Chapter 10
Breaking the Iron Cage: Understanding Legitimacy Claims for State-Sponsored International Voluntary Services

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10.1 Introduction

International volunteering is an expression of voluntary service performed across national borders with the intention of contributing to society (Sherraden et al. 2006). It encompasses a great diversity of organizational forms (Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015) ranging from unskilled, short-term, and supply-driven "voluntourism" to skilled, longer-term and demand-driven "international development volunteering" (IDV) like that used by Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV).

Unlike most forms of international volunteering, IDV focuses on matching skilled professionals with a volunteer partner organization that has a demand for their expertise (Jinwen 2015; Lough and Tiessen 2018; Schech et al. 2015). For this reason, IDV can be an important contributor to global development outcomes such as those linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and hence is often funded as part of donor nations' foreign aid and development agendas.

Being situated within a system of international development cooperation, state-sponsored international voluntary services (SSIVS), such as JOCV, the United States Peace Corps, and World Friends Korea (WFK), often face competing pressures to achieve both development and domestic outcomes. As other chapters in this volume demonstrate, IDV can contribute to positive "downstream" impacts achieved by volunteers through the long-term development of partner organizations and the

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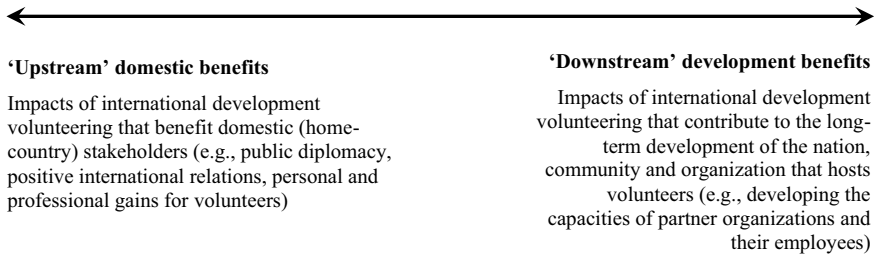e-mail: yasunobu.okabe.d3@tohoku.ac.jp

Fig. 10.1 Distinguishing between the different outcomes of international development volunteers

communities that host them (see chapters of Hosono, Ueda, Yamada, and Sakamaki), as well as "upstream" domestic benefits to the donor state via outcomes like public diplomacy, positive international relations, or enhancing the human capital of volunteers (see chapters of Onuki and Sekine). These different demands, illustrated in Fig. 10.1, can create tensions for SSIVS programs, which may struggle to reconcile downstream development outcomes with domestic agendas of their government funders.

This chapter examines tensions in this upstream–downstream dynamic. We first précis the operating context of the development ecosystem that creates tensions for SSIVS within this landscape. We then apply the lens of institutional legitimacy theory (Meyer and Rowan 1977) to explain why espousing upstream benefits of their value propositions may create problems for SSIVS programs based on competing demands on legitimacy. From this, we introduce a simple model that offers four options for how SSIVS programs might reconcile these divergent demands. We conclude by arguing that SSIVS programs that choose a certain option like JOCV may benefit by imagining the distinctive value proposition of IDV as a mutual and reciprocal process that can simultaneously balance valuable up- and down-stream outcomes. While this chapter is theory-oriented, we sometimes use the case of JOCV, considered to be representative of other SSIVS programs, to illustrate our argument.

10.2 The Historical Context of International Volunteering in the Development Ecosystem

The foundations of contemporary IDV programs can be traced to the middle of the twentieth century and the post-war establishment of global organizations and frameworks intended to promote economic stability, development, and peace (Lough 2015; Sobocinska 2017). In the 1960s SSIVS programs emerged in countries like the USA, Norway, and Japan as structured mechanisms to help match skilled professionals from a donor home country with a role in a partner organization in a "recipient" host country. These programs arose, therefore, in the context of global efforts to redress structural poverty and to instill self-reliance and capacity in the world's least developed nations.

In this chapter, SSIVS is conceptualized as international voluntary services sponsored or managed by the state or governments. Their qualification as "state-managed" is important because it implies that state policies and controls are reflected in the program. However, state sponsorship alone does not necessarily entail direct state intervention in the program. In this sense, SSIVS programs are a broader set of programs that include state-managed international voluntary services (SMIVS) programs, the focus of most chapters in this volume (defined in the introduction chapter). Some programs, such as JOCV, US Peace Corps, The Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (Norec), and WFK, are SSIVS initiatives sponsored and managed by the state, and hence can be more narrowly categorized as SMIVS. In contrast, other programs like Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Australian Volunteers International (AVI), and CUSO International are only partially funded by the state and are managed by an independent board of directors.

For governments, several features make IDV an attractive addition to their official development assistance (ODA) arsenal. In particular, volunteers' local knowledge and relationships with host communities allows these programs to distribute a localized and decentralized form of "smart aid" that promotes grassroots development and local ownership (Ataselim 2014; Joseph and Gillies 2009). Consistent with this strategy, some SSIVS programs have directed their identities and energies "downstream" at building capacity within partner organizations and the host communities that they serve (Howard and Burns 2015). The policy and operating landscape of these programs has been heavily influenced by various trends in development practice that include structural reforms, economic marketization, and resource efficiency, among others (Murray and Overton 2011). Other SSIVS programs, like JOCV, have traditionally been more circumspect in demanding development outcomes, with expectations of volunteers' ability to achieve sustainable development outcomes less categorical. For these programs, the need to demonstrate upstream benefits—for instance, diplomacy benefits of mutual intercultural exchange and understanding, volunteers' personal and professional development—have been salient, and in some cases central to the program's goals (Okabe's chapter in this volume).

Upstream-downstream tensions have come to the fore in recent years as SSIVS programs have increasingly experienced demands from government funders to professionalize their operations, embrace competitive funding, improve transparency and measurable impact, and align strategic activities with government priorities (Eagleton-Pierce 2019; Howard and Burns 2015). In this context, although governments have always used ODA to serve multiple interrelated domestic and international objectives, SSIVS programs are being asked to demonstrate progress more explicitly toward a broader suite of outcomes emphasizing both donor- and recipient-country benefits. The reasons for this are complex and vary by program, driven in part by changing government priorities. Consequently, programs that have downstream development outcomes at their center are increasingly being asked to incorporate domestic priorities, while those with upstream domestic outcomes as their foundation are being encouraged to demonstrate downstream development impacts. In these

contexts, IDV program's "future funding base … may be dependent on their ability to meet multiple—and sometimes divergent—priorities of governments" (Lough and Allum 2013, p. 914).

We argue that these dual objectives can create tensions for IDV and SSIVS programs seeking to retain their legitimacy in the eyes of the many stakeholders that they serve, notably the field of international development, a field which encompasses myriad interconnected transnational and intergovernmental agencies, international and domestic NGOs, and other private organizations involved in development practices. The field has complex historical legacies and some resistance to programs seen as promoting "selfish" upstream benefits. In the next section, we seek to explain this tension for SSIVS programs by drawing on institutional legitimacy theory.

10.3   How SSIVS Programs Develop Priorities Through Legitimacy Seeking

We propose that SSIVS programs wishing to achieve both domestic and development impacts can encounter tensions arising from the threat to their credibility as legitimate development actors. The importance of maintaining credibility within the development sector can be explained using *institutional legitimacy theory.*

This theory, associated primarily with works of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), posits that organizations operating in comparable contexts tend to morph toward adopting similar sets of socially endorsed practices that are responsive to perceptions of important stakeholders (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Theoretically, "isomorphic" pressure for conformity arises because organizations seek to attain and retain their social legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977). In this context, the term "legitimacy" refers to an entity's acceptance by relevant stakeholders and institutions within a particular setting by demonstrating attitudes and practices that are viewed as acceptable within the group (Bitektine and Haack 2015; Suchman 1995; Suddaby et al. 2017).

Applied to SSIVS programs, although their legitimacy to operate hinges on evaluations by myriad overlapping stakeholder groups, we propose that their social acceptance as genuine development programs within the institutional field of international development actors creates pressure on SSIVS and other IDV programs to emphasize downstream impacts. In short, the sector's dominant ideological stance results in isomorphic pressure on SSIVS programs to embrace values, enact activities and focus their energies on outcomes such as redressing social and economic injustices; outcomes that are perceived as acceptable within the expectations and norms of this operating context. This focus is reinforced through well-established professional practices and globally endorsed principles such as those found in the SDGs, which provide unifying beacons for this institutional landscape, and recognized through the existence of metaphorical labels like "Aidland", a term used to describe the shared cultural and psychological landscape of the actors inhabiting the field (Mosse 2011;

Schech 2017). These pressures stand in contrast to the logic underpinning programs that direct efforts primarily toward domestic benefits—where goodwill benefits (e.g., donor country public diplomacy) outweigh tangible development outcomes, and where helping volunteers to develop professional experience and expertise is more important than the application of those expertise toward SDGs.

To explain these pressures, we draw on institutional legitimacy theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) and the experiences of JOCV, a program with historical legacies ensconced in international development. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) propose three main means through which isomorphic pressures are reinforced: *coercive* mechanisms via formal and informal pressure to comply with political or regulatory priorities, *mimetic* mechanisms in the form of organizations imitating, role modelling or benchmarking the practices of others within the institutional field (Heugens and Lander 2007), and *normative* mechanisms such as formal education or professional associations which enculturate standardized practices and values.

Applied to international development cooperation, practices and norms have evolved around firmly held and widely shared institutional norms that are established and reinforced normatively and mimetically. At least three features of IDV programs' relationship with the sector support this view: (a) their historical roots, which place them firmly in the international development sector, (b) their desire to "professionalize" their operations within this sector in which most actors are professional development practitioners (not volunteers), and (c) their desire to demarcate their activities from other forms of unskilled or semi-skilled supply-driven international volunteering. We briefly discuss each and illustrate these by considering their relevance to JOCV.

a. *The Historical Roots of IDV Programs in International Development*

The historical roots of many SSIVS programs, including JOCV, position them firmly in international development cooperation (Lough 2015) with an interest in cooperating with host countries to achieve greater economic and social development. The discourses and practices of many of these programs have been underpinned by commitments to redress global inequalities and past colonial and wartime practices. This was fortified by widely shared ideological attitudes compounded by the strong association (at that time) of voluntary service with notions of sacrifice, selflessness, and altruism which, while simplistic, tended to suppress recognition of personal or donor benefit. As a result, acknowledging nation-building outcomes, such as volunteers' own professional development, could be seen as directly conflicting with the humanitarian values that underpin these programs' self-appointed *raison d'être* (Georgeou 2012; Lough and Allum 2013).

Consistent with efforts to demonstrate programmatic contributions to the SDGs by development organizations, many IDV programs have placed a heavy emphasis on measuring "development impact" (Allum 2017), which inevitably converges on downstream outcomes. Indeed, many reforms shaping the institutional field in recent decades—such as greater accountability for measuring impact, a focus on return on investment, and a demand for strong local partnerships—served to reinforce this unilateral downstream focus.

In the case of JOCV, since its establishment in 1965, the program's official objective had been two-fold (Okabe 2016): development cooperation (downstream) as well as volunteers' personal development and their contributions to Japanese society (upstream). However, it has undergone periods with different emphasis. For instance, a shift occurred with the introduction of the 1974 JICA Act, which stipulated that the program had development goals but made no reference to upstream objectives. The Act explicitly stated that JICA, JOCV's funding and managing agency, "shall undertake the following operations, including the JOCV program, to promote and encourage youth activities overseas … with the purpose of cooperating in the economic and social development of the developing countries by working together with the people from local communities." While in practice JICA still continued to pursue the upstream benefits after the enactment of the law, this legal shift meant, from a retrospective view, that the JOCV program started to prioritize downstream benefits over upstream ones, a policy change that coincided with a trend among Western IDV programs at that time.

Subsequently, JICA has progressively emphasized volunteers' downstream contribution. It finally removed "youth education" from JOCV's purposes in 2015, concluding that nowadays young Japanese people have many opportunities to visit foreign countries at their own expense. Having said that, however, JICA did not abandon JOCV's upstream benefits completely. Rather than denying the effectiveness of JOCV in contributing to volunteers' human capital, JICA now focuses on another traditional upstream benefit of the program—returned volunteers' contribution to Japanese society (Okabe and Mitsugi 2018). In this sense, JOCV's dual objectives continue.

b. *IDV Programs' Desire to Professionalize Their Operations*

A second contributor to a desire to establish and maintain legitimacy comes from normative pressures arising from IDV's standing within the field as a professional activity. These demands to professionalize may be particularly acute for IDV programs due to the voluntary nature of their service in "an industry increasingly dominated by … high finance, large-scale programmes, and professionalism" (Devereux 2008, p. 361). SSIVS programs' desire to focus more overtly on downstream development impacts, therefore, can be viewed as efforts to position their work—performed by highly skilled but "non-expert" volunteers—more strongly within the sector's professional and moral foundations. Evidence of movements to professionalize IDV program's operations exists in associations like the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (*Forum*), a global network comprising 28 IDV programs with various histories, which includes JICA as a member. *Forum* claims to represent "a *collective* voice and *unified* identity in the values and principles that underpin volunteering for development" (emphasis in original), and through which "exclusive forms of knowledge" (Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015, 22) are circulated, including research papers, reporting practices of members, annual conferences, and global standards of practice (Allum and Onuki 2019; Forum 2019). Consistent with this, *Forum*'s website reports that it exists:

> To share information, develop good practice and enhance cooperation across the international volunteering and development sectors. It promotes the value of volunteering for development through policy engagement, mutual learning and by sharing innovative and good practices.

Collectively, these moves to strengthen professional acumen suggest a desire by this community of IDV programs for legitimacy attached to their perceived moral contributions to communities in need and, in part, acceptance from the wider development sector of their role as professional development agencies (Suchman 1995).

The evolution of the JOCV program has emphasized the need for professionalization over time. Prior to volunteers' overseas deployment, for instance, they are mandated to undergo an extensive residential group training course of around 70 days. This rigorous training regimen covers a diverse range of topics, including proficiency in the local language, understanding international cooperation principles, familiarity with the conditions in the host country, and a comprehensive health management course that includes essential safety protocols. Volunteers stationed in host countries actively participate in regular study meetings organized in collaboration with JICA country offices. These gatherings serve as platforms for the exchange of insights, experiences, and valuable information about their respective missions and activities. Moreover, within JICA country offices, a crucial role is played by professional staff members holding the position of "Volunteer Coordinators" (VC). These dedicated individuals shoulder primary responsibility for managing the logistics of the JOCV program, ensuring its smooth and effective operation (see Yamada's chapter in this volume on the elements of some of these features).

c. *IDV Programs' Desire to Demarcate their Activities from Unskilled and Semi-skilled "Supply-driven" International Volunteering*

Related to the preceding features, the growing awareness of questionable impacts of supply-driven, short-term volunteering models (e.g., voluntourism) has provided incentives for some programs to demarcate themselves from these other forms of international volunteering, and in doing so embed their practices more strongly within the formal development ecosystem. Supporting this, Howard and Burns report a "growing re-emphasis on skills transfer" designed to differentiate IDV from unskilled volunteer tourism, which tends to emphasize the convenience and benefits to volunteers (2015, p. 8) and which is criticized for reinforcing inequalities and stereotypes (Perold et al. 2013). Some individual IDV programs have publicly criticized the limitations of supply-driven, unskilled international volunteering (Devereux 2008), while others have re-emphasized the development credentials of their model to demonstrate "how and why (IDV) can be a particularly strong vehicle for development" (Howard and Burns 2015, 10). This view was endorsed formally in *Forum*'s *Global Standards for Volunteering for Development*, which defines "impactful volunteering" as "deliver(ing) measurable and sustainable improvements for poor and marginalized communities that align to a country's national development agendas and to the SDGs" (Forum 2019). Such initiatives may be viewed as active efforts to differentiate IDV from supply-driven models of volunteering and so can help prevent negative

"legitimacy spillover" (Stevens and Newenham-Kahindi 2017), which may otherwise weaken a program's claims to normative legitimacy within the development sector.

This trend is not as prominent within the JOCV program as in other sending countries, due to the relatively lower popularity of voluntourism in Japan combined with the program's inherent emphasis on short-term volunteering opportunities. It is noteworthy that JICA, the state authority that funds and manages JOCV, employs a strategy to maximize the benefits of short-term volunteers, including university students. To facilitate a more comprehensive learning experience and a deeper understanding of developmental issues and realities in host countries, JICA dispatches short-term volunteers to partner organizations (aka counterparts) where long-term JOCVs have been actively engaged in the communities. This intentional pairing allows for collaboration and knowledge sharing between short-term and long-term volunteers (Fujikake 2018). Importantly, this strategy underscores JICA's approach of not seeking to isolate the JOCV program from other forms of international volunteering but rather aims to integrate unskilled university volunteers into the broader development mission of the JOCV program. This integration is designed to ignite the short-term volunteers' interest in development issues, potentially motivating them to pursue longer-term volunteering commitments or to consider future careers within JICA, the central Japanese government, UN organizations, NGOs, and similar entities in the field of international development.

In short, we posit that the IDV community—including SSIVS programs like JOCV—operates within a set of institutional practices and assumptions that are central to their legitimacy. An essential part of this is the institutional field's dominant focus on downstream impacts. Viewed this way, government donors' demands for accountability for upstream objectives—for instance, to develop volunteers' international perspective for the benefit of the home country—can be perceived by those within the sector as a mildly coercive imposition to focus "disproportionately (on the) high levels of benefits" extracted by volunteers, which starkly contrast normative and mimetic pressures from sister organizations within their field (Lewis 2005, p. 20).

It is these contradictions—achieving legitimacy within the institutional field by demonstrating downstream impacts while fulfilling funders' desire for tangible upstream benefits—that create strategic tensions for programs seeking to balance both. This tension has salience to many SSIVS programs including JOCV as it navigates a changing policy framework laid out by its government donors.

The following section introduces a framework that outlines a range of strategic options to explain how individual IDV programs might respond to contrasting legitimacy pressures, and considers the particular case of SSIVS programs.

10.4   Explaining Different Legitimacy Responses

We suggest that the way individual IDV programs respond to competing legitimacy demands is likely to revolve around their handling of two main issues. The first is the extent to which they are open to the multiple and contrasting legitimacy concerns of donors and development beneficiaries (i.e., a "pluralistic stakeholder strategy") or whether they focus primarily on objectives and outcomes linked to a dominant stakeholder group (i.e., a "primary stakeholder strategy").

The second issue revolves around the extent to which an IDV attempts to fully embrace the interests of stakeholders in an integrated way that aligns the concerns of multiple stakeholder groups with its operations and values—what we call an "aligned legitimacy response"—or whether it resolves to prioritize legitimacy with some stakeholders, and so proffer what might be viewed as superficial concern to other stakeholders—characterized here as a "discordant legitimacy response".

Weighing these considerations leads an IDV program to four possible response orientations broadly mapping to the four illustrative quadrants in Fig. 10.2 and discussed in more detail below.
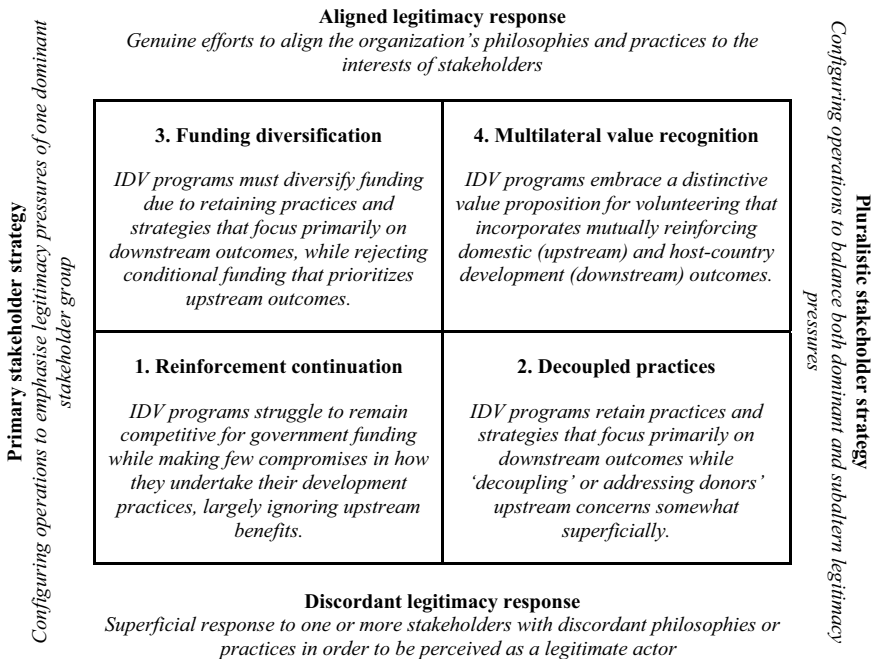

Fig. 10.2 Framework for understanding IDV programs' responses to pressures from competing stakeholder groups

1. *Reinforcement Continuation*

The first possible response orientation involves an IDV program's refusal to modify the emphasis of its development practices. In this scenario, the program continues to covet and deploy donors' funds as a prominent source of their operating expenses but maintains a clear focus solely on either downstream development or upstream outcomes. Despite donors' interests in IDV programs measuring and demonstrating alternative (upstream or downstream) benefits, under a *reinforcement continuation* strategy these demands remain largely unrecognized by the program. As a result, a program embracing this orientation may struggle to continue attracting funding from donors that maintain different objectives.

Reinforcement continuation indicates a preference for the legitimacy reinforcement of a dominant field: either organizational peers in their institutional field, or donors more interested in reaping domestic upstream benefits. It thus suggests a degree of legitimacy "capture" by a dominant stakeholder group. For some IDV programs, this may reflect the strong isomorphic pressures that are incumbent on the program's historical foundations linked to the international development field.

This positioning is likely to succeed best in contexts where one stakeholder's accountability demands may lack strength or continuity, as evident in fluid government policy settings or indications of limited commitment from within government for the priorities associated with one set of outcomes. It may therefore represent a long-term strategy to outlast trends in government funding in order to stay true to the program's core (unilateral) beliefs.

This strategy may also succeed when legitimacy claims among other stakeholders compete to the degree that one set of stakeholders' demands diminish, such as where the program has established support for their activities from a stakeholder group that asserts some leverage over the other. This might include, for instance, domestic constituents asserting pressure on government donors for the program's position. In such cases, the program may seek to nurture and assert its own moral legitimacy with these competing stakeholder groups to weaken or modify demands from the other. Potential actions include openly questioning the merits of governments' public diplomacy or development-oriented interests, or discrediting these views with domestic constituents or other competing interest groups; in other words, by weakening the legitimacy claims imbued in their donors' interests.

2. *Decoupled Practices*

IDV programs using this approach recognize the complexity of their stakeholder relationships and try to address the concerns of multiple groups; however, they do this in a way that preferences one set of outcomes while giving only superficial attention to others (i.e., paying "lip service" to either downstream or upstream outcomes). Such an approach is underpinned by oppositional attitudes that, for example, view measuring benefits of one outcome as a burdensome but necessary evil. Consequently, programs with this orientation would activate responses to demands in ways that are insincere and separated from their core practices and philosophies. In legitimacy theory, such

an approach is known as "decoupling", whereby organizations disconnect "illegitimating" practices from institutional demands (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Decoupling can allow an organization to retain legitimacy among dominant stakeholders through a genuine commitment to one set of demands while offering only "symbolic" deference to others. Thus, while a program deploying this approach may internally recognize IDV's possible contributions—both upstream and downstream—the potential of being perceived as self-serving or too strongly associated with a certain agenda leads them to satisfice but not seriously embrace accountability demands.

Programs that decouple their activities and outcomes tend to succeed at maintaining legitimacy by leveraging the ambiguities and inconsistencies that exist among different groups of stakeholders. Taking advantage of these, programs can reconcile their internal expectations with external communications by disconnecting one set of benefits (domestic or development) from their core measures of accomplishment and performance (DiMaggio and Powell 1983); for instance, by taking notional steps to measure and report on these impacts while separating this from their core monitoring and evaluation activities, and by limiting how such reporting is disseminated. Through this, programs with this orientation conserve the *status quo* by offering only notional compliance with either upstream or downstream outcomes.

3. ***Funding Diversification***

IDV programs employing this approach direct their legitimacy efforts toward a dominant stakeholder group and actively (and authentically) disavow contrasting claims from other stakeholders with competing interests. In this way, rather than ignoring or decoupling practices to placate demands seen as being unnecessary burdens, programs resolve the tension of competing legitimacy claims by aligning only with donors whose values and interests are consistent with their philosophical view. Thus, programs with this orientation overtly reject notions of domestic benefits from donors or legitimacy claims from other development organizations. Instead, they seek to operate within the legitimacy of a single stakeholder group. They thereby rebuff accountabilities that are incompatible with their core vision. This strategy may require programs to source funds from donors with fewer accountability demands or with views more aligned to their unilateral philosophy and objectives.

This approach is most likely to succeed in contexts where organizations focusing solely on down- or upstream objectives can access a range of funding options, a condition that makes it challenging for SSIVS programs reliant on government support. It may necessitate devoting more resources toward sustaining relationships and nurturing legitimacy with multiple funding bodies and associated stakeholder groups, and toward communicating and advocating the "purity" of their philosophical stance. A program assuming this position may also seek to differentiate itself from other IDV programs that—in the program's view—compromise its mission's impacts by bending to the wishes of donors.

Like the two preceding response strategies, this orientation assumes that contrasting legitimacy claims are a zero-sum game, and that the demands for one set of benefits detract from gains in other areas. In effect, responses represented by

the first three quadrants in Fig. 10.2 each reassert a program's value proposition as unilateral.

4. *Multilateral Value Recognition*

The final possible response orientation available to IDV programs involves organizations enacting philosophies and practices that seek to recognize and *authentically address the interests of multiple stakeholder groups* (i.e. donors, development sector actors, partner organizations and host communities) by configuring a value proposition that achieves multilateral legitimacy. As such, it is the only option that seeks to reconcile up- and down-stream benefits into a distinctive value proposition. Embracing multilateral value recognition requires programs to separate their practices from other professional actors in Aidland and from supply-driven volunteering by articulating a clear rationale for why and how the IDV model can represent a (more) mutually beneficial development intervention. Organizations doing this must acknowledge nested loyalties by accepting that "legitimacy accounts are not inherently restricted to any fixed set of gatekeepers" (Deephouse and Suchman 2008, p. 55). While these loyalties may compete, raising the question of "legitimacy for whom?", the challenge for programs deploying a *multilateral value recognition* approach is to make these competing loyalties mutually reinforcing by building on IDVs' particular ability to nurture mutuality with recipient communities and partner organizations that genuinely value the program's contributions to donors' interests. It is this approach that, we believe, best suits JOCV's current mission.

The alignment between this approach and the core mission of JOCV has been examined in Okabe's (2016) distillation of JOCV's history. As detailed in this article, JOCV is uniquely positioned to draw a substantial pool of applicants owing to its dual objectives encompassing both development cooperation and youth education and development. The program extended invaluable opportunities to young Japanese individuals, not merely for the sake of cultural competence and experiencing life abroad, but also to actively contribute to the well-being of communities in host countries. This strategic approach—though it was a product of political compromise reached between stakeholders—serves as an example to IDV programs wishing to recognize and foster multilateral interests by engaging in development interventions that are mutually beneficial.

To this point, JOCV's current mission encompasses both upstream and downstream objectives. At its core, the JOCV program is dedicated to bolstering self-help efforts in the communities with which volunteers work. It positions local people and organizations as the key protagonists in the development process, with volunteers serving as collaborators rather than central actors. This unique dynamic empowers volunteers to engage in a two-fold process: they can glean valuable insights and knowledge from local people, partner organizations, and communities, while simultaneously making meaningful contributions to advance JOCV's broader development objectives.

Configuring multilateral interests requires strengths-based approaches that value local knowledge and two-way learning. It also necessitates transparency about expectations on local partners to make valued contributions through their impacts on individual volunteers, project efficacy, and program impact. The strongest way for actors in the field to recognize multilateral value is through establishing and curating genuinely equal partnerships with downstream stakeholders, notably partner organizations and the "recipient" communities that host their work; thereby overtly valuing these partners' contributions to IDV programs. This is notable because, while development principles are predicated on notions of "partnership", these standards are often limited or insincere in practice, and frequently carry minimal genuine operational or strategic gravitas. This, in turn, draws greater attention to the genuine reciprocal partnerships that lie at the center of IDV's value proposition. We expand this point in the discussion in the following section.

10.5 The Distinctive Value Proposition of International Development Volunteering

In considering the features that might differentiate IDV from other development interventions, we contend that IDV's core philosophy of nurturing collaborative and equal interpersonal relationships between (skilled) volunteers and counterparts provides a development model more strongly oriented to mutuality and reciprocity than others within the institutional field. An important feature of this is the potential of IDV to construct enduring reciprocal relationships that cultivate, value and recognize the contributions of partner organizations and host communities. Two features are worth highlighting here.

First, we suggest the long-term person-to-person partnerships in IDV enable reciprocal engagements between individual actors (volunteers and counterparts) and organizations (IDV programs and partner organizations) that, when managed effectively, nurture the respect, equality and mutuality that can best facilitate two-way (rather than one-way) benefits. IDVs' community-embeddedness (e.g., volunteers working and living in host communities for extended periods) opens opportunities for an authentic form of solidarity and "insider" association that is lacking in most development partnerships. This relational positioning not only enables culturally congruent knowledge and feedback to enhance the programs' effectiveness in delivering development projects, but also provides a stronger platform for two-way learning and understanding through authentic reciprocal exchange. The mutuality imbued in these relationships is an important contributor to many of the upstream outcomes reported in earlier chapters (see chapters of Okabe, Onuki, and Sekine respectively) and other published research (Fee and Gray 2011), such as enhancing volunteers' professional expertise, cultural acumen, returned volunteers' contribution to their society, and awareness of the intricacies of development and geo-political landscapes. These contributions, when recognized and celebrated, can demonstrate

a more genuine valuing of local strengths and contributions at a level rarely seen in otherwise market-based development interventions.

A second important consideration of the value proposition of IDV programs is reducing the harm, disempowerment, paternalism and dependency often associated with unilaterally focused activities: either via unskilled volunteering programs exploiting host communities for the benefit of volunteers and donors, or via development projects that assume unilateral benefit from North to South and/or sideline or ignore partners' strengths and contributions. Functional long-term partnerships for development or diplomacy require "fair" benefits to both parties. Celebrating partner organizations' contributions can help to equalize the power relationships—with greater local ownership and recognition that these partners are legitimate stakeholders and contributors (see Hosono's chapter on local ownership for capacity development and Ueda's chapter on how local people's sentiment can enhance their ownership and legitimacy). In contrast to many alternative models of development, IDV can be legitimately valued with a proposition that is a more equitable, ethical, and sustainable form of development cooperation—but only to the degree that multilateral benefits are embraced.

The notion of gaining mutual benefit is a shared sentiment among international development volunteers from many IDV programs in many countries. It is a sentiment expressed by numerous JOCV volunteers and other IDVs who have completed their service. Their remarks often echo something along the lines of: "I went to the host country with the intent to teach, guide, and help people. Yet, in return, I found myself being helped by them, and learning invaluable lessons from our shared experience", and "I learned more than I taught" (see Sekine's chapter in this volume). While not evidence of genuine *multilateral value recognition*, these types of comments suggest the potential of mutuality via balanced and fair relationships between volunteers and locals, and between host communities and partner organizations.

As these examples suggest, rather than posing a threat to the legitimacy of IDV programs like JOCV and the viability of the IDV model, the new managerialist landscape for monitoring and evaluating both upstream and downstream outcomes offers programs the chance to leverage the unique features of IDV that may allow it, more than other forms of genuine development, to achieve these mutual benefits. The following section explores how programs can adapt their organizational strategies to best achieve *multilateral value recognition.* Acknowledging the tensions and conflict associated with institutional change, we suggest that these strategies can help pioneering programs promote institutional change while still maintaining legitimacy with multiple stakeholder groups.

10.6 Organizational Adaptation Strategies

A necessary antecedent for IDV programs interested in understanding their competing legitimacy positions is a critical awareness of the constraining nature of the dominant logic of the contesting institutional fields—the development sector's belief

that development contributions are unidirectionally downstream, and some government decision-makers view that volunteering is a mechanism of public diplomacy rather than true development.

Drawing on imagery by the early twentieth-century sociologist Max Weber, legitimacy theorists have used the metaphor of an iron cage that organizations "construct around themselves" when responding to the powerful forces of isomorphism; forces that "lead them to become more similar to one another" and so "constrain(s) their ability to change further in later years" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, pp. 147, 148).

A "one-size-fits-all" approach is problematic within the complex operating environments that IDV programs navigate. Nonetheless, although IDV programs asserting value propositions that are unilateral may have rational aspirations, we see pragmatic, moral and resourcing challenges associated with the first three quadrants in Fig. 10.2, representing more discordant legitimacy responses and singular stakeholder strategies. In addition to having questionable ethical foundations, the decoupling or devaluing of upstream contributions inherent in discordant legitimacy responses (options 1 and 2, Fig. 10.2) have a high potential to alienate partner organizations and threaten legitimacy claims from subaltern stakeholders. Meanwhile, a singular emphasis on up- or downstream outcomes (options 1 and 3)—while feasible in the short-term—reflects a form of legitimacy capture by dominant stakeholder groups (i.e., donors and/or transnational aid organizations), which may come at the expense of other stakeholders with equally valid claims (e.g., partner organizations and recipient/host communities). More pertinently, they circumscribe just a portion of the ultimate value of IDV as a person-centered, localized, "smart-aid" approach that promises mutual and reciprocal benefits to both sending and hosting countries. *Funding diversification* strategies (option 3), while strongly principled, are likely to involve a substantial organizational reconfiguration associated with securing consistent donations from private foundations, corporate sponsorships, member contributions or other less-common sources.

IDV programs wishing to embrace a *multilateral value recognition* strategy must structure their operations, manage relationships, and measure impacts to reinforce, improve, and ultimately demonstrate these benefits. For organizations wishing to make this adaptation, we suggest two complementary procedures are fruitful: (i) configuring operations to (re-)position these multilateral interests as the central feature of their value proposition and operational practices, and (ii) instigating active efforts to inform and advocate for the acceptance of this multilateral value proposition within each institutional field.

For these programs, reporting hierarchies (e.g., embedding measurement of both up- and downstream outcomes within central monitoring and evaluation units) and processes (e.g., maintaining direct accountability measures on partner organizations for their contributions to volunteers' human capital) may be more readily adapted than features like organizational culture and strategies, which may be especially prone to isomorphic tendencies (Ashworth et al. 2009).

IVCOs' niche position within the institutional field of international development makes introducing organizational change challenging; however, it may afford individual programs like JOCV freedom to deviate from the field at large and, through this, to energize normative pressures within the sub-field of IDV without necessarily threatening their legitimately as complementary actors within the development ecosystem. More pragmatically, the model serves as a practical tool for IDV programs both to understand these tensions inherent in their current operational landscape and to pinpoint adaptation strategies that might lead to a more complete value proposition while also retaining institutional legitimacy. Remaining tethered to dominant stakeholders may harm, rather than protect, IDVs' long-term interests by reinforcing attitudes and behaviors counter to the organizations' effectiveness (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). We suggest that it is through recognizing these dimensions—i.e., "seeing" the iron cage that they have created—that IDV programs can weigh up the potential benefits of their strategic responses.

Advocating for the acceptance of a multilateral value proposition within the institutional field, IDV programs can work at the intersection of their desire for legitimacy reinforcement and their desire to contribute optimally to both development cooperation and diplomacy/education. This may involve actively changing the institutional constraints that limit their effectiveness (Seo and Creed 2002). For example, globally dispersed fields like that of international development may be diverse and multilevel, often fragmented by linguistic, cultural, and geographic distances. Consequently, it may afford IDV programs more flexibility to diverge from norms without incurring "punishment" from the field. In other words, while work practices can shape institutional fields over time, marshaling a critical mass of acceptance within the field may require coordinated effort from IDV programs, including other SSIVS programs. Although not all their members are State-funded or -managed, sector-level bodies such as *Forum*, the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE), or the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) may assume a leadership role to shift the dynamics of institutionalized norms and reinforce the valuing (or at least acceptance) of new practices and expectations within an organizational field (Greenwood et al. 2002). As a part of coordinated efforts by IDV programs, JICA—the agency overseeing the JOCV program and a member of *Forum*—can be expected to participate in that leadership and to demonstrate its efforts to realize an authentic form of *multilateral value recognition*.

10.7   Conclusion

This chapter has applied institutional theory to explain why JOCV and other contemporary IDV programs may encounter tensions arising from a funding landscape that creates accountability demands to achieve both upstream (domestic) benefits for donor countries and downstream (host country) development benefits. From this we posited a model of four strategic orientations based on how IDV programs might choose to respond to these legitimacy challenges. By identifying a range of responses

to manage these various legitimacy demands, this model provides theoretical carti-lage to connect and explain competing pressures for legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness encountered by IDV—and especially SSIVS programs.

More research is needed to assess the effects of these strategic positions on programs' legitimacy with diverse stakeholders. The most pressing empirical need may be cost–benefit analyses of the four orientations identified, including the ethical implications of each. The difficulties articulating tangible downstream development impacts are well recognized, and such challenges are likely to confront organiza-tions wanting to replicate these measures of upstream impact that emanate from the types of partnerships that IDVs nurture. Thus, garnering field-level legitimacy may require programs to develop innovative tools to adequately measure (and report) the many amorphous impacts. In this, we see a strong role for researchers and practi-tioners to collaborate with IDV programs, volunteers, partner organizations and host communities in identifying what and how two-way outcomes manifest through the IDV model of development cooperation.

Given the likely benefits of IDV programs' positioning within *multilateral value recognition*, studies articulating a theoretical platform to explain how such offerings might be curated, and practical insights into how programs' operations might be configured to maximize multilateral benefits, are needed. Related to this, although some IDV programs have sought to carefully distinguish IDV from less-skilled forms of volunteering, they have invested comparatively little effort in articulating how volunteers provide added value distinct from other development organizations. While a smattering of primarily academic studies exists (see Burns et al. 2015; Lough 2016), more research is needed to emphasize the added value of interpersonal human engage-ment in development cooperation—but also in the oft-neglected areas of diplomacy, peacebuilding, and competency training of volunteers. For programs like JOCV that appear keen to embed multilateral value recognition within their operations, this seems an important first step.

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