

Volunteering: Giving and Receiving in Return

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*"Volunteers are people of all ages, from young to old, who dedicate part of their time, without pay, to various types of activities related to social wellbeing and other areas, out of personal interest and civic spirit."*¹ That is the United Nations' definition of people who volunteer, and it's also how we understand the noble task of volunteering here at BMA. Through BMA Inspiration, we seek to give back to society through corporate volunteering in actions that can contribute to profound and lasting impacts on everyday life.

Beyond *pro bono* work, which is the most common way that lawyers are able to give back to society, using their legal knowledge to help those who need it, volunteering gives all our people the chance to engage in social actions directed to education and social entrepreneurship initiatives that we support. August 28th was Volunteer Day, and we took the opportunity to take stock of our volunteer initiatives. In 2023, for example, more than 188 people from our firm were involved in BMA Inspiration, an increase of 14.2% over 2022. And in just the first few months of 2024, we already have 154 volunteers.

This increased engagement within BMA reflects a national trend. According to the 2023 national household survey, PNAD (*Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios*),² conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE, 7.3 million Brazilians did volunteer work in 2022, reflecting an increase of 603,000 between 2019 and 2022. The study also showed that most volunteers are active four or more times a month, dedicating 6.6 hours per week to volunteer work.

At BMA, we devote our volunteer time to causes like women's entrepreneurship. Rede Mulher Empreendedora (Women Entrepreneur Network), one of our partner organizations, works to build a support network for women, offering resources, training and networking. In the 2023 edition, 40 BMA practitioners with different specializations came together to help 12 women-led startup businesses in a legal advice session, as part of Rede's accelerator program. We helped the participating businesses by answering questions about how to set up and formally register a business, raise capital, and address common employment and intellectual property issues, among other matters. In the last few years, these sessions have been held online, involving more than 88 volunteers and more than 260 hours of volunteer work in total.

Another partner organization that was able to count on our people's volunteering spirit was Reffetorio Gastromotiva, which does important work to improve food security among vulnerable populations. In the first half of 2024, BMA organized two "social dinners". At each dinner, meals were served to 72 residents of Rio de Janeiro's downtown area in a situation of social vulnerability by 30 volunteers who dedicated 120 hours of their time.

In addition to its benefits for society, institutional engagement earns

recognition. The work done by BMA Inspiration has been recognized by Latin Lawyer and the Vance Center in Pro Bono Leading Lights, which highlights firms that make an important contribution to the pro bono culture in Latin America.

>>> *Article written by Mariana Brugger for BMA Inspiration.*

>>> *This content is part of BMA Review #84. Click here for more.*

NOTES

¹ <www.un.org/pt/rio/carreiras/voluntariado>. Accessed September 6, 2024. Our translation.

² <<https://valor.globo.com/brasil/noticia/2023/08/11/trabalho-voluntrio-aumenta-n-o-pas-impulsionado-por-pandemia-diz-ibge.ghtml>>. Accessed September 6, 2024.