A Glossary of Volunteering

Are you interested in volunteering but have become confused due to the numerous volunteering terms you've come across? Never fear! The following small glossary may be a beacon in providing guidance in the increasingly complex sea of volunteering.

Volunteering	Volunteering is generally an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial or social gain. It's done purely to benefit another person, group or organisation. This definition aligns with the United Nations' view that volunteering should be done for the common good. It should directly or indirectly benefit causes or people outside the family or household, even though the person volunteering normally benefits as well.
Skilled volunteering	Skilled volunteers provide services using their professional skills. Skilled volunteers do pro bono work, which is professional work that is undertaken voluntarily and without payment. In skilled volunteering, the specific skills of professionals are used to provide services to those who are unable to afford them. Pro bono employees in a non-profit may include web editors, designers, bookkeepers, or lawyers.
Unskilled volunteering	Unskilled volunteering refers to situations where volunteers donate their time for a good cause without having specific professional expertise to contribute to the project. Despite the seemingly negative connotation of the term, unskilled volunteering can be highly beneficial as long as the volunteers are trained and well-prepared for the task they're expected to carry out, whether it's raising funds or serving meals.
Long-term volunteering	This type of high-impact volunteering is about either committing a small amount of time on a regular basis or working full-time for a mid- to long-term (generally three months or longer) period. Long-term volunteering is fundamentally based on building relationships with people in the local community.
Virtual volunteering	Also called online volunteering, remote volunteering or e-volunteering, virtual volunteering has the unique feature that it can be done from a distance. It allows volunteers to complete their tasks, in whole or in part, at home or in an office using their own computer via the Internet.
Corporate volunteering	Certain companies encourage their employees to give back to the community by giving them an allotted period of paid time per annum, which employees use to volunteer at a charity of their choice.
Team-based volunteering	Outdoors, indoors, in the community or as a fundraising challenge, these group volunteering activities strengthen team spirit and morale. Non-profits generally organise half-days or day-long volunteering activities with the team of volunteers in mind.
Skilled micro-volunteering	Skilled micro-volunteering involves using the volunteer's professional skills to complete small tasks that make up a larger project. Micro-volunteers solve one problem at a time, and no long-term commitments are necessary. The tasks can often be done from the comfort of your desk, and some of them take only minutes, though some can take up to a few hours. As a form of virtual volunteering, the tasks are usually distributed and completed online

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International volunteering	International volunteering describes situations where volunteers contribute their time to work for organisations or causes outside of their home countries. In most such cases, volunteers work in developing countries on international development programmes with local volunteer organisations. International volunteering is a broad term which is used to capture multi-year skilled placements as well as short-term roles (which has recently been given the term *voluntourism*) and a range of activities administered by governments, charities and travel agents.
Voluntourism	Voluntourism is the intersection of international volunteering and tourism. It's a type of holiday in which people work as a volunteer to help the community in the places they visit. While there's nothing wrong in wanting to do something meaningful while visiting a new country and exploring their culture, the negative connotation emerges when the focus is exclusively on the fulfilment of the volunteers themselves and not necessarily what they bring to the communities they visit.

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