7]. The absence of activities involving contact with nature discourages pro-environmental behavior. Indeed, contact with nature influences activists' desire to protect and preserve natural environments [8]. A balance between strengthening operationalization and intrinsic motivation is key to stimulating volunteers. So, the question is: what motivating factor promises the sustainability of volunteering in environmental associations? The objective of the study is to establish a specific operationalization process for volunteering within an environmental association. The hypothesis is that the associations' revitalization activities are factors in maintaining the sustainability of volunteering. Scientific research on the revitalization of volunteering in the environmental sector in Madagascar is still rare, hence the initiative for this study.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research at the association level focused on the respective activities of the four associations. In order to verify the hypothesis that “the dynamic activities of associations are factors in maintaining the sustainability of volunteering,” a survey was conducted among 120 volunteers from the four associations. This included 23 people surveyed in Namako ny Tany (Diana), 60 people surveyed in Club Vintsy Ravintsara Fanabeaza or CVRF (Analamanga), 21 people surveyed in the Mahery consortium (Menabe), and 16 people surveyed in Tafamasoatoi (Atsimo-Andrefana) through bilateral interviews, focus groups, and the use of questionnaires. Two sets of individual questionnaires were sent in two waves in physical form to volunteers. Only volunteers who met the sampling criteria responded to the questionnaires:

- Member of the association for more than two years
- Active member who has participated in at least five activities
- Member who is willing to give their opinion (by choice)

The criteria for the questions relate to the activities carried out by each association, the concepts or themes of the associations' operations, the outcomes obtained by volunteers through the associations, and internal activities to ensure the sustainability of volunteers. The variables selected focus on specific activities to energize the associations. The variables are presented as follows:

- Questions about the activities carried out by the associations focused on volunteers' multiple choices from the list of activities, followed by the option “other” outside the list. Multiple answers were possible in order to determine the activities carried out:

Table 1: List of activities in environmental protection associations

Playful Approach	Artistic Approach	Playful Awareness	Message Transmission	Education	Reforestation	Awareness
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- Following volunteers' statements that they perceive outcomes that encourage them to remain in associations, we compiled a list of the outcomes received and appreciated by volunteers. Multiple responses were possible in order to determine the order of appreciation and attainment of outcomes.
- Skill acquisition
- Broadening of horizons
- Leisure
- Knowledge
- Reflection
- Experience acquisition
- Self-confidence

- Money
 - Relationships
 - Work
- In addition to the activities carried out by associations with target group or stakeholders, associations also carry out internal activities for volunteer members to optimize the level of volunteering and maintain their commitment. The list of sustainability activities is established according to different variables to assess the level of appreciation of internal volunteer activities
- Stimulating activity
 - Sharing with seniors
 - Debate
 - Personal development
 - Internal training
 - Influence among members
 - Financial interest
 - Relational outcome
- Environmental associations are multidisciplinary, dealing with a wide variety of concepts. We verified that the priority themes used by the four environmental associations in different locations in Madagascar are in line with national trends and government policy. The variables maintained for the concepts or themes used by the four associations for environmental protection are:

Table 2: Themes developed by association for environmental protection

Environment	Reforestation	Hygiene	Human Rights	Equality	Health
Education	Gender	Social	Communication	Entrepreneurship	Leadership

Descriptive statistics using Excel Stat were used in the data processing. This allowed the data to be processed based on the responses obtained from the questionnaires completed by association members. Once processed, the results were presented in the form of various types of graphs, numbers, and percentages illustrating the program to boost volunteering in environmental protection associations: The results obtained on the types of activities, the outcomes perceived by volunteers, and the actions aimed at sustaining volunteering are presented in a radar chart in order to study more than three variables together. It also facilitates the interpretation of character analysis. The results on concepts or themes are presented in a histogram chart for ease of reading. The objectives in verifying the hypothesis are as follows:

- Graph showing the percentage of types of activities carried out by associations
- Graph showing the percentage of outcomes obtained by volunteers
- Graph showing the percentage of internal activities aimed at ensuring the sustainability of volunteering
- Figure showing the variety of themes addressed by environmental associations

3. RESULTS

3.1 The different types of activities in environmental associations

In the four study sites in Madagascar, six activities are promoted and implemented within environmental associations. The results show that among the six types of activities, 25% represent environmental protection awareness-raising carried out by volunteers among target group, closely followed by 24% representing reforestation by volunteers and 21% representing educational activities by volunteers. These three main types of activities follow the strategic priorities of environmental associations, where awareness-raising and education are learning techniques based on environmental concepts aimed at influencing and changing the behavior of target group. Reforestation is also an essential application in the conservation of the terrestrial ecosystem, aimed at building the skills of target group.

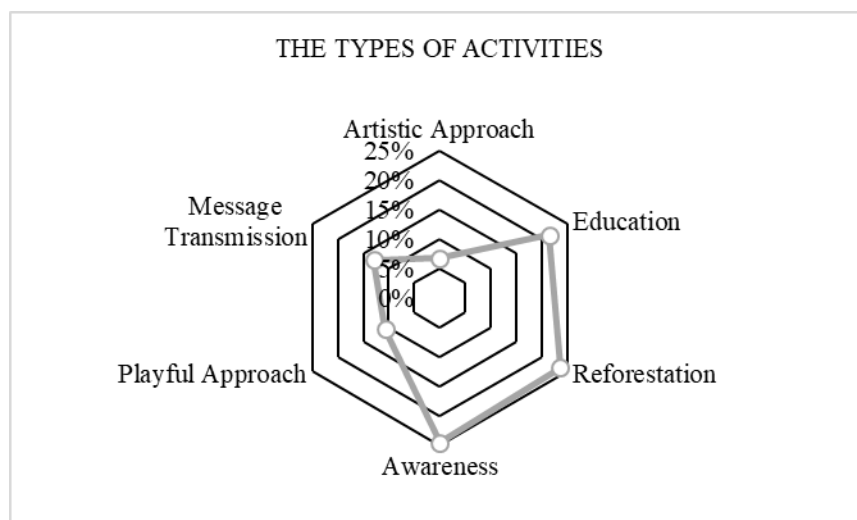


Chart-1 : Types of activities carried out by each association

3.2 The outcomes of volunteer association members

Among association members in the four regions of Madagascar, six outcomes stand out in the results. Six types of outcomes are shown in the graph in Figure 6. Knowledge transfer through activities accounts for 20% of the outcomes most acquired by members, while 19% represent relationship outcomes, networking between members, and between individuals or organizations outside the association. The outcomes of gaining experience through the association account for 17%. Thus, volunteer members receive outcomes that can enrich their personal development through the various types of activities within the associations.

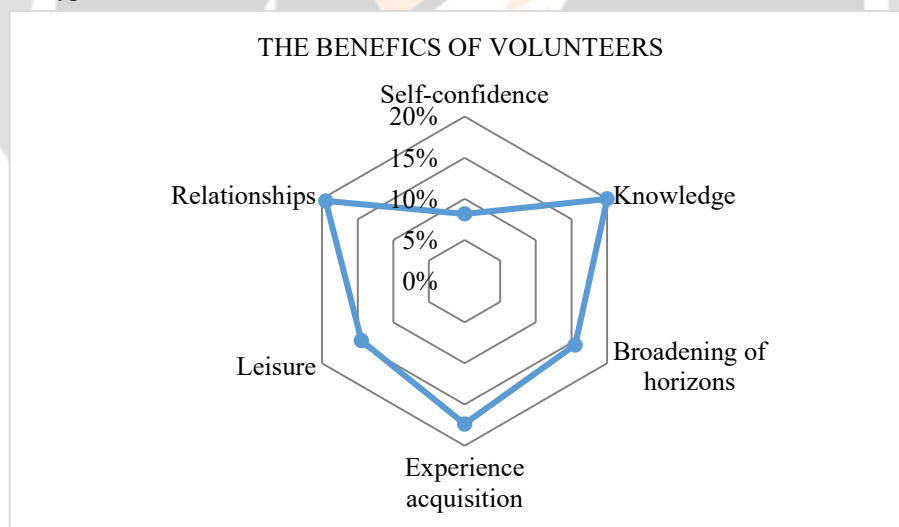


Chart-2 : Acquisition of outcomes by volunteers in each association

3.3 Encouraging young people to continue volunteering

In the four environmental associations, three specific criteria among the five others were identified as key to retaining volunteer members. Of the four criteria for retaining volunteers in Figure 7, internal training for members was the top priority, with 33% of the results, followed by personal development for young people with 30%, and finally sharing with older members, which was cited by 26% as a source of motivation for members to stay with the organizations. The deepening of activities through internal training and personal development focused on citizenship education focuses on the personal development of each individual. In addition, the support of older

and more experienced former members guides younger members, establishing a relationship of kindness. Other elements such as debates, stimulating activities, influence among members, financial interests, and relational outcomes are minor among the criteria for sustainability.

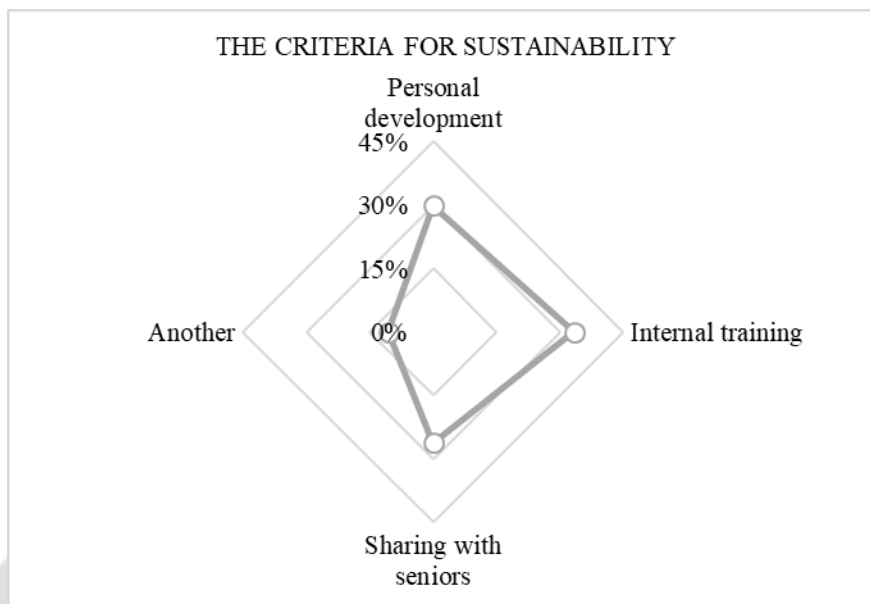


Chart-3 : Implementation of sustainability activities in each association

3.4 The different concepts in the four regional associations

The concepts or themes used in environmental protection activities are grouped according to the four associations. The inventory of the twelve themes was carried out in the four regional associations. First, the concept of “environment” was the most widely applied in the four associations, with a rate of ninety-two (92) members. Of the four regions, the CVFR association in Analamanga chose the environment theme the most, with thirty-seven (37) members. Second was the concept of “reforestation” with a score of eighty (80), and was mainly applied in the Analamanga association with a score of thirty-seven (37) as well. In third place was the concept of “hygiene” with forty-nine (49) members, mainly applied in the Analamanga association with twenty-seven (27) members. Thus, as an association for the protection of the environment, the concepts relating to the environment, environmental restoration, and personal hygiene are the most widely used in the four associations. Of the twelve varieties of concepts, the “Namako ny Tany” association in the Diana region applies eleven (11) of the twelve (12) identified concepts. It is followed by the “Tafamasoatoi” association in the Atsimo-Andrefana region, the “Les Consortiums des Jeunes Mahery” association in the Menabe region, and the “Club Vintsy Ravintsara Fanabeazana” association in the Analamanga region, each applying seven (7) of the twelve (12) concepts identified. The concepts applied to a lesser extent are “Leadership, entrepreneurship, and communication.”

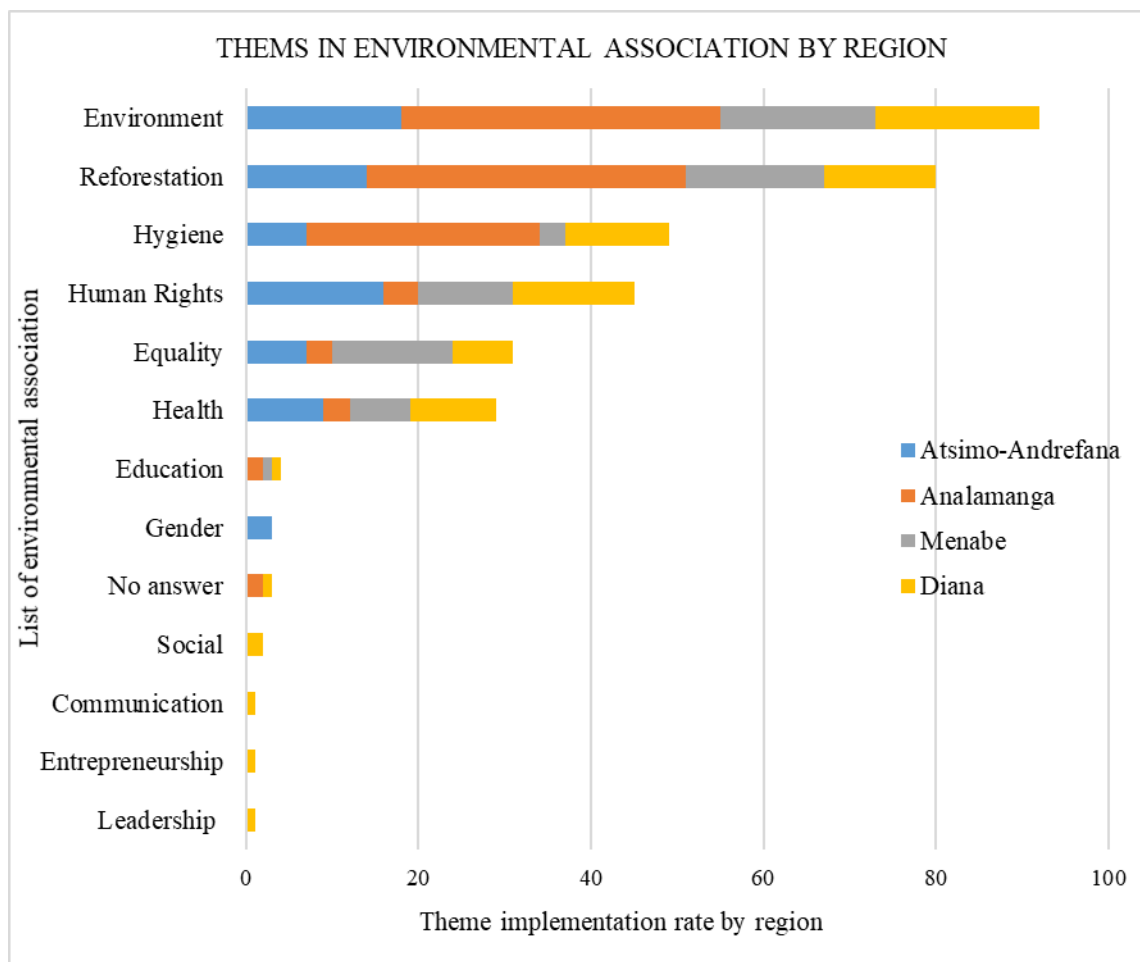


Chart-4 : Themes in environmental associations

4. DISCUSSIONS

The research highlights the parameters to be taken into account in order to revitalize an environmental protection association. Activities such as awareness-raising, reforestation, and education are the most favored by the four associations. The variety of activities that align with the goal of environmental protection motivate those involved. Environmental activities have been promoted for many years through projects aimed at engaging, educating, and raising awareness among all stakeholders in the development of social, cognitive, and emotional skills [9]. Raising public awareness of environmental protection involves recognizing the role each of us plays in ensuring the sustainability of our planet and having a large-scale impact on present and future generations [10].

Among the factors contributing to sustainability are the outcomes volunteers receive from participating in an association. Volunteers gain the most from acquiring knowledge, enhancing internal and external relationships with associations, and gaining experience in the field. These outcomes help to retain young people by showing them that, in return for their dedication, they also receive privileges through volunteering. The development of practical and professional skills improves their future career prospects. The activities support volunteers in developing a positive view of the world and themselves. They are enriched by sharing experiences, relationships, and dialogue with others [11]. Added to this is the opportunity to meet people who share the same interests and a real sense of personal satisfaction. Furthermore, meeting people who share the same interests is a source of real personal satisfaction [12]. For students, for example, their experience in an association plays an important role in their future career choices. They engage in activities related to their future professional lives. Volunteering allows them to “test” the profession they aspire to pursue. Volunteering offers them initial practical experience related to their academic studies and complements their training [10]. In addition, volunteers at “J’agis pour la nature” in France are aware of the increasingly frequent warnings issued by scientists about the state of the planet, and more and more people,

especially young people, are taking action at their own level to find solutions, either individually or collectively. Between surprises, learning, and encounters with nature, volunteers testify to their enjoyment of taking action for nature [13].

Added to this are sustainability activities such as internal training, personal development activities, and sharing with former members. This is necessary for the continuity of environmental protection actions in the non-formal sector. The sustainability of young people's involvement in environmental associations increases their knowledge and skills while helping to reduce or prevent damage to the environment [14]. Volunteering makes a very practical contribution to environmental protection issues by focusing on the specific needs of organizations while ensuring their own development [15].

Today, associations develop activities around complementary themes. The diversity of fields offers a wide range of subjects addressed by environmental organizations, such as environmental education, health, culture, agriculture, water, energy, waste management, and more. As a result, their actions often span multiple sectors, making classification particularly challenging [16].

Furthermore, environmental associations place great emphasis on raising public awareness and educating especially younger generations about environmental issues. Environmental education enables individuals and communities to become aware of their environment, and to acquire the knowledge, values, skills, experiences, and the will necessary to act individually and collectively to address current and future environmental challenges [17].

The term “environment” encompasses natural ecosystems (water, air, plants, animals, etc.) as well as human activities that affect them (natural and technological risks, energy use, etc.) [18]. In response to the loss of over 40% of its forests and the widespread destruction of vegetation—which now threatens Madagascar’s unique biodiversity—national reforestation campaigns are organized annually, with strong participation from volunteer associations. For example, in March 2024, with financial support from GEOFIT and SINTEGRA in Madagascar (a subsidiary of the Group), 4,000 trees adapted to local conditions (2,000 acacia and 2,000 ash trees) were planted by around forty volunteers [19]. Indeed, reforestation is a driver of development, as it encourages local populations to replant by fostering love and respect for forests. It also has a favorable impact on rainfall patterns, which in turn increases both the frequency and intensity of surrounding crop production [20].

The prioritization of environmental and reforestation themes by associations is accompanied by other themes linked to human needs. In fact, activities aimed at individual well-being and the equitable sharing of global common goods—such as hygiene, human rights, health, education, and gender equality—when managed in a way that supports the environment, are integral components of sustainable development [21]

5. CONCLUSION

Through the four (4) environmental protection associations comprising 120 volunteers, the volunteer mobilization program demonstrates the importance of prioritizing key activities, namely awareness-raising (25%), education (24%), and reforestation (21%) within the organizations. Similarly, the sustainability of volunteer engagement is reflected in the outcomes received by the volunteers, with knowledge acquisition (20%), gaining experience (19%), and the strengthening of social relationships (17%) identified as the most valued outcomes.

In addition, activities related to personal development (33%), internal training (30%), and sharing with senior or former members (27%) serve as strategies for retaining members and maintaining long-term commitment.

Thematic focus areas within environmental protection associations encompass various concepts, with Environment (92), Reforestation (80), and Hygiene (49) being the most prevalent. The environmental theme was prioritized in all four associations. However, the continuation of this research is oriented toward the development of a specific reference document on environmental protection in the non-formal education context, which will support the volunteer mobilization program.

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