

# **VOLUNTEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

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## **Abstract**

Developing volunteerism in individuals, particularly from childhood, is crucial for fostering a culture of social responsibility and civic engagement. Parents, teachers, peers, and the media play significant roles in shaping children's behavior and attitudes towards volunteering and community involvement. If these influential figures convey positive values such as public awareness, concern for common property, and empathy towards others on a regular basis, children are likely to internalize these traits. Moreover, it's essential to recognize that children's learning characteristics and interests evolve as they grow, necessitating tailored strategies for promoting volunteerism at different ages. Developers must organize activities and experiences that align with children's developmental stages and interests to effectively nurture their sense of social responsibility and engagement. Creating a generation of "Thai people 4.0" with public consciousness and environmental leadership is pivotal for Thailand's development beyond the middle-income trap. The youth, equipped with a strong sense of civic duty and environmental stewardship, will play a crucial role in achieving sustainable development goals, particularly in areas such as responsible consumption and production. To transition to a circular economy and promote responsible consumption and production practices, it's essential for youth, along with adults, to cultivate a culture of environmentally friendly consumption. They can serve as leaders of change, advocating for

policy reforms, infrastructure improvements, and the adoption of new values that prioritize sustainability. By empowering youth to become agents of change, society can move towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

**Keywords:** Volunteering; Environmental Conservation

## Introduction

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment serves as the central agency for integrating natural resource and environmental management. An essential concept within this framework is the integrated management of natural resources and the environment, which prioritizes target areas or ecosystems when determining development guidelines. The emphasis is on fostering cooperation and building relationships to facilitate a collaborative process among all sectors, including government, private, and public entities (Pollution Control Department Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2018, p. 3)

Currently, there is a noticeable trend of further deterioration in the state of natural resources and the environment. Significant natural resources crucial for human and animal survival have been extensively degraded. The environmental conditions around humans are progressively worsening to the extent that it is widely recognized as an environmental crisis. Destruction of natural resources and the environment stems from both natural disasters and human activities, often driven by human selfishness. Material factors, particularly monetary gain, often prioritize over environmental preservation, leading to resource destruction. Key natural resources facing degradation or depletion in the country include soil and land use, forests, water, minerals, energy, marine, and coastal resources. Environmental issues encompass water, air, and noise pollution resulting from solid waste, sewage, hazardous substances, and waste. These challenges are exacerbated by national development in the era of globalization, coupled with the convenience of advanced modern technology and rapid population growth. Humans are both the creators and potential solvers of these problems. However, addressing these issues effectively appears to be delayed. Inadequate problem-solving approaches may exacerbate existing problems and strain budgets. Consequently, conflicts may arise among individuals in communities and within broader society. Human survival relies on four basic necessities. As humans depend on diverse

ecosystems for life support, it becomes crucial to utilize natural resources judiciously. The utilization of natural resources carries the risk of depletion and generates waste, leading to pollution challenges. Therefore, to mitigate the depletion of natural resources and minimize waste generation, there is a focus on human responsibility towards the environment, particularly addressing environmental concerns. Humans are the primary architects of environmental science, which employs scientific principles to systematically and conditionally investigate the environment. Understanding environmental conservation involves the public's dissemination of information, attitudes, comprehension, and awareness regarding the sustainable utilization and preservation of natural resources and the environment (Boonlert Kachayuthadej, 2008), p. 25).

## **Basic Knowledge of Environmental Conservation**

Several researchers have provided their definitions of natural resource and environmental conservation, Kesorn Jantakaew (1997, p. 60) Conservation entails the prudent and appropriate utilization of resources due to the limited nature of Earth's resources. This involves activities such as preservation, maintenance, restoration, prevention, conservation, and ecologically responsible exploitation of resources to safeguard humanity's long-term quality of life. Sombat Pimpasit (2000), p. 80) Conservation can be described as human management aimed at maximizing benefits while ensuring sustainability for future generations by harnessing the biodiversity present in a particular area. It also involves guaranteeing the ability to fulfill the needs and goals of future generations. Conservation encompasses innovative substitution, collection, protection, and promotion of natural environments. Niwat Ruangpanit (2003), p. 59) conservation is defined as the wise and informed utilization of resources to benefit the greatest number of people for the longest duration and to the fullest extent possible. To minimize the overall loss of benefits, this must be coupled with the fewest resources lost each time. The benefits derived from resources should also be equitably distributed among all.

Conclusions, conservation involves optimizing the use of available resources while ensuring their capacity to meet present and future demands. To uphold the sustainability of environmental resources, satisfy human needs, and ensure their continued existence in the future, individuals must be motivated and guided to adopt similar practices.

## Environmental Conservation Principles

Natural resource conservation and management must consider the interconnectedness of various natural resources to be effective and to optimize benefits. This is because different natural resources are intricately connected and have interconnected impacts on each other. Planning for natural resource management is intertwined with broader development, societal, economic, political, and quality of life concerns, as well as the preservation of interconnected environmental systems. Scholars have provided the following interpretations.

Chamnong Adiwattanasi (1998, p. 104) colleagues outline the principles of environmental conservation with a focus on three main points: Sustainable Utilization: This principle emphasizes the need for all types and categories of resources to be utilized in a sustainable manner. It involves organizing resource consumption based on the unique qualities of each resource. Additionally, it entails selecting appropriate technologies for resource utilization, considering factors such as resource type, quantity collected for usage, timing of consumption, and waste and pollutant disposal/treatment.

Restoration of Degraded Resources: When natural resources or human-made creations are degraded due to various factors such as improper technology, over-harvesting, introduction of pollutants, excessive harvesting, or improper timing, they must be restored. Proper restoration methods should be implemented until the resources or environment have sufficiently recovered for future usage. Restoration processes may include activities aimed at replenishing ecosystems, rehabilitating habitats, and mitigating the effects of degradation.

Boonchan Mekthan (1998, pp. 85-86) outlines eight approaches to conservation methods, emphasizing the importance of understanding these methods thoroughly to avoid errors. Here are the details:

Utilization: This approach encompasses various forms of resource use, including direct consumption, observation, sensory experiences (seeing, hearing/listening, touching), providing convenience, and ensuring safety,

including energy consumption. It stresses the importance of sustainable practices in utilizing resources.

**Preservation/Storage:** Involves the collection and preservation of resources that may become scarce or face crises in the future. Resources are stored for regulated usage at later times to ensure their availability.

**Preservation/Repair:** Refers to activities aimed at restoring resources or habitats that have been depleted, deviated from their natural state, deteriorated, or encountered problems. It involves efforts to return small sections or spots to their original condition, possibly utilizing technology.

**Restoration:** Encompasses efforts to rehabilitate degraded resources or habitats to their original state, allowing them to be utilized again in the future. Restoration efforts are focused on bringing back the functionality and biodiversity of ecosystems.

**Development:** Involves attempts to enhance the current state of resources. This may include implementing strategies to improve resource productivity, efficiency, and resilience, as well as promoting sustainable development practices.

These approaches highlight the diverse strategies available for conserving natural resources and ecosystems. By understanding and implementing these methods effectively, stakeholders can work towards sustainable resource management and environmental conservation.

## **The definition of Volunteerism**

"Volunteerism" embodies the act of giving, sharing, or assisting others without expecting anything in return. It is an expression of selflessness, driven by a genuine desire to help and support others, with the hope that they may experience positive outcomes. This can take various forms, including donating items, participating in missions, or spreading positivity. Offering knowledge and providing helpful advice on cultivating a life centered around giving and helping others is crucial. It's about inspiring and motivating individuals to embrace a mindset of generosity and service. This requires endurance, courage, and

leadership to lead and engage in activities that benefit others. In accordance with the principles of "sufficiency, discipline, honesty, and volunteerism," outlined in the book, volunteering involves caring about the well-being of society as a whole and willingly offering one's time and effort to make a positive difference. It's about embodying a sense of responsibility towards the community and actively contributing to its betterment (Volunteer Heart Foundation, Weaving Hearts, Volunteer Hearts, 2014-2016).

Consciousness is often regarded as the foundational aspect of human emotion. It encompasses the mind's various desires and intentions, comprising three key components: perception, desire, and action. Consciousness represents our awareness of external stimuli that are processed by the mind. Thoughts in the conscious mind are primarily communicated through language and speech, representing the cognitive aspect of the brain capable of rational thought processes. This includes activities such as critical thinking, analysis, judgment, decision-making, planning, creativity, and forecasting. The conscious mind utilizes both inductive and deductive reasoning, relying on past experiences and expertise to evaluate situations and predict future outcomes. Behavior is influenced by the principles of cause and effect, responding to external stimuli in accordance with the laws of reality.

Consciousness serves as the level of reason within the mind, shaping a diverse range of activities by determining what actions to take or avoid. It enables individuals to reflect on their social position within the broader societal framework. This perspective aligns with the concept put forth by Prawet Wasi et al., which emphasizes civil society's role in assisting society through non-profit organizations. These organizations, often referred to as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), operate with a public consciousness or a community-oriented approach. They include entities such as housewives' associations, foundations, clubs, and community groups. The overarching goals of these organizations typically revolve that: 1) Emphasizing group relationships. Members must share common ideals and principles. 2) Have public consciousness (public mind), which includes protecting public interests (public goods), public audits (public responsibility), and being accountable to the public. 3) Fairness. To society (Social Equity) 4) Have social justice. 5) Be a social network. 6) Communication. 7) Have a vision. 8) Become a learning society. 9) Want to be able to practice.

Public consciousness is indeed a fundamental attribute of citizens and a subset of the broader discourse on civil society. Values and conscience play a central role in shaping individuals, organizations, and communities within any civilization. A society characterized by a strong sense of conscience fosters creativity and moral integrity, which are essential for societal progress.

Civil society emerges as a result of public consciousness, contributing to the generation of social strength and improvement in the morality of political and economic systems. There are three key characteristics of civil society:

Civil society consciousness (Civic Consciousness) or public consciousness (Public Consciousness): This involves the concept and acceptance of individuals freely coming together with love and generosity. It entails embracing diverse perspectives and working collaboratively to address challenges. Participation and integration are central features, allowing for freedom and collective learning.

The structure of civil society elements (Civic Organization): This refers to the formal or informal groups that gather to discuss specific issues, topics, or projects. Members may include individuals from the public sector, commercial sector, or various segments of society. These groups play a crucial role in raising public awareness of civil society across all domains.

Civil Society Network: This encompasses the structure and mechanisms through which members of diverse civil society groups collaborate. Effective communication systems and amicable connections are vital components of civil society networks.

These three components of civil society work together to produce civic society. However, achieving the goals of civil society requires individuals within society to possess public awareness, which influences collective behavior and actions. It is through the cultivation of public consciousness that civil society can thrive and contribute positively to societal development (Phramaha Prakasit Thitipasittikorn and Sanya Sodprasert, 2019).

## Volunteer Development Process

The "volunteer spirit" thrives within individuals who possess a strong awareness of public welfare. They maintain a mindset of generosity, positivity, and optimism towards others, willingly offering their assistance without expecting anything in return, which brings about a sense of mental well-being. Those with a public consciousness are motivated to volunteer for the betterment of society while refraining from actions that could cause harm.

Participation in volunteerism also involves caring for and respecting the rights of others when utilizing public resources. Additionally, the act of volunteering can be seen as a learning experience, where individuals collaborate with others to address societal issues. Mere willingness to help is insufficient; the learning process plays a crucial role in problem-solving.

Individuals in society must possess knowledge and the ability to seek it out. They are motivated to acquire knowledge from various sources to fulfill their learning objectives. This process fosters the development of leadership, critical thinking, and analytical skills. It allows individuals to learn at their own pace, both independently and collaboratively, contributing to the resolution of societal challenges.

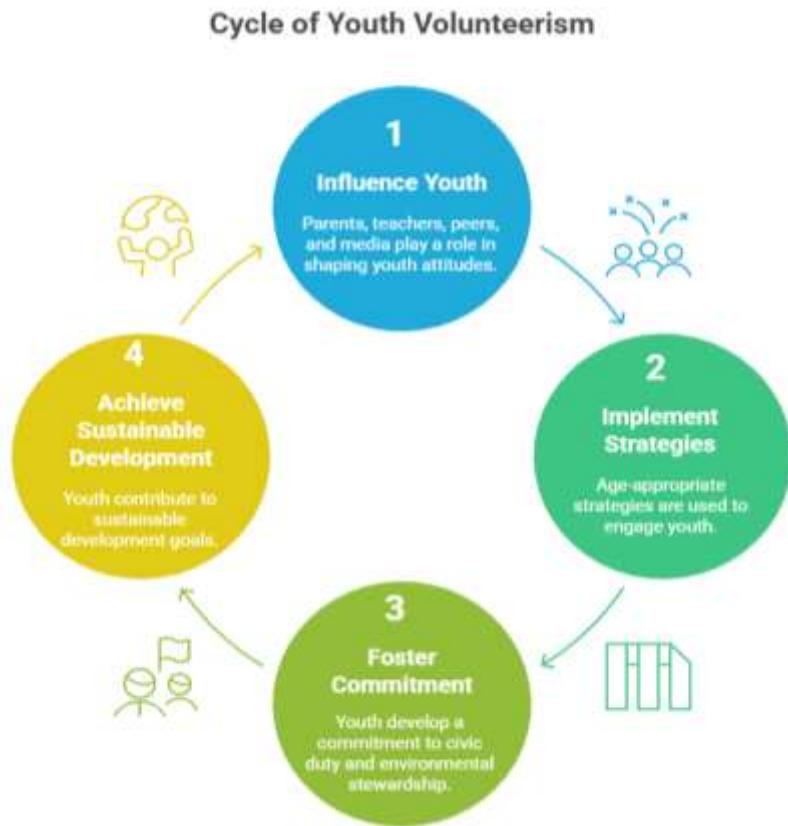
However, volunteer behavior is also influenced by various environmental factors, both internal and external. These factors shape individuals' attitudes, motivations, and opportunities for engagement in volunteer activities. By understanding and addressing these influences, organizations and communities can create environments that encourage and support volunteerism.

1) External elements encompass human connections and social conditions that extend beyond physical surroundings. These conditions are shaped and nurtured over time, gradually influencing perceptions and giving rise to various forms of consciousness. The social environment begins within familial and interpersonal relationships, extending to broader societal factors such as organizational structures, cultural norms, traditions, beliefs, legal frameworks, religious practices, and environmental contexts.

2) Internal factors pertain to consciousness originating from within individuals. It involves analytical thinking to discern values and concepts of goodness, which in turn influence behaviors, particularly mental practices aimed at personal development. Consciousness stemming from internal sources is shaped by individual perceptions, learning experiences, introspection, and contemplation about the type of consciousness one wishes to cultivate. Through deliberate practice and accumulation of realizations, individuals can shape their internal consciousness and enhance their personal growth.

The emergence of awareness defies simple categorization or differentiation as it is influenced by both internal and external forces, which are interconnected. External stimuli act as natural inputs that modify an individual's perceptions, often leading to conscious awareness, sometimes unconsciously. However, consciousness also originates from internal forces, which are specific and selective, resulting in individuals being highly self-aware. It is a continual interaction between internal and external factors, and consciousness growth occurs concurrently in both realms. Many academics and informed individuals attempt to define, characterize, or identify volunteerism in various ways. While the spirit of volunteerism may seem unique to Thai society, it actually exists in human societies across nations, languages, and religions. When individuals volunteer, their thoughts and actions are driven by the desire to alleviate the suffering of others and bring happiness. They may contribute resources such as money, goods, or labor, as well as offer intellectual support, time, and encouragement in various forms or methods, without seeking personal recognition or gain. The essence of volunteerism lies in selflessly giving without expecting anything in return. Although the volunteer may not seek any direct consequences, the act of volunteering inherently yields positive effects on individuals or society, akin to the natural process where trees bearing beautiful flowers naturally produce fruit. Thus, while the giver may not anticipate any rewards, the impact of volunteering can be profound and beneficial, akin to the natural cycle of growth and fruition in nature (Prappephan Panawawattana, 2013, p. 9).

## New Knowledges



**Figure 1:** The Diagram Show Volunteering and Environmental Conservation.

## Conclusions

Volunteer, an individual with a mindset prepared to devote or sacrifice time, energy, and emotions to aid others and society without seeking recompense. Conservation entails utilizing resources wisely and efficiently, ensuring maximum benefit with minimal waste, and distributing these benefits equitably to the public, while also supporting mutual coverage. However, it's important to recognize that conservation isn't about passively preserving resources; rather, it involves actively managing and utilizing resources in accordance with their temporal and spatial contexts, while striving to minimize environmental impact as much as possible.

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