

# On the Effective Way to the Application of Voluntary Service in Grassroots Social Governance

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## Abstract

**Voluntary service is a significant symbol of social civilization and progress. In the new era, voluntary service has played an important role in participating in social governance. Taking S province as an example, this paper summarizes and analyzes the significant achievements made in the development of voluntary service since 2008, sorts out and summarizes the necessity and importance of voluntary service in social governance, and points out some shortcomings and deficiencies exposed in the participation of voluntary service in social governance in the current stage. Focusing on perfecting the voluntary services system, promoting the institutionalization and normalization of community voluntary service and giving full play to the important role of this service in social governance, we should improve the operation mechanism of this service, strengthen the platform construction and popularization of it, enhance the professional level of voluntary service, increase the policy incentives of it, and improve the laws and regulations governing voluntary service.**

## Keywords

**Voluntary service; social governance; explore breakthroughs; effective way.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Voluntary service is an important symbol of social civilization and progress. In China, the charity and dedication fostered by Confucianism has a very profound cultural soil. After the reform and opening up, voluntary activities have flourished in China. [1] The functions and core values of voluntary service are generally reflected in: passing love on; contributing to society; stimulating the brilliance of human nature. [2] However, in the new era, voluntary service has also played an important role in participating in social governance.

Social governance is not only a change in the ways and methods of state and social management, but also "different from what it used to be" in terms of "the meaning and process of governance" and "the conditions, elements and essence of governance". [3] In Hong Kong, for instance, a city with a time-honored volunteer culture, the government deems it is imperative to take adolescents as priority for maintenance of social stability, so it implements the education of the youth by encouraging citizens' participation in voluntary work. [4] With reference to the voluntary service including its institutional construction from the perspective of reform and innovation of social governance, we find that the sound development of this service and the realization of its functions are highly correlated with the essential requirements and basic characteristics of social governance. Consequently, the promotion of civic participation in social governance through voluntary services is conducive to political stability and maximization of public interests. [5] As far as S province is concerned, it is imperative to comprehensively sort out and summarize the existing experience of voluntary service in view of the current main problems, and further explore a new way to the institutionalization and normalization of

voluntary service, so as to make voluntary service system function in grassroots social governance.

## **2. THE POSITIVE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES IN SOCIAL GOVERNANCE AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL**

Voluntary service has developed rapidly in S province and made remarkable achievements since 2008, laying a solid working foundation for social governance. Particularly after the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, a large number of volunteers have made major contributions to the prevention and control of the epidemic in the province, which fully exhibits the necessity and importance of their service in social governance.

### **2.1. The Formation of An Institutional System**

S province recently incorporated "promoting the institutionalization and normalization of community voluntary service" into the relevant work plan for advancing the innovation of urban and rural social governance system and capacity enhancement, which is attributable to the good volunteer service in S province in the early stage. For example, the provincial youth volunteer association was founded in 2001, and then all cities (autonomous prefectures) under its jurisdiction established relevant organizations. The Regulations on Voluntary Service in S Province was adopted in 2009. In 2014, the Social Service Center of S Province was set up to strengthen our contact with non-governmental entities and encourage the public support and participation in voluntary service. We formulated the first provincial standard of Emergency Voluntary Service Management Regulation in 2018.

### **2.2. Improvement in the Classification of Projects**

Volunteers in S province always take key groups for their major target and offer services to meet the needs of people's well-being, especially focusing on community governance, rural revitalization and serving rural migrant workers. In addition, they also expand their services further to such special fields as psychological counseling and prison management. At present, there are rich varieties of voluntary services for large-scale games, conferences, communities, senior citizens, the disabled, ecological and environmental protection and emergency rescue in S province.

### **2.3. Creation of Good Reputation in Service**

We have created reputable titles like "civilized volunteers", "youth volunteers" and "volunteers for 5 types of seniors" (senior cadres, veterans, professors, specialist, and paragons) for S province in public services by persistently telling stories about volunteers and presenting positive image of them. Incomplete statistics show that the number of registered volunteers in S province has mounted to 12.89 million. In regard to youth voluntary service, "Youth Volunteer" has been carried out in a series of projects such as "Love in the Community", "Love in the Journey", "Beauty in the Countryside", "Navigation for the Lost", and "Life Protection" in recent years.

### **2.4. Taking the Lead in the New Era**

A number of cultural products such as "Song of Volunteers in S Province", "Panda Man", the theme song of Youth Voluntary Service, and "Grass", a charity song in response to COVID-19, have been issued. According to relevant data, in the prevention and control of COVID-19 this year, more than 43,000 young volunteers in S province registered through online platform and participated in non-contact network investigation, material purchasing, medical care and protection, online class, information consultation, psychological counseling and other activities,

providing 9,095 services daily in average with service time over 3 million hours. As a result, volunteerism has become popular in the whole society.

### **3. THE DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY VOLUNTEER SERVICE IN SOCIAL GOVERNANCE AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL**

With China's overall national strength growing considerably, especially after the "5.12" Wenchuan earthquake, COVID-19 epidemic and other major tests, voluntary service plays an increasingly important role in cooperating with non-governmental entities to participate in social governance. However, there is still room for improvement in the work of voluntary service.

#### **3.1. The Operation Mechanism of Voluntary Service Is Imperfect**

At present, a voluntary service mechanism has been initially established, in which departments perform their duties with collaborative involvement of the society. However, the overall work force has not yet been formed for lack of effective coordination mechanism such as regular consultation, platform sharing and resource pooling.

#### **3.2. Individualization and Specialization of Voluntary Service Are Inadequate**

Voluntary service is still at the phase of organization- and activity-oriented version 1.0, which shows the immature mechanism for volunteers to participate in personalized voluntary service in nearby places at their convenience, or some volunteer service projects are relatively simple in design. The expertise- and project-oriented version 2.0 has not been fully formed yet.

#### **3.3. The Scientific and Technological Support for Voluntary Service Is Insufficient**

At present, although there are many online platforms for voluntary service in S province, the data format is not uniform enough, the public is not aware of using the platforms to participate in voluntary service, and the voluntary service organizations are not aware of publishing projects on the platforms, either.

#### **3.4. The Application of Incentive Policies for Voluntary Service Is Inadequate**

On the whole, the detailed implementation rules matched with the incentive policies are not perfect. Volunteers are not able to receive corresponding incentive feedback conveniently in the aspects of growth, schooling, public service, credit and commendation.

#### **3.5. The Legal Support for Voluntary Service Is Insufficient**

It is, at present, the main problem in the legislation of voluntary service that the relevant regulations are too inflexible and general, lacking in feasibility. [6] The current regulations on voluntary service in S province, formulated and promulgated in 2009, can not fully meet the needs of the development of voluntary service, and need to be revised and improved in due course.

### **4. THE FEASIBLE EXPLORATION AND BREAKTHROUGH IN VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN GRASSROOTS SOCIAL GOVERNANCE**

Voluntary service is an important way to build a social governance pattern of "co-construction, co-governance and sharing". S province is exploring the extension of voluntary service to special areas of social governance and the development of participation facilitation.

Generally speaking, there exist many problems in voluntary service organizations, such as unclear organizational goals, weak management ability and low management efficiency, which seriously affect and restrict the development and effective operation of voluntary service. [7] Therefore, a new path must be found out to enhance the important role of voluntary service in grassroots social governance, in accordance with the general idea of "promoting the integrity

construction and the institutionalization of voluntary service", through focusing on the perfection of the voluntary service system, and the promotion of the institutionalization and normalization of community voluntary service.

#### **4.1. Improve the Operation Mechanism of Voluntary Service Management**

With S Province Volunteer Service Federation as the platform and the implementation of Pilot Program of Youth Volunteer Service System Reform in S Province as an opportunity, we will strengthen the regular consultation and coordination of volunteer service work, and promote the institutionalization and normalization of volunteer service system. For primary and secondary school students, we will explore to set up a special area on the online platform, so that these students are able to experience volunteer service under the supervision of parents and teachers, and their participation will be incorporated into the comprehensive quality evaluation system. As for college students, it is suggested that they become registered volunteers, each student engage in volunteer service for no less than 60 hours during college, and their service be incorporated into the "second class transcript", so that volunteer service will become an important way to improve the quality of college students and an effective way to serve the society. We will strive to form an overall synergy, exploring the establishment of a collaborative "four-level linkage" mechanism based on community as the platform, social organizations as the carrier, social workers as the support and social volunteers as the backbone.

#### **4.2. Strengthen the Construction and Popularization of the Platform**

The volunteer online platform will be built into an open network platform for young volunteers, multi-type public welfare organizations and volunteer service projects with unique characteristics of S province, so as to realize the effective connection between service demand and supply. Applying such advanced technologies as big data and blockchain, we will promote the convenient registration and dispatch of volunteers, the project release and personnel recruitment of voluntary service organizations, establish a credible "time bank" for volunteer service, and realize data interconnection with "China Voluntary Service Network" platform.

#### **4.3. Promote the Professional Competence of Voluntary Service**

We will explore and formulate the standard system and system norms of voluntary service in S Province, and promote the formation of local "working guidelines" for voluntary service in games and conferences as well as normal, emergency, and special fields. Relying on higher education institutes, professional departments, etc., we will strengthen the construction of specialized institutions and upgrade the teaching talent pool concerning voluntary service training, and provide normalized professional training for registered volunteers in different levels and types. Relying on S Youth Volunteer College, the theoretical research, cultural promotion and brand building of youth volunteer service will be further strengthened. The judicial departments will be urged for the further construction of volunteer teams for special teenagers, prisoners, people in community correction, and those affected by drugs and AIDS, to form targeted service processes and work standards.

#### **4.4. Increase the Policy Incentives for Voluntary Service**

We will further provide the recognition and encouragement of outstanding individuals, teams and projects in volunteer service, stress selecting "moral models" from outstanding volunteers, carry forward the volunteer spirit of "dedication, friendship, progress and mutual assistance", and earnestly create a sound social atmosphere to respect and care for volunteers and encourage participation in voluntary service. We will learn from the valuable experience of voluntary service of Hong Kong and other areas, increase the governmental financial support to purchase voluntary services, and enhance the service quality of voluntary service organizations. We will accelerate the incorporation of voluntary service into the social credit system, take the

length of voluntary service as the directory of credit information sharing and exchange, explore the establishment of a joint credit incentive mechanism and a repairing mechanism for minor discredit, and enhance volunteers' sense of fulfillment.

#### **4.5. Perfect the Laws and Regulations on Voluntary Service**

It has become a world trend to promote and guarantee the healthy development of voluntary service through voluntary service legislation. [8]We should further clarify the functional orientation of voluntary service in boosting grassroots social governance, accelerate the revision of voluntary service regulations in S province, confirm the legal status of voluntary service organizations and the normative requirements for voluntary service activities, and clarify the rights and obligations of and the relations between volunteers, service targets and volunteer service workers, so as to provide a more comprehensive legal guarantee for voluntary service in S province.

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