

COMPLEMENTARY CONTRIBUTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS TO DEVELOPMENT: Evidence from Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines the complementary contributions of international volunteers from the Global North that work in Kenya. It also explores program components that appear to be associated with positive outcomes. Research was conducted at 12 different placement sites across three locations in Kenya. Meetings with stakeholders were a combination of 24 structured interviews, 7 participatory workshops and 83 quantitative surveys. Findings indicate that volunteers contribute to development goals as valued human resources in development projects. They also contribute to capacity building and leverage social capital—providing bridges to resources. Community members also emphasise other contributions that would not otherwise be available without the presence of international volunteers.

Keywords: Development, international Volunteer Service, Kenya, qualitative, quantitative

Der Beitrag von internationalen Freiwilligen zur Entwicklung: Evidenz aus Kenia

Der Aufsatz untersucht den Beitrag der Arbeit von internationalen Freiwilligen aus dem globalen Norden in Kenia. Diesbezüglich werden Komponenten von internationalen Entwicklungsprogrammen identifiziert, die durch den Beitrag von Freiwilligen eine positive Wirkung auf die lokale Entwicklung in Kenia haben. Der hier vorgestellten empirischen Studie liegen Daten zugrunde, die an 12 Einsatzstellen an drei Standorten in Kenia gesammelt wurden. Die Daten umfassen Ergebnisse aus Treffen mit Stakeholdern, in denen 24 Leitfadeninterviews, sieben partizipative Workshops und 83 quantitative Befragungen durchgeführt wurden. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Freiwilligen personelle Ressource geschätzt sind und dazu beitragen, Entwicklungsziele in Entwicklungsprojekten zu erreichen. Sie bringen Wissen und Kontakte in die Einsatzstellen und lokalen Communities ein, welches diesen wiederum hilft, finanzielle Ressourcen zu akquirieren. Vertreter der lokalen Einsatzstellen betonen, dass ohne die internationalen Freiwilligen manche Fortschritte in ihrem Projekt nicht eingetreten wären.

Keywords: Entwicklung, internationale Freiwilligendienste, Kenia, qualitative Methoden, quantitative Methoden

1. Introduction

The value of international volunteer-driven development is a question of debate and occasional scepticism. Proponents claim that international volunteer service is

a practical way to promote global understanding, while making tangible contributions to the development of individuals, organisations and communities (McBride/Lough/Sherraden 2010; Devereux 2008). On the other hand, critics contend that many international volunteer programs are imperialistic, volunteer-centred and ineffective at tackling the real challenges of development (Simpson 2004; Plewes/Stuart 2007). These contrasting views both have merit. In truth, the impacts of international volunteer service ultimately depend on whether programs recognise and implement effective institutional practices based on the outcomes they desire to achieve (Sherraden/Lough/McBride 2008).

This debate has gained prominence and relevance in Germany following the establishment of *weltwärts*, a popular international volunteer service¹ program funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with a budget of 30 Million Euro a year (Fischer 2011). This follows a similar trend across other EU Member States such as the UK's International Citizen Service (ICS), launched in 2011; and Irish Aid's 2013-launched Volunteering Initiative, which is "committed to increasing volunteering opportunities" abroad (Irish Aid 2013). Likewise, the European Commission launched a 150 million funded EU Aid Volunteers program in 2014, which aims to deploy 4,000 EU citizens to 30 countries by 2020 (European Commission 2014). These policy movements represent a significant shift in priorities of bilateral aid with a dual domestic and international focus. Unfortunately, research has not kept pace with practice, and effective institutional practices are not often associated with specific development outcomes.

Over the past ten years, a handful of research studies have begun to link practices to outcomes for volunteers and host organisations. One of the first publications to link these areas, commissioned by United Nations Volunteers (UNV), found that volunteers make a more substantial contribution in rural than urban areas (Rehnstrom 2000). More recent research found that international volunteers may increase the capacity of host organisations, but their success is dependent on the volunteers' language capacity and the duration of the service placement (Lough et al. 2011). Other research has found that service duration, cultural immersion, guided reflection and reciprocal partnerships are all associated with outcomes on volunteers and communities (Leonzon 2011; Devereux 2010). Likewise, research using a rigorous quasi-experimental design has found that volunteers with significant previous international experience before volunteering return from service with higher international awareness, intercultural relations and international social capital (McBride et al. 2010). Despite these recent developments, studies linking practices to impacts are still rare, and are only beginning to emerge as a priority for the field.

1 International volunteer service is defined as "an organized period of voluntary engagement and contribution to society across international borders with little or no monetary compensation" (Sherraden et al. 2008)

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impacts of international volunteerism, with a focus on answering three key questions. First, what are the perceived contributions of international volunteers to discrete development goals? Second, what are the “value added” contributions of volunteers to development projects and programs beyond other technical and managerial approaches? Third, what program components and practices seem to be associated with achieving these outcomes?

2. Research Design and Methods

As a global network of International Volunteer Cooperation Organizations (IVCOs), the International Forum on Development Service (hereafter “Forum”) was well-suited to mobilise member organisations to engage in cross-comparative research on volunteer impacts. Although some of the nine organizations that participated in the study requested to remain anonymous, they included large publically-financed IVCOs based in Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway and the UK. All volunteers serve for at least one month, and the majority of sponsored volunteers have minimum educational or occupational qualifications (such as the completion of a four-year degree). Although the age of volunteers that serve with these programs varies widely, the majority are young people under 30. Around 55 per cent of the interviewees participating in this study hosted short-term volunteers (four months or less), while the remaining 45 per cent primarily hosted long-term volunteers (one year or more) (see Tables 1 and 2). No programs hosted a substantial number of volunteers that fell in the mid-range of four months to one year.

The research design was a retrospective case control study: measuring outcomes of sites receiving volunteers at one point in time and reflecting, post hoc, on the volunteers’ contributions. Kenya was chosen as the site for the case study due to the high number of volunteers from Forum-member organisations located in this country. Researchers spent one month in country speaking with volunteers, program staff and intended beneficiaries at 12 different placement sites across three locations in Kenya: Nairobi, Kisumu and Lari.

Because volunteers are hosted by an implementing partner or service organisation, direct attribution of development effectiveness to the volunteers is challenging. As a recent report from the UK’s government Department for International Development (DFID) concluded, “most interventions are a ‘contributory cause’ and part of a causal package, making it unusual for an intervention to cause a development effect on its own” (Stern et al. 2012). Consequently, determining the contribution of volunteers requires a level of abstraction or indirect attribution, which can measure volunteerism’s credible association with organisational capacity, staff morale, skill development, resource acquisition, etc.

Because of the difficulty isolating discrete contributions of volunteers, the goals of the research design are to assess whether international volunteers make a

difference, and whether they provide added value to the hosting organisations and communities beyond the direct service provided by partner organisations and other actors. One method used to isolate added value is to directly ask intended beneficiaries to compare the contribution of volunteers with the contributions of others working in the organisations (i.e. paid development workers or full-time staff). Subjective comparisons were assessed using surveys and participatory interviews with intended beneficiaries.

2.1 Staff member interviews

Individual interviews took place in participating organisations with staff members who could speak to potential contributions of volunteers at the project and program levels. Staff members who had frequent interaction with international volunteers were asked to provide their feedback to questions on a semi-structured interview guide. Interviews at each of the 12 placement sites consisted of between one to four staff member interviews, and lasted an average of 45 minutes to one hour. In total, researchers conducted 24 staff member interviews. Researchers also administered an equal amount of surveys to participating staff. The age of participating staff members ranged from 24 to 53 years old, with an average age of 37 years. Additional demographic characteristics of the staff member interviews are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic statistics of staff member interviews (n = 24)

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
CITY		
Nairobi	16	66%
Lari	4	17%
Kisumu	4	17%
LOCATION		
Urban	14	58%
Rural	6	25%
Sub-urban	4	17%
VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT DURATION *		
Short-term	13	54%
Long-term	11	46%
GENDER		
Male	13	54%
Female	11	46%

* Short-term is defined as less than four months; long-term is one year or more. No organisations reported hosting a substantial number of volunteers that fell in the mid-range of four months to one year.

2.2 Participatory workshops

Lengthy focus groups with community members were conducted at seven different placement sites in Nairobi, Kisumu and Lari. The format of these workshops largely followed the UNV Assessing the contribution of volunteering to development methodology (UNV 2011). Participating community members were chosen by the partner program based on the frequency of their interactions with international volunteers. In cases where other expats worked in a partner program with communities, researchers were careful to clarify these relationships at the introduction to the workshops, as well as when asking relevant questions that might elicit some confusion during the workshops. In two of the seven workshops, there was some level of initial ambiguity between full-time expats and international volunteers. In the remaining five workshops, these relationships appeared to be quite easily distinguished.

Due to occasional language barriers, a local research assistant was trained to help complete interviews and to co-facilitate the participatory workshops. The workshops lasted for three to four hours, followed by an interactive lunch discussion. Participating community members also received a short survey to measure respondents' perceptions of changes following the interventions of international volunteers. In total, researchers conducted 59 community member interviews (in workshop format), and administered surveys to an equal number of participants. The age of participating community members ranged from 18 to 61 years old, with an average age of 37 years. Additional demographic characteristics of the community member interviews are provided in Table 2.

Transcription and translation of all digitally recorded interviews and participatory workshops were completed in preparation for qualitative analysis of interviews and focus group data. For the most part, English was the primary language spoken during the interviews. However, participants in the workshops occasionally spoke in Swahili, which was directly interpreted by the local research assistant during the workshops. Two local consultants transcribed and translated all digital recordings.

Initial coding of key responses from the interview data was performed using NVivo, a qualitative analysis software package, to uncover key themes and frequencies of responses. All translated transcriptions and researcher field notes were included in the final analysis. Qualitative analysis was a mixture of coding down, based on information contained in research, and a grounded-theory (coding up) approach based on new ideas obtained from the interviews (Bazeley/Richards 2000).

Table 2: Demographic statistics of community member interviews (n = 59)

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
CITY		
Nairobi	34	58%
Lari	12	20%
Kisumu	13	22%
LOCATION		
Urban	24	41%
Rural	12	20%
Sub-urban	23	39%
VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT DURATION		
Short-term	36	61%
Long-term	23	39%
GENDER		
Male	31	52%
Female	28	48%

2.3 Surveys

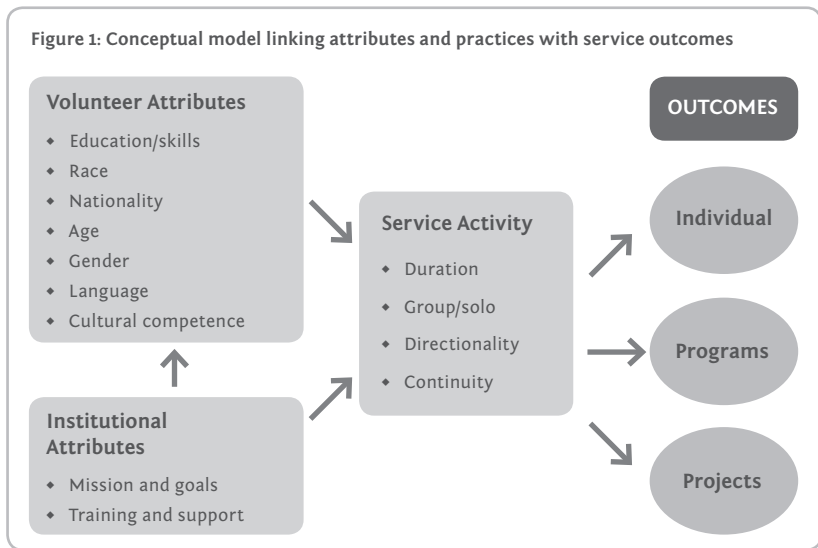
Quantitative survey instruments were also developed based on previous research studies. These instruments were also adapted following consultation sessions with a handful of partner program staff from Kenya, as well as academic colleagues. Over the past ten years, a number of studies have qualitatively assessed the perceived contributions of international volunteer service but few have quantitatively measured volunteers' contributions to development. The surveys administered in this study seek to test the merit of previously identified contributions, with the aim of developing and testing potential hypotheses in future studies. Surveys were administered following the conclusion of staff interviews and at the midpoint of participatory workshops with community members. Although basic demographic data were gathered, all surveys were completed anonymously.

Ordinal regressions were run on each outcome of the survey data to determine significant differences by key programmatic elements. Ordinal regression is a type of quantitative analysis used to predict variables with ordered values to determine whether the difference between these values is significant. Specifically, the following variables were included as independent variables in these models: duration of service, location, gender of the respondent and age of the respondent. Duration was dichotomised by short-term (less than four months) and long-term (one year

or more). Location was sub-divided and dummy-coded into three categories: rural, sub-urban and urban, depending on where the partner program was operating. Results of the 33 regression models are not presented. However, areas of statistical difference are discussed in the Findings section. If differences along any independent variable by outcome is discussed quantitatively in the findings section, it was significantly different statistically.

3. Findings and Discussion

As mentioned in the previous discussion on research design, a primary goal of this research is to assess whether international volunteers deliver added value to the hosting organisations and communities, enhancing the services already provided by partner organisations. The research seeks to link individual and institutional practices to outcomes in order to better understand how projects and programs can be structured to achieve these outcomes. A 2008 review of literature assessing the effects of international volunteering and service found that volunteer attributes, institutional attributes and variations in the service activity affect the outcomes of service in different ways (Sherraden et al. 2008). Figure 1 provides a condensed conceptual model illustrating how different helping (or hindering) factors may affect outcomes.



The section below describes volunteers' key contributions to development projects and programs as articulated by the staff members of partner organisations. It then describes key contributions to the individual, family and community as articulated

by members of the hosting communities. In order to better isolate the unique contributions of international volunteerism, it further explores the added value of international volunteers to development programs in comparison with full time development staff or local partner program staff members. Finally, it describes the various contributing causes or helping factors that seem to affect these outcomes.

3.1 Key Contributions

Staff members of partner programs outlined a large variety of potential contributions resulting from the work of international volunteers. Given the breadth of contributions, not all are covered in detail in this report. For the sake of brevity, only key outcomes—those that were mentioned in at least six (25 per cent) of the 24 interviews—are covered. These fall under the general categories of capacity building, resource acquisition and the achievement of development goals.

3.1.1 Capacity Building

Organisational capacity is defined as “management practices and organizational processes” that help volunteer hosting organisations accomplish their missions (Letts/Ryan/Grossman 1999). Building organisational capacity adds to the ability of development organisations to achieve their mission and goals, and to meet the needs of intended beneficiaries (Castelloe/Watson/White 2002). According to findings from this research, international volunteers potentially contribute to these practices and processes in a number of ways. They help develop human capital and skills in communities and organisations; they promote a culture of professionalism and “time management” that appears to have value to hosting organisations; and they contribute resources directly or act as “bridges” to link people or organisations with external resources. The relationship-based engagement inherent in international volunteering has been reported as one of the most important factors contributing to the successful capacity development initiatives (Devereux 2010; McWha 2011).

In the Kenyan context, it is important to note that comments on capacity building were often embedded within a general discourse about the race and the nationality of volunteers as White Westerners. There seemed to be a strong belief from staff and community members alike that many of the ideas taught and modelled by international volunteers were not only new and innovative but were also perceived as “better”. The quote below illustrates this concept briefly. Although racial and North-South issues are covered in greater depth later under the discussion of volunteer attributes, it may be important to consider this lens as readers consider the following perceived contributions:

Westerners have different styles; the way of how they look at things....You find that we learn a lot of information from these outsiders. When they come, you

listen to their topic....When we get people like the Whites coming to a country like ours, we think they are much better than us.

Research on international volunteer service has sought to identify whether volunteers fill gaps in local knowledge through technical or specialist expertise (UNV 2011; Daniel/French/King 2006). Previous studies have found that volunteers may develop human resources by contributing skills, information and knowledge that may not otherwise be available in the hosting organisations and communities (Vian et al. 2007). Nearly 70 per cent of community members agreed that international volunteers teach skills that would not otherwise be available in their community. An example below illustrates one of many such contributions:

[Volunteers] have engaged the community in water projects. They use their technical expertise at the ground level to show people how to dig the canals; how to make the community based dams—and now people can irrigate their farms; people can grow food....[Referring to a close-by rural district] It was a barren land; now people are having a bumper harvest. So for a community that, two years ago, was being fed on relief food—currently as now we are speaking, it has a surplus whereby they are selling some of the bumper harvest to the other districts. So when it comes to poverty eradication, I think they play a big role when they engage their technical expertise.

Within organisations, volunteers were viewed as being helpful at teaching management, planning and marketing skills. Findings from other research corroborate these findings (Brown/Moore 2001; Nu'Man et al. 2007; ITAD 2011). While there is no quantitative measure of skill-building at the program and project levels in this study, this outcome was highly evident in qualitative interviews with staff members. For instance, one of the most frequently cited contributions of international volunteers at the program level was instilling stronger expectations for “professionalism” and “time management” among program staff. Speaking with volunteers, this often seemed to be an unintentional contribution, yet staff members cited the diffusion of a “Western culture of professionalism” as a prominent advantage of hosting international volunteers in their organisations. This finding may be unique to the conceptions of time usage in Kenya, and may not be viewed by some as a universal improvement. However, staff members maintained that this was a significant contribution to their organisations.

Community members’ perceptions about the utility of volunteers for skills differed significantly between shorter- and longer-term volunteers.² Nearly 85 per cent of community members interacting with long-term volunteers agreed that volun-

2 A number of additional attributes are closely correlated with the duration of volunteer service placements, including the age and educational/skill level of the volunteers, the funding policy of donors, etc. Thus, time length is not the only effect of difference when considering placement duration.

teers taught new skills, while only 56 per cent of those interacting with short-term volunteers agreed with this statement. Interviews suggest that short-term volunteers were perceived as mostly effective when they had a specific technical skill to teach during a training session or workshop.

Examples of skills learned during workshops included topics ranging from book-keeping to customer relations, marketing and fundraising. One focus group cited an example of a successful five-day intensive workshop on HIV/AIDS with students and teachers. They remarked that this information was offered in a new and exciting interactive format, and they witnessed students taking the information back to their schools to use in educating their peers. Others cited that volunteers taught innovative techniques for fundraising locally and abroad. There were efforts by some volunteers to build organisational capacity in the area of grant and proposal writing. However, there was no strong evidence to suggest sustainable improvements in this area when volunteers left. In fact, a number of staff and community members expressed anxiety that funding would dry up following the departure of volunteers. Train-the-trainer programs also seemed to be prominent capacity-building methods for local volunteers and staff members. These type of programs were particularly valued in rural areas where expertise in needed areas was low.

While many examples of skill-building were provided, the focus was often on “new” or “innovative” concepts and ideas. When asked whether people within their community or country could teach similar skills, some commented that this was possible but suggested that this would be expensive and would likely be rejected by community members. Three members in three separate workshops and locations cited a phrase from the Bible that, “A prophet is not recognized in his own land” (Luke 4:2), indicating that this is likely a common perception among community members. Communities seem to have a heightened interest in, and respect for, training by people from outside of their local community.

Financial management was another area where community members expressed a special appreciation for volunteers. Volunteers taught seminars on earning and saving money, and on the importance of budgeting and spending money on priority items. They also introduced new ideas such as micro financing and other entrepreneurial projects designed to increase the livelihood of community members. As one community member recalled, micro finance was a concept that she believed would not have emerged organically:

In 2006, we had a volunteer talking about how women can organize themselves to lend each other money. It was a very foreign thing here...After she had gone, there is tremendous progress in women this day. In the groups, women like it, and it is really improving the lives of women in the rural areas and in the town here...it is a very great thing volunteers have done.

3.1.2 Resource Acquisition – Money and More

An oft-cited contribution of international volunteers was their ability to attract tangible and intangible resources, including money and aid, networks of support and concrete opportunities for collaboration (Jester/Thyer 2007; Lough/McBride/Sherraden 2009; VSO 2002). In addition, volunteers often pay from their own pockets to provide services when programs are unwilling or unable to help (Mavungu 2010). One staff member gave a personal example of how a volunteer provided resources when the organisation was not able to assist:

[The volunteer] took me as her own son, which the organisation did not do, and again she went to an extent of paying my rent for three good months and even my daughter could go to school because of her....Yeah, after she went back, in fact she was releasing money every month.

While other interviews did not cite a similar level of resource support from volunteers, many recalled receiving at least minimal resource support from volunteers, particularly from those who were only in the country for a short time. It is not clear whether these contributions can be considered developmental, as such contributions are often viewed as paternalistic and furthering a dependency mindset. While such contributions are charitable, they are not typically sustainable, and thus may not be considered a “development” impact.

In addition to resources donated directly by volunteers, they often used their “social capital” to leverage additional resources while in country and after they returned home. As a staff member explained:

A volunteer from Australia managed to get some consignment of used clothes....It was a lot and we spread it all over the country. Through that, we were able to tell [the community members], “you see, some of the volunteers we work with, when they go back to their countries, they see the challenges we go through and they are able to go lobby for support and whatever resources.”

Many community members also believed that volunteers could provide supervision of projects that the government would not otherwise fund. Thus, having a volunteer in the organisation may indirectly increase resources for the organisation. This is related to a perception of higher accountability and trust of international volunteers, which is described later in this report.³

To the degree that international volunteers provide resources and link partner organisations with additional sources of aid, they may contribute to development

3 Social capital is listed as a sub-concept of resources because social capital is often associated with resource mobilisation, and the economic value of these networks as “capital” is related to volunteers’ ability to coordinate action and generate additional resources.

of the organisation. While it is unknown whether this leads to sustainable development over the long term, diversification of resources can provide greater flexibility and may help combat resource dependence (Froelich 1999). On the other hand, when volunteers become a primary source of funding, partner organisations may become dependent, thus increasing reliance on continued philanthropy.

Volunteers were also viewed as a labour resource, and as a means of motivating citizens and local volunteers as human resources. As stated by the advocacy officer of an organisation that hosts young, short-term volunteers:

Because of Africa kind of perception, whenever you see a White, there is this feeling that probably...there seems to be a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of interest that is developed by communities to really learn, and also cooperate...so when we have someone extra come on board then that means we've increased the number of people working down the community. So we are able to at least increase the number of activities and programs we are running. So you get extra people and we are able to do a lot of work within a given period of time. That has been very critical in our work.

Despite the perceived value of volunteers as generators of resources, only 33 per cent of staff members believed they had greater access to resources than paid development workers. Thus, resource contributions from volunteer service were not necessarily viewed as offering greater value than standard development programs without volunteers. This may be a positive finding, however, as it may help to promote local ownership. As Devereux (2010) explains:

IVCOs have frequently used a community development model of having a volunteer within a local organisation but not with power over what that organisation does. This potentially provides good levels of local ownership and accountability...This also means the volunteers are at the mercy of local resource, management and other constraints over which he or she has very little, if any, control.

This suggests that, although the slower pace of volunteers may lead to greater trust and sustainability, they may also have less power and fewer resources to drive change (Devereux 2008). Perhaps as a result, this may promote local change, ownership and home-grown capacity development (Pinkau 1981). In addition, many respondents recalled contributions made by volunteers after they returned home, which was not mentioned when describing the benefits of paid development workers.

Community members expressed some frustration that volunteers were not able to provide or obtain access to needed resources. A number of community members remarked that they had asked volunteers for assistance in finding donors and

funding, or for providing resources directly. However, comments suggest that volunteers were not always meeting their expectations in this regard, as the following comments illustrate: “If volunteers can have a way to help the groups to have donors because we...we would like to have the donors because we rely on ourselves”; “I would also like to all those groups coming to be remembering girls in the school providing sanitary towels all the on behalf of all the girls”; “We would like more groups to come to support the hand work craft work, please.”

These expectations seem to pose a challenge for partner programs. Many expressed concern that members of the community often lose trust in staff members who work closely with volunteers when they fail to produce money or resources when solicited. Staff members often have to work hard to manage the expectations of community members:

When somebody sees a White—this is how we call them, mzungu⁴ and that means a White—so the community expects to be given, to expect some payments, some money or a lot of handouts from these Whites. Or maybe whenever we call for a meeting, there is a belief that all those guys have come with a lot of cash, so you need to give us money. As the organisation we have grapple with it a lot.

Although the perceived value of volunteers’ resource contributions was a significant outcome in both the staff interviews and community workshops, they consistently asserted that many of the contributions of international volunteers cannot be measured monetarily. In fact, one of the questions posed to staff members in the interviews was, “Given the choice between: (1) receiving an international volunteer or (2) receiving development aid that would otherwise be used to support the volunteer, which would you prefer?” Every staff member interviewed (100 per cent) stated that given this choice, they would choose a volunteer (although actual amounts of aid disbursements were not indicated). When asked why they would make this choice, some believed that volunteers could leverage additional money, which would likely exceed the initial allotment. However, many also stated that the relationships, capacity building and learning received from international volunteers is hard to put a value on.

The interviews also asked about the challenges of hosting international volunteers. Previous research suggests that hosting volunteers requires training, support and resources, and therefore may consume scarce organisational resources and time (Structure of Operational Support 1999). Staff members indicated that some volunteers did come without means of support. Hosting these volunteers appeared to require extra organisational or community resources:

4 Literally translated as an “aimless wanderer”, but typically referring to White person or a person from the West.

At times we are forced to stretch, because at times—they come as volunteers as you understand—and they have not been allocated some funds to help them in movement, and maybe in transport, and maybe lunch and other things. So we are forced to really dig into our pockets and to really chip in and support them. Ah, that again has been a very big challenge to us.

In addition to financial resources, organisations also reported challenges with allocating staff time to support volunteers, as each new volunteer requires orientation, training and greater attention. Because organisations hosting longer-term volunteers did not cite these challenges, this may be particularly applicable to organisations hosting shorter-term volunteers. This is not an exclusively negative finding, however. Organisations that contribute some resources may have greater buy-in to development projects, leading to more locally owned efforts.

3.2 Added-value: Differences between International Volunteers and Paid Staff

Isolating the development impacts to international volunteers is difficult. The areas listed above were frequently cited as key contributions. However, they are not necessarily distinct from the contributions of development organisations that do not use volunteers. Using only the information above, it is unclear whether the contributions of volunteers as human resources would differ if they were paid staff rather than volunteers. Although interviewing comparison organisations to assess counterfactual evidence might help, this issue is not necessarily solved by comparison, given that programs are likely to have distinct operations and practices. This section attempts to isolate the contributions of volunteers by directly asking intended beneficiaries to compare the work of volunteers with the work of full-time development workers or full-time local staff members. While this method is not a strong means of determining attribution, it can help identify areas where more rigorous investigation may be fruitful.

All else being equal, most staff members⁵ reported that they would rather have a long-term international volunteer than a “paid development professional”. A distinction between long- and short-term volunteers is necessary because most of the staff members working with short-term volunteers did not view them as comparable with development workers.⁶ Given stark differences in the activities performed by paid development professionals and short-term volunteers, many staff members marked this question as “not applicable”. Despite these differences, staff members

5 Although field notes indicate near unanimous agreement on this point, the precise percentage will not be known until completion of qualitative analysis.

6 As described earlier, age and education/skill level of the volunteers is closely correlated with the duration of volunteers' service. Thus, differences extend beyond service duration and may reflect volunteer capacity.

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were able to list a number of distinct advantages that volunteers bring to development projects, regardless of the duration of their service.

Previous research has identified a number of areas where volunteers hypothetically provide “added value” to development projects (Lough et al. 2011; Devereux 2010; Lewis 2005). Based on prior research, survey items were used to verify and measure the strength of prior hypotheses. Additional areas that were not measured quantitatively emerged during the initial qualitative coding. The main areas of volunteers’ contributions (in comparison with paid development or local project staff) include greater trust, accountability, ownership, creativity, optimism, an increased motivation for local volunteers to engage, greater diversity in project management and administration, a stronger human rights orientation, relative cost-effectiveness of development projects, and slightly higher sustainability of their work.

3.2.1 Trust

Greater trust was one of the most frequently referenced contributions of volunteers. Nearly half of the community members indicated having more trust of international volunteers than paid development workers or local project staff. Research on volunteers has observed similar outcomes, particularly for volunteers who live in close proximity with the community, and who speak the local language (Devereux 2008; UNDP 2003). While paid development workers are reportedly more likely to speak Kiswahili, they are perceived as preferring to work in offices and with programs, rather than directly with community members. They also tend to live outside of the community, where volunteers are more likely to reside in home-stays with community members or to live in close proximity.

Interviews suggest possible reasons why there may be lower trust among shorter-term volunteers. As noted in findings on resource acquisition, community members often expect resources and contributions that tend to be forthcoming from short-term volunteers. When these expectations are not met, community members may come to trust volunteers and partner programs less. On the other hand, volunteers who stay in the community long-term are reportedly less likely to provide resources directly, and have more time to manage the expectations of community members and to build trust. Interviews suggest that this expectation is not as high among longer-term volunteers because people learn not to expect resources as they come to know volunteers over time.

Higher trust for international volunteers over local staff seems to be correlated with high relative poverty. According to respondents’ perceptions, some community members believe that local workers may be more prone to petty corruption, given high levels of poverty. Community members also mentioned that they will continue

to see local workers for many years, and thus may be less willing to divulge sensitive information that may spread in the community.

Discussions about trust were both positive and negative. Many community members who work with volunteers asserted that others in the community assume they are receiving money and help from the volunteers. While this sometimes appeared to be true, in most cases, community members asserted that they do not receive money directly from volunteers. They expressed concern that other members of the community often have less trust for local staff who work with volunteers because they typically fail to produce money or resources when solicited.

3.2.2 Accountability and Ownership

Because paid workers are often part of a development infrastructure with specific mandates, they are often viewed as being primarily accountable to large development programs, funders, and multilateral technical organisations, and less accountable to the local community. Although volunteers who serve with a development organisation may have a similar mandate, they are often viewed as more flexible and responsive to local community needs (Devereux 2008). This study substantiated this claim, finding that nearly 90 per cent of community members viewed long-term volunteers as being more accountable to their community than paid development workers. This finding was dampened significantly among community members working with short-term international volunteers (56 per cent); short-term volunteers were more often cited as following their own agenda.

When probed about the differences between paid workers and unpaid (or underpaid) volunteers, volunteers' motivations seemed to be a key driver affecting differences. Paid workers were perceived as caring less about relationships and more about accomplishing a given task, or about producing a specific product. In addition, many staff and community members believed the volunteers had more frequent interactions and maintained stronger relationships with local people, thus heightening their knowledge of local needs and interests.

3.2.3 Creativity

Volunteers are highly valued for the new ideas they bring to program and projects, as well as to community-led interventions. Long-term volunteers reportedly bring more knowledge than short-term volunteers. By definition, longer-term volunteers may have more time to understand the complexity of problems and to provide viable alternative solutions. 70 per cent of community members working with long-term volunteers "strongly agreed" that international volunteers bring new knowledge that would not be available in community, compared to 20 percent working

with short-term volunteers. An additional 26 per cent of those working with short-term volunteers strongly disagreed with this statement.

As for value added, 82 per cent of community members believe that the ideas presented by international volunteers are more creative than the ideas presented by paid development workers. While 18 per cent believe the creativity amongst these two groups is “the same”, no community members reported that paid development workers are more creative in their solutions.

3.2.4 Optimism

The quest for adventure is a primary motivation for many international volunteers (Lough et al. 2009; Rehberg 2005). Consequently, they often begin their work with an excited and optimistic attitude. This perspective often contrasts with local or paid development workers, who often labour with a specific problem area for multiple years and may become jaded over time. Although previous studies have hypothesised that short-term volunteers may be more optimistic than long-term volunteers based on the newness, excitement and novelty of their experience (Lough et al. 2009), this study did not find a significant difference in perceived optimism by duration of service. Across the board, 73 per cent of staff members believed that international volunteers are more optimistic than development workers.

In addition to the comparison with paid development workers, international volunteers may also exude a level of optimism and commitment beyond what local volunteers can provide. However, because international volunteers often receive a stipend and may have higher personal resources to draw upon compared to local volunteers, they may have cause for greater optimism and commitment. As one staff member who works with both local and international volunteers explained:

They [international volunteers] are so much enthusiastic, very much zealous after you've seen them get hold of a job. Actually they even go beyond our expectations, compared to our local volunteers. They do extra work, you realize a volunteer that we have here may only work today. But the other who comes from an international organisation would be able to almost work daily and go to any activity and don't expect any payments or something like that, because they know what brought them here. I have seen it, and I have handled a lot of volunteers.

3.2.5 Civic Engagement

Volunteers may support the growth of a strong civil society, which is recognised as essential for good governance, democratic accountability and vibrant social activism (Henriksen/Svedberg 2010). Findings from this and other research suggest that local volunteerism and engagement seem to be directly inspired by the

involvement of an international volunteer in development projects (Pinkau 1981). Many examples of this correlation were cited by staff during the interviews, and nearly 80 per cent of staff members agreed that community members seem more interested in the organisation's activities when international volunteers are involved.

A number of the community members participating in focus groups were local volunteers, and provided examples of how they were personally inspired to engage in their communities following the example of international volunteers. As one staff member explained:

People will see a foreign visitor—and after seeing—they'll talk about it. They'll say, "if a mzungu can be a volunteer, why not me? I'm African. Why am I not helping my people? If somebody can come from abroad to help us here, why don't I start with me?"

3.2.6 Sustainability

Despite associating volunteers with high trust, creativity and local accountability, less than half of staff members believed that the contributions from volunteers are more sustainable than the work of paid development workers. On the downside, some asserted that the work of volunteers is seasonal and lacks continuity. Although there was no quantitative difference between short- and long-term programs, this critique was particularly evident in discussions of volunteer placements of a few months or less. Others viewed volunteers as falling outside of formal development programs, and thus believe there is lower institutional commitment and resources to sustain their work. On the upside, the work of volunteers often continues well beyond their return home. Many staff members cited examples of volunteers who continue to communicate with, and direct resources toward, the organisation or community, even years after their departure. This did not emerge as a common behaviour for paid development workers, although this question was not directly assessed.

3.2.7 Cost-effectiveness

Responses were also more evenly mixed regarding perceptions of the cost-effectiveness of international volunteers. Slightly more than half of local staff agreed that using international volunteers reduces the total costs of development projects. The 20 per cent who disagreed remarked that substantial amounts of time and money are used to train, orient and host volunteers, in addition to travel and other logistical costs. A few believed that volunteers were helpful and useful but were not entirely convinced that volunteers offered good value for money. It was also possible – though unstated – that some respondents took this question at face value,

agreeing that volunteers are not cost-free. Some of those agreeing with the statement that volunteers are cost-effective saw volunteers as filling a role that otherwise might be filled by a more costly development worker. Others reiterated that the contributions of volunteers are hard to put a monetary value on, and thus offered good non-monetary value to development partners.

3.2.8 Diversity

Community and staff members in this study cited many ways that volunteers' differences inspire open-mindedness and respect for diversity in their communities and organisations. Because international volunteers come from outside the community, they tend to increase the diversity of organisations and communities. As such, volunteers contribute new ideas but they may also bring in diverse perspectives that contribute to increased tolerance and respect for difference. This has also been noted in other studies on international volunteering (Rehberg 2005; CVO 2007; Universalia/Jackson and Associates/Salasan 2005). International volunteers may have low awareness of historical ethnic, racial and class biases or other long-standing prejudice within communities. Thus, volunteers may be more likely to involve marginalised people or minorities who may otherwise be socially excluded.

Only 42 per cent of staff members believed that international volunteers include more minorities in projects than local staff, while 55 per cent believed they were more likely to include women in development projects. An even higher 62 per cent believed that international volunteers promote gender equality generally. This finding, paired with earlier assertions that volunteers promote gender equality, reinforces the conclusion that international volunteers may have a moderate impact on promoting gender equality and empowering women in the Kenyan context.

3.2.9 Human Rights Orientation

In line with the perception that international volunteers promote diversity, advancing human rights also appears to be a common activity among international volunteers. About 65 per cent of community members believed that international volunteers promote human rights more frequently than local staff members. This was not always perceived as a positive contribution, however. For instance, one focus group cited an example where volunteers held trainings in an attempt to help reduce gender-based violence. Community members asserted that the volunteers were not well received by the community because they held different values and perspectives on human rights. Consequently, they were not able to connect well with community members, and thus were not necessarily effective at reducing gender-based violence in this area.

3.3 Mediating Factors that Influence the Contributions of International Volunteers

Consistent with prior research on the outcomes of international volunteering (Sherraden et al. 2008), respondents listed a number of “contributing causes” or “helping factors” that ultimately affect the impacts of international volunteer service on intended beneficiaries (Stern et al. 2012). Various dimensions of the service activity, along with individual and institutional attributes, help to explain “what works for whom, why and under what circumstances” (Pawson/Tilley 2004). Although only a handful of helping factors were evident in quantitative findings, qualitative data revealed a number of key variables that appeared to change the mechanisms of impact.

International volunteer service is not a monolithic activity. Because volunteers engage in widely differing activities under different service “models”, it is not possible to make firm conclusions of impact without considering how these differences affect outcomes. For instance, the findings outlined above clearly illustrate how duration of service and the skill-base of volunteers affect beneficiaries’ perceptions of impact. In addition to service duration and skills, beneficiaries discussed a number of other factors related to service activity that seemed to affect outcomes. Among these, directionality, group or solo placement, and continuity emerged as dominant helping factors. These factors align closely with theoretical and empirical findings from previous studies (Sherraden et al. 2008).

3.3.1 Duration

Duration of service was the most widely cited variable affecting the contributions of international volunteers. As one voice among many asserted, “those who have been here for quite some time—they have been really productive and given us a greater impact.” Although duration is often the manifest variable, time length is only a fragment of the contributing factor. A number of additional attributes coincide with volunteering for different lengths of time.

Longer-term volunteers are typically a few years older than shorter-term volunteers, and are often required by the sending organisation to have a degree or a specific skill. Among the programs interviewed in this study, none reported hosting a long-term volunteer who lacked a college degree or a specialised skill. Short-term volunteers may also be skilled and are often “professional” volunteers. However, they are more commonly young people who might not have higher education or developed skills.

While duration often has a significant effect on outcomes, even after controlling for age and education (Lough 2011), it should not be discussed in isolation. In fact, many program staff in this study asserted that short-term volunteers can be highly

effective when they are technically skilled or when they lead a training or workshop. One staff member working for an organisation that hosts both short- and long-term volunteers estimated that they value short-term young and unskilled volunteers at about 80 per cent for the resources they provide and at about 20 per cent for other contributions, while skills-based short-term volunteers' contributions are the opposite: 80 per cent capacity building, and 20 per cent resources.

A strong message that emerged from interviews with program staff and community members is that short-term volunteers are highly valued for the resources that they can bring to the organisation and community. With the exception of short-term professional volunteers, this appeared to be one of the most obvious contributions of shorter-term volunteers to development. In fact, as one staff member asserted, hosting volunteers for less than a few months is often viewed as a "service" that the partner program provides to the sending organisation in order to maintain a functional working partnership. In this sense, they often view shorter-term volunteers as learners, not necessarily as contributors. However, other program staff mentioned less-tangible, but still important, contributions from young, short-term volunteers such as mutual learning, cross-cultural understanding, relationships, diversity, and inspiration—along with the changes already outlined above such as a perceived higher engagement of local volunteers, and a more enthusiastic working environment.

Shorter-term volunteers also appeared to more commonly engage in direct work with community members while longer-term volunteers appeared to work in organisations at the program- or project-management level. In many ways, longer-term volunteers were more comparable to paid development staff. When asked about the "ideal" length of time for volunteers to serve, the most common response from program staff was one year or more. However, among community members, the duration of service never seemed to be quite adequate. For instance, those hosting volunteers for three months stated that one year would be preferred, while those hosting volunteers for two years or more stated that five years would be best. If volunteers come to teach or practice a specific skill, to hold a training workshop, or to otherwise share their expertise, then short-term service is perceived as quite helpful. However, for other capacity building or program-level interventions, one year or more is preferred.

3.3.2 Directionality

The chief reason given for preferring Northern volunteers is a belief that volunteers from higher-income countries may have greater access to resources. In addition, there is also a belief that external funding and development organisations may have more respect for volunteers from the North, and may address their requests and ideas more quickly than volunteers from the South. In fact, 91 per cent of staff

members believe that hosting an international volunteer from outside of Africa increases their likelihood of receiving funding. In contrast, only 53 per cent believe hosting an international volunteer from another country in Africa increases their likelihood of receiving funding. This also ties back to the issue of trust. Although having an international volunteer from any country tends to increase the trust others have of the partner organisation, trust is slightly higher among volunteers from the North (96 per cent) than the South (82 per cent).

The handful of staff and community members indicating a preference for Southern volunteers stated that volunteers from the South are more accustomed to manual labour, and tend to work harder when manual labour is required. They also suggested that it is easier to talk frankly and openly about development plans with the volunteers from the South. While they may also discuss plans with Northern volunteers, there is a perception that neither party tends to be as open in these discussions. There was also a reported precedence that Northern volunteers had been less likely to implement plans developed in collaboration with community members, and vice versa.

3.3.3 Group size

Differences in the practice of sending volunteers to serve alone or in a group were not explored in depth in these interviews. However, a handful of comments reveal that the collective nature of a placement may act as a helping or hindering factor. Group placements may be more structured and may require a lower investment by local staff, whereas individual volunteers often need specific tasks and assignments to keep them busy. As one staff member asserted:

Those who come in groups usually have very common objectives and really more structured work. In the sense that, when they come here, they are a bit more organized and they go through some training of what works. They have been assigned to come and do. You realize it is well coordinated and is very easy [for them] to understand the work. As compared to an individual who has just come, many times those who come as individuals just fit to whatever work we are exposing them to....

3.3.4 Continuity

The continuity of volunteer placements appeared to be of greatest concern among community members working with long-term international volunteers. Many expressed worry about what would happen when the volunteers left. Their most pressing concern was losing funding for community-based programs. However, they also expressed concern about losing the volunteers' expertise related to project management. Those working with short-term volunteers seemed to take it

for granted that volunteers come and go, and did not express unsolicited concern about volunteers leaving. However, this was not an explicit question in the interview guide. Thus, continuity could also be a concern among those hosting short-term volunteers, as this issue has been noted in previous research with short-term volunteers (Lough et al. 2011). This question may be explored in greater depth in future research.

3.3.5 Skills and education of volunteers

The skills and education of volunteers were frequently mentioned attributes that appeared to affect outcomes. Across the board, staff and community members indicated a strong desire for volunteers with specialised skills and high education. References to the need for higher-skilled volunteers were particularly evident during discussions about the impact of short-term volunteers. As discussed earlier, the general perception seemed to be that short-term volunteers are best for technical or skilled placements. Non-skilled short-term volunteers are openly welcomed and are valued for the resources and relationships they provide, but they are often viewed as recipients of service rather than substantive contributors to “hard outcomes”.

3.3.6 Language

Language barriers were perceived to be a significant challenge, particularly for older community members and those located in rural settings. While young people in urban settings often spoke good English, communication was more difficult for those in rural contexts where people have infrequent exposure to English. As illustrated by a staff member working in a rural area:

Some people in the community find it difficult to get the English from some of these volunteers. So maybe things are not done in the correct way because communication is not proper, and especially in cases where they are going alone--unless they are assigned to one of our local volunteers--then maybe somebody can translate. But language has been a challenge....most of our work is community-based kind of meeting and talking, sharing out experiences. So at times the language spoken from some of these volunteers also really may not create much impact.

Although this finding is somewhat tied to the Kenyan context, volunteers' ability to speak in the host-country language has also been documented in other research on the contributions of international volunteers to development (Lough et al. 2011; Jester/Thyer 2007). Even if staff and community members are relatively fluent in English, native fluency in the English language also seems to be helpful for writing grants and framing proposals to Northern organisations.

3.3.7 Cultural competence

The lack of cultural competence and knowledge of volunteers is yet another variable that seems to be a limitation to their effectiveness. Community members, in particular, expressed a concern about volunteers who lack cultural knowledge or who have a fear of, or discomfort with, local settings. Staff and community members asserted that volunteers who are not culturally competent are more difficult to manage and are perceived as less effective in the community. Prior international experience, living with a host family, reciprocal partnerships and “guided reflection” with staff, volunteers, or community members all have been associated with higher intercultural competence in previous research (Lough 2011), though these variables were not expressly measured in this study.

3.3.8 Race

Racial issues emerged as highly relevant contingencies in the Kenyan context. Similar findings have been documented in other research on the impacts of international volunteers in Tanzania and Mozambique (Perold et al. 2013). White volunteers are generally perceived as being higher in resources, education/expertise and trustworthiness compared to Black volunteers.

Many staff and community members associated the race of volunteers with trust in their actions and motivations. One quote by a staff member typifies a sentiment that was frequently expressed during interviews and workshops:

Race also is a factor because people tend to believe in people from the West as being truthful. Yeah, we believe people from other countries or Western countries....I don't know but I heard it from my grandfather—he was telling me that a mzungu cannot lie even if he does something wrong, he will just tell you the truth....

According to surveyed staff members, 81 per cent believed that having a White volunteer work in the organisation increases the trust others have of their organisation, while only 38 per cent believed the same of Black volunteers. The staff did not state that they themselves believed White volunteers to be more trustworthy, but they did believe that the race of volunteers affected other people's trust of the organisation.

As noted earlier in this report, the White volunteers were also perceived as having more resources. Consequently, many reported that communities expected help and financial support from White volunteers. The importance of volunteers' race seems to be more influential for volunteers who stay for less than a few months. According to various members of different focus groups, volunteers who stay for a long term in the community are less likely to provide resources directly, while those

who come for a shorter term frequently tend to provide resources or to tap into connections with resources abroad. If volunteers stay in a community for long periods without providing resources, community members find that, although they are White, they are often not able or willing to provide resources.

Communities also associate race with “outsiders” and the external connections they may offer. When partner programs host White international volunteers, this may alter others’ perceptions of the organisation as more globally connected. They are often perceived as having greater access to external support and new ideas. This notion is exemplified in the following quote from a staff member of a partner program:

Whenever we see the White come and work alongside us, [the community] really values our organisation. They don't just see us as the local NGO, but they see some sort of international face—that we are, well, kind of networked and we get people from abroad of diverse experience, divergent views, something positive to support our work.

These findings can have both positive and negative implications. As noted earlier in this report, what does it mean that some interviewees perceive of White volunteers’ ideas as “better” and more progressive? How might this impact the implementation and uptake of indigenous practices and models? While techniques and strategies from Western perspectives may be beneficial, there are many examples illustrating how the unexamined replication of practice methods are inappropriately applied to local problems, and may inhibit the invention of local solutions. Given this potential challenge, future research may need to consider the relevance of volunteers’ contributions in light of race-based perceptions.

3.3.9 Gender

With a few exceptions, staff and community members did not believe that the gender of international volunteers had a substantial effect on outcomes. Some believed men were more effective with manual labour, and were more emotionally distant, while others disagreed. Others claimed that female volunteers were more compassionate and open, and worked better with community members. However, gender assumptions were consistently confronted by different community members citing exceptions. Overall, no findings related to gender were consistent enough across interviews to make firm conclusions.

For specific organisations or volunteer activities, gender did seem to make a difference. For instance, female staff members in a faith-based organisation claimed that having a female international volunteer take a managerial role in their organisation seemed to change how other [male] staff members valued female staff in their organisation. Likewise, a few staff members discussed how male international

volunteers worked in the kitchen, fetched water or would engage in other activities that are typically considered women's work. They noticed that, after time, local males would also join them—challenging gender roles and stereotypes. Thus, the gender of the volunteer may have a role in programs aiming to promote gender equity—at least in the Kenyan context.

4. Limitations of this Study

Researchers involved in this study are independent from volunteer sending organisations. However, because some of the researchers are from the global North, it is likely that many community members and staff of partner organisations considered them to be part of the same system.⁷ While researchers were careful to describe their relationship of independence, it is likely that study informants were not entirely forthcoming about the challenges presented by volunteers. A pleasing bias is common in most evaluation studies. However, this bias may be more pronounced in this study given the organisations' stated interests to retain volunteers in the programs. Staff and community members may be concerned about the potential withdrawal of volunteers in the case of negative evaluations.

The single country case study is able to speak to many impacts of international service programs operating in Kenya, although the small n-size does not allow for textbook generalisations. It is also not clear whether similar impacts and contributing causes would be evident in other global regions. In particular, the effects of race and gender on impacts such as diversity and trust may be quite specific to this particular location and context. Future studies that span multiple countries and contexts will likely uncover many new findings or conflicting results.

5. Conclusion

Findings indicate that volunteers can and do contribute to development goals as valued human resources in development projects. They contribute notably to capacity building; they leverage their social capital; and they engage in advocacy to provide “bridges” to resources. However, this is not what makes international volunteers unique. As human resources, international volunteers are somewhat comparable to paid development workers, local staff members and local volunteers, who all work to accomplish development goals. Given similarities in human resource contributions, this was not listed as the primary justification for recruiting and utilising international volunteers.

7 Although some South-South international volunteer programs were included in the study, the majority of partner programs hosted volunteers from the global North.

Certain development outcomes, such as volunteers' contributions to health, education and agricultural productivity, may be concretely measured when single programs are isolated. This is evident in the literature reviews, and is often the conclusion of individual studies and program evaluations. However, with an understanding that "the attribution of a specific outcome to an outside intervention is potentially at odds with the approach of cultivating local ownership" (Devereux 2010), it is potentially disconcerting that staff and community members so readily identify volunteers' capacity-building and resource contributions. This may suggest an undervaluing of local knowledge and ownership.

As a community-centred or "people-centred development" approach (VOSESA 2011; UNDP 2011), international volunteering should be acknowledged and celebrated within a "relational framework of development" (Devereux 2010). As expressed by David Lewis, "International volunteering as an arena of development activity is important because it potentially humanizes what is often left as a technical or managerial process ...International volunteering can provide tangible contributions to development in the form of skills and other resource transfers, but also perhaps more importantly it can promote international understanding and solidarity" (Lewis 2005).

Organisations and communities in Kenya assert that they value volunteers for their labour, expertise and the resources they contribute to development goals. However, they also strongly emphasise other contributions that would not otherwise be available without the presence of international volunteers. Organisations and communities value the trust, local accountability, creativity and optimism of volunteers. They value the increase in civic engagement and local volunteerism that accompany international volunteerism. They value the diversity and new ideas that international volunteers bring to development projects and program management. These are the contributions that organisations and communities identify as adding unique value to development projects. Such outcomes are often difficult to assess in logic models, and may be overlooked in organisational theories of change. Nonetheless, they are highly valued.

Nonetheless, not all models of international volunteerism contribute equally. Measuring development effectiveness requires considering various service models, along with the attributes of volunteers serving within these models. Outcomes appear to differ depending on the duration, directionality and continuity of service placements. Likewise, characteristics of individual volunteers such as their educational and skill level, their nationality, race, gender, and language and cultural competence, all affect outcomes in different ways.

While partner programs may prefer certain service models or certain types of volunteers, deviations do not necessarily imply that programs need to invent a

different solution. For instance, while most partner programs reported that longer-term volunteers would be more effective at meeting development targets, the provision of short-term volunteers does not necessarily violate development principles of “joint responsibility” and “mutual accountability”. Development activities are commonly a compromise of what the community requests and what the donor can provide. The same formula applies to international volunteer programs (Leigh 2005). Although IVCOs may not be able to meet all preferences and requests of the partner programs, staff and community members’ frequent expressions of gratitude for the sacrifice, efforts and commitment of volunteers across all forms indicate a general satisfaction with this compromise.

In summary, international volunteer-supported programs will be more effective at achieving development goals when IVCOs can successfully match service attributes with the goals and priorities of community partners. Thus, taking deeper stock of “contributing causes” will be important for future studies on the impact of international volunteering. As variations in service activities, individual attributes and institutional attributes are measured and matched with outcomes, it will be easier to plan and design service models that align with the development priorities that are valued by partner programs and communities.

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