

## CHAPTER 12

### ONLINE VOLUNTEERING AND NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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DOI: 10.26650/B/SS49.2022.007.12

Due to reasons such as providing ease of access, enabling the efficient use of time, overcoming boundaries, and revealing volunteers' potential, online volunteering has greatly excited volunteers and NGOs in our current era and created new areas of work and employment. Online volunteering has become widespread since the 1970s, when it first came to the fore, by differentiating according to the types of themes it has established in various institutions and the diversity of tools it uses, and has entered the world agenda more intensely since the turn of the century. Despite occurring less than in-person volunteering, online volunteering has continued to maintain its presence. With the COVID-19 pandemic, online volunteering has become more common than ever before, and the opportunities for being able to access it have increased. This section addresses topics such as what exactly this relatively new trend is (also known as digital volunteering, e-volunteering, virtual volunteering, and volunteering through digital communication), which activities it covers, its advantages and disadvantages, and its relationship with in-person volunteering. This section additionally seeks answers to questions such as, "Will online volunteering replace face-to-face volunteering, can online volunteering become sustainable, does online volunteering give birth to new inequalities in the wake of the opportunities it presents, and what is the point of ethical debates on online volunteering?".

## Introduction

Because of Project Gutenberg's<sup>1</sup> open source design, in the 1970s support was received from online volunteers who created electronic versions of works. Thus began the online volunteering journeys of the volunteers who supported this work in order to facilitate access to information and to produce social benefit. The non-profit organization known currently as VolunteerMatch, and previously as Impact Online, began developing online volunteering practices in 1995. They even developed a project called the Virtual Volunteering Project in order to create a model for online volunteering to be able to become widespread; they carried out their activities using a website application in early 1997. Online volunteering guides were created. By 1999, nearly 100 organizations with online volunteering opportunities were listed on the website.

While online volunteering continued with various topics and tools, classical volunteering (in person in physical settings) continued to be popular. People with disabilities who have to live dependently in a specific physical place with various facilitating instruments, individuals who cannot participate in physical volunteering activities due to time or economic constraints, or people who prefer digital communication instead of face-to-face communication are known to tend to volunteer using online volunteering activities. Online volunteers of NGOs support many activities that can be monitored online or at a desk, such as designing an NGO's website, reading legal documents and providing expert support, consulting on fiscal and financial sustainability, translating foreign resources, doing writing projects, and doing data entry.

In addition, online volunteering has seen changes and developments in individual and organizational forms due to the effects of digitalization, such as managing the tools of social media, producing and sharing information and content, digital activism, signature campaigns, local digital correspondence, verifying information so that correct information can be accessed, creating awareness of the climate crisis, informing citizens about live environmental developments, and mapping and visualizing data. The COVID-19 pandemic is an important turning point in the more widespread diversification of these activities by different age groups, by different areas of expertise, and by occupational groups. Today, people of all ages from a wide variety of social backgrounds participate in online volunteering activities around the world and have become volunteers via online tools, using their knowledge, skills, time, and effort for the benefit of society.

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1 Project Gutenberg is a volunteer effort to digitize, archive, and distribute copyright-free cultural works. Established in 1971, Project Gutenberg is the world's oldest digital library and was moved online after the birth of the Internet.



### Online Volunteering Activities

So, in which areas does the need for online volunteering arise and in which areas do volunteers want to volunteer?

- Website design or support
- Data entry and management, mapping, and visualization
- Email sending and design
- Donation development
- Social media promotion, content development, and management
- Developing technology-based applications
- Project writing and development
- Volunteer coordination and follow-up; reporting and monitoring processes
- Content development (research, copywriting, and blogging)
- Graphic, visual design
- Branding and strategizing
- Information and expertise support in areas such as software, informatics, law, and psychology
- Video and audio recording; montage
- Training, mentoring, and coaching
- Translation
- Local digital reporting, editorial
- Organizing workshops in various fields such as yoga, origami, and storytelling
- Support for lessons that are part of the curriculum

These areas vary according to the needs and resources of the institutions, and the competencies, interests, and expertise of the volunteers. But in general, we observe that there is a great interest in all social benefits that can be generated through online tools.



## Digital Transformation's Impact on Volunteering and Current State in Online Volunteering

A brief introduction has been given above regarding the impact developments in the digital world have had on volunteering activities and how these developments have transformed them. NGOs that have adapted to the processes of digital transformation are able to more easily access their target groups, stakeholders, and decision makers. As a result, interaction rates have increased, and this has also increased the expectations of monitoring, reporting, transparency, and quick and effective decision making. The expectations of stakeholders (who have easier access to opportunities, information, events, activities, and key people, together with digital transformation) from NGOs have changed. Through digital tools, they have expressed *en masse* their requests to be more involved in operational processes, to be consulted, to be informed, and to generate more benefits.

One of the effects of digital transformation is that the actors supporting civil society (i.e., volunteers, citizens) have had the opportunity to voice their demands for rights more vocally and to access these demands from the local to the national to the global level. This has deeply affected NGOs' responsibilities and business processes. NGOs that are unable to keep up with digital transformations have seen the risks of not taking an active role in the processes of social change and have started to receive support from empowerment programs in this field.

In order to meet the changing demands of the effects of digital transformations and to adapt to the process of change, various impact investors, foundations, and grant funds supporting NGOs have also taken up efforts to empower NGOs in regard to adapting to digital transformations.

While the widespread use of technology has changed the nature and scope of online volunteer activities, it has also revealed the need for skills such as using technology-based tools, programs, and applications as well as coding and communication technologies. Thus, new areas of employment have emerged under the coordination of online volunteer activities. These needs and expectations have also affected the profiles NGOs seek for online volunteers.



*Photo 1.* The widespread use of technology has greatly impacted volunteering.

Online volunteering has been affected, changed, developed, and differentiated by the world's agenda and by the processes of digital transformation. However, the specific event of the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected this process of change. Since March 11, 2020, many daily life practices and business processes in Türkiye have rapidly moved

to online environments with the emergence of COVID-19 cases. This rapid transition and transformation have had impacts on all sectors, including civil society. Some NGOs quickly planned how they would be able to transfer their solutions to social problems to the digital environment. NGOs that had started their digital transformation before the pandemic and used technology more widely were able to continue to provide support and service to their target groups and volunteers through online tools; more importantly, they shared their experiences in this field with other NGOs on various platforms.

The institutions that transitioned to online volunteering processes relatively quicker were basically among the ones who had switched to online education and volunteering practices long before the pandemic. These institutions are the NGOs that had already moved their data management and information sharing systems to digital channels and encouraged their employees' use of technology; in other words, these NGOs had started working with technology earlier. This shows the need to prepare for the digital transformation process with a holistic point of view.

As part of these digitalization processes and in an effort to diversify online volunteering, a variety of funds and trainings have been made available to strengthen and accelerate NGOs' digital transformation. The basic reason for this is that some NGOs have not been able to adapt to this transformation quickly. For this reason, institutions invested in civil society have supported NGOs in order for them to be able to benefit from capacity strengthening programs, use their resources efficiently, and create new resources.

In addition, volunteers with previous online volunteering experience who in particular have contributed to social benefit production processes without leaving their computer desks have shared stories on online platforms about how they had kept their motivation and sense of belonging alive in order to contribute to getting new volunteers used to this model. Thus, volunteers' online volunteering experiences have also become a part of the process of learning from one another.

Various social initiatives were launched in this period and digital platforms were established in order to make digital volunteering tools inclusive and accessible. The positive result of the digitalization process was that the digital platforms that had launched prior to the pandemic gained momentum in their use. The purpose of these platforms was to make proper matches between more NGOs and volunteers, to use resources efficiently, and to bring these two together to create social benefit. Within a very short time, these platforms began to match the profiles of volunteers with NGOs seeking volunteer support. The acceleration of

digital volunteering has also opened up new employment opportunities. In particular, youths competent in the use of technology began to be employed within these initiatives.

From interviews done with NGOs, we learn that digital volunteer applications have doubled in a short time through NGOs' own websites and the platforms mentioned above.

### **What Does Online Volunteering Mean for Volunteers and Organizations?**

One of the advantages of online volunteering is that volunteers have the opportunity to volunteer in more than one field or institution at a time. This can become a goal for the volunteer, which in turn creates more social benefits. Online volunteering has become more meaningful to volunteers due to advantages such as the time previously spent going from place to place in face-to-face volunteerism being used more efficiently in online volunteering, and being able to volunteer for longer periods. Not having to take the risks that occur in physical spaces (where volunteering traditionally took place) can increase motivation for online volunteering activities and provide greater flexibility regarding taking responsibility. For volunteers who choose to volunteer for personal growth rather than for socializing, online volunteering can allow them to focus directly on volunteering and more personal development opportunities. At the same time, online volunteering may be an area where different competencies and skills gain meaning and personal satisfaction further increases.

Online volunteering can be an opportunity for an organization to reach people from different cultures and structures that they could not reach in person. Organizations may prefer to use online volunteering tools so that volunteers with less time but greater competence can volunteer with more focus. Institutions may also prefer online volunteering tools because they reduce the costs traditionally required for carrying out face-to-face activities (travel, meals, accommodation, appropriate clothing, t-shirts, etc.), where volunteers come together physically. Using online volunteering processes, institutions can seize the opportunity to access and share more information by communicating more widely.

### **What Can Online Volunteering Mean for Volunteers and Organizations?**

Being one of the advantages of online volunteering, the opportunity to do volunteering in more than one field and institution at the same time, can turn into a goal to create more social benefits for a volunteer. The time spent in the face-to-face volunteering process to get from one place to another can be more meaningful to the volunteer by turning into a direct activity in online volunteering due to its advantages such as using time more efficiently and volunteering for a longer time. Not taking the possible risks of the physical places where volunteering takes place can increase motivation in online volunteering activities and be more flexible in taking responsibility. For volunteers who choose to volunteer for personal growth rather than socializing, online volunteering can make it possible to focus directly on volunteering and more personal development opportunities. Online volunteering can also be seen as an area where different competencies and skills make sense and personal satisfaction increases further.

Online volunteering for an institution can mean an opportunity to reach people from diverse cultural and structural backgrounds that cannot be reached face-to-face. Organizations may prefer to use online volunteering tools for volunteers having less time but more competence can volunteer more intensively. Reducing the costs required to carry out the activities in the face-to-face volunteering where volunteers come together physically (transportation, meal, subsistence, appropriate clothing, t-shirt, etc.) can be an outcome preferred by the institutions. Institutions can seize the opportunity to communicate more widely access and share more information by online volunteering processes.

### **Online Volunteering's Development and Future**

Being able to look at digitalization holistically is very important. One can only see the real picture when looking at the opportunities, crises, inequalities, advantages, disadvantages, and benefits that have been created as a whole. The social impact online volunteering has created should be measured, and the areas for change and improvement in this field should be determined.

Measuring the positive change and social benefit online volunteering has created will provide important data on how the private sector, impact investors, and various funders will use their resources, as well as what the public will create for legal regulations.

Since its inception, online volunteering has undergone changes to respond to various needs, but its focus has always been on producing social and public benefits and to mediate how individuals contribute to society in this way. Meanwhile, people who've participated in volunteer activities have also been affected by change in the world, and this has created new expectations for them: volunteers have begun to request transparency, consistency, accessibility, and participation in decisions.



*Photo 2.* Online volunteering contributes to a world accessible for all.

Global changes have also changed intersocietal interactions. Volunteers at the local and international levels have begun to learn from and be influenced by one another. There are two important reasons behind these interactions: the first is the mobility of volunteering, and the other is the rapid spread of online volunteering, due to its nature.

The institutions and volunteers involved in volunteer activities have tried to answer one common question during this process: How can we be more useful? The Sustainable Development Goals identified by the United Nations have served as a guide in answering this question.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), also known as Global Goals, are a universal call to action to eradicate poverty, protect our planet, and ensure that all people live in peace and prosperity. (<https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/tr/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>) Containing 17 goals and 169 targets, this call to action has built a bridge among sectors in regard to identifying, prioritizing, and monitoring local regional, national, and global social issues within the framework of universal values. These days, NGOs refer to SDGs when setting their goals for social change and improvement. SDGs have undertaken the task of facilitating volunteer motivation and togetherness by providing a framework in which many volunteers who don't know each other come together in an online volunteering processes where they meet in front of the screen and work together in the digital environment to set common goals.

Some of the problems experienced regarding volunteerism are concerns about sustainability, identifying common goals, and losing focus; on all these points, SDGs have formed the basis for a strong environmental volunteerism regarding the efficient use of the Earth's resources, investing in the present and the future, and reaching the common good. For volunteers who've lost their motivation to volunteer, SDGs offer new sources of motivation through its qualities of being able to universalize and localize. Today, a person who volunteers in any of Turkiye's provinces with the aim of "fighting poverty" is able to sharpen their focus and reenergize the motivation they've lost by meeting with people and societies referencing the same goals in other parts of the world on different platforms. Volunteers state that with the widespread use of online volunteering, the borders expand and accessibility and opportunities increase.

## **Opportunities Evolving Through the Increase in Online Volunteerism**

Many institutions organize ideation marathons with the volunteers they bring together in a virtual environment to try to identify the problems experienced in their own localities and open up space for producing solutions in groups, in line with the aims of the SDGs.



The projects that online volunteers propose in these marathons are brought to life through financing by the private sector, foundations, and other sources of funds. In this way, volunteers have the opportunity to strengthen their projects through the contributions of people from different cultures and with different experiences. Thanks to the projects developed in online volunteering environments and the modeling of their applicability, volunteers can also find the opportunity to present themselves more actively.

Alongside this, the visibility of some inequalities in opportunity has come to the fore with the increase in online volunteering activities. Online volunteers once again step in to address the emerging inequalities, which offers a promising outlook for the future. For example, in the idea marathons, projects have also been developed for eliminating and improving the disadvantageous situations that have emerged through the digitalization of volunteerism. The intercultural learning experience has been disrupted due to volunteers who meet in digital settings being unable to meet in physical settings. The same reason again may lead to a quick loss in the motivation to volunteer. In addition, among the important items is how to include people in volunteerism who've experienced problems with the Internet or device access. An attempt has been made to overcome opportunity inequalities by searching for solutions to these issues through online volunteering.

One important topic of discussion among experts is whether or not the interactions that occur among volunteers who meet in person in classical volunteer activities, share the same environment, and witness one on one the source of the problem (e.g., communication, perspective development, effort to be part of the solution, sense of belonging, and sustainability) are seen in online volunteering.

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### **Does Everyone Have Sufficient Internet Access for Online Volunteering?**

For internet, one of the main sources of online volunteering, there is a need for access available to everyone in workplaces, schools, dormitories, homes and various public spaces. In such places where multiple usage increases, it may be possible to encounter various obstacles such as the number of users, the shortage of devices and the affected internet speed. For example, different individuals who want to receive online education in the same house, who want to volunteer online, who want to socialize over the internet may experience problems when they want to access the internet at the same time.

Geographical effects, infrastructure problems, device and equipment quality can affect the quality, efficiency and sustainability of online volunteering activities. Non-governmental organizations and financial supporters who want online volunteering activities to become widespread can invest in eliminating the disruptions in internet and device access, and take an active role in resolving inequalities that arise due to internet access. Public institutions, private sector and other investors can bring this issue to their agenda in order to strengthen the relationship between internet access and social benefit generation.

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Meanwhile, activities (e.g., meetings over various Internet applications, empowerment programs that will positively impact student volunteers' career plans, plans to increase the Internet literacy of the elderly) are also conducted through the initiative of online volunteers for volunteers who've been adversely affected by online volunteering processes.

### **What Problems Have Emerged in Online Volunteering?**

Online volunteering differs from classical volunteering in the capacities and strategies that are involved in managing processes and the ability to create outputs that produce added value and meet expectations. While this difference brings some flexibility and innovation with it, it may also result in certain negatives. Assessing the advantages and disadvantages within online volunteer activities and maintaining positive developments while looking for solutions to the negatives (in short, creating holistic strategies) are important.

In mixed groups of volunteers from different age and occupation groups, the differences in competence in using technology tools may cause inequalities to increase or become visible. Conditions such as Internet quality, devices that will use the Internet, and appropriateness/inappropriateness of the physical environment may create an impediment to equal participation. The voices of people who hesitate to express themselves in front of the screen may not be heard much and their visibility may decrease. People who have difficulty adapting to the virtual world may have problems with group dynamics, concentration, focusing. Due to the problem of digital belonging, those who do not find digital environs to be sincere or real may find challenges positioning themselves as a part of the team with those across from them. There may be cases of encountering, or not being able to identify or deal with, digital bullying or harassment. The experiences of learning from one another, learning by seeing, and learning by doing, which are more direct in face-to-face volunteering, may not be realized; intercultural learning and interaction may become interrupted.

NGOs are expected to produce solutions to all these negatives by looking through the lens of "What and how can we change?" The topics to be applied at this point include orientation, education, volunteer ethics, communication and community building, efficient use of own resources, etc. In this context, NGOs are able to implement online volunteering more efficiently and sustainably by producing solutions.

### **Role of NGOs in Eliminating Disadvantages**

NGOs are also able to produce appropriate solutions to the problems they encounter in online volunteering provided they sufficiently focus on this. The following examples can be given for these:

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### Adults 65 & Above and Online Volunteering

It is becoming more and more important every day to develop online volunteering opportunities for adults aged 65 and over, to support the use of technology by individuals from the older age group, and to cooperate to create equal opportunities. Volunteers who accept that everyone is equal in terms of rights while prioritizing social well-being and take responsibility for reducing the inequalities of opportunity brought about by digitalization processes based on this knowledge; works to strengthen the digital competencies of adults aged 65 and over in various fields such as health, food, socialization and access to accurate information by developing collaborations between the private sector and civil society. Mechanisms should also be established that will support them to stay in touch with social life, maintain their well-being by producing social benefits, and enable them to volunteer online. The expertise, experience and volunteering motivation of adults aged 65 and over should be supported by increasing the accessibility and use of online tools.

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- NGOs can implement a mentoring program by matching people from different age groups to help develop digital skills and competencies.
- The Internet and devices may be provided to volunteers who are able to be active but have limited Internet access or lack the tools needed to use the Internet, provided these are used in volunteering areas through corporate collaborations.
- People who experience screen fatigue or have difficulty expressing themselves on screen can be trained to express themselves in front of the public.
- By sharing supportive content on data privacy, combating cyberbullying, and promoting ethics and rights in online interactions in the digital world, adaptation to online volunteering in a safer way can be achieved.
- Games and meetings outside of the area of activities where volunteerism is done can be organized to enable volunteers to learn and interact with one another and to improve group dynamics.
- When considering volunteers whose sense of belonging has decreased due to being unable to go to the institution's headquarters, events where volunteers can meet can be organized through the employees of the institutions; mechanisms can be organized where volunteers can easily access information about the institution, and activities can also be organized that will remind volunteers of the institution's mission and values.

### Online Volunteering and Ethics

Debates on ethics in online volunteering have now begun to be addressed in a broader context. Legislation that is envisaged for the field of volunteering brings the issue of ethics

to the agenda alongside debates on volunteer and civil society relations. Due to the nature of volunteering, which includes a wide variety of activities and takes place in institutional/organizational structures that differ in many aspects, the effort to create general norms as well as various situations that require making decisions about daily activities may cause the volunteer to confront an ethical dilemma. (İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2020, p. 166). For this reason, corporate culture, mutual expectations, geography, and regional differences stand out as important determinants in discussions on volunteer ethics. Even if universal ethical values are always brought to the agenda in discussions on volunteering ethics, it is important to decide on exactly which basic values and principles to develop a dialogue within the culture of living together and co-production. NGOs are expected to plan how they will maintain these values and principles they've identified in an applicable, sustainable, and effective way and how they will be consistent in practice. Again, NGOs are expected to encourage volunteers to take an active role in this process.

Volunteers are not one type; they have very different needs, expectations, motivations, levels of education, economic situations, and cultures. The existence of different volunteer profiles means standardizing the issue of ethics is impossible. For this reason, having NGOs know the different volunteer profiles, cooperate with volunteers, and know the environment in which volunteer activities are carried out will also facilitate the development of volunteer ethics.

The following points should be considered in discussions on online volunteer ethics:

- One volunteer group cannot be superior to another,
- When evaluating the value or benefit created by volunteer activities carried out by volunteers with different profiles, such as children, women, youth, the elderly, or the retired, care must be taken not to create an ethically questionable debate,
- Online volunteering should not be portrayed something that helps volunteers gain status,
- One type of volunteering (e.g., humanitarian aid, neighborhood, city council, social enterprise) should not be considered superior to another,
- NGOs should place digital ethical codes or online volunteering ethics issues on the agenda, and studies should be carried out to develop a common language with volunteers.



*Photo 3.* Digital ethics in online volunteering must be on the agenda.

### **Online Volunteer Administration**

Making, implementing, and developing decisions together (in short, creating coordination among volunteers) is one of the most important cornerstones for strengthening civil society. In order to do all these together, the understanding of administration must become part of the corporate culture. Involving all shareholders in the implementation and monitoring of the volunteer process is important. Online volunteers' expectations of inclusion, transparency, and consistency in the various processes should not be ignored. Implementing administrative mechanisms in the online relations between the institution and volunteers or among the volunteers themselves falls within the responsibility of NGOs.

An NGO's administrative approach is decisive in meeting stakeholders' expectations. With the right administrative principles, one can predict if empathy has been established with the volunteers and whether volunteers' significant demands, such as receiving feedback, orientation, training, access to information, and co-production will be met. The administrative principles are as follow:

- Fairness
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Consistency
- Participation and expansion
- Ethicality

## Steps in Setting Up Online Volunteering

*What types of questions and problems may arise in online volunteering that are different from traditional volunteering?*

- To what extent are the NGO's activities impacted by volunteers' command of and competence with online tools, and could this cause a problem or crisis? Should volunteers' online competence be tested to determine this? In what way should their experience and skills be tested?
- Having in the past involved volunteers in their programs by meeting in person, NGOs should plan well how they will manage the interview processes for online volunteering. Will issues such as screens being off during online interviews or meetings, or doing self-reported age declarations require NGOs to take stricter measures?
- Are institutions prepared to make investments in connection with motivation and community building through digital tools in order to have volunteers feel like they belong to the community, to internalize the institution's continuity and field of activity, and to ensure the motivation for volunteering is sustainable?

Searching for answers to all these questions and adapting these answers to volunteering tools are fundamental steps and part of NGOs' digital transformation.

The following are structural and administrative issues that could turn into a big problem if overlooked:

- Lack of a responsible (professional employee) within the organization dealing with online volunteering,
- The institution having yet to determine any vision, principles, or strategies regarding volunteering,
- The institution not allocating the time or budget needed to empower volunteers,
- Volunteers' areas of activity not being defined,
- The institution's employees lacking command of digital tools,
- The institution not leading the way in building communication and trust among volunteers,
- Lacking knowledge and awareness about the online volunteering needs and expectations of the stakeholders who financially support volunteer activities.

When these conditions are not addressed, even in the classical volunteerism model that is applied in the field in person, great schisms frequently occur among volunteers as well as conflicts with the institution and loss of trust in the field of civil society. This is exactly why these issues should be addressed more sensitively when discussing online volunteering.



### **What Are the Digital Tools Used While Conducting Online Volunteering Activities?**

There are many different types of activities referenced in online volunteering. The tools used for all these (meeting, screen sharing, small group work, collaborative work space, design, planning, data management, donation development, volunteer follow-up, internal-external communication, chat) are much more than we have included here. Some of these tools are free, while others require a paid subscription. NGOs can choose the appropriate ones among these tools according to the capacity of their institutions, their financial structure, and the service feature they seek. The fact that NGOs prepare user manuals and provide training to volunteers on the use of these tools will also help to eliminate some of the inequalities of opportunity experienced by online volunteers during the digital transformation process. Some of the main tools that can be mentioned at this point are as follows:

- Apps used for community building, messaging, internal communication, video calling, voice chats. Ex: Slack, Discord
- Applications used for meetings, trainings, webinars, video and audio conferences. Ex: Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams
- Digital work environments that provide the possibility of a joint working paper or wall in activities such as training, meetings, workshops. Ex: Mural, Miro,
- Tools that collect applications such as the management of volunteer information, reporting, sending e-bulletins in a common data management system. Ex: BidestekOl, Fonzip, Raklet, Salesforce
- Web-based applications that enable visual design preparation using common and ready-made templates. Ex: Pitochart, Canva.



## Summary and Evaluation

The history of online volunteering coincides with that of the Internet, and the story of its origin is Project Gutenberg, which seeks to contribute to the dissemination and accessibility of information. Online volunteers, who at that time supported the transfer of non-copyrighted cultural works to digital media, have become important agents of social change by using the opportunities of digital transformation to contribute to solving current social problems in many different fields, without changing their locations.

Online volunteering has been around for a long time as a volunteering model applicable using remote technology-based tools and is preferred by people from different profiles, such as youth, those with disabilities, white-collar workers, and those with expertise in various fields but limited time. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is clearly seen in the diversity of backgrounds of those participating in online volunteering activities, including in their age group, profession, and sector. Having affected a large swath of social and work life, the pandemic has also played a large role in diversifying and changing online volunteering practices.

Within this context, online volunteering has gained momentum by using the opportunities technology offers in a positive way; however, this has also brought certain inequalities of opportunity. Yet online volunteers have viewed these inequalities as a social problem and developed projects for finding ways to produce solutions. They have aimed to enable more people to benefit from technological opportunities by developing projects such as providing tools that enable Internet literacy, access, and use. They have developed sensitivity toward children, women, and young people in particular not falling behind in areas such as volunteerism, education, social life, and career planning due to not having Internet access.

Analyzing the advantages and disadvantages that arise with online volunteering, developing and strengthening the advantages, and eliminating the disadvantages has become a topic in which public institutions, the private sector, and civil society should make social investments.

Developing online volunteering activities, in parallel with increased technology usage, has led to the establishment of different departments in NGOs to handle volunteer administration and the emergence of new areas of employment. Online volunteers have begun requesting that NGOs help them improve in their use of technological tools.

New areas of development have emerged for volunteers, regardless of their fixed location, as training sessions and meetings have moved to online settings and design, data mapping, analysis, coding, and data visualization applications have improved. NGOs have begun to



question how they can develop their own capacities in order to meet volunteers' expectations and implement high quality volunteering processes.

Issues such as protecting personal data in online volunteering practices, struggling with cyberbullying, the competency differences between generations regarding technology usage, unequal opportunities due to problems accessing the Internet, and volunteers' sense of belonging and motivation levels have become study topics for NGOs to reflect on and invest in.

Will online volunteering replace traditional volunteerism? On one hand, the importance of face-to-face communication, intercultural interaction, physical mobility, and on-site learning remains, while on the other, online volunteering has gotten stronger every day within the framework of the conditions of the age. While volunteering has begun to stretch, strengthen, change, and become widespread, we hope that we will see the power to create positive social change and the agility to build communities freed from geographic restrictions for the benefit of society.

## Basic Reading Recommendations

Dijital Aktivizm, Durmuş Gökhan Turhan, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 2017 (accessible online)

Sanal Gönüllülük (accessible online)

Dijital Dönüşümün Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarına Etkisi: Türkiye Örneği (accessible online) Hak Temelli Örgütlerde Online Gönüllülük Rehberi (accessible online)

Online Gönüllülük Yapılabilecek 5 Kurum (accessible online)

Dijital Etik Nedir? (accessible online)

Gençlere Dijital Tavsiyeler (accessible online)

## Advanced-Level Reading Recommendations

Volunteers' perspective on online volunteering - a qualitative approach, Silva ve arkadaşları, International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing, 2018

Satisfaction With Informal Volunteering During the COVID-19 Crisis: An Empirical Study Considering a Swiss Online Volunteering Platform, Trautwein ve arkadaşları, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 2020.

Classifying and Relating Different Types of Online and Offline Volunteering, Jennifer Ihm, Voluntas, 2017.

Bridging or Deepening the Digital Divide: Influence of Household Internet Access on Formal and Informal Volunteering, Piatak ve arkadaşları, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 2018.

Online volunteering as a means to overcome unequal participation? The profiles of online and offline volunteers compared, Ackermann ve Manatschal, New Media & Society, 2018.

## Activity Recommendations

e- Gönüllü, podcast, Elif Nazlıgül (accessible online) Gönüllülük-Kooperatifçilik, podcast, Kadıköy Kooperatifi (accessible online) Pad Man, Yönetmen: R. Balki, 2018

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