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*Sustainability Unwrapped*, a conversational podcast about responsibility, ethics, inequalities, climate change, and other challenges of our times, where science needs practise to think about our world and how to make our society more sustainable one podcast at a time.

Good afternoon to all our listeners. Welcome once again to Hanken's *Sustainability Unwrapped* podcast series. There's an African proverb that goes, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Two days ago on December 5, the International Volunteer Day, or IVD, was celebrated. The UN General Assembly instituted this celebration in 1985 to promote voluntary work and encourage governments to support volunteering efforts at local, national, and international levels. These contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, or commonly known as SDG.

This afternoon, our topic focuses on volunteering, simply defined as a free act of an individual or group to give time or service to others. In the context of our podcast series, we will discuss volunteering as an invaluable asset from the academic, corporate, and, of course, personal perspectives.

Society and organisations need people who are not just gainfully employed, but also meaningfully engaged with and in their community. Volunteering at intergenerational dialogue can help citizens develop a sustainability mindset. With us today are Kaisa Vainikka, social responsibility manager at UPM. Welcome.

Thank you very much.

Henrietta Gronlund, Professor of Urban Theology from the University of Helsinki. Welcome.

Thank you. Thank you. Hello.

And joining us from London, one of our graduates Daniella Sumalias. Nice to have you with us.

Thank you so much. I really look forward to the conversation.

Great. And I'm your host from Hanken, [? Maria ?] [? Gajitos ?] from the Centre for Languages and Business Communication. Would you like to share something about yourself?

Yes, I can start. I'm Henrietta as mentioned, Professor of Urban Theology in the University of Helsinki.

And I have done a lot of research on volunteering and issues related to volunteering for many years now. Already started in my doctoral thesis years ago, and after that, done research on several Finnish and international research projects on the issue. I have, for example, done research on the motives of volunteering, the role of values, world views, and cultural contexts in volunteering, and the interaction between volunteering and identity work.

Beautiful.

My name is Daniella, and I graduated from Hanken three years ago. My major was in marketing, but I also completed the study model in corporate social responsibility. In my master's thesis, encouraging young students to volunteer through social marketing. I then combined these two fields of study.

After graduating, I moved to London and began my career in digital marketing. I currently work as a client development manager at the publicist group agency, CJ Affiliate. And in my spare time, I play tennis and take boxing and dance classes at my local gym. But I also volunteer for Save the Children and enjoy enrolling in other volunteering projects as opportunities to merge.

Wow, fantastic.

Hello, everybody. I am Kaisa, and I work as a social responsibility manager at UPM. UPM is a publicly listed global company operating in the forest and paper industry. And my job in brief is to develop UPM social agenda together with our businesses and also functions.

Majority of my work is currently related to business and human rights. But I also coordinate our Share and Care programme where employee volunteering is one way of giving support to our local communities and also, of course, also engaging with our local communities.

Wow, that is wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you, again, for each one of you sharing your time to discuss volunteering with us today. Our listeners will certainly appreciate the wide perspectives from our group of guests, representing the academe, the corporate world, and the personal experience. Talking about experience, have you done any volunteering yourself? I mean, we've heard Daniella say so, but what about Henrietta and Kaisa?

Well, I'm happy to start, as you referred to me first. So currently, I am a boutique shop volunteer at one of the Save the Children's shops in Notting Hill. This is one of the 22 Mary's and the Living & Giving boutiques that can be found around the UK.

So moving to a new city, one needs to sort of rebuild their social circle. And even if I've been lucky to

find close friends at work and also via my hobbyist, it has been really exciting to further expand that social circle with the amazing fellow volunteers at Save the Children UK. So when you join a volunteer volunteering activity or volunteering group, you immediately get welcomed with this sense of community feeling.

That's beautiful.

I also volunteer, yes. I was actually a volunteer before I started researching volunteering. And when I was younger, I took part in human rights work, for example, and answered calls in different helplines. Today, it's more related to my work and my expertise in volunteering. So I collaborate with and volunteer as an expert member in boards and/or different working groups of different non-profits, who work among our volunteers and with the collaboration of volunteers.

So if I draw from my own research, I would say my motivation for this combines a quite typical starting points for volunteering. So I have wanted to make a difference and still want to make a difference in social issues, which I find important. I also need to find ways to show compassion for people in difficult situations. That is important for me. And I have found volunteering to be a way to carry out principles and values that are important for me personally, and which I also want to promote in our society.

Thank you. That is so beautiful.

I think I'm a little bit of an exception here in this group since I do not think that I had ever officially volunteered before I started to coordinate UPM's volunteering programme. But now due to my position, I have had the chance to engage in various employee volunteering activities. And I think one of the most meaningful experiences was spending a day as an instructor at [INAUDIBLE], which is kind of learning environment for sixth graders in Finland, and kind of a mini city where the students work in a profession-- so in a company or similar and earn money for their work.

And I truly think this concept this is an excellent one. And it is so many important things about our society. And during the day, it was eight hours a day if I remember correctly. And I was literally moved several times about the, let's say, the openness and the teamwork and the skillfulness of the children. And being able to see so close how the workers and consumers of the future behave was really a unique experience for myself.

That really sounds fascinating. In fact, I checked the website. And it's impressive what these children can do. And that's thanks to what corporations like UPM would be doing, OK? It's truly admirable to

hear how businesses in Finland are starting now to incorporate volunteering in their agenda.

On my part, I've always been involved in volunteering since my university years back in my home country, which is the Philippines. While living in Finland, I have continued volunteering in various ways. For example, since 2015, I have coordinated the student and staff volunteer work between Hanken and Folkhalsan.

We've had some of our students, teachers, and several exchange students involved in activities such as French and German conversation classes, IT help for the seniors, concerts, chess games, and numerous cultural get togethers hosted by our foreign students from China, France, Nigeria, Korea, to name a few. Our student volunteers have also hosted the seniors visit to Hanken on two occasions. The guests were welcomed by the rector, were given a tour of the university and also the special art exhibit we had last year on the occasion of our 110 anniversary.

And moreover, they were entertained by our very own Lucilla with her singing. After the first visit, the coordinators from Folkhalsan sent me this message on the part of the seniors. They said, "we were welcomed really kindly by the students. Everything was arranged so well. It was fun to visit the library and see the, quote unquote, 'silence chairs.' So many young people. Lucilla signed for us. That was the best, 10 plus. When can we do it again?"

The seniors came for only two hours in the university, but it made such an impact on them that we decided to make this an annual tradition. However, this year, is exceptional because of the pandemic. So no visits are organised. Without doubt, the pandemic is put on hold a considerable number of activities and traditions.

The limited physical presence is naturally affecting everyone. On the local scene, for example, one of the newspaper headlines, stated last November 10, *People Battle Loneliness During Pandemic*. And according to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, younger, more educated people were slightly more prone to experiencing loneliness than those who were older and less educated. And that is something to think about.

But on the positive side, and going back to our topic, the pandemic has revived solidarity in society, in general, fostering a lot of volunteering activities. Is volunteering trendy, opportunist, for the sake of a good CV or a good brand name, or is it altruist?

Let's say, I can comment them first on this. And I think there are certainly there are various motives for volunteering. And I would not personally call one better than the other. The pandemic has, like

you said, certainly encouraged people to help others. And I think we've seen this very clearly in the businesses as well.

And I think at the same time, I believe it has encouraged many companies to think of fresh and even more impactful ways of volunteering. And if we think about volunteering in general, for us as a company, it's, of course, it's about helping people and supporting community, thanks giving, giving time or expertise in causes we as a company care about.

Since as a [INAUDIBLE], as a profitable company, we have the opportunity to do so. And of course, we believe that with this kind of activity, we can have a positive impact on society and the local communities surrounding our operations. But I see a lot of, let's say, opportunities for us as well or for our direct benefit also.

So I think volunteering can really broaden your horizons and dispel prejudices. And it can make you see things in a new way. And if we think about the evolving landscape of work and business, I see a lot of opportunities in promoting diversity, developing our people and, of course, creating empathy.

Thank you. From my side, I believe that there are often personal incentives behind our decisions to engage in any type of volunteering as individuals. However, the incentive can be very innocent, such as the fact that you would like to try something new or perhaps just meet some new people. And yet, you choose to volunteer over engaging in any other type of activity, which always brings an element of altruism to the volunteering.

I have noticed that the pandemic has increased the empathy towards the homeless here in London. The lockdown limits the numbers of people on the streets, who the homeless are so dependent on. And this has led to me and my friends to have begun to more actively stop to ask the homeless if they would like to have anything from perhaps like a nearby shop.

Most often, they ask for something small, like a soda. And this type of everyday, unorganised volunteering goes unreported and is often driven by empathy. And these actions, of course, they do make us feel better. And therefore, one could argue that the elevated mood that we get from that activity is the personal incentive in this example.

And then, of course, we see trendy volunteering opportunities emerge out of the pandemic as well. And often, they gain a lot of exposure on social media. But I think we see more fundraising activities rather than volunteering activities on social media.

For example, again here in London, we saw the Run 5, Donate 5 Pounds and Nominate Five campaign

that run on Instagram. But social media is a great catalyst for good causes. And hopefully, anyone participating in this trendy one of volunteering or fundraising campaigns realise the positive impact on society and get inspired to volunteer also in the future.

I fully agree with what Daniella said. And I think also research shows that nothing we do is basically purely egoistic or altruistic, but always our behaviour is a mixture of both. And this also do not exclude one another. So compassion, wanting to do good things to other people, they are innate features in all of us, in all human beings, and they are very often carried out in volunteering then.

And this is also something that makes volunteering very rewarding. But again, I think building a CV or participating in a trend, they're also perfectly good motives to do something proactive. In addition to these kinds of motives, volunteering can also be very much fun. It can give you new friends. It can give you something productive to do, et cetera, et cetera.

And a very central incentive for volunteering is that someone has asked us to do it. So we need these kind of wake up calls to take part. And I think the pandemic has been one wake up call to us, in a way, awakened our values and our wish to help and our altruistic thoughts, as we are reminded that there is kind of a need for our input.

I think, Henrietta what you've mentioned is rewarding, that volunteering is rewarding is definitely true. You hit it on the spot, which brings up that point, that Daniella, your research back in 2013 has actually been an inspiration for this podcast. And you've enumerated 12 positive consequences, kind of the rewards in participating in a volunteering activity, such rewards as fostering a good mood, improving social skills, learning about intergenerational dialogue, having fun.

But then you also state that there was one negative side to volunteering, and that is the lack of time. Now, if volunteering does so much good for the individual, why is it not a common phenomenon in our society? Is lack of time real, or is it a false excuse?

This is a really good question. The students I interviewed for my study struggled finding a volunteering job in their preferred field, which did, at times, lead to decreased motivation to volunteer. So to illustrate, one of the respondents in my study explained, "it's so much easier when someone just gives you the place. Like, here it is, do you want to help?"

So I think quite a bit of time is simply spent on finding the volunteering opportunity, especially if you want something regular. Before I got my volunteering job at Save the Children, I had contacted four charities, none of which wrote back to me. And to secure my job at Save the Children, I had to

formally apply with a cover letter, provide two references, and also have an informal chat with the shop manager. [LAUGHS]

Wow.

So that's quite a bit.

Yeah, definitely.

Yeah. So now that I have found my place, I volunteer once or twice a month for a few hours in the weekend. And I'm confident there are opportunities out there that also fit even the busier schedules. For me, it's refreshing to surround myself with people who have nothing to do with digital marketing and prefer to speak of completely other topics. I'm lucky to say that volunteering recharges my batteries.

If time truly is an issue, I'd, of course, want to encourage everyone who's listening to take the matter into your own hands and see if your organisation could grant a day off for volunteering, perhaps. That's a common phenomenon here in the UK. And volunteering quickly becomes a lifestyle.

So you'll see yourself getting involved in all sorts of volunteering opportunities as they start presenting themselves. So when you do find volunteering enjoyable, you'll begin to prefer it over other activities. And in that case, lack of time is no longer really an excuse.

Beautiful.

Yeah, that's well-said. Yeah. And actually, if we look at the statistics on volunteering, in Finland, volunteering actually is a rather common phenomenon also in our society. So up to 40% of Finns volunteer annually. And this, of course, does not include all people who do helpful things for their family members or relatives and friends or spontaneously on the street, for example, as we heard before.

However, it does seem in our society, unfortunately, that people who are at the risk of being excluded from our society or in the risk of being excluded, volunteer less than those who are already connected in many other ways, too. This might be a lack of social networks or a lack of self-confidence, for example.

Whatever it is, I think our society needs more bridges between schools and volunteering, for example, unemployment offices and volunteering, et cetera, to make volunteering more equal, and

find ways to encourage all people to find their place and gain the good effects from volunteering that we heard of. But at the same time, I think lack of time really is a true hindrance for many.

Many people are stressed and burdened in today's societies. And I don't think that anyone should be blamed for not volunteering. I think it's really important that volunteering remains voluntary, you know? But in some cases, as Daniella really nicely described, volunteering can also provide a great way to take some time off or to give something back to find a meaningful hobby in a way which gives more than it takes.

Also, in my research interviews, I have encountered really nice stories about this. For example, one young woman who volunteered as a friend to an older lady-- this volunteer was a really, really busy business person building a career and so on and definitely did not have extra time. But she called these visits to meet this older lady her retreats.

So she said there were these moments where she forgot everything else and just focused on being present with this other person and always when she left the apartment of this lady, she said, she felt rested and inspired. So they were her retreats as well.

But I think most of us could actually say that is one of the rewards. For a very small deed, you gained a lot. And this is one of the things that I wanted to share from the student volunteer work here at Hanken.

One of our students hosted a weekly French conversation group at the [? Reston ?] in Ruskeasuo, which is just 15 minutes by bus from the university. She wrote one day and said, the conversation group is going well. I have five participants and always a few interested ladies that do not speak French, but enjoy listening.

I always start by asking how the week has gone if anything particular has happened. Most of the time, the response is that, due to their old age, nothing really happens. But still, they managed to tell interesting and exciting stories from Folkhalsan. Old age is not an obstacle to experiencing new things.

After some chatting, we usually read the French newspaper I take with me and discuss current events. The ladies have wished that I would someday take my dog Charlie to Folkhalsan as he understands only French.

Now, I thought this is a simple meeting. She goes for half an hour to that residence. And the contact benefits both parties.



I think if we come back to, let's say, the beginning of this question in terms of the time, time challenge-- and if I think about this from the, let's say, employee volunteering point of view, I think lack of time can be a true challenge for many. But also, what I've seen in practise is that if companies really invest in organising employee volunteering and the volunteering itself, it's really something that's more and more employees will just take the time, and it will be prioritised.

But just like in society also or also in many business, a lot comes down to the question of equality like Henrietta also noted. Are all employees given the opportunity? Is it possible? Is it practically possible? And how do we then make sure that no one feels the pressure to do it so that it will be always voluntary?

Yes. That is very true. That is something that needs to be maintained-- that it is always out of free will. Now, as we can see from everyone's contribution, there are many forms of volunteering. What has worked really according to your study and experience? Moreover, since a good majority of our listeners are young people, how can they be encouraged to see volunteering as a sustainability investment?

Well, volunteering is extremely individual. So I think what works for one person does not work for another. But this, on the other hand, in my opinion, actually is the great benefit of volunteering. Volunteering gives me the access to do things that are meaningful to me in ways that are appealing and suitable for me personally.

So we do not always find a job that perfectly suits our needs, for example, and gives us experiences of meaningfulness or whatever it is we are looking for. But volunteering can do that.

I completely agree with Henrietta. And to continue sort of on that same argument, in my study, most young students best enjoy their volunteering experience when it was something in their field of interest, such as volunteering at a music festival, which also would then give them access to all the concerts at that same event. It also helped if the volunteering opportunity was presented to them via any type of institution or organisation such as their school to church or via their hobbies. And of course, since lack of time often is the main barrier for volunteering, it's important that the volunteering opportunity is close by so that time is not spent on commuting.

Indeed. And that's why we've got this at Folkhalsan, which is simply 15 minutes away from the university. Well, I think with our group, we can certainly go on for hours talking about volunteering as a meaningful contribution to sustainability, but I think time is running short. Would each one of you

give our listeners one last food for thought?

I'd like to say that volunteering is like creating your dream job. And at the same time, you can make a difference, make the world a better place, and/or feel the special joy of helping someone who needs a hand. Finding one's match is what works in volunteering.

Beautiful. Thank you.

I'd like to still touch upon the question if volunteering really is a sustainability investment. So volunteering can be seen as an investment since you are investing time as a resource. And then to argue that volunteering is a sustainability investment is also quite simple.

If we want to reach structural, sustainable change, we need to mobilise communities. And to do that, we need to see changes in behaviour on individual level. I'd like to quote some of my respondents from my research.

"If a lot of people are working for the same thing, a lot can be achieved. Things would be taken care of quickly and easily, and you're able to affect things. I guess that's it's a good thing that the society does not have to pay salaries and things get done anyway, and that there are more people willing to do something. Volunteering helps the people who are in the worst position in society. So for these people, the help received by volunteers that society does not give must be very meaningful. So maybe society should support volunteering more so that it would be in that way the people worse off would receive more help."

So those were some thoughts from my lovely respondents in my master's thesis study. And finally, a lot of millennials today struggle finding a purpose in their current jobs. And I'd really like to stretch that not everyone finds a job that's a world-saving, community-improving job, and that is OK. You can choose to volunteer outside your 9:00 to 5:00 and find meaningfulness and purpose elsewhere.

Thank you, very concrete. Very concrete suggestion.

If I think about UPM and many of the volunteers, our volunteers that I have talked about have told me how the experience has inspired them and how they have really felt the kind of sense of accomplishment. And I think if employees are provided with the opportunity to support others in a meaningful way, it can also provide them with an opportunity for societally influencing.

And making a change and finding the purpose as both Daniella and Henrietta [INAUDIBLE]. It's clear that many people find this meaningful. And what is also kind of rather self-evident that many look for

a sense of community. And I've seen this happening very much in practise at UPM.

So our people are very happy to volunteer if it includes a chance to spend time with their colleagues. So a sense of community seems to be very important.

Wow, wonderful. Thank you so much. Well, finally to quote another of Daniella's student responded, the person said, "Volunteering brings people together, brings us sort of on the same side so that we can improve society."

And I think this is what a social sustainability's all about. Recalling the African proverb we had at the beginning, "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." We want to go far, right?

(SIMULTANEOUSLY) Yes

Yes.

And we want to make a difference, right?

(SIMULTANEOUSLY) Yes.

Yes, yes.

[LAUGHS]

Let's stay tuned for the rest of the podcast series. Thank you so much to each one of you, Kaisa, Henrietta, Daniella, who our are guests, and, of course, our *Sustainability Unwrapped* organisers and supporters.

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