



MOHAMMED BIN RASHID SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

# POLICY ANALYSIS EXERCISE

## Summary

Volunteerism is a path initiated by the late President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, not only inside the UAE but also worldwide. With regard to following this path, the government stressed the importance of citizens giving back to the country in the UAE Vision 2021, as well as the Dubai Plan 2021. Since the year 2017, many individuals and groups have started following this path, and the number of volunteers and volunteer groups has increased. Initially, the volunteers and their groups faced many challenges, because there were no policies or authorities in place to protect their rights. In 2018, the Law Number (5) Regulating Volunteer Work in the Emirate of Dubai was issued by the Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The Community Development Authority (CDA) has been entrusted to develop the Law, from its design to its implementation, including the required activities, deliverables, timelines, resources, roles and responsibilities. This policy brief provides preliminary insights into and evidence regarding the implementation efforts based on interviews conducted with CDA staff, in addition to volunteers' perspectives on the above Law, covering the challenges that the CDA has faced, and ending with recommendations for further improvements of this plan and the strategies.

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## Implementation Process of the Law Number 5 in Regulating Volunteer Work in Dubai by the Community Development Authority

The main purpose of the Law Number 5 of 2018 is to regulate the volunteering work in Dubai and set rules to encourage volunteerism and protect volunteers. Moreover, it promotes social responsibility among community members, encourages their participation in initiatives and infuses positive engagement in the country. The CDA is responsible for creating an implementation strategy to transform the Law into a set of operations and accomplishable objectives. The implementation plan is a critical element to ensure that objectives are delivered from the decisions made by the government. Sometimes, the implementation plan includes a rough schedule, but teams usually set a well-defined outline of the execution plan. When creating an action plan for the new process, people or teams think about many questions before starting. For example, what are their resources? What are the roles and responsibilities of each member? What are the human resource requirements? What is the budget needed? What is their capacity? What

## About the PAE Series

The Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) series is a student-led policy publication series. The PAE Series is a platform that highlights the contribution of MBRSG postgraduate students to policy. The Policy Briefs in this series identify and analyze real policy issues and provide concise advice and solutions for policymakers. The Series contributes to bridging the gap between educational output and real policymaking. It highlights the impact of MBRSG's educational output on policy through high quality research outcomes by MBRSG students. For policymakers, the Series provides valuable practice-driven policy analysis, advice, recommendations and solutions that can contribute to better quality of government.

challenges are facing the implementation process? And what are the perceptions of the volunteers about the new Law?

## Volunteerism in Dubai

The Dubai Plan 2021, which is launched by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, is a comprehensive strategy to transform Dubai into one of the world's most attractive places to live in by 2021. Constituted of six main themes, the plan aims to reach a cohesive society and spread civic values, including personal responsibilities towards the development of the country and society (Dubai Plan 2021, 2014).

Recently, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum has launched the Fifty-year Charter Development Plan of Dubai, in January 2019, coinciding with his 50th anniversary of serving the country. The document intends to improve the quality of life in Dubai for its citizen and residents, over the next 50 years. H.H. Sheikh Mohammed stressed the importance of charity work in Dubai for the coming years, and he pledged to increase the philanthropic initiatives yearly (The National, 2019). This emphasizes the leaders' focus on charity work and giving back to the country.

### The Law NO. (5) of 2018 Regulating Volunteer Work in the Emirate of Dubai

The Law is applied to all persons who engage in any activity relating to volunteer work in Dubai. It has 4 objectives: 1) to regulate all volunteer work, 2) to set rules and regulations for volunteers, 3) to encourage the community to take a part in social responsibilities, 4) to benefit from volunteering through serving the society.

Also, the Law includes 22 articles in which the main clauses address the scope of implementation, the objectives of the Law, the CDA's role, performing volunteer work, specialised volunteer

work, corporate volunteer work, volunteer work teams, donations, obligations of the volunteering organising entities, volunteering agreement and its expiry, requirements of volunteers, volunteer rights and their duties, exemption from liability, volunteers affairs committee, compliance, issuing implementing resolution, and publication and commencement of the Law.

In addition, the Law covers many crucial areas for volunteers, for example, consultation programs, practices, training, security check, rights and responsibilities, and a system for improvements and evaluations. Also, the Law highlights creating a database of all volunteers who have specific talents and would like to benefit others. This helps in strengthening the voluntarism sector. The CDA's role is multifaceted: 1) to develop the implementation plan, 2) to encourage other entities to initiate community volunteering opportunities, 3) to conduct more awareness programs on volunteering, 4) to provide various opportunities for volunteers, 5) to secure approvals in coordination with other parties, 6) to create a volunteers database, 7) to use volunteer information to issue identification cards, 8) to issue certificates of appreciation, 9) to help local organizations attract volunteers for their initiatives, 10) to provide opportunities for volunteers to participate in events based on their skills and qualifications. Accordingly, the CDA will be the authority which the government can entrust with volunteer information and gathering data regarding the number of volunteers, their interests, their professions, and their field of contribution.

According to the Law, entities must obtain authorization from the CDA to conduct any volunteering activities or sponsoring volunteering initiatives. They must follow standards and regulations and gather volunteer information related to the initiatives, and then give a copy to the CDA. A volunteering agreement should be created for volunteers to sign to know

their rights. The same concept is applied for volunteering groups as they should register themselves in the CDA, and obtain all required permits, and accordingly, they can participate in any opportunities except fundraising activities. Moreover, the Law specified the age of volunteers as above 18. Volunteers under 18 should obtain their guardians' permission. A volunteer should be physically fit to participate, have a record of ethical conduct, and must commit to their assigned responsibilities.

## Methodology

The research is based on a mixed method approach. The researcher has adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods to get a bigger picture of the topic from different perspectives through interviews from the CDA staff as well a questionnaire survey distributed among the volunteers which resulted in a wider and balanced picture on volunteerism in Dubai. All the information and data contributed to gaining a clearer understanding of the issue at hand. The methods involved collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative descriptive cross-functional data that consists of statistically analyzing scores collected on instrument like questionnaire using an online program to make it easier to access. Also, the qualitative data consists of open-ended information gathered through interview and observations. This integration is important for the research because it provides better understanding of the research questions presenting the diversity of ideas gathered during data collection. The research mostly adopted qualitative research as it is an appropriate method that offers comprehensive explanation and analysis of a research subject in areas like volunteerism, third sector, and the new Law.

## Interpretation and Discussion of Results

According to the interviews conducted with

three key individuals at the CDA, considered as most knowledgeable on the particular research, were interviewed: The Director of Studies and Research Department, the Head of the Volunteering Section, and a Team Leader of a Volunteering Group at the CDA. The interviewees have depended on the Dubai Plan 2021 to strengthen the social connection, build a strong community, and connect people together, inspiring them to help each other. In the questionnaire, regarding how the respondents rate the CDA's implementation process, 40% of the respondents chose "uncertain" for a variety of reasons, while 30% and 14% of them chose "good" and "excellent," respectively. Similarly, on rating the CDA's efforts for developing the volunteering work, 53% and 9% of the respondents chose "good" and "excellent," respectively.

### Culture of Volunteerism

Spreading the culture of volunteerism took a significant part of the CDA's capacity and work. Thus spreading awareness among people is time consuming. Also, the small staff number (3) at the volunteering department can be challenging in terms of reaching out to the community in a timely manner. This challenge is apparent in the respondents' answers, as 47% of them had not volunteered with the CDA; besides, only 24% of the respondents heard about Law Number 5, while 76% of them didn't. The reason behind these answers might be that awareness of the volunteering opportunities has not reached a large number of the population. With regard to how the respondents perceive the CDA's appearance in media, responses varied: 2% and 23% of the respondents chose between "strongly weak" and "weak," while 35% of them chose "uncertain," and 35% and 9% selected "good" and "excellent," respectively. When asked about the awareness program on the importance of volunteering, 5% and 12% of the respondents

chose “strongly disagree” and “disagree,” respectively, while 37% selected “uncertain,” and 40% and 7% agreed and strongly agreed, respectively. Although the variables were different, these responses show that people might want to acquire more information about volunteering, the Law Number 5, and their rights as volunteers.

### **Volunteers’ Affairs Committee**

The interview’s findings stated that the CDA has created a volunteers’ affairs committee to address any complaint made by a volunteer within the scope of the volunteer agreement, or any complaints made by an organizing party, resolve problems, and take decisions. Indeed, volunteers’ perspectives on resolving their complaints were found to be generally positive, as only 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 44% chose “uncertain,” and 44% either agreed or strongly agreed.

Overall, volunteers were satisfied and wanted to continue volunteering with the CDA, as 63% of the respondents chose “agree” or “strongly agree.” The friendliness and helpfulness of the CDA staff was perceived positively by the respondents, as 72% responded positively, while 21% were neutral, and only 7% chose “disagree.” This demonstrates that most volunteers were satisfied with the CDA employees’ performances.

## **Policy Implications and Recommendations**

### **Policy Implications**

Law Number 5 will have implications on the CDA as an organizational institution for volunteering, on the volunteers, and on third parties such as event organizers. This Law can be applied to all persons who engage in any work or activity relating to volunteer work in Dubai. It is important to follow a unified

plan so that the implications will reach the whole community in Dubai. This Law strives to foreground social responsibility in society and motivate positive social engagement, as well as encourage people to serve their community. By implementing this Law, the goals of the Dubai Plan 2021 will be achieved and directed towards the UAE Vision 2021.

Moreover, the policy implications will lead local organizations to attract volunteers for their initiatives and provide opportunities for volunteers to participate in events based on their skills and qualifications. Furthermore, the individual volunteers and groups, after registering themselves in the CDA and obtaining all the required permits, can participate in any event except fundraising activities. This will lead the volunteers to gain more satisfaction, increase their self-esteem and trust, improve their mental health, curb their depression especially if they have extended periods of spare time or are unemployed. They can also increase their happiness by learning new skills, meeting new people and creating friendships, and sharing knowledge, which might result in a better overall mental health.

### **Recommendations**

Many public policy academics ignore the challenging features of this stage, assuming that once the policy was made, the concerned people would simply follow it (Howlett and Ramesh 1996). The research shows that challenges should be taken under consideration.

- First recommendation, since there has been limited prior research on the topic. There should be more studies and analyses should be conducted by the research department at CDA to identify new gaps in volunteering works and describe the current situation for further data and improvements.

- More studies and analyses on the current situation should be conducted through asking the volunteers to provide their feedback, as it would lead to more responses with some suggestions on plan improvements. These investigations should be allocated to scientific research for further analysis and recommendations, since no examination was conducted after the implementing the process for about one year.
- To improve implementation plans, information regarding comprehensive marketing and awareness should be provided to the given community with respect to volunteer culture, delivered to all categories by the stakeholders at the CDA, including the volunteers' affairs committee and volunteering department. Therefore, more effort needed to be made by the CDA, otherwise more employees should be hired so that they can subsequently spread awareness.
- In addition, to enhance the capacity and the human resources, decision makers can conduct regular meetings with individual volunteers and volunteering groups, choose good leaders and train them for the purpose of conducting lectures and spreading awareness regarding the culture of volunteering in the society under the supervision of the CDA. Thus, the work would be distributed among them, ensuring a wide outreach in the given community, and in turn enabling the search for smooth plan improvements.
- The CDA should also conduct meetings for the third parties after each event and discuss the positives and negatives as well as factors that require improvement regarding future events. In this case, they can allocate all the suggestions and results gathered from every quarter and compare them at the end of the year, in order to identify the most common gap that needs to be addressed and bridge the same.
- Application improvement should be up to date, as many comments were made on the application defect and the lack of time and funding. Thus, comprehensive knowledge, easy applications, and adequate infrastructure can improve the adoption procedures of new technology. This will improve the quality of services provided to the community and ensure the establishment of Dubai (as mentioned in Dubai Plan 2021) as a smart city. Not only the applications, but the online channels can also provide volunteering services to the public as well as third parties, making sure that the applications are safe, effective, and increase the quality of services.

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## About MBRSG

The Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG) is a research and teaching institution focusing on public policy in the Arab World. Established in 2005 under the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, in cooperation with the Harvard Kennedy School, MBRSG aims to promote good governance through enhancing the region's capacity for effective public policy.

Towards this goal, the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government also collaborates with regional and global institutions in delivering its research and training programs. In addition, the School organizes policy forums and international conferences to facilitate the exchange of ideas and promote critical debate on public policy in the Arab World.

The School is also committed to the creation of knowledge, the dissemination of best practice and the training of policy makers in the Arab World. To achieve this mission, the School is developing strong capabilities to support research and teaching programs, including:

- Applied research in public policy and management
- Master's degrees in public policy and public administration
- Executive education for senior officials and executives; and,
- Knowledge forums for scholars and policy makers.

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## Credits and Acknowledgements

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### Acknowledgement:

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