

Pro bono translation survey among translators

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This document presents a summary of the results of a survey on pro bono / voluntary translation conducted in October 2012, in which 162 translators participated. This feedback helped me prepare my talk "Translations that can change people's lives", delivered at the 53rd ATA conference in San Diego.

My interest in the subject stems from my five-year collaboration with the [Solidarités team](#). I founded this team with a double aim: to provide linguistic aid to select humanitarian organizations, and to create a workgroup for translators where they can network and collaborate – without the usual anonymity that has, unfortunately, become the standard in the largest segment of the translation market.

This five-year collaboration has forged many of my views. Still, getting to know over 150 colleagues' points of view is a great way to prepare a presentation on a subject that is rarely discussed in depth. When it comes to translation in the humanitarian sector, the focus is usually on the question on how can translators give as much as possible. That's certainly an important question, and one where sharing best practices is useful. But it is only one side of the coin. How translators can best benefit from doing pro bono work is an equally important question – and the two are strongly interwoven. Therefore I hope to use the results of this survey to provide recommendations to entities that organize pro bono work.

Comments on the survey itself, the current analysis, or the covered topic in general are welcome at translation [at] pirothattila dot com.

Data collection

Four different samples were collected, as the survey invitation was initially posted in different places:

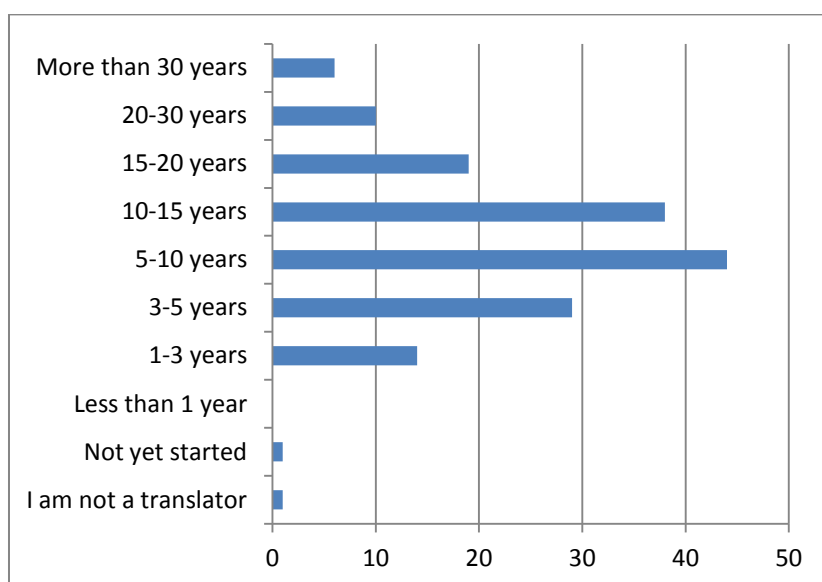
- 1.) On the forum page and facebook wall of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI) – **17 replies**
- 2.) On the open forum of ProZ.com – **39 replies**
- 3.) On the "Certified Pro" forum of ProZ.com – **90 replies**
- 4.) On the private forum of the Solidarités team – **16 replies**

Survey respondents shared a multitude of different viewpoints, and provided deep insight into many aspects. While it would have been impossible to present each individual answer, I made sure to make a wide and balanced selection of comments (typeset in blue). All the replies included in this summary are taken verbatim from the survey replies; only a small number of obvious typos have been corrected.

Results

Q1. How long have you been a translator?

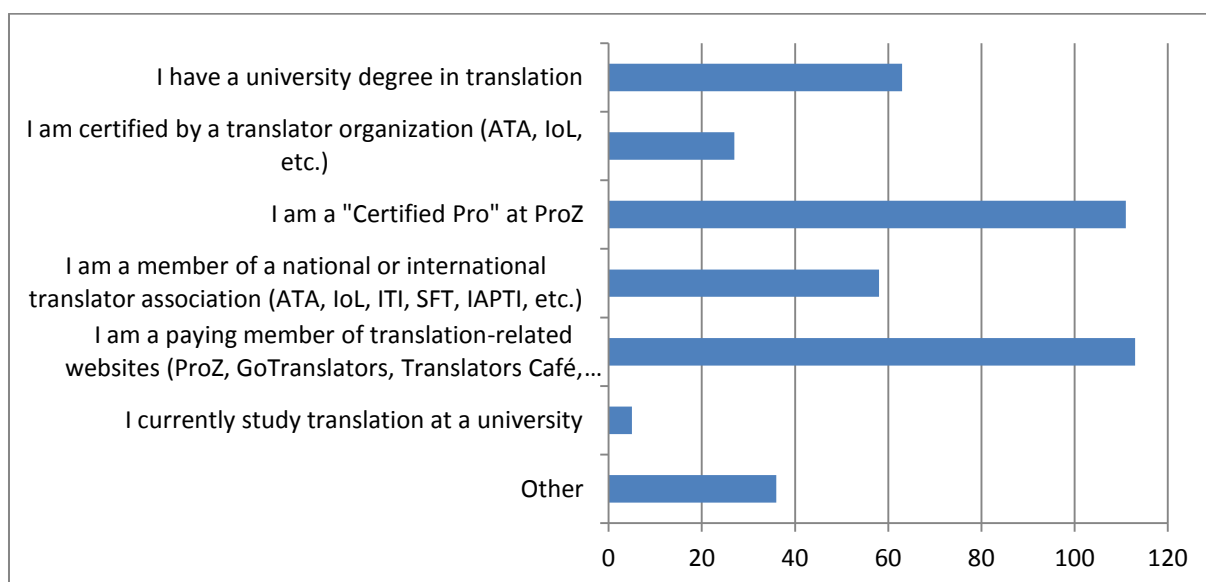
I am not a translator	1
Not yet started	1
Less than 1 year	0
1-3 years	14
3-5 years	29
5-10 years	44
10-15 years	38
15-20 years	19
20-30 years	10
More than 30 years	6



Using mid-interval values (and 35 years for the first category), this corresponds to more than 1700 years of experience.

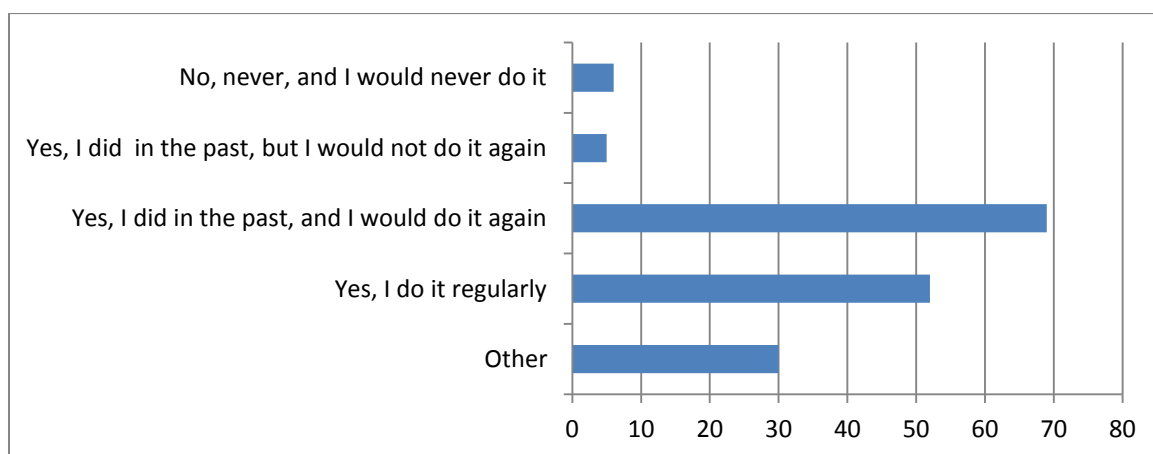
Q2. What kind of translation-related background, certification and/or membership do you have? [Select all that apply.]

Other	36
I currently study translation at a university	5
I am a paying member of translation-related websites (ProZ, GoTranslators, Translators Café, etc.)	113
I am a member of a national or international translator association (ATA, IoL, ITI, SFT, IAPTI, etc.)	58
I am a "Certified Pro" at ProZ	111
I am certified by a translator organization (ATA, IoL, etc.)	27
I have a university degree in translation	63



Q3. Since becoming a professional translator, have you ever participated in pro bono / voluntary translation projects? (Free test translations should not be considered as such.)

Other	30
Yes, I do it regularly	52
Yes, I did in the past, and I would do it again	69
Yes, I did in the past, but I would not do it again	5
No, never, and I would never do it	6



Comments

I am extremely selective in choosing organizations or causes for which I will do pro bono translations: I will only do it for urgent projects by a couple of humanitarian organizations I trust and know well and which have paid for my translations on non-urgent projects in the past.

If I want to do charity, I donate money - quite often, even. Donating my skills to organisations that also collect large sums of money is not my idea of charity.

99% of it was translation of software (both open source and closed source, both freeware and shareware).

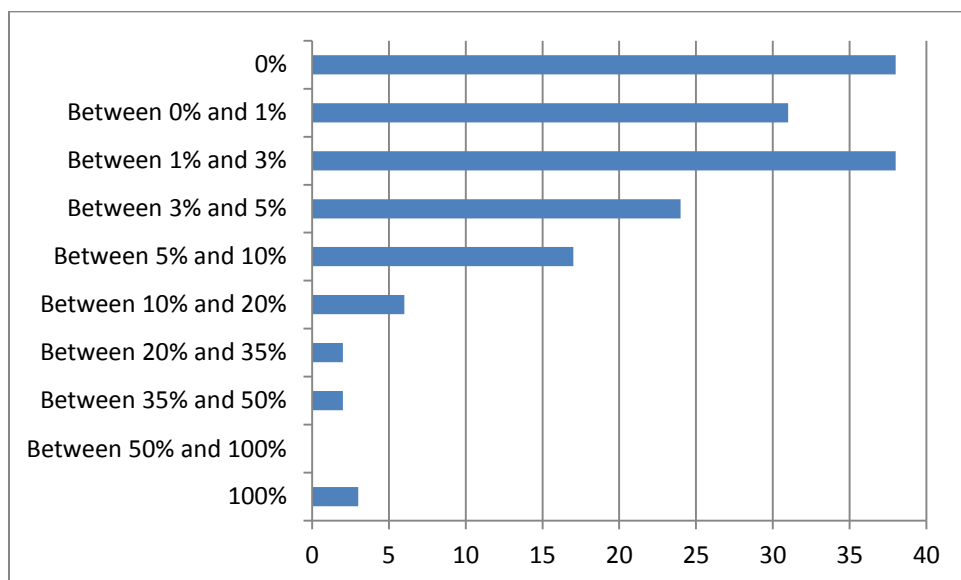
No, never, but I could do it one day if it were for a cause I really support and for which I know that the people involved are also volunteers and don't have any money to pay for any kind of service (not only translation).

For Telefono Azzurro (Italian childline charity), for deserving individual cases at the request of professional colleagues, for Lions International (rarely) and for a cultural website that interested me. Also accepted by Translators without Frontiers but no work has been requested.

... I do occasional pro bono translations for private individuals who cannot afford to pay, in my current country of residence (Chile).

Q4. What proportion of your translation work is done on a pro bono / voluntary basis?

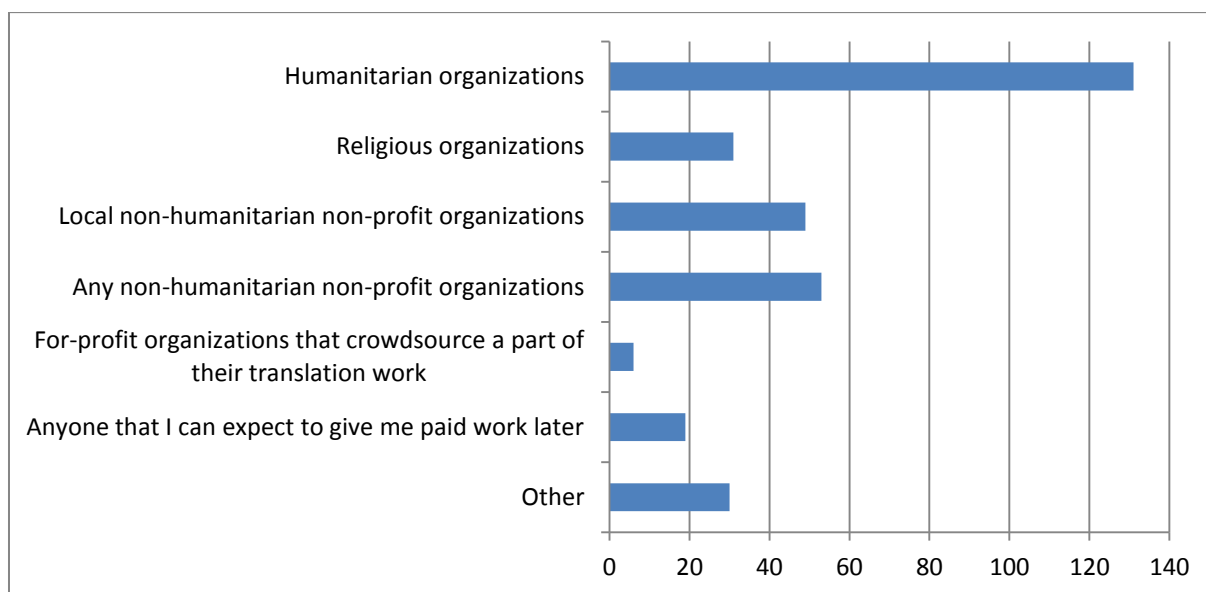
100%	3
Between 50% and 100%	0
Between 35% and 50%	2
Between 20% and 35%	2
Between 10% and 20%	6
Between 5% and 10%	17
Between 3% and 5%	24
Between 1% and 3%	38
Between 0% and 1%	31
0%	38



The weighted average is slightly over 5%; when multiplied with the total experience of the answerers (question 1), this still gives over 90 years of full-time pro bono translation!

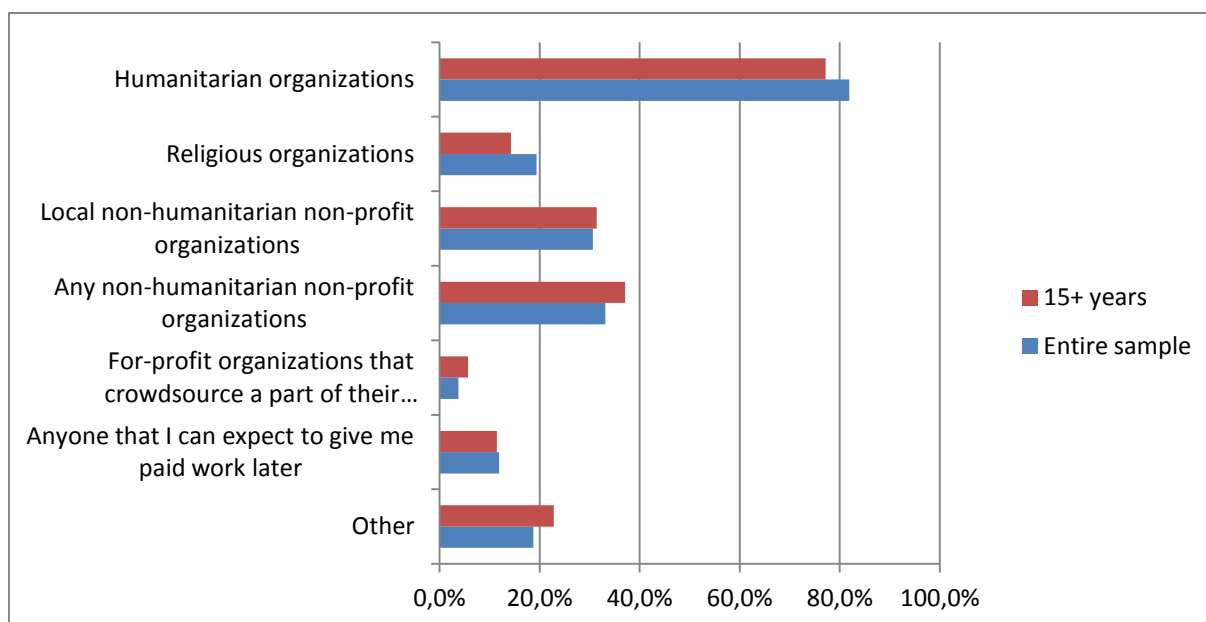
Q5. For what type of organizations would you provide translation on a pro bono / voluntary basis?

Other	30
Anyone that I can expect to give me paid work later	19
For-profit organizations that crowdsource a part of their translation work	6
Any non-humanitarian non-profit organizations	53
Local non-humanitarian non-profit organizations	49
Religious organizations	31
Humanitarian organizations	131



The survey has received some criticism for focusing on organizations. True, this survey did not investigate the provision of pro bono translation/interpreting help to individuals – a topic that is well worth exploring in depth. A great example is interpreting in one's local community, whose importance and impact is difficult to overestimate. But even there huge organizational structures are often present. For example, [17 million dollars](#) were spent on expanding the non-profit network of the [National Language Service Corps](#), which uses volunteer translators and interpreters – about 4 thousand registered members to date. (See the last comment for Q6.) Mixing volunteers and paid staff is often a question of prioritizing. Should one be tempted to make any correlation between payment and prestige of a profession? The [substantial criticism](#) LinkedIn received in 2009 for trying to crowdsource the translation of its website contents suggests so.

While it seems plausible to assume that mostly career-starters would reply in the affirmative to the option "Anyone that I can expect to give me paid work later", the survey results do not support this hypothesis: as shown by the diagram below, there is no significant difference between the entire sample and the subsample of those with at least 15 years of experience.



Comments

... In my previous life as a lawyer, I organized a team working in a very deprived neighborhood for the purpose of getting basic documents and family-related paper work for people who otherwise had no access to public social services. We worked every week for 3 years until the State took over the role.

None. I would rather see translators be paid for their work and make voluntary contributions to worthwhile causes. I have worked too closely with the "development industry" to see large sums being paid to consultants and yet translators (already not big earners) are expected to offer their services for nothing.

Only if they are small, transparent and I entirely can identify myself with their goals.

None, until recently my main client was a charity. They were exploitative and dumped all translator one Friday afternoon without warning because they deemed us to expensive.

Professional networks. I do not provide voluntary work to organizations (such as humanitarian or religious) that do have sources of income.

Political and social non-profit organizations (local and non-local), specially grassroots organizations.

- Free software projects - Non-profit organisation in which have a real interest

Small companies we support with translations and SEO in various 3rd world countries. Private persons, such as patients requiring specialized surgery in Germany who don't have the money

I'm interested in volunteering my work to non-profit organisations whose cause or mission I support. If it's a for-profit, then I have a problem seeing why I should work for free!

Not just organisations - individuals as well.

For citizen media - "Global Voices" - I wasn't sure which category this would come under.

Q6. Please list some of your own criteria for choosing what organizations you are ready to help with your pro bono work.

Some of the fascinating comments cited in the previous question already focus on this. Many answerers draw a very appropriate parallel between choosing an organization for donating work and for donating money. Transparency, how their budget is spent, what other tasks are covered on a pro bono basis, whether they employ in-house translators for non-urgent projects – these are just some of the cited criteria. Enjoy the selection of insightful comments below.

Comments

I try to make sure that these organizations are really benefitting the people that they say they are benefitting. For this reason, I stick to well-known organizations.

Their cause has to be one I support, usually it's a humanitarian one, often it's in a field that mirrors my beliefs, like women empowerment or sexual rights. I have to respect their values: I'll never volunteer for a religious non-profit organisation for example. They have to be non-profit. I work as a translator to pay my bills, I don't want my work to be financially profitable for the organisation, but not for me.

Conducting humanitarian or socially useful work. Efficiently managed organizations which do not waste money on large salaries for 'consultants'

Small transparent organization in a so-called "third world" country with few resources and really not enough means nor lobbies to pay a translator and/or make publicity abroad.

I will not do pro bono work for a cause just because it sounds "noble" or because it signed up with Translators Without Borders. Among many studies of how "humanitarian organizations" can exacerbate inhumane conditions are the books "Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda," by Peter Uvin (1998) and "The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho" by James Ferguson (1994), not to mention articles on how some aid to countries like the Sudan or Haiti worsened conditions. So, some of my criteria are: (1) I will only do it for urgent projects or causes by a couple of humanitarian organizations I trust and know well; (2) this means I need to personally know and respect at least a few individuals in the organization and/or have good proof that its activities are actually helping their target population, not hurting it; (3) so if I do not know the individuals and the organization already, I do a lot of background research. For instance, I look into relevant databases on what percentage of their funds are actually getting spent on direct aid or activities (some spend less than 10%!), what the salaries are of their directors and staff, and where most of their activities take place (in the field? in Washington or Brussels?). I also read up on their experience and demonstrable impact, their philosophy, the context of the humanitarian problem, and what efforts might be duplicated by other organizations. I certainly read the organization's own materials, but I make sure I also read third-party studies or critiques. (4) these organizations must have demonstrated respect for the translation profession by having paid translators for non-urgent projects in the past (it doesn't have to be me, just someone who is a professional translator). I am worried about growing trend toward asking translators for pro bono work that undermines the profession.

I choose organizations where most or all the people working there also do it on a pro bono basis. Organizations for which my translation work can help make visible those who are usually neglected in governmental agendas and the mass media (i.e., for as much as I care about the environment, I wouldn't do voluntary work for Greenpeace)

Charities I identify with or that I would support financially if someone shook a collection tin under my nose.

I would have to consider it to be a form of political activism in support of a cause that I believe in (e.g. translating publicity material in support of what I believe to be a certain ethnic group's struggle to achieve its right to self determination, or material needed in a court case aimed at furthering such a struggle).

NGOs with a focus on hunger and maternal/child health issues among others, only secular organizations.

- Non political - Working for deprived populations (some variant of "the poorest of the poor"). I do realize that people who are ill or lonely are also a worthy cause, but for the moment my efforts are in this direction. - Preferably certified/approved/listed by a review board (regarding % of income that goes to administration as compared to the programs themselves) - In the case of TWB, I am trusting that they screen the organizations for which they accept translations. I have been thinking of finding out more about this, but the last few jobs I did were certainly jobs I would have accepted anyway (even if not for TWB... one for breastfeeding, one for an organization in Bangladesh).

humanitarian impact, professional networking possibilities, exposure to interesting translation techniques or procedures, love for subject matter

It really depends on the reason the translation is needed, the cause of the work and whether I can justify giving that time to that cause - it is the same as donating money to a charity.

I think there is only one: I must share their goals, mission and/or vision.

I love those sites who particularly hurt imperialist feelings :)

1. Nonprofit, 2. Humanitarian causes 3. Agencies whom I would love to donate money and can give my time so that they can spend their money for more direct benefits.

Humanitarian, charity, secular, non commercial.

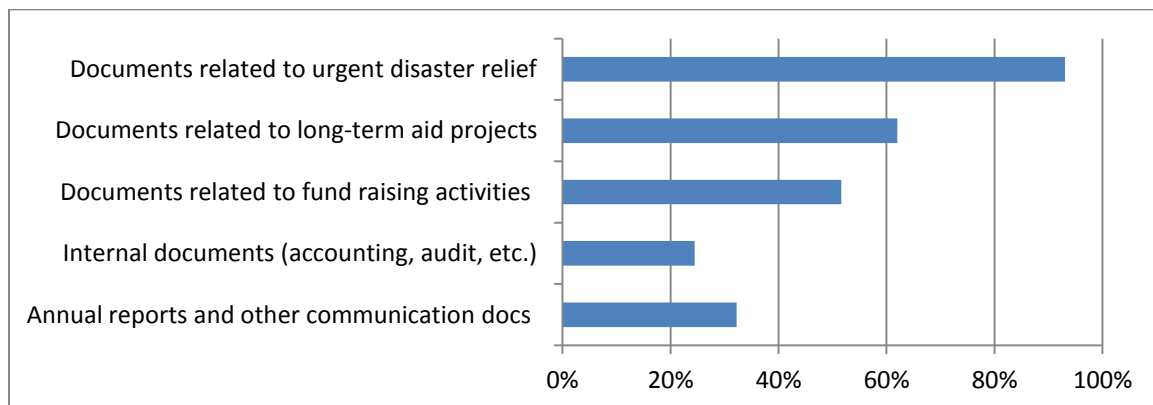
Any non-profit organization, foundation, etc. aimed at helping children or improving the quality of life of an underprivileged community.

I prefer helping bigger, better known non profit organizations working in the field of human rights and health. I always look for information about the organization: who they are, what they do, how they are organized, are they open and transparent, do they publish a budget and balance sheet. The same criteria apply when I choose an organization for donations.

Any genuine organisation doing work that I believe is helpful, and is not wasting its funds on its own infrastructure.

Q7. For what projects of humanitarian organizations do you approve the use of pro bono translators?

	Yes	No	Yes (%)
Annual reports and other communication docs	49	103	32,2%
Internal documents (accounting, audit, etc.)	37	114	24,5%
Documents related to fund raising activities	80	75	51,6%
Documents related to long-term aid projects	98	60	62,0%
Documents related to urgent disaster relief	148	11	93,1%



Urgent disaster relief is definitely the most approved type – and it is also type whose translation is most commonly requested on a pro bono basis.

The majority of the answerers expect humanitarian NGOs to have their internal documents and communication documents translated on a paid basis – employ an in-house translator, or outsource it to a professional.

Involving external translators also gives the humanitarian organization the opportunity to let their work be known by more people, who can then spread the word even further. This can easily lead to financial donations in the short or long run – as confirmed by a microfinance site using volunteer translators. Obviously, urgent disaster relief documents are more likely to generate such donations than internal audit or logistics documents (see Q8, bold comment).

Comments

The organization needs to do its work as cheaply as possible. It is free to solicit desks, phone cards, donated office space, and such, so it should be free to request pro bono translation as well. Those of us without large chunks of cash to give away can contribute our time and skills instead.

Humanitarian organisations could not function without donations. Pro bono translation is one way of helping them out in the form of donating time and expertise.

Most big non-profit organisations have (or should have) a budget for translation/interpreting in case of urgent disasters, so even though I ticked "pro bono is ok" for "documents related to urgent disasters" it really depends on the situation and the organisation. For example: Oxfam pays millions to its chief executive, so they should have a budget for translations in urgent situations.

If an organization is humanitarian and non-profit, any reduction of its expenses is helpful -- I don't see how getting free translation of disaster relief documents and paying for translation of internal documents is preferable to paying for disaster relief documents and getting internal documents translated free.

All the above-mentioned categories, except the first, are run with predetermined budgets; those budgets should include translation and the jobs should be paid ('though perhaps at a 'budget' price). The first category is also pre-budgeted by many humanitarian organizations (especially those active at international level, whether governmental or private); pro bono is 'OK' only for those who take up 'urgent causes' without prior planning/budgeting.

I do not do pro bono work for Humanitarian organization as they do have funding available.

I think people shouldn't substitute for governments' incompetencies. I prefer to dedicate my time to fighting against unfair state policies, than give them the alibi that everything is working well because we have all those volunteers working for us for free! Thanks!

Let me reiterate that not all "urgent disaster relief" projects end up helping the target populations. Translators have to do their due diligence to find out which ones are being undertaken by organizations with good track records in the past.

The point is: if an organisation pays its utility bills, has permanent employees, etc., why couldn't they pay translators?

Tricky question. I think it depends on the company's budget, mainly. At the very least, a group requesting regular free translations should offer a small stipend whenever possible. I almost always ask for a reference for my portfolio, too.

I think the annual reports and strictly business work should be done by paid professionals. Accounting and audits must be seen to fulfill all normal requirements and not as the work of amateurs. The organizations are administering gifts and funds in trust, and should show they can be held responsible.

Paid work for audit, accounting, annual reports so that the translator is accountable. If the translator messes up, there is no way for the organization for legal recourse, to get compensated for the damages - it is simply too risky to use pro-bono work.

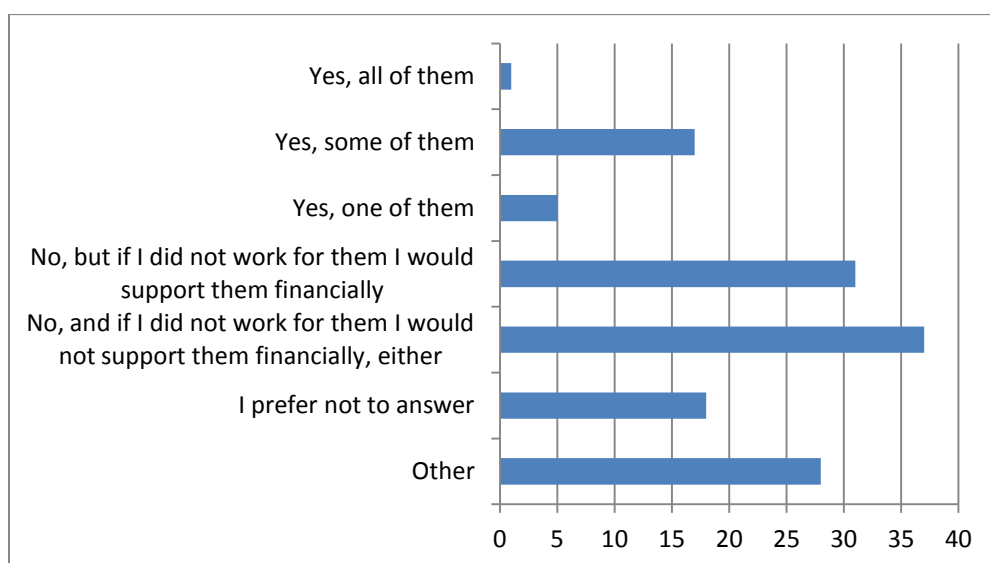
Principles: Anything related to income generation or for which other contributors are paid, should be paid work. Translators may make a contribution to a fund raiser, but should be paid for their work.

I have serious suspicions about the worth for the public good of: - the LT aid projects conceived and manage by the World Bank & Co - the fat cats running the huge "motherhood" NGOs like Unesco etc... spending lavishly on advertising and glossy annual reports and communication documents, as if money was no object. (Who does this profit to, if not the Advertising Industry of the rich countries?)

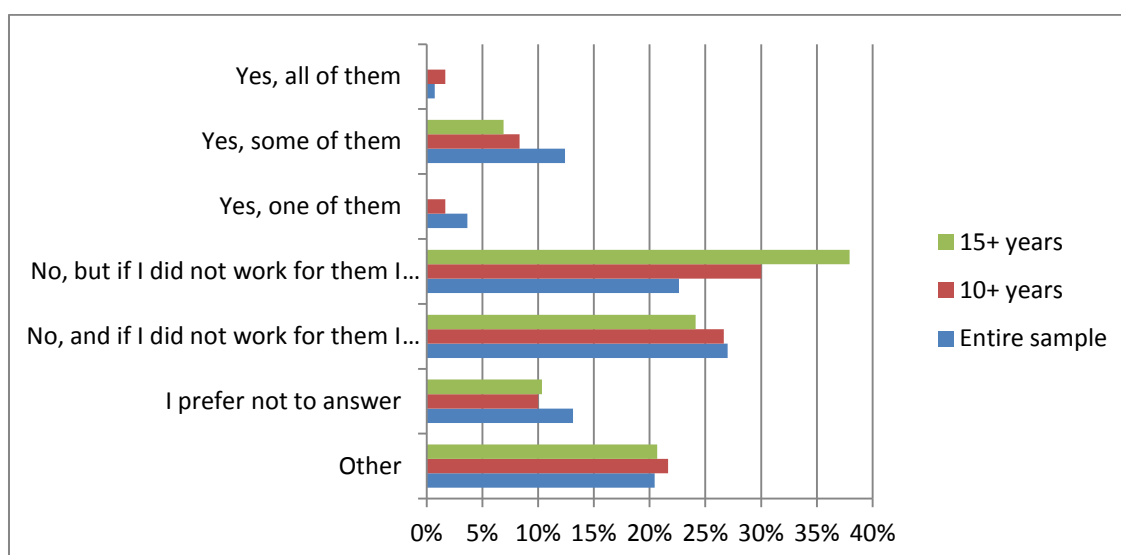
If it's a humanitarian organization that's using its funds wisely (and not wasting half of them on its own infrastructure and pointless activities as some do), then absolutely all translation is valid for pro bono work. I've done CVs for staff members applying for other non-profit jobs on the international scene.

Q8. Do you support financially the humanitarian organizations that you provide pro bono / voluntary work for?

Other	28
I prefer not to answer	18
No, and if I did not work for them I would not support them financially, either	37
No, but if I did not work for them I would support them financially	31
Yes, one of them	5
Yes, some of them	17
Yes, all of them	1



Donation of competences and donation of money was linked in some previous comments. (Q10 and Q11 will also deal with this.) There is some indication that more experienced translators tend to treat the two on the same footing more than less experienced ones. Statistically significant deviation between the entire sample and the 10+/15+ years experience subsample was observed only for the question "No, but if I did not work for them I would support them financially" (see below).



Comments

I personally prefer supporting HOs by contributing time & skills rather than by contributing money. I support financially a more local HO who doesn't need translation work.

I would support them if I had the money

Not as black and white as the options suggest. I have and would again make financial donations to organisations from time to time (e.g. disaster relief via the DEC). I do not see a link between pro bono work and whether or not I would make a financial donation.

I currently only do provide pro-bono work for one charity and do not give any financial donations, I support other charities financially.

If I did work for them, it is possible that I would support them financially.

Well, I started supporting one after doing some paid work on their fundraising documents - I felt particularly touched by what they do.

I was a translator for PLAN international, and also sponsored one of the children

I think my professional aid is better than financial

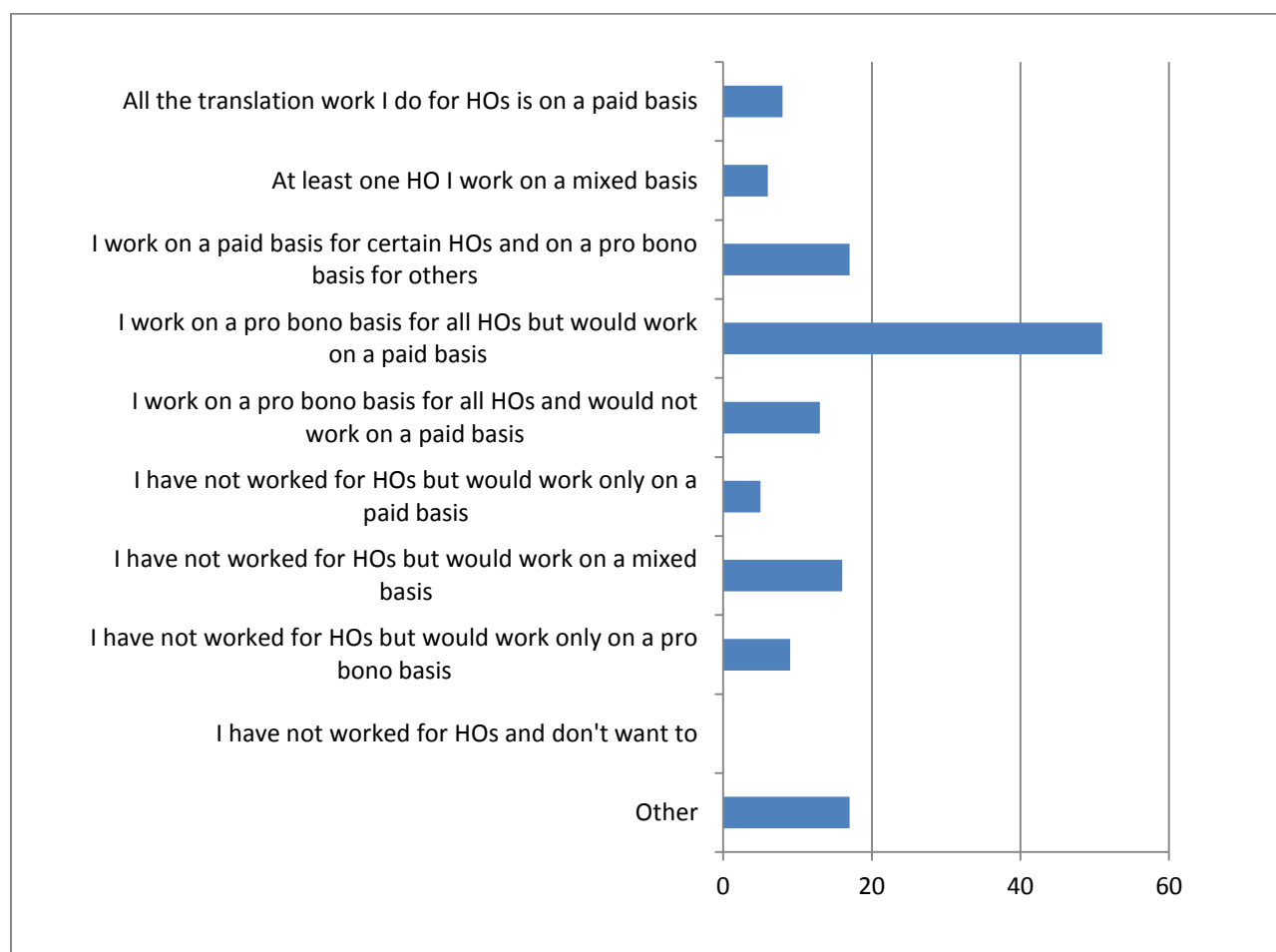
I can't imagine not working for them - I prefer to donate my skill and time than donate money.

I think my work is already a financial support, so yes, I am supporting them with my voluntary work

My time has a cost, too.

Q9. Which statement describes how you do translation work for humanitarian organizations?

Other	17
I have not worked for humanitarian organizations at all, and I don't want to	0
I have not worked for humanitarian organizations at all, but I would work only on a pro bono basis if I had the opportunity	9
I have not worked for humanitarian organizations at all, but I would work on a mixed (sometimes paid, sometimes pro bono) basis if I had the opportunity	16
I have not worked for humanitarian organizations at all, but I would work only on a paid basis	5
I work on a pro bono / voluntary basis for all humanitarian organizations now, and I would not work on a paid basis if I had the opportunity	13
I work on a pro bono / voluntary basis for all humanitarian organizations now, but I would work on a paid basis if I had the opportunity	51
I work on a paid basis for certain humanitarian organizations and on a pro bono / voluntary basis for others	17
There is at least one humanitarian organization for which I work on a mixed basis: paid for certain projects and pro bono / voluntary for other projects	6
All the translation work I do for humanitarian organizations is on a *paid* basis	8



Comments

I did volunteer work for one organization, and then they received a large grant and began to pay me.

I have not worked for humanitarian organizations but would do it pro bono if I had the chance and knew for sure I was not being 'exploited' in any way - i.e. that the result of my effort really benefited those who needed it most and was not somehow being 'wasted' or badly used. The problem is that I also have mixed feelings about humanitarian organizations/work. I recognise their importance but wished we lived in a world where they just weren't necessary. Putting dreams aside, I fear and loathe mismanagement and waste in every things in life but specially where 'good deeds' are supposed to be involved.

I have worked for HO only a couple of times in the past. In general, I am very reluctant as I think many HO do invest on other things, but try to save on translators.

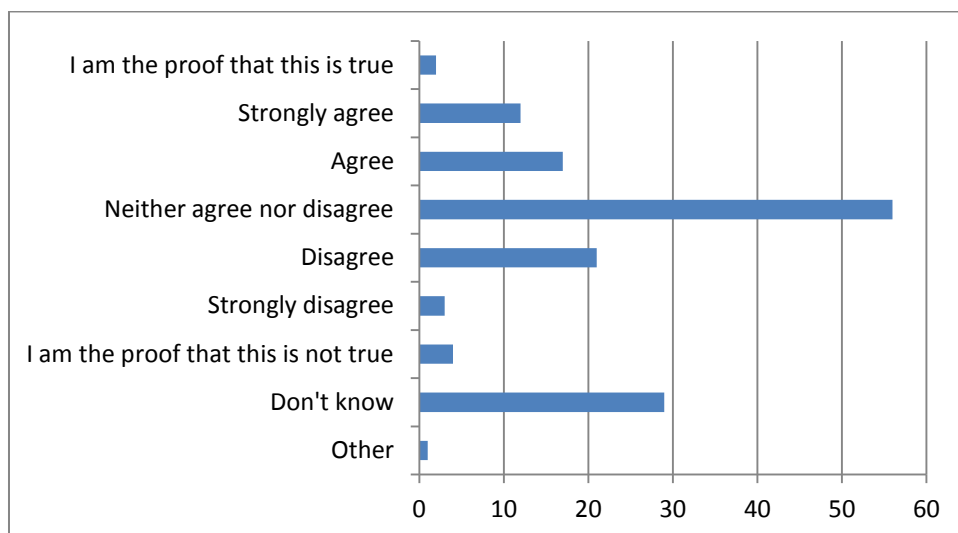
I have worked pro bono for humanitarian organizations in the past and at the moment, all translation work I do for them is on a paid basis. I would consider to work pro bono again under the conditions mentioned above.

If they offer to pay, who am I to discourage them?

Because I get something from the 'pro-bono work, which I feel is useful to my own translating career.

*Q10. What do you think about the following statement? "If a translator receives ***paid*** work from a humanitarian organization, he or she is more likely to support the organization financially later."*

Other	1
Don't know	29
I am the proof that this is not true (-3)	4
Strongly disagree (-2)	3
Disagree (-1)	21
Neither agree nor disagree (0)	56
Agree (+1)	17
Strongly agree (+2)	12
I am the proof that this is true (+3)	2



While the neutral answers "Neither agree nor disagree" and "Don't know" dominate, those who agree or strongly agree (over 20%) indicate that humanitarian organizations that pay translators are likely to get a certain extra sum back from some of the translators as donors. More about this in the next question.

The first comment draws a very good parallel: buying products of companies for which one has worked. And while the answerer does not show that behavior, many translators reportedly do (see http://www.proz.com/polls/12566?action=results&poll_id=12566&sp=polls and the related discussion).

Comments

*I don't really see the link between doing paid translation work for a HO and supporting them and/or their mission. I don't know if this can be compared, but I **regularly work for a lot of firms/companies that sell products, and it has never influenced me to buy them.***

I had never thought about this. I suppose that translating for an organization makes me more interested in its work and therefore more likely to read its newsletters and fundraising appeals. I

suppose that it is also possible that I might feel that I had already helped an organization by doing pro bono translation and therefore should give financial donations to a different charity. This question is very interesting and I shall certainly think about it.

I simply do not have any data upon which to make an informed statement to this question. Your survey will help shed light on whether this is more likely or not. I think your survey a step in the right direction, but since it is informal and you'll probably get skewed results from non-random responses, your data won't be definitive, but it will certainly be interesting.

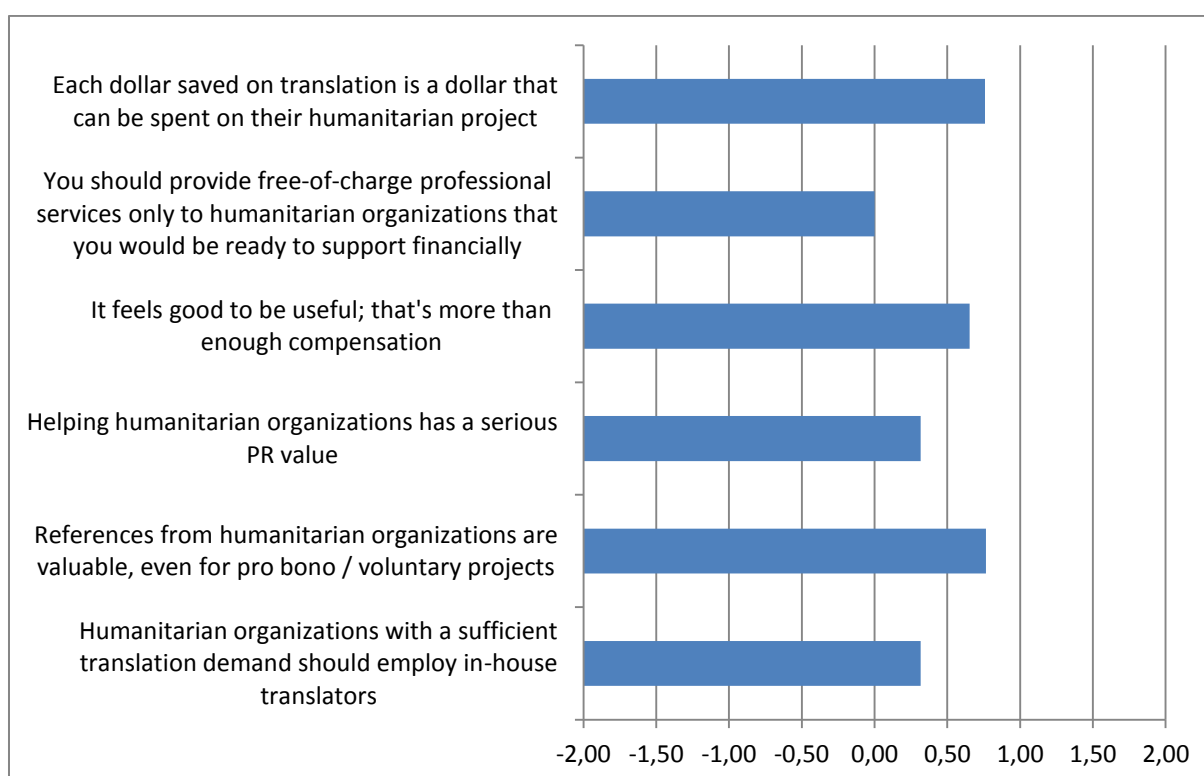
I don't really see the link... even if I had done pro-bono work for the particular organization I support, I think I would have still decided to support them - the decision to send a donation really had nothing to do with translation, I just felt a personal urge to do it.

It might be true, but not necessarily.

I think the relationship is unlikely to be reversed once you've been on the receiving end

*Q11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about providing pro bono / voluntary help to *humanitarian organizations*?*

	Weighted average	Strongly agree (2)	Agree (1)	Neither agree nor disagree (0)	Disagree (-1)	Strongly disagree (-2)
Humanitarian organizations with a sufficient translation demand should employ in-house translators	0.32	18	39	59	22	4
References from humanitarian organizations are valuable, even for pro bono / voluntary projects	0.76	29	66	33	7	5
Helping humanitarian organizations has a serious PR value	0.32	12	49	59	16	6
It feels good to be useful; that's more than enough compensation	0.65	27	66	26	16	6
You should provide free-of-charge professional services only to humanitarian organizations that you would be ready to support financially	0.00	16	36	35	42	13
Each dollar saved on translation is a dollar that can be spent on their humanitarian project	0.76	42	58	22	14	9



Apart from the statement linking willingness to provide free work to the willingness of providing financial support, all statements got a net agreement. Judging from the successful communication of philanthropic arms of large for-profits, I expected the statement about the PR value to score higher. Possibly, some answerers had in mind the PR value drawn by individuals from helping through such philanthropic arms. As noted by one answerer, *"Translators do not have a sufficiently high profile for there to be any kind of PR value. Nobody notices or cares who did the translation."*

Obviously, of key importance is the communication of such participation. See [Nicole Schnell's](#) insightful comment: *"I do quite a lot of non-profit work, and I do not expect my name to be mentioned anytime or anywhere. The mere thought, however, of investing my time, my energy and my know-how to enable another company to be able to use my work for their PR purposes is out of the question."*

The statement *"Each dollar saved on translation is a dollar that can be spent on their humanitarian project"* sounds obviously right – but let's look at it in the light of the previous results.

The statement is a [zero-sum proposition](#): either the money is spent on translation or it is spent on humanitarian aid. However, the translator may later donate to the organization – the answers of Q10 show that this is indeed the case. Even though only a minority may be of this opinion, overall there will be an extra net donation – hence the zero-sum proposal falls through.

This very rudimentary argument does not even touch upon the question whether an organization that has no translation budget can expect just as high quality translations as an organization that has a translation budget – and the impact of translation quality on the donation (e.g., through better communication campaigns). These simple aspects are obvious in the context of for-profit companies – but tend to be completely ignored in a humanitarian context.

The net agreement for "Humanitarian organizations with a sufficient translation demand should employ in-house translators" is quite consistent with the answers for Q7 on the pro bono / paid translation of different types of documents.

Comments

I think it's important to stress that not all translation work for non-profit organizations should be pro bono. I work for one major international non-profit organization and they don't work with volunteers because they want quality work and they don't want to take advantage of volunteers. When I started working for them, I offered them a substantial discount, because I support their work, but they insist on paying me my full rate. It has advantages for the translator too: people tend to spend more time on paid work than on voluntary work, so the quality of paid work tends to be better.

The organizations for which I've done pro bono translations understand that high-quality translations invariably bring in more money from grants or donations, which means more funds to spend on their humanitarian project; that they have to pay to ensure they're getting high-quality translations (urgent situations excepted); and that translation is a profession like any other in which practitioners have to support themselves. I've worked for some organizations that tried in the past to rely only or mostly on pro bono translations, and they saw the sad results and negative impact on their cause. Paid translators can be in-house or freelance as far as I'm concerned, it depends on the situation.

"Humanitarian organizations with a sufficient translation demand should employ in-house translators" - or pay a freelancer the "proper" rate for the job.

Translators do not have a sufficiently high profile for there to be any kind of PR value. Nobody notices or cares who did the translation.

As for employing in-house translators, I certainly believe that it's useful to use the same translator or a small, tight team of translators to maximize the quality and consistency of an organization's translations. If such translators are willing to provide the service at no charge, all the better.

If I received paid work from such organisations at rates nearing the ones of western translators, I would definitely donate 20% of the revenues coming therefrom.

... I cannot ensure that the money they save in translations will be spent on their projects. I am actually quite skeptical about it. And yes, it feels good to be useful and sometimes, it is enough, but there are sometimes that it isn't. And if an humanitarian organization produces a huge amount of translation demand, then they should think about invest some money on this part and be sure about the quality and coherence of their content. If they need everything to be translated, then their image in the world must look serious, and having paid translators might ensure this.

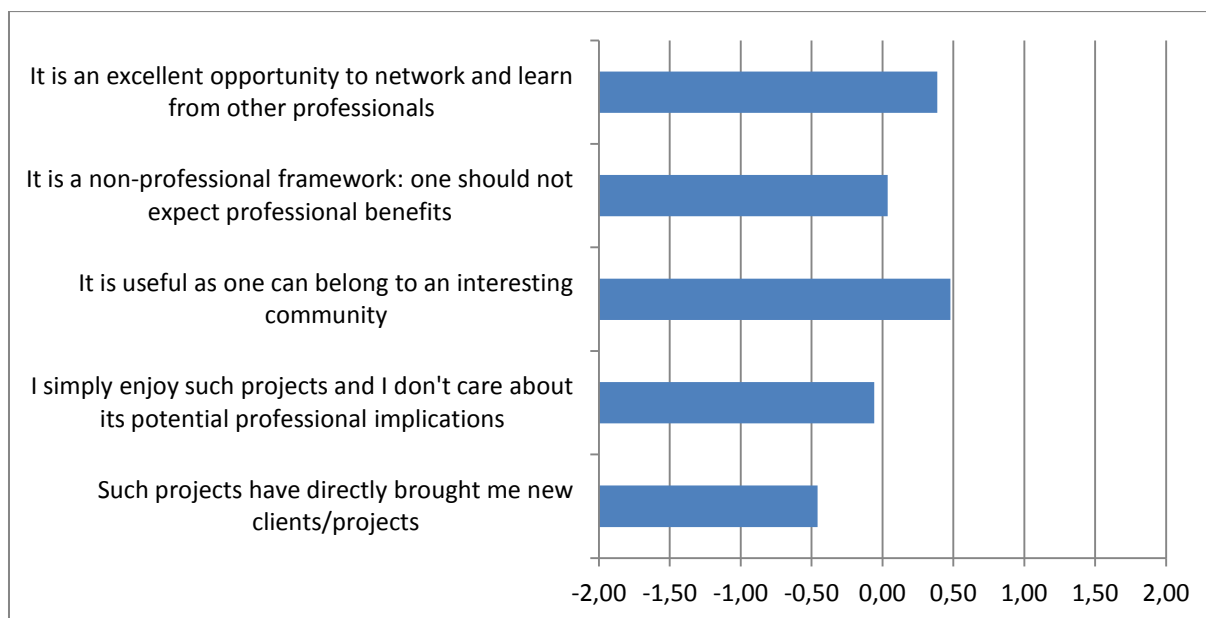
"Helping humanitarian organizations has a serious PR value" If one help such organisations, he or she should not announce it publically.

One should not offer pro bono work to humanitarian organizations in expectation of a compensation of any kind, even PR. But it may be used for reference purposes

It is hard for me to speak for all organizations in general. PR for example. It fills up your CV, but some clients might think the translator is a "merciful soul" so they tend to use this "weak spot" during negotiations pretending they are poor and in desperate need of help. They tend to play on good will of the translator. I rarely state that I do voluntary work. I don't have an opinion on in house translators for Humanitarian organizations. It depends on the subject and nature of their work. Specialized organizations should have in-house translators with deep knowledge of the issue.

*Q12. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about providing translations on a pro bono / voluntary basis in crowdsourced / community projects for *other (non-humanitarian) non-profit organizations*?*

	Weighted average	Strongly agree (2)	Agree (1)	Neither agree nor disagree (0)	Disagree (-1)	Strongly disagree (-2)
Such projects have directly brought me new clients/projects	-0.46	0	7	81	30	20
I simply enjoy such projects and I don't care about its potential professional implications	-0.06	6	38	53	28	15
It is useful as one can belong to an interesting community	0.48	11	66	43	14	4
It is a non-professional framework: one should not expect professional benefits	0.04	13	36	42	39	9
It is an excellent opportunity to network and learn from other professionals	0.39	16	48	53	20	3



The answers show that such collaborations can offer interesting networking and learning possibilities – but they rarely bring client contacts directly.

Comments

[The shortest way to a bad translation is crowdsourcing.](#)

I don't think translation should be free, unless it is for a humanitarian organization.

It can be an opportunity to learn from other professionals if they are involved. I am not sure about the networking and also I don't expect any professional benefits.

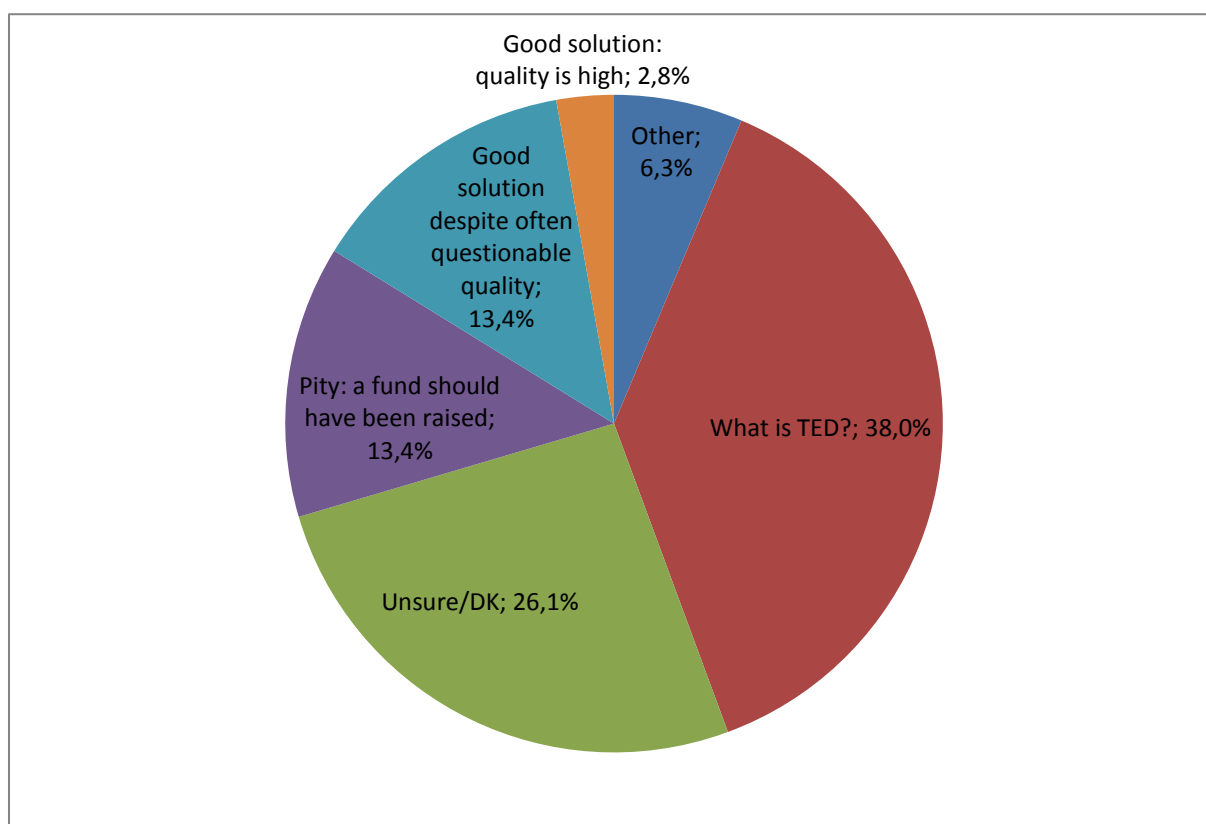
In my experience (perhaps only in my country and/or Facebook) crowdsourcing is performed by people without any translation experience or training whatsoever. They don't translate for a living and they have average to below average knowledge of their source and target language.

I have never participated in crowdsourcing and I would never do it.

I have turned down crowdsourced/community projects such as the ones you describe. The notion of crowdsourcing is not something that appeals to me.

Q13. What's your opinion on the crowdsourcing the subtitling of TED videos (www.ted.org)?

Other	9
What is TED?	54
Unsure/Don't know	37
A pity: raising funds for professional subtitling of a limited selection of the videos would have been the right approach	19
Good solution: while the quality of subtitles is often questionable, it makes knowledge widely available	19
Good solution: high-quality subtitles are now available in lots of languages, which helps spread knowledge	4



[TED](#) is a global set of conferences owned by a non-profit company, with the aim of disseminating "ideas worth spreading". A wide variety of topics is covered by very high-profile lecturers for a wide target audience. As of 2012, over 16,000 talks have been given in more than 130 countries.

To spread knowledge beyond the language barriers, talks are transcribed and translated into a number of languages as part of the TED Open-Translation Project, which aims to "[reach] out to the 4.5 billion people on the planet who don't speak English". While the speakers are hand-picked from the best of the best, subtitle translation is open to anybody. According to [José Henrique Lamensdorf's criticism](#), TED subtitles are often of disappointingly poor quality. This is confirmed by the survey results: among those who have heard of TED, less than 5% stated that high-quality subtitles were now available in many languages. Of the rest, 19 answerers found it was a good

solution despite the often questionable quality – while 19 others would have preferred a fundraising solution to unpaid crowdsourced work.

In light of the very high profile of the speakers, adequate funding or crowdfunding of the subtitle translations would have been quite easy – and would have given appropriate translations for these ideas well worth spreading.

Comments

Given its huge audience, TED has enormous potential for raising funds to pay for professional subtitling of **all** its videos. "Nonprofit" doesn't mean "destitute." Individual translators of TED videos should be given credit for their work (i.e., named), in addition to being paid. In fact, translating TED videos could be an excellent avenue for educating a wide public about the value of high-quality translation and increasing worldwide respect for the translation profession.

The quality of the subtitling is very poor due to the method/software provided to create the subtitles. It undermines the profession as anyone can (have the possibility to) translate the videos and claim they are subtitlers or have subtitling experience. The quality of the translation is therefore very questionable.

I translated few TED videos. Bad experience as a translator. My translation got proofread by a person with limited knowledge of English and Romanian, non-professional, amateur. She just changed everything and made the translation a non-sense, plus the message became so much different than the source. I had to submit support requests, multiple emails, just because I didn't want my name associated with that translation. I stopped doing it. The quality if the translations is questionable, because basically anyone can translate/proofread for TED.

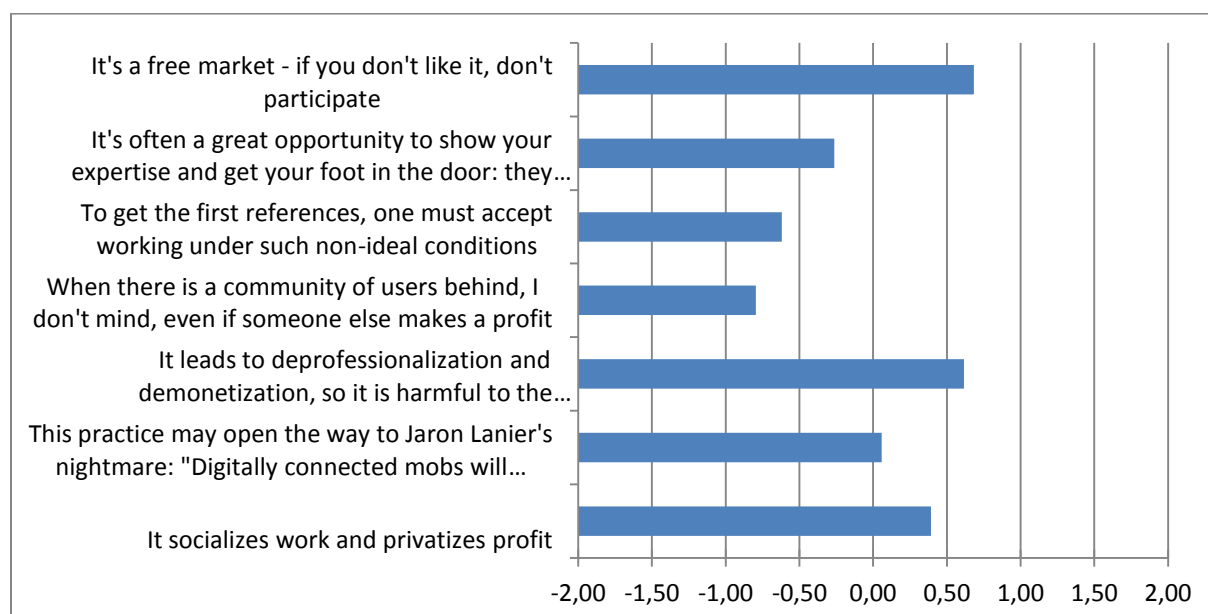
I know what it is now, having followed the link, but I don't know about quality. They say every one is checked by a professional before being made available. Even if the quality is only marginal, it's a very good idea, IMO, as it's extremely educative. If the quality is dire then it's a waste of everybody's time. Raising funds was probably a non-starter. Restricting input to those who are supposed to be professional bilingual linguists would be a good idea - your CV could be used for that. But perhaps then there wouldn't be enough support.

I didn't know they were doing this, but I enjoy the TED content so agree that it should be spread to other languages. It would be better if it could be done with professional results, however!

I can't really decide...if TED should be translated on a voluntary basis, then we could translate slashdot.org or any other useful source of knowledge, films, talks, anything. I am realizing that TED is already a filtered source of very informative and "worth sharing" knowledge, but I hardly think, we need to support it on a voluntary basis. If there would be - am not sure, but never saw - talks in different languages, coming from different cultures, yes, but it seems to me to spread the American point of view worldwide, which is absolutely not bad, but should be paid (some ideas are giving for free a machine translated version and who wants to see the fully and professionally translated version, can order it with hitting a button)

*Q14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about providing translations on a pro bono / voluntary basis in crowdsourced/ community projects by *for-profit organizations*?*

	Weighted average	Strongly agree (2)	Agree (1)	Neither agree nor disagree (0)	Disagree (-1)	Strongly disagree (-2)
It socializes work and privatizes profit	0.39	13	37	78	4	3
This practice may open the way to Jaron Lanier's nightmare: "Digitally connected mobs will perform more and more services on a collective volunteer basis, from medicine to solving crimes, until all jobs are done that way."	0.06	11	34	53	28	10
It leads to deprofessionalization and demonetization, so it is harmful to the translation profession	0.62	36	40	40	17	5
When there is a community of users behind, I don't mind, even if someone else makes a profit	-0.80	3	8	42	45	39
To get the first references, one must accept working under such non-ideal conditions	-0.62	4	20	35	46	34
It's often a great opportunity to show your expertise and get your foot in the door: they may then choose you for the next paid project	-0.26	7	29	42	44	18
It's a free market – if you don't like it, don't participate	0.68	37	55	23	14	10



As shown by the massive negative score of the 4th statement, most translators draw a strong line between non-profits and for-profits: pro bono projects may be acceptable for the former but not the latter, as it would lead to deprofessionalization and demonetization, doing harm to the profession. Those interested in finding well-formulated arguments against this practice can, for starters, consult Jaron Lanier's [You are not a gadget](#), the [blog of the late Miguel Llorens](#) or this [excellent article](#) in the Translorial, the journal of the North Carolina Translators Association.

One of the answerers added the comment, "I find this question unbecoming in the context of voluntary work". But pro bono work, which the majority of answerers consider acceptable in a humanitarian context, is something lots of for-profit companies are after, and humanitarian projects can provide very useful insights. [In her presentation](#) at the TAUS (Translation Automation User Society) European Summit, Lori Thicke (the founder of Translators without Borders and the CEO and co-owner of Lexcelera) makes a very interesting comment about motivations. Speaking about community projects for non-profits as well as for-profits, she mentions:

But all the people who translate on forums, they love their language, they love their people, and they are helping their people. So, it isn't necessarily money that is going to be the motivator. So, a community manager needs a new skill they haven't had before. They need to know how to incentivize people. And it could be money, it could be a present, but not necessarily. It's actually a bit of an art. For example, in our study that the Common Sense Advisory did we asked, what motivates people to translate, and we said, 'Would you volunteer?' 75 percent said yes, we said, 'Would you volunteer if we gave you an iPad?' 67 percent said yes.

The clash of arguments for and against such opportunities of "getting your foot in the door" is particularly vigorous in this [LinkedIn thread](#).

It should be pointed out that in certain cases the involvement of the community in translation does not primarily serve to save money on translation – or even to produce a translation. President Obama's State of the Union address was translated by a group of volunteers. Cost savings are obviously not an issue for such short and extremely high-impact documents – and there is no doubt professionals were also involved in a later stage to polish the community translation. Increasing the loyalty of those involved and having them influence their network of acquaintances is clearly much more important.

When Adobe, Microsoft et al. involve volunteer translators in their customer support, product videos etc., or when SDL encourages users to help others, they not only save costs but also increase brand loyalty in the helpers' group. This is certainly a non-negligible by-product.

Comments

I have ticked "strongly agree" for the first option in reference to the second part of the statement: "if you don't like it, don't participate". We all have a responsibility to say no to unacceptable conditions.

Well, I hesitated between "agree" and "disagree" for the "to get the first references..." question. I could see why beginning translators might be tempted.

My opinion: if you are going to accept pro bono work, do it for non-profit organizations. They will appreciate your effort. For for-profit organizations it will only send out a message that translation is something you don't pay for. They won't dream of crowdsourcing their legal or financial work...

<http://www.business2community.com/online-marketing/where-translation-is-concerned-crowdsourcing-is-clownsourcing-0273367>

I don't like it and I won't do it. Hurts me and the profession.

It socializes work and privatizes profit - I hope TWB doesn't do that. If I have even the slightest doubt they do, I would immediately stop supporting them.

It's just a BAD IDEA, for everyone.

I really disagree with the idea that you have to work for free for for-profit in order to get paid work later (I have even stopped taking free translation tests for agencies looking for new translators).

I think there is sufficient benefit to be gained by a translator for doing this kind of work to make it an option in some cases. The translator must go into it with his/her eyes open, knowing that they are in some way being "used" to make more profit for others, and weigh up the benefit to themselves (potential for future paid projects, experience) against this.

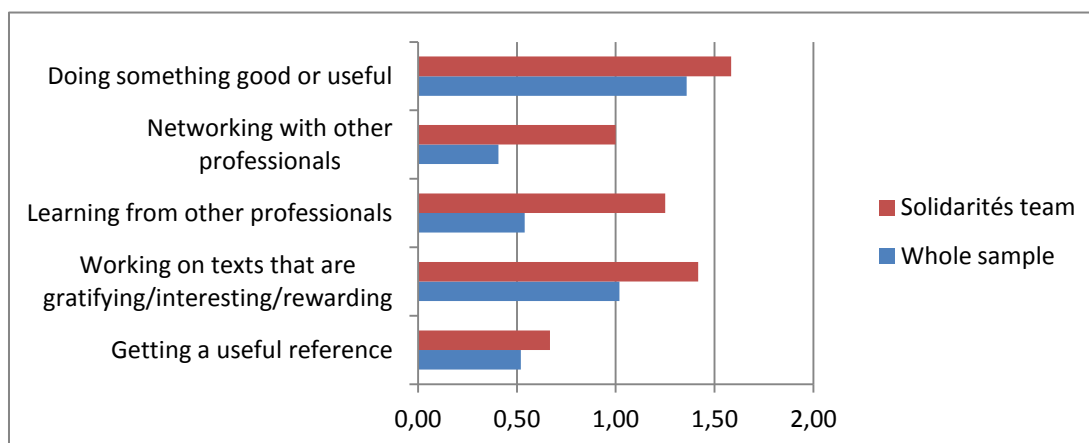
It sounds suspiciously like exploitation to me.

I find this question unbecoming in the context of voluntary work.

Q15. How strong are each of the following motivations for this kind of work (i.e., pro bono / voluntary work in the humanitarian sector)?

	Weighted average	Strongly agree (2)	Agree (1)	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree (-1)	Strongly disagree (-2)
Getting a useful reference	0.52	11	47	29	14	1
Working on texts that are gratifying/interesting/rewarding	1.02	27	58	12	5	1
Learning from other professionals	0.54	12	48	27	13	2
Networking with other professionals	0.41	6	45	36	12	2
Doing something good or useful	1.36	42	61	2	1	0

All five aspects can be considered as motivations. I expected "Doing something good" and "Working on gratifying texts" to score high, but I was surprised by the relatively low score for "Learning" and "Networking". Since later questions showed that in many frameworks translators work practically always alone, an interesting result can be drawn from comparing the entire sample to a subsample – answers from members of the Solidarités team. This collaborative framework lays a strong emphasis on providing networking opportunities for the translators who choose to offer their help. In this subsample, "Learning" and "Networking" got much higher scores than in the entire sample, suggesting that those who have not had the opportunity to work in real collaboration tend to underestimate its benefits.



Solidarités team	Weighted average	Strongly agree (2)	Agree (1)	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree (-1)	Strongly disagree (-2)
Getting a useful reference	0.67	3	3	5	1	0
Working on texts that are gratifying/interesting/rewarding	1.42	5	7	0	0	0
Learning from other professionals	1.25	4	7	1	0	0
Networking with other professionals	1.00	3	7	1	1	0
Doing something good or useful	1.58	7	5	0	0	0

Comments

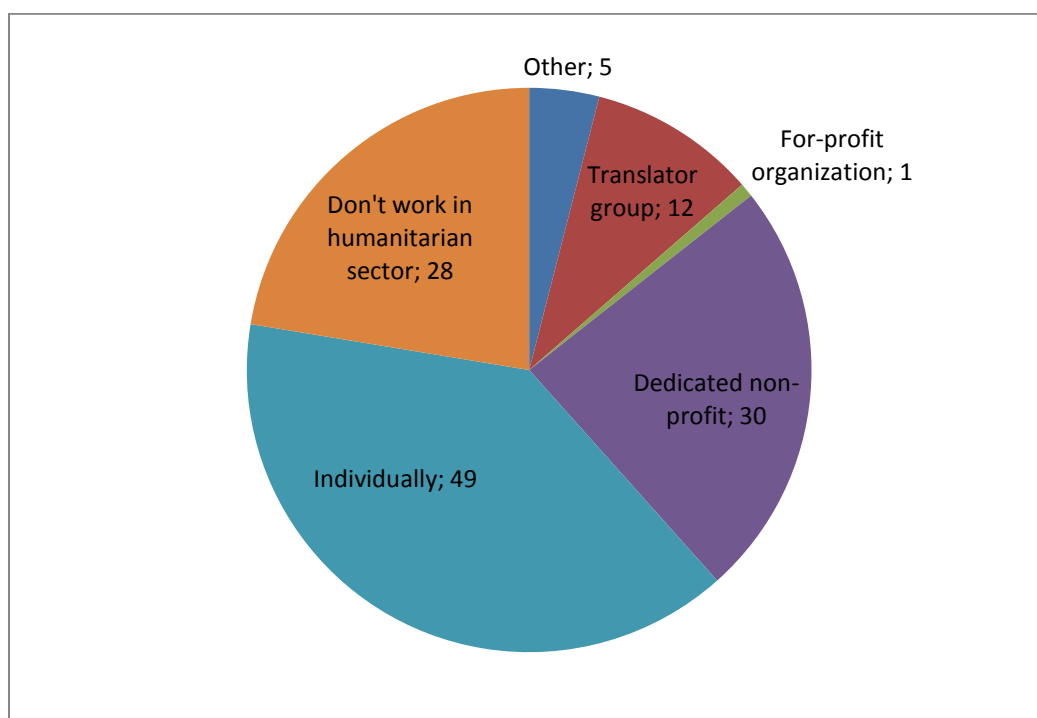
When I do voluntary work, I don't interact with other professionals.

I have never done pro bono work with other professionals involved in the project so I can't say it would be a good opportunity for networking or learning from others.

Ensuring that professional standards of translation are maintained, especially in texts which are likely to be made public, e.g. published on a website. It is our responsibility to show the world the difference between professional and unprofessional translation and why it is so important.

Q16. In what kind of framework do you provide most of your pro bono translations? If you are comfortable with naming the framework, please do so.

Other	5
Through a group of translators that acts as a team/workgroup, with members who manage the projects and are in contact with the humanitarian organization	12
Through a for-profit organization (e.g., translation agency) that acts an intermediary between the humanitarian organization(s) and translators	1
Through a dedicated non-profit organization that acts as an intermediary between the humanitarian organization(s) and translators	30
Individually, in direct contact with the humanitarian organization	49
N/A – I do not work in the humanitarian sector	28



Translators without Borders and the Solidarités team were mentioned by name.

Comments

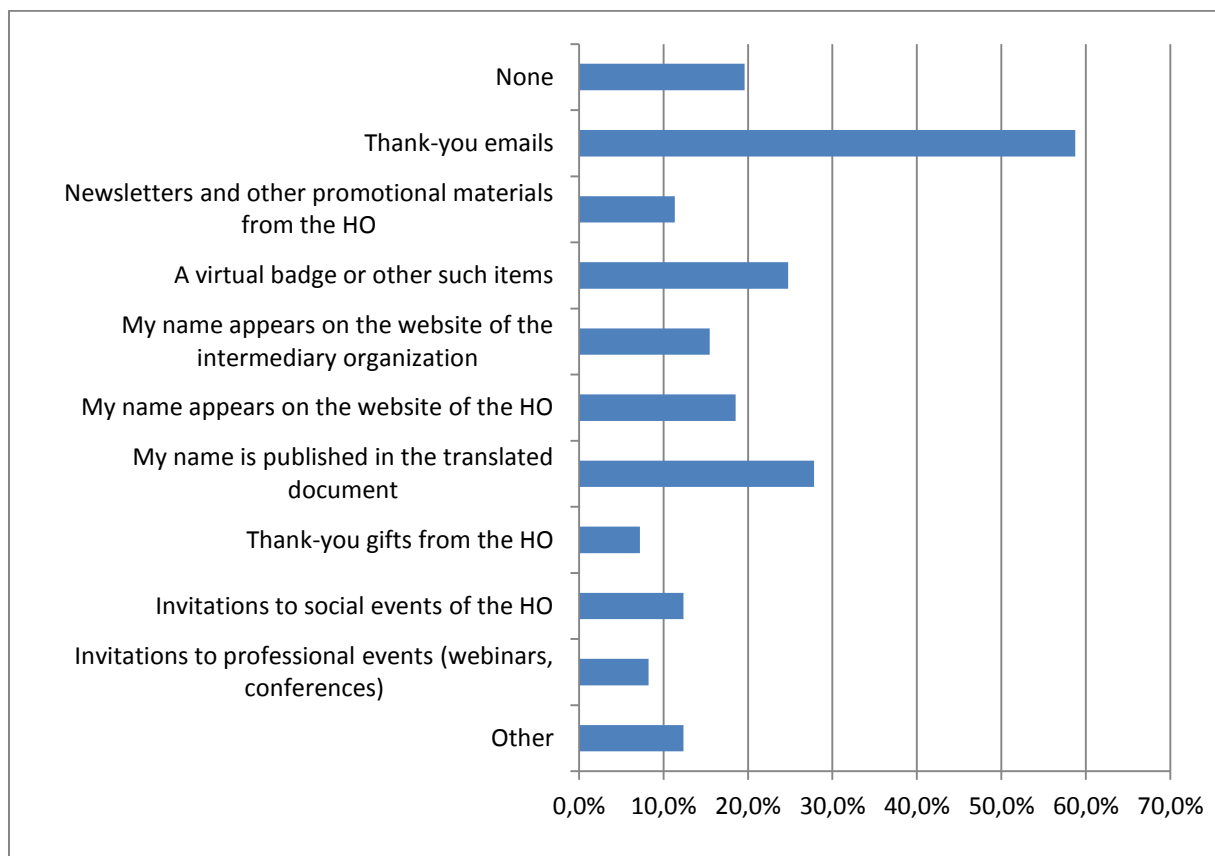
I wouldn't volunteer through an agency, I prefer to work directly with the organisation and see how my work helps. And I would never volunteer for organisations like Translators without Borders, have a look at their board members and you will know what I mean. As I said before I only volunteer for non profit organisations that I "identify" with, usually local and smallish organisations. **I usually visit the organisation before I start volunteering and I like visiting them whenever possible and see directly how my work is helping.**

Translators without Borders is my main framework to get pro bono projects. I registered with it because my former framework, the Solidarités team on ProZ.com, didn't have many projects in my language combination at that time. I also regularly collaborate directly with one small non-profit organisation.

Translations which I provide for the humanitarian sector are not pro bono any longer. There are normally paid.

Q17. What kind of reward do you get for your pro bono work in this framework? [Select all that apply]

Other	12.4%	12
Invitations to professional events (webinars, conferences)	8.2%	8
Invitations to social events of the HO	12.4%	12
Thank-you gifts from the HO	7.2%	7
My name is published in the translated document	27.8%	27
My name appears on the website of the HO	18.6%	18
My name appears on the website of the intermediary organization	15.5%	15
A virtual badge or other such items	24.7%	24
Newsletters and other promotional materials from the HO	11.3%	11
Thank-you emails	58.8%	57
None	19.6%	19
Total number of answerers	100%	97



Comments

People from the organisations with whom I am most in contact are willing to act as professional references.

If I work pro-bono I do not expect an award. If they do so, it is up to them and it varies. Usually I request to make public the collaboration provided.

Wonderful references for my work, for use as I wish.

My name was printed in a publication on one occasion.

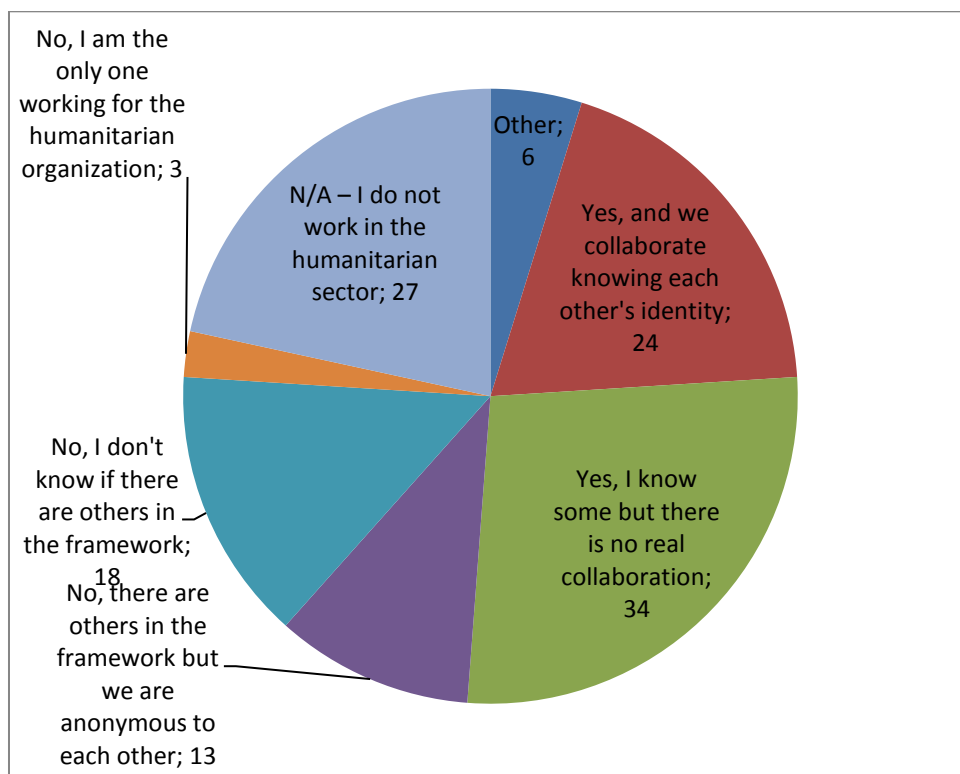
The number of words I have translated for Translators without Borders is listed automatically in my ProZ profile and on their site. I can then list that number in my resume with confidence as clients can verify it.

I think they should send at least a thank you e-mail, which they don't, or publish my name on documents, which they don't either.

I have written a blog about my experience with voluntary translations. Both Translators Without Borders and ProZ have helped to diffuse my article through social media, and this was their own action as I hadn't asked them to do that. They have shown much gratitude.

Q18. Do you know other professional translators who help in the same framework?

Other	6
Yes, and we collaborate knowing each other's identity	24
Yes, I know some but there is no real collaboration	34
No, there are others in the framework but we are anonymous to each other	13
No, I don't know if there are others in the framework	18
No, I am the only one working for the humanitarian organization	3
N/A – I do not work in the humanitarian sector	27



In workflows managed by intermediary agencies, the translator and the reviser are often meticulously kept anonymous to one another. This may make conflict management easier for the project manager in some cases, however, it makes collaboration cumbersome or limited.

Such conflicts often root in the precarious situation of the translator and the reviser and the financial conflict of interest that this brings about. The financial component being absent in a pro bono setup, the arguments to keep translator and reviser apart (or anonymous) become rather weak.

Our first-hand experience in the Solidarités team shows that such collaboration offers excellent networking and learning possibilities.

Comments

This is a very useful way of getting to know other translators and seeing how they work. I wouldn't be without it!

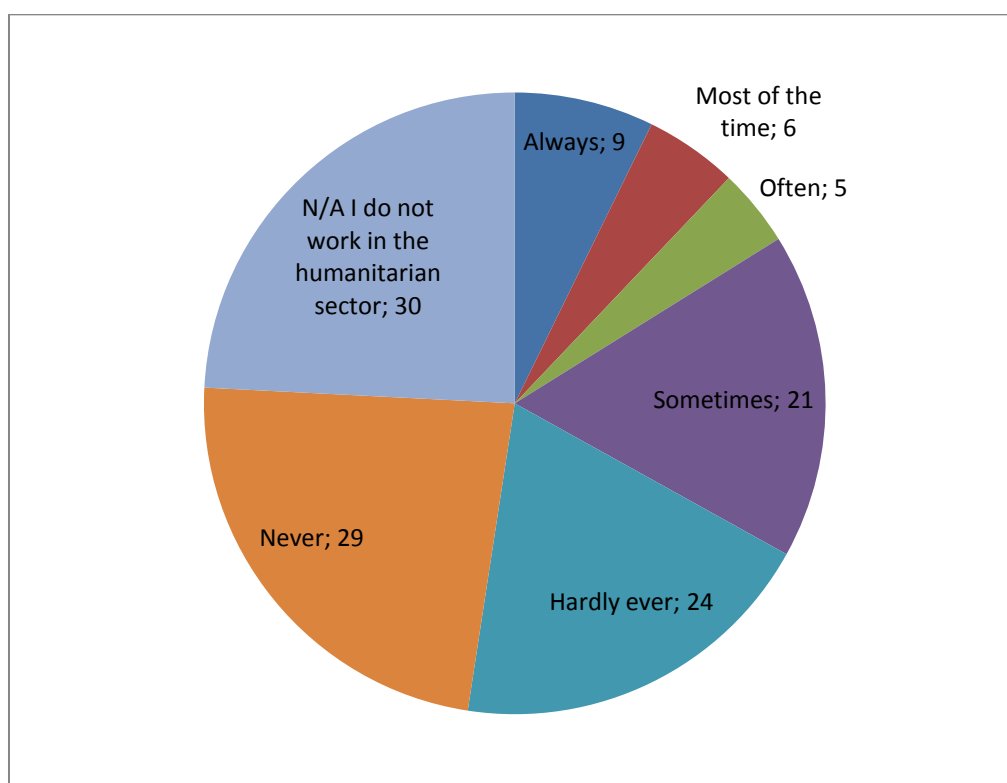
What do you mean by know? This is cyber-acquaintance. One knows who is a good translator and who is not; who is reliable and who is not.

There is a community discussion panel and translators/editors pass files between themselves and any feedback they may have.

I can see the list of translator in my language pair, but I do not know them personally.

Q19. How often do you get professional feedback (assessment, suggested corrections, etc.) on your work in this framework?

Always	9
Most of the time	6
Often	5
Sometimes	21
Hardly ever	24
Never	29
N/A – I do not work in the humanitarian sector	30



While the value of a reference is often emphasized (or even overemphasized) to career starters taking on pro bono work, the benefit of getting valuable feedback from experienced colleagues tends to be underemphasized. Such feedback with open back-and-forth communication, and without feeling exposed to the critical observation of a project manager, can be extremely useful for seasoned translators as well – even if they can produce acceptable translations when working alone.

Pro bono team projects may create excellent possibilities for such close collaboration. According to the survey results, few translators have the opportunity to benefit.

Comments

The organisation I mainly work for always provides proofreaders (other members of the team). This is very useful and helpful.

Translators working for Translators without Borders have been selected: they are self-editing translators so that there is virtually no need for another step in the translation-producing process.

All work for Solidarités is edited/ proofread and the feedback sent directly to the translator, who then produces the final version.

I always work with the author of the text I translated to ensure the accuracy and quality. I always appreciate and learn from suggestions. But more often than not, I'm the one suggesting improvements in the text, since I'm also an excellent content editor and writer. Frankly, the feedback I usually get is "you're the only translator whose work we trust."

The translations are not proofread, as far as I know.

So far have not received any technical feedback from the organization, however there has been some talk among translators to determine the right terms and tone of voice for consistency when splitting up large documents.

Editors provide feedback on the translations I produce - or I provide feedback should I be doing the editing stage

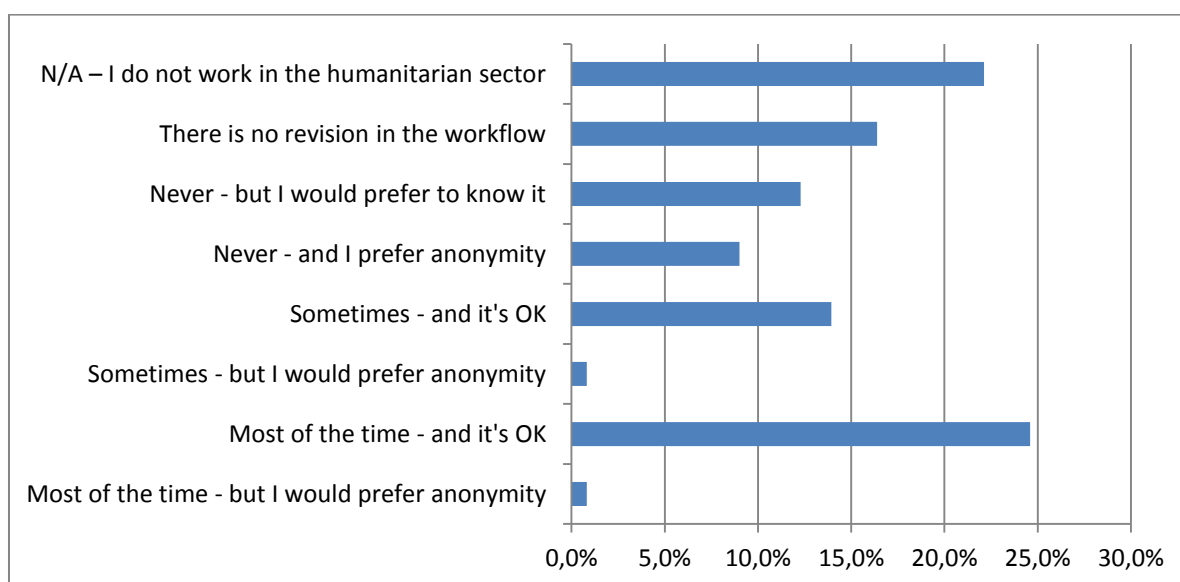
Always in the case of Proz Solidarites: one of the motivations for doing it.

Never got any.

Actually, I consider it positive feedback when TWB offered me additional work and responsibilities re the Wikipedia medical project. Unfortunately, I preferred to reject their offer because I do not work and I do not have any interest whatsoever in medical field.

Q20. Do you know / Would you want to know the identity of the reviser/proof-reader (if you are a translator) or the translator (if you are a reviser/proof-reader) with whom you share a project in this framework?

Most of the time – but I would prefer anonymity	1	0.8%
Most of the time - and it's OK	30	24.6%
Sometimes - but I would prefer anonymity	1	0.8%
Sometimes - and it's OK	17	13.9%
Never - and I prefer anonymity	11	9.0%
Never - but I would prefer to know it	15	12.3%
There is no revision in the workflow	20	16.4%
N/A – I do not work in the humanitarian sector	27	22.1%



In the "Most of the time" and "Sometimes" categories there is a very strong preference against anonymity. The lack of this preference in the "Never" categories suggest that those who never tried working this way underestimate its benefits.

Pro bono frameworks often serve to experiment with different working methods. In this [TAUS conference video](#), TwB's founder, Lori Thicke, explains how the community experience with Translators without Borders can teach new things to for-profit LSPs: *"I think in this model, the LSPs, just like Translators without Borders, like our staff, then we become something different, we become recruiters, we become community managers, we become incentivizers. These skills are completely new."*

Experimenting is encouraged not only for community managers but translators and revisers, too. By giving a try to non-anonymous revision, they may well discover unexpected benefits.

Nonetheless the great majority prefers or would prefer to know the reviser, so if the pro bono framework is not set up that way, it needs to be changed in order to be useful for the helpers as well.

Comments

It's a team effort. So long as translators and proofreaders keep their comments on jobs polite then I see no reason for anonymity. If we know who each other are, we build up a better network of contacts who have expertise in different areas, which can only be a good thing in my opinion.

Yes, I know the proofreader well, he is a colleague and provides feedback on my work, which is great.

In some cases, there is no revision in the workflow. In another case (a small publishing house), I know who the reviser is and I interact with him/her frequently.

Well, none of your options fit my situation. I always work directly with the author on revisions and proofing, since I'm better than any third-party revisers they could find and since the authors are usually conversant enough in the target language (English) to provide feedback or answer my questions. In my experience, if the translation work is pro bono, the situation typically rules out also finding a pro bono reviser -- they asked me to do the work because they knew they wouldn't need a reviser anyway. If for some reason there were some reviser or proofer involved, I would answer your question: "Always, and I would insist on knowing who it is" so I could work directly with him or her.

I would prefer to know as often as possible.

This reminds me [...] that on one occasion I did a translation for Justice Without Borders for Migrants. The work was fascinating, there was very useful feedback from the proofreader. We realized at that point that I translate into a Spanish that is more suited to Latin America than to Europe.

It's such a relatively small network for the organizations done most of my work for, so most people involved in these processes know each other.

There is no official revision in the official workflow - we checked each other's translations because we wanted to.

With one of these humanitarian organization we work in a team. Each translator must send your translation to another translator who acts as a proofreader, then he (or she) review the job. This translator/proofreader resend the translation to the first translator with a copy to the project manager of the humanitarian organization. But the project manager can't publish the translation before the first translator accept all changes made by the second translator.

I would prefer to know it also for paid projects, but I hardly ever do.

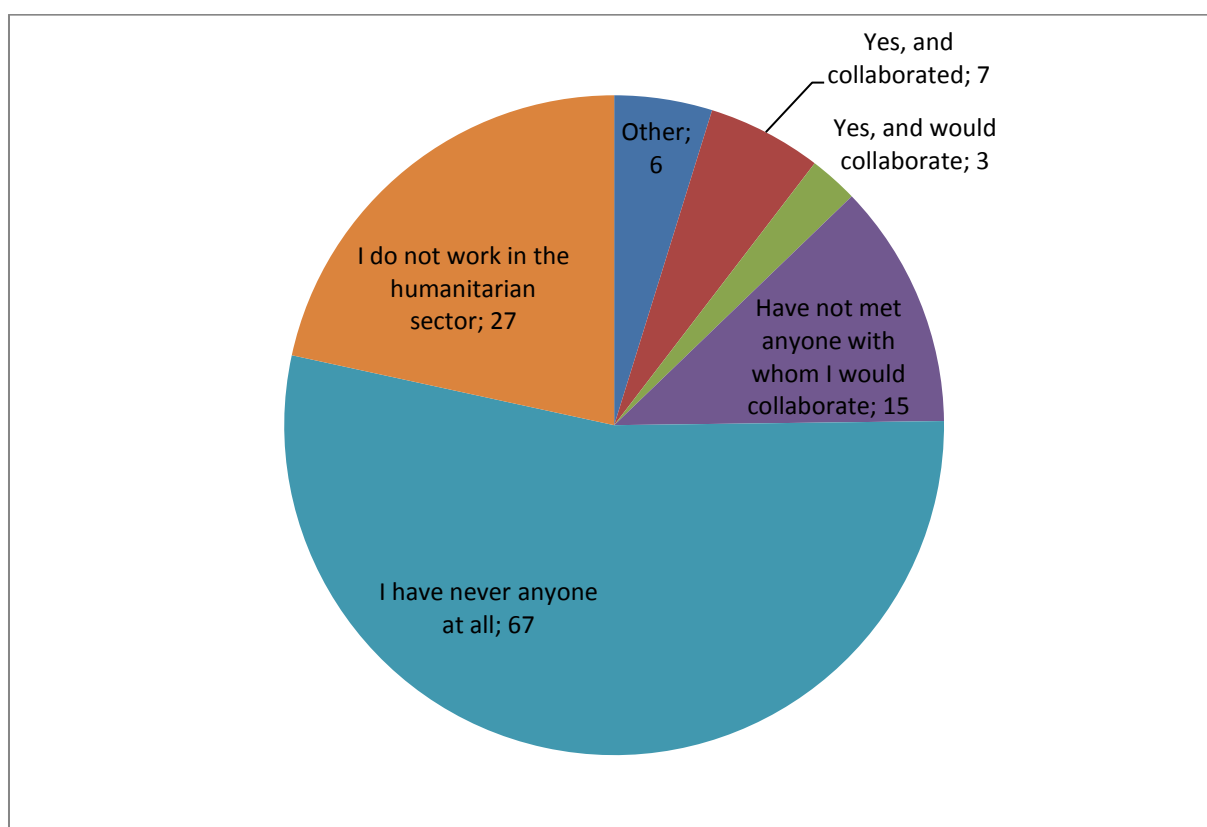
I don't mind whether I know it or not, as long as the job is done professionally.

If we are doing something good, I presume we mean no harm to each other as well. Collaboration and communication is better and more frequent, if you know the person.

More collaboration would be useful

Q21. Has it happened that you met a colleague through a common pro bono / voluntary assignment and then wanted to work with him/her on a paid assignment?

Other	6
Yes, we have successfully collaborated on paid projects later	7
Yes, I have met such a colleague, and when a good opportunity arises, I will invite him/her to collaborate on a paid assignment	3
I have not met anyone in that framework with whom I really wanted to collaborate on a paid assignment later	15
I have never met a colleague that way	67
N/A – I do not work in the humanitarian sector	27



One very real benefit of working in a pro bono framework could be sharing paid work with a trusted colleague later. The overwhelming majority of the answers have not enjoyed this benefit yet. The first step towards increasing their number would be multiplying and encouraging non-anonymous collaboration possibilities in pro bono frameworks.

Such project can work as sample or test translations (see the above mentioned [LinkedIn thread](#)). There is also an enormous free testing and recruitment potential for LSPs in such setups. Take, for example the [WikiProject Medicine](#): LSPs working in the medical field have a huge interest in making this project attractive to high-quality medical translators. See also [this announcement](#) about looking for volunteers to improve the machine translation workflow for medical humanitarian content, with the participation of TwB, Symantec, Acrolinx, etc.

Comments

After I took my translation course and set up as a translator, I had very little work. One of my friends, a translator, had some pro bono work that she could not handle because of her high work load. She asked if I would like to take on her pro bono project. I did a few for her (and I strongly supported the work of this group) and when she checked them, she liked my work. Seeing that I was indeed competent, she then started to recommend me to her clients when she had too much work, and I soon had all the work I needed.

This has not happened to me but I can imagine it. It is quite unusual for freelancers to have the opportunity of seeing each other's work. I would certainly consider contacting some of the Solidarites translators if the need arose.

There are several translators I trust who work in the opposite direction in my language pair. I would recommend them but doubt I would have the opportunity to work with them as we translate in opposite directions.

I met a couple of people through Stop the Traffik and I wouldn't mind working with them. Only time.

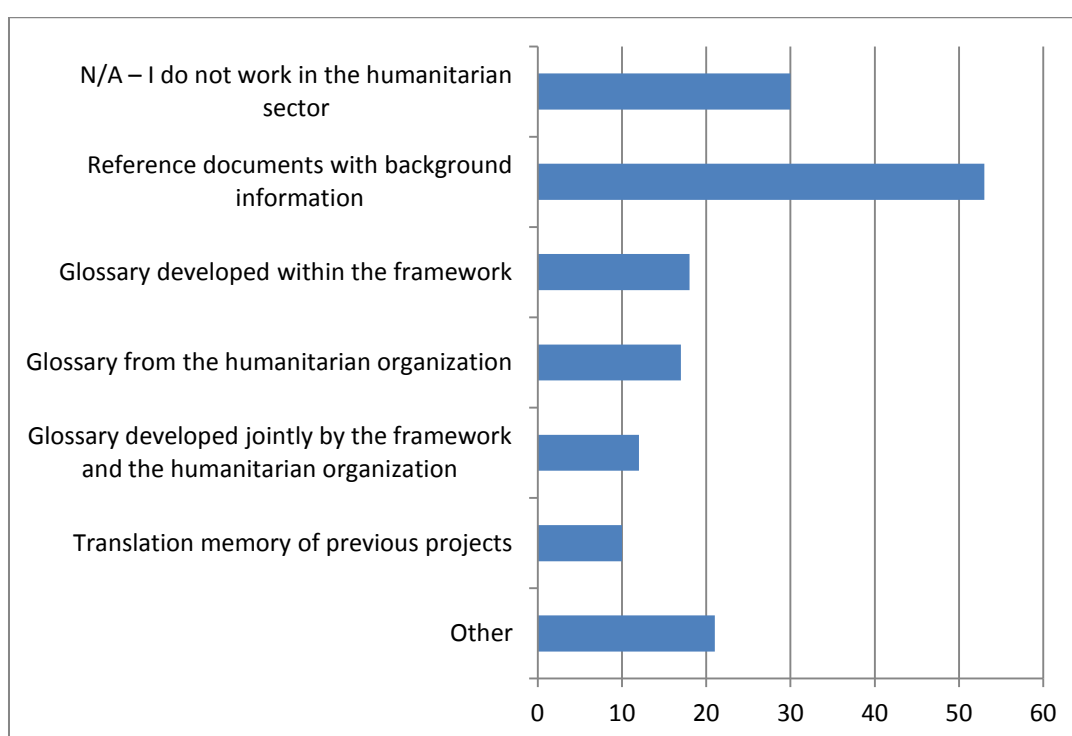
If anything, I realized I would not want to work with them on a paid project - quality was problematic.

I met a colleague whom I already knew and it has strengthened our relationship.

One of them contacted me because she was ill and could not assume her work, so I could help her.

Q22. What resources and reference materials do you get in this framework?

Other	21
Translation memory of previous projects	10
Glossary developed jointly by the framework and the humanitarian organization	12
Glossary from the humanitarian organization	17
Glossary developed within the framework	18



As the 'None' option was missing, no percentage values can be established. The fact that "None" as indicated in the Comments filed by over a dozen respondents shows that this would have been a very important answer option.

It is nevertheless clear that reference materials are the most common, followed by glossaries. TMs are fairly rare.

Comments

For TWB we made a TM ourselves

I attend their classes and trainings.

In most cases I refer to my own past projects for the same organizations. I rarely receive reference material with the requests.

Most of the time it's just a website or you have to Google for reference material yourself, unfortunately.

Never received reference materials.

Not sure if the excel glossary and TMs for Solidarités are developed by the team only or with input from Solidarités as well.

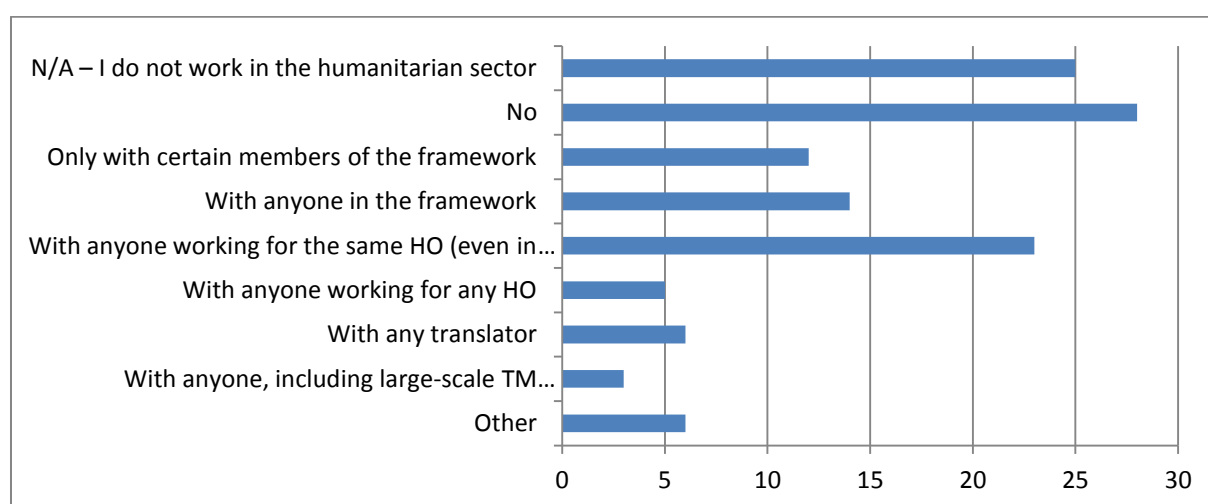
Nothing - I have made up a TM myself from previous projects, but they are not that organised (this is Une Option de Plus, I haven't done enough translations yet for TWB to see how they work).

Nothing - it's a problem

Where's the 'none' option? I suppose what I get is a network of commitment translators always willing to help if a concern or question comes up.

Q23. Would you feel comfortable sharing your glossary and TM developed within this framework?

Other	6
With anyone, including large-scale TM repositories that may use it to improve machine translation algorithms	3
With any translator	6
With anyone working for any HO	5
With anyone working for the same HO (even in different frameworks)	23
With anyone in the framework	14
Only with certain members of the framework	12
No	28
N/A – I do not work in the humanitarian sector	25



The overwhelming majority would not be comfortable with sharing their TM beyond the humanitarian organization, and a significant proportion of the answerers would not share it with anyone. Many translators have very unique approaches to their personal glossaries: some entries may be completely useless for others but still very useful for themselves. In such cases making the glossary available to others would not be useful. There may be many other perfectly valid reasons for keeping one's working methods for oneself. For others, sharing their memories and glossaries is the natural choice.

Comments

[No.] Because there is probably a lot of rubbish in it - if you mean my own personal glossary!

I don't see a problem sharing experience in the form of TMs with other translators. If translators benefit from it, then the translation industry as a whole improves slightly, which can only be a good thing for all of us. The idea that "good" translators should jealously protect their work so that "bad" translators stay "bad" seems ludicrous to me.

I am NEVER comfortable sharing my TMs with anyone except personal friends/colleagues or direct clients. I rarely compile or use glossaries of my own, and treat each new job as more or less "tabula rasa".

I don't currently use a TM but would be happy to share glossaries should this be required- though the shared glossary from the organisation should suffice as reference material.

We don't use CAT tools and that is one of the reasons I enjoy so much working for the organisation. In fact I don't think the organisation knows about CAT Tools. Frankly, if they start asking for CAT tools or machine translation I would stop volunteering for them, and so would the proofreader.

It's a publicly available online glossary anyway, so of course I share it with others

I have one huge TM and do not make a distinction between my paid and unpaid work. So this question isn't really applicable to me.

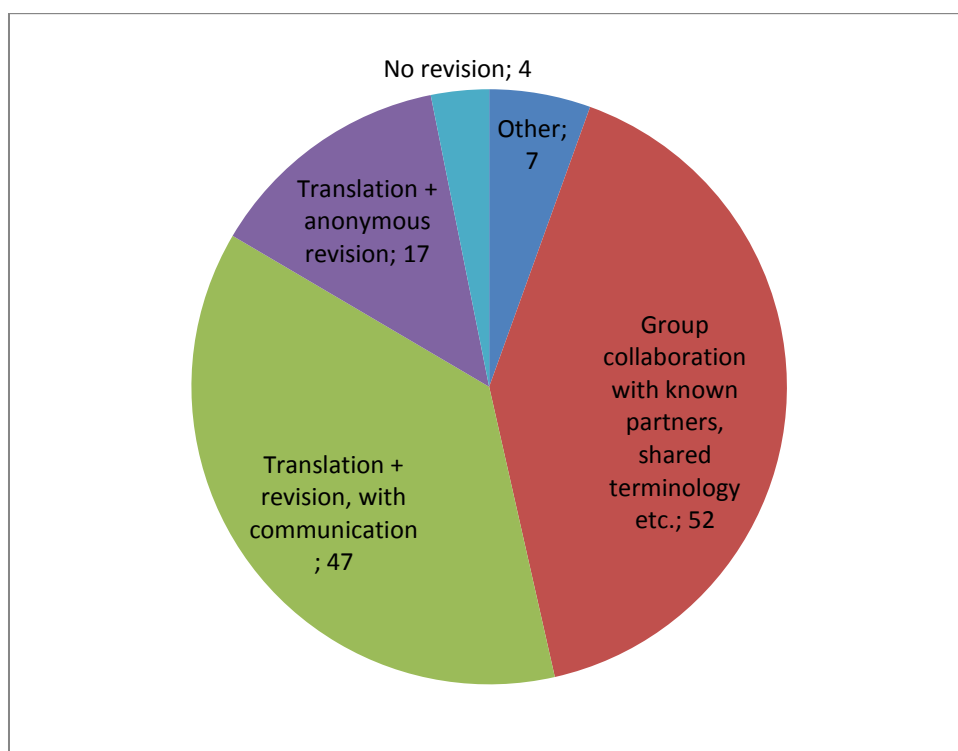
Only if I get TMs and glossaries of fellow translators.

I'm not too picky about TMs. If people have the translation (source + target), they can create a TM anyway, so why would I cling to mine?

I really need to think more deeply about that - I'm not really sure of my feelings.

Q24. In your opinion, what workflow is best adapted to pro bono work in the humanitarian field?

Other	7
Group collaboration in which translations are revised, the translators and the revisers know each other, and there is shared terminology work	52
Translation with revision, where the translator and the reviser know each other and can communicate	47
Translation with anonymous revision	17
Translation without revision	4



Comments

Shared process / project management work is good too!

The group format used by the Solidarités ProZ team works well in my (limited) experience. It makes sense to allocate specific tasks to specific individuals, but the fact that it is a team effort means there are always others available to help out if needed.

[Group collaboration] This obviously makes the most sense from the point of view of consistency even if one does not always agree with the result.

[Translation with anonymous revision] That's my favourite workflow in general, preferably with access to the revised version of my work to try and learn from any mistakes or just improve the quality of my work.

None, I'm opposed to pro bono translation work.

Just pay someone to do a decent job of the translation.

In my current situation, translation without revision is the only valid option.

Depends on the project

Translation with revision, where the translator and the reviser know each other and can communicate, should be ideal, but in the real world I inhabit it ends up too time-consuming and frustrating. So I prefer the anonymous option.

[Translation with revision, where the translator and the reviser know each other and can communicate] I believe the above to be the best workflow for any kind of translation.

No different from paid translation.

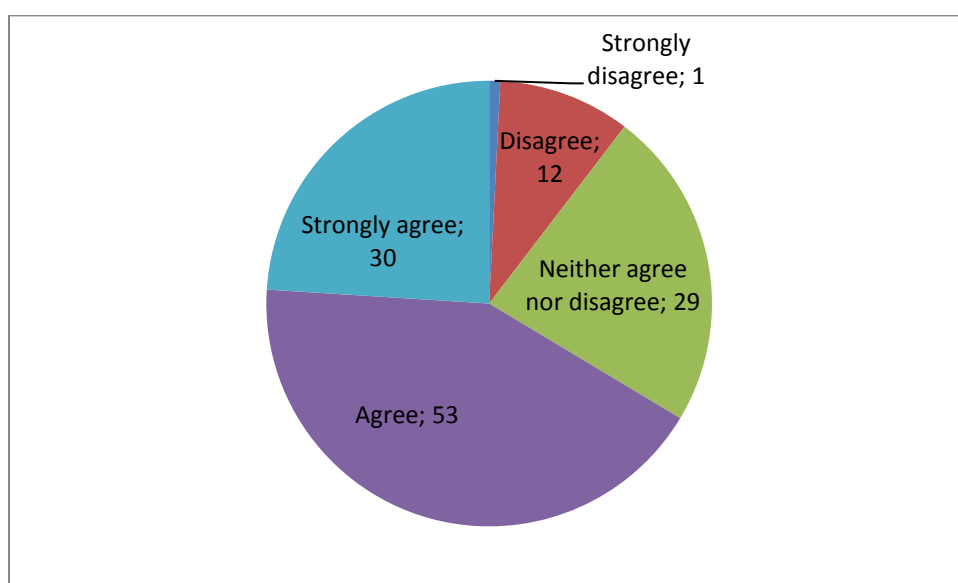
Any except the [Group collaboration] option

I usually prefer communication, since you can discuss your choices, ask questions, maybe discover you have made a wrong assumption somewhere. "Four eyes see more than two" as we say.

[Translation with anonymous revision] It's probably the best (in terms of quality vs effort) for the organisation and that's what counts really.

Q25. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "A framework for pro bono / voluntary translations for humanitarian organizations should lay equal emphasis on helping the helpers – i.e., provide maximum benefits to the translators involved."

Strongly disagree (-2)	1
Disagree (-1)	12
Neither agree nor disagree (0)	29
Agree (1)	53
Strongly agree (2)	30
Weighted average	0.79



As the comments below show, "maximum benefits" was not entirely clear to everyone. So, you will find quite a few ideas below what benefits should be in focus.

Many comments consider a collaboration in which only translators (doing translation) and the humanitarian organization (organizing the work) are involved. This is certainly not always the case: project management can be handled by the group of translators or by a third party as well (see Q16). At the very least, in the latter case, time spent with organizing the collaborative framework is not time (money) taken away from the humanitarian projects.

Comments

Personally, I advocate named credit to translators in as many situations as feasible, both nonprofit and for-profit. I believe expanding this practice would not only benefit translators by having their individual names disseminated and by educating the public about the contribution of translators to the production of documents, but I've also seen proof that it leads to higher-quality translations, because the translators impose higher standards on themselves when their work is not anonymous. This helps the cause for which the organization is working as well.

Either translators should accept that they are working mainly for the benefit of others, or they should work for an agreed fee. The organizations should concentrate on their core activity/activities, and not worry too much about 'sidelines' like helping their volunteers, unless the volunteers are also targeted in the core activities.

It depends what is meant by "maximum benefits". Certainly the translators involved should be treated as professionals and their contribution acknowledged. This does not necessarily mean that they should be able to use their pro bono work to their commercial advantage.

[Agree] Simply put: otherwise the model is not sustainable.

A translator can be "paid" in a variety of ways and, if it is within the organization's reach to offer something that can benefit the translator, it should and must do so.

Why are we doing pro bono work for a humanitarian organisation? In my case, it is because I think the organisation does valuable work which deserves to be supported. I know that there are also professional benefits to me in terms of experience and the opportunity to learn from other translators/proofreaders, but for me this is not the primary reason for taking part.

Solidarités does this. Also, a local group I work for has meetings for the interpreters where we share tips, glossaries, and approaches.

Strongly agree if by that we mean helping the volunteer translators improving their work in order to better serve the organizations.

Not sure if I understand this question. I don't do it for "benefits", I do it because I believe in the "cause" that the organisation supports.

I agree, as far as the translators are helped in a way that is not bothering or time-consuming for the NGO. For example, publishing their names, sending them a recommendation letter, etc.

Would be nice if a translator also gets some acknowledgment regarding his/her pro-bono services

I think that if you decide to help a humanitarian organisation, it is not specially to get something in exchange; in my opinion, this is not the aim

If translators are doing something pro bono, it means they are offering their time. It is fair and responsible from organization to help them do good work in as short time as possible.

We're there to aid them, not the other way round. I don't want a paid staff member spending time (i.e. funds) helping me.

As I am starting as a professional translator, this is nice to have some feedback on my work.

Q26. What framework would you recommend humanitarian organizations for their translation needs? (This can be a mix of paid and pro bono solutions. Please go into details where you feel appropriate.)

It would be nice to have a mix of paid and pro bono solutions. However, the problem is to determine what is going to be pro bono and what is going to be paid. Is it the level of expertise in a specific field (like accountancy, law, etc.) that will determine this fine line?

I think a mix of paid and pro bono solutions would maximize the organization's ability to get what it needs

Where translation is an ongoing and essential requirement, organizations need to include it in the budgets and management plans.

Translators without Borders works pretty well. I would also suggest creating a team on ProZ like the Solidarités team.

The organisation for which I currently do pro-bono work has an excellent mix which has been developed over the years: Offer of files to translate to a community done through a forum where all translators are known to each other - new members always welcome. It is not a closed shop. Translators/proofreaders paired off at the beginning of the project through mutual discussion with the project manager. Proofreaders /translators communicate freely with translator sending final version to project manager. Strict instruction not to change style- only spelling/translation/grammatical errors. Recognition of translator's names on translated docs where appropriate. It is very much a team activity.

As I said I prefer to work directly with the organisation and I choose local and small organisations that I "identify" with. But I understand some organisations might prefer to use a translation agency. I wouldn't volunteer through an agency. Also, big organisations (like the Red Cross, Oxfam, Mind, UN, etc.) should have a budget for translations - if they can pay big salaries to their CEOs they should pay for translations too.

A mix of paid and pro bono solutions seems wise to me. For some documents (e.g. contracts, financial parts of annual reports etc) it is important that the humanitarian organisation has a more formal relationship with the translator, which gives them the right to insist on changes/corrections if there are errors which might materially affect the understanding of the translated document. In extreme cases they would have the right to seek redress from the translator for any loss suffered as a result of translation errors.

A group collaboration with translators and editors working together and creating a TM and a glossary for the organization. It would speed the output. Some type of "rewards" for the linguists that are working pro bono for the organization, not necessary financial but gratifying enough to "compensate" the translators.

I'm only familiar with Translators Without Borders, and can wholeheartedly recommend them.

Pay your translators!

If the organization has a budget for the project, that budget should cover properly-paid translation.

Whenever possible, pay your translators. Give by-lines. Develop a relationship with translators you trust to do good work, on time. Keep it professional, and compensate (money is nice, but so are references etc). Treat pro bono work like you do paid work.

80% paid work and 20% — pro bono.

Provide paid translation work for the most important projects to select translators that have proven their quality of service commitment over time and let the rest be pro bono.

I wholly support pro bono solutions, provided they are supplied by a competent translator (and not just by anyone who knows the languages and is willing to work for free). I'm also not opposed to paid solutions, provided the organization has a budget for this purpose (and is transparent with its donors in regard to expenses used for administrative tasks, etc.). I also support the concept of professional translators offering special rates for such work.

It is definitely best to find a translator who shares the same ideals. People within the organisation may be capable with some guidance from sympathetic professionals. Organisations cannot expect to exploit professionals, but many mutually beneficial arrangements can be made through clear and open communication.

A mix. The accounting and auditing, reports and work to fulfill legal requirements etc. should be clearly done by professionals and paid for. Publicity and wider communications can be translated on a pro-bono basis.

I am a computational linguist and as such I can't forget the importance of automation. I would use a machine translation first, provided by professionals - MOSES is a free of charge machine translation system, which is working very good with large amount of texts, so could be just the perfect solution for big humanitarian organizations - after which I would use post-editing. This solution is bettering itself all the time, since the more you translated and post-edited, the better can be a machine translation, so the need for professional paid translators would be less and less over the years. I would - for the sake of keeping the quality of the texts and information consistently high - use only paid professionals before the documents reach their target.

I like how TWB works and they could set the trend

Like I said above, I think the framework should be aimed also at giving as well as taking, that is, creating a structure that is rewarding for the translator. This could occur in many different ways, for example, by bringing together a diversified group of translators and offering them an environment of learning and companionship or maybe an environment that would greatly add to the translator's knowledge or to his/her glossaries or an opportunity for the translator to see his or her name published in a book, magazine or website as a valued member of the group, etc.

I would recommend them to use translators both for paid and voluntary work. Sometimes there is a possibility to also raise funds for translation /e.g. some donor programs offer inclusion of such budget items/.

Whatever gets the job done accurately at no expense or with the least expense possible.

A mix of paid and pro bono work would be the first step in the right direction

Smaller, urgent need translations could be pro bono, but reports and the like ought to be planned for and paid.

Certainly some reduced fee. Translation takes time, we can't live on fresh air, and unless we are comfortably off, we can't undertake work for nothing. That said, I am all in favour of a reduced rate for humanitarian good causes. This is perhaps a framework the ITI could participate in.

Both Translators Without Borders (preferred) and ProZ.com job postings (2nd option for pro bono as there is less screening for quality)

Like any other translation project, I would recommend having a group of committed translators and proofreaders, people they have been working with for a time, so that the workflow can advance smoothly. And to a better management of money, they should prioritize the projects: those they really need to be well done and of really high quality should be paid projects.

I only collaborate with TWB and this is the only NGO I would recommend.

I work with Translators Without Borders. This seems to be a convenient framework for all involved, but I do believe the addition of a revision stage in the process would be beneficial to all involved.

A well-paid manager who has experience in translating and translation project management, maybe paid PMs if there's a fair amount of work. A proofreading team, maybe one or two inhouse (internships? PMs?) and the rest outsourced to volunteers, but regular participants of known quality, not a free-for-all. Volunteer translators selected on their merits. At present, many newbies go for pro bono work if they can't get anything else. That seems a bad idea for all concerned: the organisation will get all the newbie translation errors, and some newbies will be hopeless at the job; and the newbie will receive zero feedback so they won't improve. I think organisations deserve competent, experienced translators who can do the job - nobody else. It shouldn't be seen as "nobody else wants to trust me so I'll do pro bono work". On the other hand, some inexperienced translators are very good, so they shouldn't be disqualified for lack of experience. The way TWB selects translators (other than ProZ.com 'PRO' members) seems very good. I work as a pro bono evaluator of sample translations (my main input to TWB), along with many others. I don't know exactly what happens (how many evaluations are performed on the same sample; who makes the final decision, on what basis) but at least we can weed out the rubbish. I've sometimes recommended, with reservations, a translator who seems inexperienced but promising. In the case of TWB, I don't believe they proofread the texts at all - that's what they specify to evaluators. To my mind, that's a real drawback. I think they should ask for pro bono proofreading. All new translators should have all their texts proofread. Later, the output from good translators could just have a quick monolingual check of the target.

End the pro bono environment and find good, reliable translators who are worth every penny you pay them.

Feedback (positive and negative if constructive), support, appreciation and encouragement from colleagues.

Paid for internal documents and fund rising; pro bono for development projects and emergency to support civilians.

Q27. Please add any further comments related to working on a paid or pro bono / voluntary basis for humanitarian organizations, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations.

I would like to see greater transparency in the organizations and projects involved in Translators Without Borders. A lot of people are jumping on the TWB bandwagon without doing homework on what they're promoting or volunteering for. The organization is playing on the excellent reputation of Doctors Without Borders, even though there's no connection. That's just clever PR, not proof that the organizations are worthy.

This may be totally unrelated to the goal of this survey but it's actually the reason why I decided to complete it in the first place so I must leave it here. As I said, my experience as a volunteer translator is very recent and not very significant. But it made me aware of one big problem: until now in a certain way I used voluntary work to get away from my usual work as a translator - i.e. getting out of the office/house, being with other people, doing different things, even simply being outdoors doing some physical work (my very first voluntary task was sweeping leaves in the garden of a museum - I know, very Zen...). Since I no longer could spare the time for that type of activities, it occurred to me that a good option would be voluntary translation work. But the truth is that unfortunately it isn't. It's just like 'work not way from work' and that is terrible. Both for my paid work and for my voluntary work. I feel it may turn me into a worse translator (or at least a more tired one :-)) in the long run. So I'm seriously considering not doing it again. For the good of everyone involved, especially the people who would be depending on my work.

I enjoy my pro-bono work for NGO's but limit it to a particular field of interest, although the texts I have received so far vary enormously, and I'm not sure I would have seen this type of work otherwise. I have been given letters of recommendation for my work, but don't know how useful they may be in the future.

For-profit organizations do not have the right to request work without compensation. For-profit companies should always compensate with profits.

It was visible from this survey as well, that the importance of a reference or to get to paid work is existent. There must be organizations, which support the non-profit or humanitarian organizations. **If the non-profit / humanitarian organization could act like a bridge between the translator and its professional supporter companies to "pass" the good translators to the company, who would accept them on the basis of the reference, they have from the non-profit, it would increase the lust of people working pro bono immediately.** (I think)

It is voluntary - either you like it and do it or you leave it - as simple as that :0

My experience, as I wrote in the blog as well, is that it feels good to do pro bono translations and there is a difference between this and doing work for extremely low rates. The latter is not good for the market nor for your self-esteem.

All pro bono work should be your best work. It shouldn't be hurried, poorly researched, out of your comfort zone, un-proofread. If you don't want to give it your all, don't do it. Unpaid work for profit-making organisations, with a very few exceptions, is simply harmful to the industry. Don't do it, would be my recommendation.