



International FORUM on Development Service  
FORUM International du Volontariat pour le Développement

# FORUM Discussion Papers and Research<sup>1</sup>

Research Working Group

May 2010

---

<sup>1</sup> Draws on agreements made at the meeting of the FORUM Executive February 2007

## FORUM Strategic Plan 2010-12

The Plan sets out our approach to research as follows:

*“Building a credible body of Knowledge through Research*

At the present time:

- A discussion paper series established to create meaningful discussion and insight into a particular area or issue relevant to the next annual conference.
- Creating research that will be meaningful in informing the thinking and practice of international volunteer cooperative organisations and informing the wider discourse on volunteering.
- Supporting Members’ involvement in research activities, e.g. UNV research projects.
- Coordinating activities through the FORUM Research Working Group.
- A small research fund.

Our approach for research is as follows:

- Defining a set of research protocols to which all research aligns to ensure the standard of research is high.
- Leading and collaborating on key areas of research related to international volunteering and co-operation.
- Research partnerships.
- Building up our own research fund.
- Facilitating Member involvement in research projects.
- Recognising and incorporating partner organisations’ perspectives into research activities.”

This paper attempts to address the issues of protocols and related issues of how we work.

## Discussion Papers

### Objectives

The idea behind the discussion papers is to ensure that we effectively realise the added value of FORUM as a network of International Volunteering Cooperation Organisations (IVCOs) within our capacity to deliver. It is not our primary intention to pursue a high level academic research model, but to intervene in debates around the key issues facing IVCOs, drawing on the experiences of FORUM members and other IVCOs, mapping future trends, identifying key challenges and practical ways forward.

### Terms of Reference

Each discussion paper will follow general terms of reference and be guided by a more detailed specification for each topic area.

Each discussion paper should

- Set out broader context for why this issue is important
- Review contributions and experiences of FORUM members in this area
- Identify key areas of learning relevant to a broader range of members
- Identify key future trends
- Discuss key questions and challenges for IVCOs
- Identify areas for further study

## Topic Identification

Topics will be identified and prioritised by the FORUM Research Working Group and submitted to the FORUM Executive Board of Officers<sup>2</sup> for agreement. All proposals received directly by the Executive or at IVCO conference will be referred to the Research Working Group in the first instance.

## Producing Discussion Papers

It is envisaged that individual FORUM members would be willing to take lead responsibility for specific papers and provide the human resources for the preparatory work and writing of the paper.

Nominated individual members of the Research Working Group will take the lead responsibility on one of the discussion papers and take responsibility for:

- Providing support to the FORUM member responsible for producing the discussion paper and ensuring it is produced as written document within the specified timescale
- Reporting back to the Research Working Group on progress and ensuring the Executive are aware of the nature and timeline for the discussion paper
- Submitting the draft discussion paper to the Research Working Group for comment and consideration as to the appropriate steps to be taken prior to publication, including proposed date of publication

## Editorial Decisions

It is the responsibility of the Research Working Group to agree that any discussion paper is fit for purpose and of an appropriate decision.

On submission of a final draft, the Research Working Group may:

- Comment on the draft, which may then involve changes prior to publication
- Seek external referees to comment on the paper

The revised pre-publication copy must be circulated to all members of the Research Working Group, who will be given the opportunity to comment within a defined timescale. In the event there are no proposed changes, the FORUM Co-ordinator can take the decision to move to publication.

In exceptional circumstances, the Research Working Group may refer a publication to the Executive with a recommendation. Otherwise, the Executive will refer all consideration of specific discussion papers to the Research Working Group.

## Publication Design and Formats

Publication design would be undertaken by the FORUM Co-ordinator within a standard format, who will also arrange publication, electronically or in hard copy form. These costs will be met by FORUM.

## Authorship and Copyright

Each paper will be produced as a FORUM paper, with due recognition to the authors, contributors and the lead organisation.

## Finance

While FORUM does not have the resources to commission work, the Research Working Group can allocate a small incidental budget for expenses (up to €1,000) for any discussion paper, within the overall research budget in addition to design and publication costs. Any larger requests for financial support must be referred to the Executive with a clear recommendation from the Research Working Group.

## Research

### Objectives

There is an important role that FORUM can play in research given the added value that a global network can bring. This is recognised in successive Strategic Plans.

- To map the scope of international volunteering on a periodic basis with a view to enhancing and extending the networking of IVCOs globally
- To monitor and review trends in international volunteering on a regular basis
- To consider in depth significant issues arising from those trends

To achieve this FORUM will need to engage in the following activities:

- Facilitate members' (and IVCOs) involvement in research activities led by other organisations or individual FORUM members
- Establish a mechanism which routinely monitors and analyses trends in international volunteering rather than one that works on a one-off arrangement
- Establish a mechanism for defining research priorities, ethics protocols and commissioning of the research

### Terms of Reference

For each piece of commissioned research, the terms of reference will be determined and agreed by the Research Working Group. The terms of reference must be agreed by the Research Working Group before the research can progress.

### Identifying Research Initiatives

Areas where FORUM considers research is a priority may be addressed in different ways:

- Commissioned research will be identified and prioritised by the Research Working Group and submitted to the Executive for agreement. All proposals for research funding received directly by the Executive or from IVCO and other meetings of members will be referred to the Research Working Group for consideration

Research initiatives where participation is sought from FORUM members can be usefully considered by the Research Working Group. Indeed the Research Working Group may seek the engagement of FORUM members and other organisations in taking forward research initiatives, other than through commissioning. Research initiatives may come increasingly from external research bodies and are to be encouraged.

### Contracts and Commissioning

Where research is commissioned the Research Working Group will request a research proposal to include cost projections and how it will be resourced. This will also include information on the proposed researchers and a costed proposal. The Research Working Group will determine whether to support the proposal. Where the Research Working Group agrees to support a research proposal and where this involves the use of FORUM financial resources, the Research Working Group will provide an appropriate recommendation to the Executive.

## Producing Discussion Papers

For each research initiative, the Research Working Group will nominate an individual member of the Research Working Group to take the lead responsibility for:

- Providing support to the research process and ensuring it is produced within the specified timescale
- Reporting back to the Research Working Group on progress
- Submitting the draft research report to the Research Working Group for comment and consideration as to the appropriate steps to be taken prior to publication

In relation to commissioned research, it is expected that this will include membership of the steering group formed to support that specific research initiative. Alternatively the lead research or other representative may participate in Research Working Group meeting.

## Editorial Decisions

It is the responsibility of the Research Working Group to agree that any commissioned research is of an appropriate standard.

On submission of the draft research findings, the Research Working Group may:

- Comment on the draft, and delegate to the nominated Research Working Group member responsibility to ensure these issues are addressed
- Seek external referees to comment on the paper

The revised pre-publication copy must be circulated to all members of the Research Working Group, who will be given the opportunity to comment within a defined timescale. In the event there are no proposed changes, the FORUM Coordinator can take the decision to move to publication.

In exceptional circumstances, the Research Working Group may refer a publication to the Executive with a recommendation. Otherwise, the Executive will refer all consideration of specific research papers to the Research Working Group.

## Publication Design and Formats

Publication design will be undertaken by the FORUM Co-ordinator within a standard format, who will also arrange publication, electronically or in hard copy form. These costs will be met by FORUM.

## Authorship and Copyright

A research paper may either be produced as a FORUM paper, with due recognition to the authors and contributors; or as a research document under the auspices of another organisation as agreed at the contractual stage; or on a joint basis. The Research Working Group will have the authority to agree the most appropriate option, subject to the contractual agreements in place.

## Finance

The Research Working Group will make recommendations to the Executive on financial matters.

*FORUM Research Working Group  
May 2010*