

FOREWORD

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For far too long we have been obsessed with paid work – assuming that money changing hands made it far more important. That has been the cliché. Of course it isn't like that any more. People of all ages and social class are giving their time. Some of them even have fun. And the old narrow definition of work is blurring more every year.

The Body Shop already encourages staff to volunteer in the community, and 70 percent of our shop staff do. I discovered early on that there are few motivational forces more potent than giving people an opportunity to exercise their idealism. This blurring between work and leisure, workers and volunteers, is just the beginning.

In the future, I believe we will realise there are some things that volunteers can do far better than professionals. They can provide a human face to impersonal public services. They can provide friendship. Professionals can't do that. And we will also realise that simply helping someone can sometimes be disempowering to the person being helped. That sometimes we can set somebody free just by asking them for help.

My work has enabled me to travel all over the world, learning from people who have little in the way of material possessions, but plenty of knowledge and wisdom to offer. This is the basis of volunteering – the two-way excitement of learning about different people, cultures and different ways of living.

That's what's exciting about the years ahead. In the future, volunteering and work and jobs may not look the same to us at all. As we continue to travel more, and spend time on more important things than just making money, I hope that more people will enjoy volunteering abroad – and that includes volunteers from the South bringing their skills and expertise to the so-called more 'developed' nations.

The articles and stories included in this anthology are essential reading for anyone considering volunteering in another country. Whatever your age, class or nationality, I believe that everyone should try to make time to give, to learn, and to enjoy the satisfaction of achievement.