Rethinking Short-Term Aid

The Benefits of Short-Term vs. Long-Term International Volunteerism

Honours Thesis in International Development Studies
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**Executive Summary**

From local to cross-cultural experiences, the changing face of volunteerism has seen an increasing number of individuals seeking to assist the less fortunate. Former studies have often concentrated efforts on understanding the psychological and physical motives behind a person’s decision to volunteer. Within these analyses, scholars have developed a series of common motives, benefits and factors influencing a positive volunteering experience. While many of these studies have been focused on community-based volunteerism, a rise in the number of volunteers seeking an international experience has merited increasing concentration. This shift has contributed to an influx of young volunteer-tourists and with it the creation of short-term development placements abroad to satisfy this demand. Demands for short-term placements have similarly been mirrored by development workers that have historically worked overseas for periods of at least two years.

Has this shift contributed to a positive change in the way development is implemented and perceived? This study seeks to quantify the benefits of short-term versus long-term international volunteering in order to discover whether the increasing popularity of short-term volunteering positions has had consequential effects in the developing world.

By using secondary data, questionnaires, and interviews, this study aims to determine whether the calculation of a benefits analysis is possible and/or justifies a particular volunteer or placement duration. Understanding the benefits of both placement durations may help organizations direct and justify one type of volunteer over another to facilitate development goals. Together these shifts have changed the course of organizations in the way in which they engage in and market overseas volunteering experiences.

Through an exploratory case study research, this paper concludes that there are no significant benefits of long-term volunteerism that clearly outweigh those achieved by short-term volunteers. It also refutes past criticisms of short-term volunteering as ‘hit and run’ demonstrating that this group is as likely to produce positive benefits and outcomes as are people who serve longer durations abroad. These findings shed important light on current understandings of international volunteerism and sets up the groundwork for future research in the field.
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PART I: Introduction

Research Problem:

A volunteer is “someone who willingly (gives) unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills, through an organization or group” (Cordingley, 2000; 73); “but does the helper have the ability to help, and is the help actually helpful?” (Clary & Orenstein, 1991; 59). On the domestic front, many studies have sought to understand the psychological and physical motives that drive volunteerism. These studies have cumulated into a categorization of why people choose to volunteer (their motives), the benefits they receive from volunteering, and the factors that influence a positive volunteering experience. While extensive studies have examined community volunteer experiences and motives, little research of the same nature has been applied to international volunteers functioning abroad.

On the international front, the world has seen a move towards the provision of greater short-term volunteering opportunities. This has primarily been a response to increasing demands for shorter term experiences, by both development worker and new age volunteers. In the former case, decreasing mandate lengths have been the general trend in overseas placements as a result of diminishing desires for long-term commitments overseas. In the latter case, organizations have seen the potential benefits of tapping into an expanding resource of young eager volunteer-tourists which has shifted the way in which they engage in and advertise their development practices. With the increased popularity and affectation of shorter term placements, an analysis of the subsequent consequences derived from this shift and the resulting benefits have been essential, yet have gone relatively unscathed. The lack of analysis on the contributions accrued from this change in aid duration represents a short-fall in the assessment of the phenomenon that is increasingly changing the way in which we engage in development.

This study attempts to discover whether the continuous shift to shorter term placements has played a role in the benefits derived from international volunteer work. By assessing both

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1 Volunteer-tourist are travelers that seek to spend some of their vacation time abroad while contributing to a humanitarian cause through participation in a development project (Wearing, 2001)
partner organization and volunteer perspectives, this study seeks to find correlations between the type of volunteer duration and the benefits achieved in order to extrapolate the advantages of short-term versus long-term international development initiatives.

**Objectives and Research Questions**

With the increasing emergence of short-term placement opportunities, the consequences of this shift have been relatively un-studied. More organizations are being dragged into the provision of quick international voluntary experiences. The effects of such shifts and an analysis of the changes in the quality of development work implemented as a result, have yet to be fully investigated. Scholars have generally pointed to the negative consequences of shorter term opportunities, especially those sought out by eager youth. This study seeks to investigate the perceived effects and reveal important correlations in the benefits and results of this overall trend towards shorter placement durations. Results are important for Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and governments in understanding the effects that such a shift has had, providing arguments for why this movement should or should not be supported and/or pursued.

This exploratory study seeks to quantify the benefits of short-term versus long-term international volunteering positions in the development world. The main questions that will guide this research are:

- What are the benefits of short-term vs. long-term international volunteering positions in the developing world?
- Are there noticeable differences in the benefits provided between short-term and long-term volunteering?
- Is there a correlation between volunteer placement characteristics and achieved benefits?
- How are volunteers of both short-term and long-term durations perceived by the local organization (in terms of their efficiency, effectiveness, and attitudes)?
- Are there certain activities or sectors where short-term or long-term volunteers are more concentrated? Are there differences between the perceived benefits of short-term vs. long-term initiatives according to the types of activities implemented?
Context

Over 45% of the Canadian population aged 15 and older volunteer on a yearly basis (Hall et al., 2006). While the level of altruistic volunteering is estimated at much less, due to compulsory volunteering in graduation criteria for Ontario high school students, the interest in participating in volunteering experiences has been rekindled by the growth of overseas experiences directed towards younger volunteer generations.

Satisfaction attained, motivations for helping, and the factors that influence the quantity of help are all common themes in today’s volunteer literature. While scholars have shed important light on these issues, most studies have centered their research on community-based volunteerism, going as far as to calculate the cost-benefit ratio of giving one’s help (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999). While an assessment of the opportunity costs and factors influencing one’s willingness to help has been beneficial in understanding the psychology behind volunteerism, little research has been conducted on the costs and benefits of having volunteers (and which kinds of volunteers) from the organization’s point of view. With the increasing popularity of programs such as volunteer-tourism (aka voluntourism), the gap year, and experiential learning, the results of the shift towards shorter term placements will become increasingly important in the way organizations choose and administer their development workers.

Thus far, views on recent shifts in development opportunities have not been entirely positive. Simpson (2004) argues that the rise of new opportunities such as the gap year (the year break after high school) has led to a development focused on individual advancement, creating a separation between the volunteer and ‘the other’. She claims that such separation, points to the need for a closer examination of the consequences of this popular trend especially with regards to the practice’s social justice component (Simpson, 2004). The development and implementation of quick volunteer experiences points to a greater shift in how development is approached; from one where volunteers seek opportunities to aid in organizations and causes they find interesting (based on motivation to help) to one that is based on the marketization of these organizations and their causes to potential helpers (attracting help through the image of ‘fun and exciting’ development opportunities) (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Mac Neela, Gallagher & Carey, 2008).

In an attempt to investigate the consequences of this changing ideology, this paper will use a case study to extract perceived benefits of these new types of volunteers. The Uniterra I
program, a five year initiative (2004-2009) financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will be the focus of this research. Uniterra I was a collaborative project initiated by World University Service of Canada and Centre d’Etude et de Cooperation International (WUSC/CECI). This Canadian program ran projects in 13 countries around the world, one of which, Burkina Faso, will be the main focus for this study. There are 16 partner organizations that have benefited from the Uniterra I program in Burkina Faso, which have seen a total of 123 volunteers over the past five years. This study seeks to interact with the volunteers who have worked in Burkina Faso over the past five years as well as contact the 16 local partner organizations, all of which are locally run and administered. Through these communications, this study attempts to understand the perceptions of benefits derived by short-term and long-term volunteers, to see whether a correlation can be drawn between placement duration and benefits achieved.

**Methodology**

**Study Area**

The bulk of this research was concentrated in Burkina Faso. More specifically, it expanded across the five main regions in which the Burkina Faso Uniterra I program functioned. The choice of location was based on research feasibility as eleven months were spent within the country and a general understanding of the people and culture attained during this time. The decision to focus research solely in Burkina Faso allowed for an analysis of various types of organizations and volunteer efforts while controlling for major environmental factors (such as political and socioeconomic differences).

**Study Sample**

This study focused on Uniterra I program participants. This included volunteers as well as the partner organizations in which they have functioned. Seeking participants through the program’s registry offered a study sample represented by various volunteer and placement characteristics. Narrowing focus on the participants of this particular five year program permitted a better comparison of volunteer and organizational attitudes as the conditions under which volunteers are sent as well as the program’s functions and standards were held constant.
Data Collected

Using the five year Uniterra I program administered by WUSC/CECI, this study sought to extrapolate information on the benefits of short-term versus long-term international volunteering positions. The information sought was both quantitative and qualitative. The former extracted volunteer information such as age, gender, and duration of volunteer placement. The qualitative data sought out was information on partner organization and volunteer opinions on the benefits, satisfaction, and efficiency of the volunteers’ work. The data was examined distinctly on its own, as well as in-tandem, to explore correlations between volunteer characteristics and the benefits resulting from their work. This analysis sought to reveal whether short-term or long-term international volunteers are most effective and likely to bring about positive change to the hosting organization.

Methods

This study utilized three types of data collection methods: Secondary Data, Questionnaires, and Interviews. Each method is discussed below respectively.

1. Secondary Data- Both private and public documents were sought out. Private documents were those retrieved from the Uniterra I database (official documents, reports, volunteer registrations). Public documents (scholarly articles, published documents) were also used in order to gather a greater understanding on the subject matter as well as factors and methods previously applied.

2. Questionnaires- Questionnaires were the main source of data collected. Two questionnaires were created to extract information from both partner organizations and participating volunteers. The first was sent out to all 16 partner organizations in Burkina Faso. These were focused around evaluations of each of the volunteers that have functioned within the organization over the five year Uniterra I program. Because of a limited access to Internet and communication methods, partner organization questionnaires were sent out through Internet and by mail in order to increase the rate of completion. A second survey was developed online and sent out electronically to
volunteers that have participated in international placements through the Uniterra I program. These were focused on an evaluation of placement characteristics and an assessment of implemented activities. Online questionnaires were used as a way to facilitate the access to, completion, and retrieval of data collected for both participants and researcher.

3. **Interviews** - Interviews were carried out with experts in the field (scholars, researchers, NGO representatives). This method was undertaken in order to attain a greater understanding and an in-depth knowledge of opinions on historical volunteering trends and opinions. These interviews were structured in order to lead discussions and were one-on-one between the interviewer and person of interest. Where face-to-face interviews were not feasible (due to distance) a phone interview was conducted in its place.

The timeline of methods implemented were: the collection and analysis of public and private documents, the distribution of partner organization surveys, and the sending out of volunteer questionnaires. Interviews were conducted at all stages of the research.

**Significance of the Study and Expected Outcomes**

An analysis of the benefits of short-term versus long-term international development volunteers can be very useful for organizations that recruit and send volunteers overseas. By revealing whether there are more benefits to having short-term or long-term volunteers or whether there are greater benefits in specific activities achieved by each, organizations will be able to use the results to direct particular volunteers to achieve specific international development goals.

Seeking whether short-term or long-term volunteers produce greater benefits may also reveal the advantages of creating both types of placement duration. By revealing whether or not there is a difference in the efficiency or benefits derived between short-term and long-term volunteers, organizations will be able to direct their attentions to developing the placement duration which is most valuable for the objective pursued. A quantitative analysis may also shed light on these findings and be used to justify the particular type of volunteer desired, and thus
serve in the validation of funds requested to run these programs. Local organizations within the
development world will also benefit as they are the recipients of this aid. A better understanding
of the factors that affect the benefits achieved by international volunteers can result in greater
efficiency and tangible benefits for these organizations and the populations served.
PART II: Volunteerism: Definition, Trends, Categories

History of International Volunteerism

In Canada, volunteers give 1.11 billion hours of service per year, the equivalent of 578,000 full time employees or $11 billion in benefits. But how do we define a volunteer? Can we distinguish between someone who gives 20 hours per week of service at no pay, to another that gives 40 hours per week at a wage below market value? Defining a ‘volunteer’ has always been problematic as volunteers operate in a multitude of different organizations and contexts and take on very different roles in each case (Bussell & Forbes, 2001). While definitions have varied across time and space, most have incorporated four key dimensions to what it means to be a volunteer: free will, the availability of tangible rewards (remunerations), formal organization, and proximity to the beneficiaries (Meijs et al., 2003). In general, many scholars agree that volunteering is “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause” (Wilson, 2000; 215). It also comprises of “activities that have a market value greater than any remuneration received for such activity”, thus producing a good or service at below market cost (Cnaan & Amrofell, 1994; 25).

According to Werna & Schneider (2003), the role of the volunteer is one of an external catalyzing agent where he/she initiates and consolidates community development processes and accelerates activities that would otherwise take much longer to process. The view of volunteers as catalyzing agents has not always been common. One of the first popularized views of a volunteer’s roles was depicted in Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America, 1835. For de Tocqueville, volunteer work and associated organizations were the cornerstone of functioning democracies, where non-profit sectors shielded society from the “tyranny of the majority” (Anheier & Salamon, 1999; 48). The implementation of charity work by NGOs was in part a response to the limitations of government functions. The good work of organizations and the volunteers that functioned within them soon led to government initiatives seeking volunteers to
help target and implement effective, transparent programs and policies geared towards helping the general population (Meijs et al, 2003). The focus of collaborative efforts between governments and the non-profit sector soon experienced a transformation. Whereas governments once sought the assistance of able bodied volunteers to deliver their programs, NGOs were increasingly taking on the mantel in seeking greater government participation in pursuing their initiatives. By seeking greater partnerships with political figures, NGOs attempted to expand their scope and influence while working collectively with powerful actors to target and achieve overarching development goals.

The shift in NGO directions has also played a role in modifying what it means to be a volunteer. Traditionally connected to religious and political communities, volunteering in the past was greatly tied to ideas of altruism; an action which is “enacted with no clear expectation of reciprocation” (Murnigham, Kim & Metzger, 1993: 3). Involvement was also centrally membership-based (i.e. through religious association) and focused on long-term participation (Rehberg, 2005). Today, volunteerism has turned away from a focus on the service provided and placed a greater emphasis on the types of projects implemented and the expectations of volunteers on the potential experience as well as the time-commitments of participating. For this reason, volunteers have become more selective in the types of volunteer opportunities sought out and prefer to get involved in experiences that will bring them greater personal benefits. This change of attitude has been both the result of and perpetuated the trend towards younger generations getting involved in development (Rehberg, 2005). What factors have contributed to this shift? How have volunteer movements and the basic concept of what it means to be a volunteer changed over time?

**Early volunteerism**

The concept of giving time to a particular cause out of one’s own free will has always existed. Some of the first documented signs of non-profit thinking dates back to 4,000 BC where Babylonians ordered the Code of Hammurabi that declared justice be given to widows, orphans, and the poor (Smillie, 1995). Signs of charity later became prominent components of various religions, promoting the concept of helping others within one’s own community and later across
borders as early as 1647. In 1750, the term ‘volunteer’ expanded beyond religious institutions and into non-profit colonial associations (such as the Church of England). This decade also saw the first official employment of the term ‘volunteer’ by governments used to distinguish civilians mobilized for military services during emergency situations (Cnann, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996). Dwindling government support for volunteer organizations in the following decades gave rise to a need to secure alternative sources of funding to sustain operations. As a response, the establishment of private donations and service purchases were developed as a way to collect funds to continue day-to-day activities (Hammack, 2001). By the 1860s, national leaders began to consider non-government associations with greater credibility, even calling upon them for assistance in times of need. This was simultaneous to a shift in focus of non-profit practices towards those of curbing class divisions, assisting the less fortunate, and helping victims of natural disasters (Hammack, 2001). The creation of the Red Cross in 1864 gave rise to the emergence of the modern volunteer movement, which saw a growth away from government by emphasizing a separation between non-profits and the state (Anheier & Salamon, 1999).

With the start of a new era, escalating mistrust in governments and fears of socialism contributed to a rise in the establishment of philanthropic foundations by rich industrialists such as the Sage and Rockefeller Foundations in the 1900s (Smillie, 1995). While these organizations focused on domestic issues, a rise in cross-cultural work also began to emerge, particularly in Europe with the popularization of volunteer-sending programs and organizations. Perhaps the most popular of its time was ‘Work Camps’ which focused on short-term reconstructive projects after World War I (Devereux, 2008). With the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the non-profit sector’s growth became severely hindered. Raising funds to implement poverty-alleviation strategies became progressively difficult. To prevent potential negative effects, some governments responded with the implementation of corporate tax deductions in order to encourage donations to non-governmental associations (Smillie, 1995). The government also supported the non-profit sector by providing direct financial support to organizations that conducted activities that the government would otherwise have to do itself (Smillie, 1995). This contributed to a strengthening in relationships between the state and non-state actors as

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2 The year 1647 saw the first recorded example of overseas charitable activity when Ireland sent shipments of food to New England to assist the poor and distressed population after a war with the Indians (Smillie, 1995).
governments could benefit from assisting existing organizations to provide needed services (Smillie, 1995).

The strengthening of relationships between state and non-state actors began to be contrasted with an increasing realization that both parties should have dissimilar functions. Changing responsibilities and attitudes towards the provision of welfare by religious associations on the one hand and by state actors on the other became increasingly apparent (Lewis, 2006). By the 1940s, these changing ideologies led to the emergence of the concept of ‘aid’ (Riddell, 1997) defined as “a transfer of resources on confessional terms…that is, more generous or ‘softer’ than loans obtainable in the world’s capital markets” (Mailafia, 1997; 4).

The official coining of ‘aid’ and an increase presence and recognition of voluntary organizations allowed this sector to gain increasing credibility from governments and the public in the pursuit of development initiatives. The work of non-profits gained slow momentum throughout the early 20th century. It was not until the 1940s that voluntary organizations gained increasing appreciation and began to play a major role in development initiatives. The shifts in the non-profit sector since the 1940s, and particularly in the last two decades forms the basic period of investigation for this study. Overall, these shifts can be categorized into three dominant phases: 1940s-1980s- the rise of the non-profit sector; 1970s-1990s- the divergence of the non-profit sector; and 1990s-present- the transforming motives and associated mass volunteerism within the non-profit sector.

**Evolution of Volunteerism and the NGO Sector**

**Phase 1: The Rise of the Non-profit Sector, 1940s-1980s**

The rise of the non-profit sector did not increase significantly until the post World War II period, where some of the most famous NGOs known today emerged³ (Smillie, 1995). With an initial focus on reconstructive efforts, many organizations began to move some of their activities towards preventative measures (through the promotion of development in low-income developing regions) (Chabbott, 1998). The proliferation of bilateral and multilateral agreements and activities were also emerging and were reinforced by the formation of international

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³ Examples include Oxfam in 1942, CARE in 1945 and World Vision in 1950 (with various spin-offs and localized organizations spreading around the world).
institutions such as the United Nations and the Bretton Woods (Lewis, 2006). These institutions not only led to an absolute rise in organizations devoted to international development, but it also promoted the emergence of global solidarity movements (Chabott, 1998).

Movements that allowed people across borders to join forces on a given issue led to the proliferation of volunteer programs providing opportunities for individuals to become more directly involved in a cause. The demand for such experiences also increased with the introduction and popularization of the term ‘underdevelopment’ by President Truman in 1947 (Ingram, 2008). The conceptualization of underdevelopment as a set of ideas, and as a system of institutions and technologies, led to small steps in thinking of NGO activities as a positive way to tackle development issues (Lewis, 2006). Emerging from this thinking was also the consideration of sending volunteers overseas to enact development projects, the first of which emerged out of the World University Service Assembly in India in 1950 (Devereux, 2008). Here, the idea of fully integrating volunteers in a development context as a better way of doing development rather than simply offering their intellectual insight to a project evolved.

Many have argued however that the true thrust forward of cross-border development work came from the formalization of the Peace Corps in the United States, which was signed into existence in 1961 by President Kennedy (Smillie, 1995). The popularization of overseas placements by the initiation of the Peace Corps provided the voluntary sector with a fresh new vitality (Smith, Rochester, & Hedley, 1995). The increased frequency of overseas operations also gave rise to the coining of ‘International Volunteering and Services’ (IVS) which represented a growing movement consisting of “an organized period of engagement and contribution to society by volunteers who work across an international border, in another country, or countries… may be sponsored by public or private organizations, (are) valued by society, and (where) volunteers receive little or no monetary compensation” (Sherraden, Lough & McBride, 2008; 397-8). With growing knowledge and understanding of these activities, there was an expanding recognition that volunteering provided a great reservoir of skills, vigor, and special knowledge, capable of effectively tackling the world’s problems (Meijs et al., 2003).

The success of such undertakings contributed to a growing self-confidence in the voluntary sector, which was further popularized by a rising dissatisfaction with the state’s welfare administration (Smith, Rochester, & Hedley, 1995). As a result, governments attempted to regain legitimacy by increasing the types and number of placements available for concerned
citizens through the creation of government organized programs offering opportunities for people to volunteer in developing countries overseas (Smillie, 1995).

Phase 2: The Divergence of the NGO Sector, 1970s-1990s

While some programs focused on increasing overseas involvement, others sought a movement away from westernized development initiatives. Oxfam was one of the leading organizations driving this trend, with a focus on turning away from missionary type projects (top-down aid) and moving closer to grassroots initiatives in the 1970s (Smillie, 1995). Initially a radical concept, more and more NGOs followed suit, reducing direct program operations in the South and creating greater opportunities for organizations of the South to take up the development mantle (Smillie, 1995). With this came the notion of making a difference through ‘capacity building’, which enabled “those out on the margins to represent and defend their interests more effectively” (Ingram, 2008; 40). Capacity building incorporated a focus on harnessing local support and change rather than focusing initiatives on a global scale (Chambers, 1995). This also integrated the practice of working closely with local populations through the exchange of information, knowledge, and skills (Cobbs-Hoffman, 1998).

With a drastic shift in the roles of NGOs, the non-profit sector encountered a major identity crisis in the 1980s (Smillie, 1995). On the one hand, governments increasingly disregarded non-profit work in the development of their own societies, while on the other hand organizations were experiencing significant shifts in volunteer demands to participate in NGO initiatives. Non-profit organizations in the global south were dominantly foreign, and volunteers functioning within them were seen as ‘do-gooders’ and amateurs within the complex development world (Smillie, 1995). With changing ideologies of non-profit roles, the informality of development workers began to alter throughout the 1980s with an increasing demand for formal professionals to take on positions formerly held by non-specialized individuals (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). With experts taking on coordinating roles in volunteer and task management, paid positions became increasingly popular within the Third World (Cnaan & Amrofell, 1994). The use of experts in the field was such the focus that by the early 1990s, one fifth of total overseas development assistance was done by skilled experts (Cassen et al., 1994). This

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4 Some of the most well known government initiated programs include The American Peace Corps, The Canadian University Service Overseas, and Britain’s Voluntary Service Overseas (Anheier & Salamon, 1999).
reinforced the ideology at the time that Western experts were equipped with special knowledge and skills that are “particularly well placed to solve the problems of the developing world” (Parpart, 1995: 221). A greater focus on providing professional, efficient, and accountable services even led some organizations to veer away from the concept of ‘volunteer’ as it denoted attitudes of unprofessionalism (Devereux, 2008).

Beyond the shift to focusing on greater professionalism in the volunteers sent abroad, changes in development worker positions, family structures, and motivations led to a drastic change in the desire to go overseas. This led to a large drop in overseas development volunteer numbers from 250 million in the late 1980s to just under 100 million a decade later (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). These societal shifts also contributed to major transformations within the non-profit community and led to increasing numbers of organizations following Oxfam’s lead in focusing greater attention on working through southern-based NGOs (due to decreasing volunteer interest in the North) (Smillie, 1995). By the late 1990s, the non-profit sector was struggling to find its place in society. Amidst public criticism and decreasing volunteer numbers, the sector was also hard hit with diminishing funds. The drop in the quantity of donated aid had fallen more sharply in the 1990s than it had in the last 25 years, which raised serious questions for the sector’s viability (Riddell, 1997). The need to reevaluate organizational sources of funding was further enhanced by recent economic crises. With government cutbacks in development support, also known as Official Development Assistance (ODA)\(^5\), the non-profit sector was struggling to survive amidst budget cuts and changing public attitudes about capital, credit, work, and philanthropic activities (Gowdy et al., 2009).

**Phase 3: Changing Motives and Volunteerism through NGOs, late 1990s-present**

On November 20\({}^{th}\), 1997, the volunteer sector got the promotion it needed during the 52nd United Nations (UN) General Assembly. At the assembly, the UN proclaimed the year 2001 as the ‘Year of the Volunteer’ and December 5\(^{th}\) as International Volunteer Day (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). With the UN support, the merits and value of volunteer work was endorsed and became increasingly encouraged by other international institutions as well as world governments.

\(^{5}\) According to the ‘ODA Accountability Act’, ODA is international assistance that a) contributes to poverty reduction, b) takes into account the perspectives of the poor and c) is consistent with international human rights standards (CIDA 2)
Increasing media coverage of the plight of the world’s poorest also led to a rise in consciousness and a desire to help. A returned focus to the provision of international placements became predominant within some organizations, as both a way of appealing to the new generation of volunteers, and as a way of increasing financial sustainability through the adoption of pay-to-volunteer work terms (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). This in effect gave rise to greater self-interested individuals taking on positions formerly dominated by altruistic participants in development. Previously linked to religion and ideologies of ‘service to the nation’, new age volunteers were less tied to traditional organizational forms and increasingly sought opportunities showing a potential for self-advancement (Gowdy et al., 2009).

While volunteer motivations have changed throughout the decades, the need for volunteers and the potential benefits of their services have not. With tight funds and constant budget cuts, NGOs have moved to profit-seeking (or simply profit-to-survive) schemes to stay afloat. This has contributed to ‘pay-to-volunteer’ assistance through programs that appeal to the volunteers’ preferences and their adventure-seeking nature (focusing on providing positions based on volunteer preferences rather than those embodied by the NGO). This transformation has been particularly facilitated with increasing globalization, cheaper travel, and the spread of technologies such as access to Internet (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). Governments have also noticed the benefits of such programs, in some cases promoting the allocation of funds to those NGOs able to contribute to their own financial resources (through these types of pay-to-volunteer programs) and through the provision of volunteer opportunities for youth (to enhance growth and personal skills) (Gillies, 1997). The success of such endeavours has been quite significant. With the rise of programs appealing to a new generation of volunteers, NGOs have managed to tap into the demand from young generations seeking dissimilar travel experiences and volunteer opportunities. The appeal to new styles of development has driven some NGOs to initiate for-profit-businesses in order to keep up with the demand. Pay to volunteer services have led to new organizational forms where there is an increasing cross-over from non-profits to profit-generating enterprises and from corporations to socially responsible institutions (Gowdy et al., 2009).

Programs that have found particular success through these types of experiences are the gap year, volunteer-tourism, and service-learning practica. Although fairly recent, these phenomena have triggered large shifts in the types of volunteers recruited as well as contributed
to a transformation in how development is undertaken. New opportunities in making money by offering experiential learning voyages have also contributed to the expansion of the NGO (and other more corporate organizational) sectors. In the non-profit sector alone, the number of international NGOs has risen from 832 in 1951 to over 40,000 by the late 1990s (Ingram, 2000). The increasing scope of NGO activities have accompanied the expansion of its power, reach and needs. Receiving over $20 billion per year in foundation payouts alone, the non-profit sector is quickly moving upward in its power and capacity to direct change (Eisenberg, 2000).

The shifting types of opportunities for volunteers to accrue greater benefits from serving time to a good cause has played a particular role in alluring potential candidates to the job. While growing fast, some scholars warn of the negative impact that overseas development has created. Sherraden, Lough & McBride (2008) reinforce these considerations as they note that “IVS6 may perpetuate, or even accelerate the cultural, political, and economic hegemony of ‘First World’ over ‘Third World countries’ to the detriment of host communities” (407). Many scholars have written on this debate and warn against the application of these types of cultural exchanges programs where the needs and desires of the volunteer may take priority over those of the host community.

The concept of volunteering first emerged as an altruistic endeavour with religious institutions taking the lead in facilitating charitable actions. By the early 1900s, mistrust in the government’s ability to provide services and a rise in newly perceived inadequacies expanded the types and actions of the non-profit sector. The thrust forward of the NGOs occurred particularly after World War II with a demand for reconstructive development. The Peace Corps also popularized overseas volunteerism, and helped boost the conceptualization of aid and underdevelopment as a social concern. While some pursued an expansion overseas by calling for greater professionalization in international positions, other NGOs took a step back and began focusing on grassroots initiatives in light of surfacing criticisms of western top-down development strategies. By the 1980s, the non-profit sector was suffering an identity crisis which contributed to huge decreases in volunteer numbers. With economic recessions, budget cuts to non-profit sectors, and changing public ideologies, the sector was hard hit well into the 1990s. By the end of the decade, the sector had been revamped with a new rise and promotion of

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6 International Volunteering and Services
experiential learning and voluntourism opportunities. NGOs increasingly bought into ‘pay-to-volunteer’ programs. Although these had the potential to change institutional motivations and goals, they provided an essential source of funding for NGOs to pursue their development objectives.

**Types of Volunteerism**

What has come to be accepted as the definition of ‘volunteer’ has been anything but consistent. While general consensus of the components making up a volunteer have been increasingly apparent, some authors argue the importance of distinguishing between the types of volunteers in order to avoid the generalization of statuses given to people who give time freely. This has especially been the case with the expanding scope of voluntary services, which has attracted non-traditional voluntary actors. Such scholars as Cnann, Handy, & Wadsworth (1996) argue that distinguishing between the types of volunteers is important and suggest two types of volunteer categories: pure and broadly defined. In the former, they argue that a person is considered a volunteer only when they give their time and effort extensively without remuneration (i.e. a doctor who volunteers in a soup kitchen). In the extended category, a more broadly defined volunteer may include a person who works without full financial compensation (i.e. a teenager who volunteers in a soup kitchen as part of their community service hours). In the latter case, the volunteer is not considered as highly since this category includes those that may perform a voluntary action but under the auspice that they are gaining from their contribution (i.e. in the teenager case, volunteering to complete a graduation requirement). In other words, the opportunity cost for ‘pure’ volunteers is much higher than for those in the ‘broadly defined’ category (Cnann, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996).

Taking these variations into account, it is important to not universalize the definitions of volunteering. This has been especially so, in light of the increasing popularity of overseas volunteering opportunities which has further blurred the meaning of what it means to be a volunteer. While a more broad definition of volunteer is used in this assessment, it is important to consider the differences in the types of international volunteering position and distinguish some of the main characteristics of those who take on such roles.
Altruistic vs. Egocentric Volunteering Services

Looking strictly at overseas volunteerism, we may distinguish International Volunteering Services into two main categories: programs that promote humanitarian assistance and programs that promote experiential encounters. The first is the provision of development aid for humanitarian purposes and is based on traditional altruistic motives. The focus here is on the expertise of the volunteer and how they can transfer their skills to the achievement of sustainable development on the ground. The second type of IVS is the promotion of cross-cultural understanding. This approach focuses greater attention on fostering global citizenship and mutual benefits. The volunteer in this case is not required to have any particular skills or qualifications as the emphasis is on personal development and global awareness. In this case, volunteers may be seen as egocentric as their participation is primarily based on the potential for personal gain (Sherraden et al., 2006).

Short-Term vs. Long-Term Volunteerism

While many debate the intricacies of categorizing volunteer placement durations, most will agree that a short-term volunteer placement is one which spans from a few weeks to six months while long-term placement are greater than six months. When considering the components of a long-term placement, most consent that they have greater development potential as the longer duration allows for greater exchange of technical skills, knowledge, and experience between volunteers and locals (Devereux 2008, Jedlicka, 1990, Sherraden, Lough & McBride, 2998). Sherraden, Lough & McBride (2008) argue that the time attributed to the volunteer to learn about the culture, gain trust, and build relationships cannot be successfully accomplished in less than six months. Rather, short-term placements may be more suitable in promoting cross-cultural learning than any substantial long-term goal. Scholars have also criticized this type of service for its ‘hit and run’ style of development, arguing that it may interrupt the continuity of projects (Sherraden, Lough & McBride, 2008). Such criticisms may be intensified where very short placement durations exist (i.e. those that are one to a few weeks in length). While such disapprovals have merit, very short-term placements may have its positive side. One constructive outcome of this type of placement is that it may appeal to highly skilled professionals who
cannot take a long leave of absence from their jobs. For these individuals, very short-term placements offer an opportunity for them to participate in a social justice project, while providing the benefit of quick transfers of specific technical skills for local organizations.

**Individual vs. Group Placements**

The majority of overseas placements are designed for individuals. Individual placements are usually geared towards a focus on the recruitment of professionals and technicians and on the transfer of skills by working alongside nationals on the ground (Sherraden *et al.*, 2006). They are seen as providing greater volunteer-host interaction and relationship-building and are thus said to provide longer lasting benefits (Sherraden, Lough & McBride, 2008). Although individuals may be seen as providing greater benefits over the long run, they are often more demanding on resources as NGOs cannot take advantage of cheaper training and placement costs attributed to such undertakings in larger numbers (as a group placement may provide). These traditional interpretations of individual volunteers have since diverged as greater individual placements are now being offered as ‘experiential’ opportunities where costs are increasingly being fronted by participants. Group placements on the other hand most frequently occur as partnerships between schools and other social groups with collaborating NGOs. In these cases, most of the costs are forwarded by the participants (or the coordinating association) while the NGO arranges placement details (Sherraden *et al.*, 2006). Eligibility for participation may be based on associational ties, age, and general enthusiasm for being a part of the experience (Sherraden *et al.*, 2006). The goals of the experience are generally those of cross-cultural understanding, personal development, and skill enhancement, and often include activities such as construction projects and work in educational and environmental settings (Sherraden *et al.*, 2006). While group placements may provide more tangible contributions, the group setting reduces the frequency and quality of meaningful cultural immersion and contacts with local populations (Sherraden, Lough & McBride, 2008).

In general, individual placements may be seen as the least invasive option and most beneficial for achieving sustainable development goals. With the rise of self-interested overseas placements however, the greater benefits traditionally accrued through individual placements may become overshadowed by the increasing frequency of more egocentric programs.
Types of New Age ‘Pay-To-Volunteer’ Programs

As previously noted, the shift towards greater ‘pay-to-volunteer’ programs has been primarily a response to funding cutbacks and changes in volunteer demands. These changes have contributed to a continuous cycle where NGO constraints and volunteer demands have driven a move towards providing greater volunteer-focused opportunities. This has subsequently increased the prospects for new (particularly) young individuals to participate in overseas experiences, which has in turn further increased the demand for these programs. Rising demands to participate in these types of services have been increasingly matched by NGOs as an important way of securing funding to pursue development objectives. The gap year, volunteer-tourism, and service-learning have been the three main programs driving this change. The following section will look at each subsequently.

The Gap Year

The gap-year represents the year break between high school and entering post-secondary education. Once seen as a form of rebellion and escape from formal institutions, the gap-year phenomenon has been attributed as a symbol of life experience in support of these previously rejected institutions (Simpson, 2005). It has come to represent “structured Third World experiences” with an emphasis on forming new citizens for a new global age (Simpson, 2005: 73). Most gap-year placements are between six to seven months (Sherraden, Lough & McBride, 2008) and have particularly appealed to Generation Y (those born between 1984-2000) who feel the pressure to advance their skill sets, improve their CVs, and experience self discovery (Ingram, 2008). The gap year grew substantially in the 1990s with a rising economy, and with high profile cases such as Prince William and Harry taking part in the movement. The rapid rise of the gap year (especially in Europe), had resulted in over 250,000 youth participating in the phenomenon in the UK alone by 2003 (Ingram, 2008). Today, the gap year continues to grow globally with increasing for-profit organizations and companies tapping into the rising market. NGOs have increasingly followed suit with a realization that a great source of funding can be accrued from these types of activities.

The gap-year has not been applauded by all with arguments that these types of programs have led to a development focused on personal improvement, creating a separation between the
volunteer and local populations (Simpson, 2004). The growing popularity of this movement has also transformed “the face of development (to one which) is both highly visible and consumable” (Simpson, 2004: 682). Voluntary Services Overseas, one of the largest international volunteer sending NGOs has shown particular concern for such a shift, warning of the risks of pushing new forms of colonialisms and reinforcing egotistical attitudes through the proliferation of such programs (Devereux, 2008). While many good gap-year programs exist, the concern here is over those that are poorly planned and inadequately supported. These, Ingram (2008) argues, end up benefiting no one but the travel company which runs them. To mitigate these consequences, gap year programs need careful consideration and planning. Devereux (2008) suggests such considerations to be extended not only to gap year programs, but to all short-term services in general, and suggests doing so through the infusion of social-justice pedagogy within their frameworks.

**Volunteer-Tourism**

Volunteer-tourists are those that “volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing, 2001: 211). These type of programs are typically less than six months and seek to “combine the hedonism of tourism with the altruism of development work” while making the practice of development “doable, knowable and accessible” (Simpson, 2004: 681). Volunteer-tourism practices emerged in the 1980s with a greater proliferation of the plight of the world’s poorest through the media. The focus on the distinction between the ‘have’ and the ‘have not’ led to a turning point in society and to the emergence of development based tourism programs (Callaman & Thomas, 2005). The approach of a new century led to a ‘volunteer-tourism rush’ emerging out of a guilt-conscious society and the popularization of social justice and global citizenship through such events as Band Aid and Live 8 which provided global exposure to poverty issues (Ingram, 2008). With tight budgets, charities began to see the benefits of this heightened interest and facilitated operations (through greater mobility, leisure time, and disposable incomes). In response, they began forming partnerships with touring companies as a way to diversify their

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7 VSO merged with Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) in 2008 forming CUSO-VSO
income generation (Ingram, 2008). Today, the types of volunteer-tourism programs continue to expand with recent trends in eco-tourism as a sustainable travel option and more recently slum tourism as an opportunity to see firsthand the realities of Third World poverty (Weiner, 2008).

Voluntourism leads to many potential consequences. Most noticeably is the fear that organizations may begin to provide increasing numbers of volunteer-tourism programs (whether due to budget cuts or as a response to increasing demands) without full consideration to the associated consequences. Such concerns as moving towards the ‘externalization’ of development and the potential for every aspect and dimension of human and society to be incorporated into these profit-driven programs posits considerable anxiety in the development sector (Simpson, 2004). Callaman & Thomas (2005) suggest that the proliferation of volunteer-tourism in development is simply an exploitation of a niche market emerging out of an increasingly restless society. For this reason, we must be careful that offering programs in a development context is not simply an exploitation of the world’s problems and an exposure of poor peoples’ vulnerabilities to the benefit of those willing and able to pay.

**Service-Learning**

The National Society for Experiential Education defines ‘service-learning’ as “any carefully monitored service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience” (Furco, 1996: 1). Furco (1996) also notes that experiential learning is premised on ‘reciprocal learning’ characterized by an academic context, equal benefits to both the provider and recipient, and a focus on the service provided as equal to the learning being achieved. In recent decades, there has been an increased focus on providing first hand experiences to students in order to enhance their learning experiences and better prepare them for the job market. Greater educational institutions are realizing the benefits of such endeavours and are responding by offering international placements where students gain through personal growth, increased self-esteem, and a greater awareness of social responsibility. This adoption has also represented a shift in how development is tackled, as

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8 Ecotourism is tourism that is environmentally conscious and includes five distinct criteria; nature-based product, minimal impact management, environmental education, contribution to conservation and contribution to community (Fennell, 2008: 22)
9 Slum tourism is a recent trend that makes a spectacle of poverty by offering a first hand look into the slums of Brazil, Africa, and Asia as an increasingly popular tour company destination (Weiner, 2008)
a movement away from volunteers seeking opportunities to help in causes and organizations they find appealing, towards those which are focused on the marketization of causes and associated organizations in an attempt to attract potential helpers (Mac Neela, Gallagher & Carey, 2008).

Stukas, Clary & Snyder (1999) suggest that this movement, from a volunteer seeking to help, towards an organization appealing to volunteers for help, has shifted the development focus away from traditional altruism. While proponents of service-learning praise the ability for students to get firsthand experience and understand realities ‘on the ground’, the benefits accrued in increasing global awareness and international understanding are still unknown (Crabtree, 1998). Because this is a fairly new trend in academia, the long-term consequences of these programs may not be known for years, nor will the degree of success of the benefits that these programs claim to provide (greater awareness, global citizenship) really be known for some time.

There are two types of volunteer: (1) the traditionally ‘pure’, altruistic volunteer that gives their time to a humanitarian cause for no apparent benefit of their own and (2) the increasingly ‘broad’ volunteer who participates in volunteer services as a reciprocal experience. The later has increasingly proliferated short-term volunteer positions. While most short-term programs have received negative light for their promotion of self-advancement, there may be increasing justification for the shift towards greater short-term placement as desirable for the rapid transfer of specific skills. Group placements have similarly received criticism for its skill-enhancement and drive-thru style cross-cultural learning. Individual placements by contrast have continued to be seen as the most appropriate type of placement for building relationships and achieving project sustainability. With higher costs attributed to individual placements however, the increased drive towards the development of pay-to-volunteer programs has been seen as a way to stay afloat amidst decreasing development budgets. Programs such as the gap year, volunteer-tourism, and service-learning have all concentrated greater focus on volunteer desires. Marketed as fun and exciting overseas opportunities, young generations are increasingly taking on the development mantel. With a greater concentration on gaining experiences and personal growth, the negative impacts of this shift in development practices have yet to be fully assessed. Without knowledge on the full benefits and consequences of this shift, why have organizations increasingly pursued the promotion and development of such programs? Has this been primarily
as a response to changes in participants’ demands or in NGO constraints and needs to secure alternative sources of funding?
PART III: Explaining the Shift

Reasons Behind the Shift

Thirty years ago, most development work was done by volunteers who sacrificed a year or two of their lives to go overseas and help for a humanitarian cause. For those that could not forgo an extended period of time abroad, they took on one of the few short-term positions, spending approximately six months overseas. Today, that has all changed. The proliferation of condensed opportunities abroad has made two year placements nearly obsolete, being replaced with six months to one year placements considered as long-term and those of a few weeks to six months as short-term. It is interesting to note however, that the changing notion of what is considered to be short-term and long-term placements have primarily occurred amongst the people who have taken on these experiences (personal communication, February 12, 2010). The opportunity to go abroad for less than four months was previously rare, but with increasing popularity of short-term experiences abroad and programs set up to meet these demands, a new generation of volunteers is shifting the definition of short-term and long-term international volunteerism.

Canadians have a long history of sending people overseas for development work. With church associations, corporate projects, school internships, and government funded programs, the numbers have been on the rise. Since 1960, the number of volunteers sent overseas by major volunteer-sending organizations has surpassed 65,000 (Mendleson, 2008). The Canadian government has also facilitated this shift with the sponsorship of 4,500 international internships, costing upwards of $15,000 per participant through the International Youth Internship Program. Mendleson (2008) also notes a trend in shorter term placements, stating that the ratio of Canadians going abroad for shorter term placement versus longer ones was 4:1 in the early 1990s. A decade later, this ratio had risen to 7:1, a trend that does not show any signs of stopping. What explains this shift? Why has there been a movement away from two-year long placements towards increasingly shorter term positions as short as a few weeks in length?

Many have sought an explanation to these questions, yet due to the recent nature of this trend, little conclusions have been reached on the matter. While this may be so, a general inquiry
of the reasons behind such a shift results in four main arguments elucidating the trend: a redefinition of development, changing interests and demands, government motives, and increased funding.

**Redefining Development**

There’s a lot of “historical forgetting” states Barbara Heron, Program Director at the School of Social Work at York University. Where criticisms about the implications of short-term development rose decades ago it has merely been dressed up differently, re-emerging as ‘new ideas’ in the ways in which we approach development (personal communication, February 9, 2010). A transformation in the way that development is talked about is a major component of why short-term placements are rising, especially where they are emerging within the context of previously philanthropy-dominated organizations. Once seen as a project needing long-term intervention, the development discourse has changed to one about a volunteer’s self transformation. Looking away from solidarity with the poor and the promotion of equality as the dominant facets of development has facilitated ignorance to the consequences of this transformation through the greater privatization of development components (personal communication, February 12, 2010). The felt need to transform traditional development ideologies through the redefinition of development (to be in line with changing public opinions and demands for international experiences) has been a driving force in the justification of such a transformation. Rebecca Tiessen, Associate Professor in the Department of Military Psychology and Leadership at the Royal Military College sums up this increasing divergence by stating that “a development experience is now a purchasable commodity” (personal communication, February 12, 2010). The notion that these experiences have become purchasable demonstrates how NGOs have shifted their definitions and development strategies to target these emerging markets and shifts in public opinion. This has altered the development discourse from one where volunteers seek altruistic opportunities to assist abroad, towards greater young tourist wanting to do something good while receiving a ‘foreign experience’.
Changing Interest and Demand

Diminished interest for going overseas for long periods as well as increasing appeal to participate in shorter term experiences have both contributed to the shifting nature of placement durations. The general trend away from habitual volunteering towards more episodic giving has been present for decades at the domestic level. This has more recently proliferated the international front, where the desire to go abroad for long-term positions has significantly diminished. In the past, the economic recession may have been a major factor for why people didn’t want to travel overseas for long periods. In the case where people were employed, risking the lost of their job once returned home was a significant push factor for pursuing such endeavours (personal communication, February 9, 2010). Today, the changing nature of the development world has played a major role in persuading people to not take on the challenge. The context has often constituted one that is poorer, more dangerous, more challenging, and amidst deteriorating health and educational systems. These factors have played a large role in deterring many from taking on the role as long-term development workers, especially where there is a consideration for bringing their families along. The new sentiment among younger generations is that the experience sought out can be gained in less than a years and if one can have this experience in as little as three months, then that’s what they’ll want to do (personal communication, February 9, 2010).

An increase demand for shorter term placement on the other hand has furthered the push away from longer term positions towards more condensed ones. There is a growing desire and ability by middle-class youth to participate in overseas opportunities. They want experiences, a way to enhance their CV and gain new skill sets, have a desire to travel, and want exposure to other cultures. There is a sentiment that if you do not have these types of experiences, you will be at a disadvantage going into the job market. The pressure to have these types of encounters is further exemplified in certain sectors, such as students of engineering and international development, where there is a huge push for international exposure (personal communication, February 12, 2010). Increased travel to developing countries through short-term development experiences may also lessen the guilt about what younger generations are doing on their ‘leisure time’. The enhanced safety of such experiences is also a large pull factor. Because shorter term placements often attract and are directed towards younger generation volunteers, these types of
programs are often better defined and structured. Thus as long as someone can provide the financing, the rest will be taken care of (personal communication, February 9, 2010).

From the organizations perspective, the inclusion of greater short-term programs has been in large part due to a response to increased demands for such experiences. Organizations are simply tapping into a demand and responding to a growth market where participants are willing to pay to ‘help out’. The expansion of shorter term placements therefore runs full cycle. As the demand for shorter term international experiences increases, so does the desire to respond to such demands through the provision of suitable placements. This in turn increases the supply of overseas opportunities, and ultimately the exposure of such experiences and the desire to take part.

**Canadian Government Motives**

The push for shorter term international placements has also been in part due to Canadian government motives. Nossal (1988) has classified government motives into three categories; philanthropic, political, and economic. In the first case, philanthropic motives represent a concern for humanitarian causes. Canadians have naturally instilled values that coincide with a feeling of obligation to help others. The original creation of cross-border opportunities gave Canadians the chance to participate as global citizens. Ultimately it provides Canada with new mechanisms by which it can strengthen its commitment and contribution to “human rights, democracy and good governance” (Tiessen, 2008: 3). The government has been particularly active within the past few years in instituting programs that allow students to take part in educational experiences abroad. Some such programs have included Canada Corps (established in 2004) and Students for Development (established in 2006) which sends 100 Canadian senior university students per year on three month internships through local partner organizations (Tiessen, 2008).

The second government motive is political. It argues that Canada’s actions and transfer of goods and services is in large part to achieve security and diplomatic objectives of its foreign policy (Nossal, 1988). By promoting political stability abroad and diverting francophone countries from supporting Quebec nationalism, Nossal (1988) claims that the government is able to diminish political instability at home and threats to its own national unity. Rebecca Tiessen
reasserts this claim stating that sending volunteers abroad is an important form of public diplomacy for the Canadian government. She states that Canada has an interest in projecting its values overseas and sending people abroad to ‘do good things’. The provision of international opportunities provides a cheap way to win over the hearts and minds of the people both at home and abroad (personal communication, February 12, 2010).

The third government motive is an economic one. Nossal (1988) argues that the Canadian government provides assistance and volunteer links to strategic countries due to enduring prospects of expanding commercial trade. While this may not be as obvious as the other two motives, it does provide a case for why Canada chooses to work in select countries. This factor may be given increasing light with the recent release of a new ‘Canadian Action Plan’ that aims to concentrate the bulk of its aid to 20 ‘countries of focus’.

The government’s realization that there is a high demand for going overseas to work on developing projects has provided it with an excellent route by which it can project its values overseas. Rather than setting up and pushing for public diplomacy through formal channels, the Canadian government has tapped into the market to provide (relatively) cheap international experiences that indirectly (and more subtly) help it achieve its foreign policy objectives.

**Increased Funding**

In light of these government motives, it is not surprising that funding for short-term international experiences has increased over the last few decades. With very limited funding capacity, NGOs have often been partially tied to the government for accessing funds to carry out their activities. As early as the 1960s, Canada had toyed with providing funding for international development experiences (through first CUSO in 1964) (Morisson, 1998). Since the 1990s however, the government’s commitment to sponsoring volunteer-sending organizations and opportunities for youth to partake in overseas initiatives has increased dramatically. One can take a look at the Canadian International Development Agency’s (CIDA) expenditure in the development sector to see how government funding in this area has expanded over the years. The best way to analyze its contribution is through CIDA’s expenditure in Official Development

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10 The 2009 Action Plan ‘Countries of Focus’ include Bolivia, Caribbean Regional Program, Columbia, Haiti, Honduras, Peru, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Ukraine, West Bank and Gaza, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Sudan, and Tanzania (CIDA.gc.ca)
Assistance (ODA). Figure 1 shows CIDA’s ODA expenditure from 1949 to 2006. While spending in ODA increased steadily throughout the earlier half of the period, particular interest should be placed on the early 1990s, where the promotion of experiential travel and volunteer work began to rise (coinciding with the rise in ODA). After a slight fall in funding in the late 1990s and early 2000s (due to the effects of economic recessions), the government once again took up the mantel in mid-decade to help support the increased demand for international experiences.

Figure 1: CIDA ODA Expenditure from 1949-2006. A representation of the Canadian government’s spending in Official Development Assistance.

Besides direct increases in ODA funding, changes in funding conditions have also played a role in the shift towards shorter term placements. With last minute funding becoming available and constraints on its implications, NGOs are often forced to develop a mandate, post a position, hire a volunteer, then train, send, and conclude the overseas experience all within one year. These types of conditions have set limitations to the length of placements possible as the process of hiring and training an individual prior to their departure can often take up many months, leaving only a few months left in the funding period for the volunteer to spend overseas (personal communication, February 5, 2010).
Consequences of this Shift

Critics of development have always found problems in the way in which development work is carried out. A particular topic of distress in the 1980s and 90s, concerns over the exploitation of beneficiary communities have recently resurfaced. Especially now that there have been major shifts in the way in which society thinks about and participates in development, opponents of this trend point to many problematic elements which are likely to be magnified if the fast-paced profit seeking environment of this new development is not carefully managed.

The proliferation of shorter term opportunities has augmented the number of people interested in experiencing the Global South. For the NGOs that have found it profitable (or even necessary) to tap into the demand for short-term, cross-cultural placements, they are to various levels getting sucked into the creation of placements that are attractive to young eager volunteer-tourists. This has meant an increasing control by the volunteer over the country location, duration, and timing of going abroad. With increased demand (and provision by the organization) for specific experiences, the conditions of going overseas have been increasingly dictated by what the volunteer wants (personal communication, February 12, 2010). While these transformations may be justified by suggesting that we are helping to breed ‘global citizens’ and that work accomplished is still intrinsically good, the bottom line is that greater egocentrism is increasingly associated with the types of placements that volunteers seek and take on.

For very limited placement durations (those of a few weeks to one month), some of the most popular activities include the building of schools, digging of wells, and the construction of simple infrastructure that can benefit from the human force of a group of eager volunteers. While this does provide concrete material results, they are often ill-placed or inappropriately delivered. On the one hand, most locals are better equipped and knowledgeable in the construction of buildings using local materials, thus the presence of a group of eager helpers may only hinder the speed and effectiveness of such undertakings. This may be due to many reasons including a lack of experience by the volunteer, which then requires training and supervision by able-bodied locals. The building of infrastructure may also contribute to false hope in the community. Barbara Heron suggests that you can build a school in an impoverished neighbourhood in need of education, but without government support and commitment to the provision of teachers, this school will only serve to build up hope in the community that a system of education will be implemented in the near future (personal communication, February 9, 2010). The consequences
of such programs advertised as ‘adventurous, cross-cultural assistance’ may also have negative impacts on participating volunteers. Tiessen (2008) suggests that the push on promoting short-term placements that will both entertain and provide help to the less fortunate develops high expectations among volunteers in their capacity to contribute. Once returned however, these volunteers often demonstrate a felt inability to help, often claiming limited durations as a main factor for this ineffectiveness (personal communication, February 12, 2010).

The case of volunteers feeling useless may also be due in part to the changes in the preparation process for those going abroad. In the past, many organizations undertook rigorous multi-level application and hiring processes which enabled the weaning out of people not thought to be volunteering for the right reasons or those seen as ill-prepared. Today, with various constraints and conditions (especially with the access to funding), the recruitment process has been reduced to a single over-the-phone interview with applicants that have been electronically assessed for their compatibility to the program (personal communication, February 9, 2010). Training has also decreased significantly (in part due to the centralization of training offered freely through the Centre for Intercultural Learning – CIL). Barbara Heron reasserts this transformation, stating that training used to be more extensive and focused on one’s role as a foreigner and an understanding of their power position. Today they consist of a weekend session of ‘feel good training’ where participants meet and discuss the great time they’re going to have overseas with similar outgoing volunteers. Some may not even go through any pre-departure training, being merely directed to Internet to discover and learn about their country of destination on their own time (personal communication, February 12, 2010).

The benefits from a financial perspective of running placements through government-sponsored programs and sending volunteers off to attend a free CIL training session (rather than the organization hosting a training session itself) has not overshadowed rising costs in other domains of having shorter term volunteers. Start up costs (such as training, return airfare, and settling in) are similar along the short-term to long-term spectrum and represent the bulk of a volunteer’s placement cost. Maintenance expenses on the other hand are fairly low with allocations paid out on a monthly basis. If we consider the two together, the more months a volunteer spends abroad, the cheaper they become as the costs span over a greater period of
time. This represents a significant difference and may point to the idea that NGOs may only be offering shorter term durations because of funding made available or in cases where volunteers pay for their own experience (as the shift would otherwise represent a significant increase in NGO expenditure where funding is already very limited). The costs taken on by partner organizations on the ground may also increase with shorter term placements. This however may have a greater reflection in the psychological costs of hosting a short-term versus long-term volunteer. Barbara Heron through her personal research on local partner NGOs has noticed a difference between how short-term and long-term volunteers are treated. She claims that there is a greater feeling of obligation in the level of care provided to shorter term volunteers, including ensuring that they are transitioning well, are well settled, and enjoy their overall stay. There is also a greater emphasis on maintaining the health and safety of short-term volunteers because they are there on limited assignments. While partner organizations may still care significantly about longer term volunteers, there is a realization that this degree of care cannot be sustained over a long period of time, thus they are more likely to move a long-term volunteer towards a higher degree of independence earlier on in their stay (personal communication, February 9, 2010). Beyond an increased psychological load, the time and money spent on planning and making provisions for volunteers on shorter term placements also tend to outweigh those for long-term volunteers (personal communication, February 9, 2010).

**It’s Not All Bad News**

While there are many criticisms for how development work has come to incorporate shorter term placements, the outcomes of such positions has not been all negative. Less skilled volunteers (which often make up the shorter term overseas positions) may be favoured by some local NGOs. In this case, there is a recognition by both the volunteer that they may lack specific

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11 Let’s consider the following example. Assume that the start-up costs of having a volunteer equals $10,000 with monthly allocations totaling $1,000/month. For a volunteer who spends 3 months overseas, this would mean a total cost of $10,000 + 3($1,000) = $13,000; placing the monthly cost of that volunteer at $4,333 ($13,000/3 months). If we do the same calculations for a Long-term volunteer spending 12 months abroad, the cost comes out to $1,833/month, a 42% decrease in volunteer expenditure [($10,000 + 12($1,000)) / 12 months].

12 Moving a volunteer towards greater independence may include helping them find and settle into a more permanent living arrangement, introducing them to stores, services, etc. that will help them settle into the local life more quickly. A short-term volunteer may be hosted and taken care of by the local organization which may present heavier constrains on the their members and resources.
skills, and by the organization that they can use the volunteer to tackle their own perceived needs. The volunteer is both happy to help and offer assistance where they are needed which to the organization may present a less intrusive helping hand (personal communication, February 9, 2010). A longer term, more professional or skilled volunteer, may have greater experience in the sector in which they are working. According to their past experiences, they have more definite and clear plans in mind which may not always coincide with local partners’ motives. In such a case, even though the benefits may not be as great, the local organization may favour having a larger control over what the volunteer does. On the other extreme, shorter term placements being offered to professionals and the corporate world may call for more defined mandates through shorter term placements. Where specified skills are needed (i.e. training in computer system set up), there is no need for a mandate to extend months if the results can be achieved over a shorter duration. For these types of placements, the extension of a mandate would not contribute to any further benefit since the objectives can be achieved short-term and extending it would just augment costs without contributing to any greater gains (personal communication, February 9, 2010).

In the middle of these two types of short-term volunteers (young unskilled volunteers and professional experts), lies university students. With some knowledge of the development context, students focusing their studies on development issues may find it beneficial to travel overseas to gain international experience. Even though internships are focused on gaining understanding through a learning experience, the time and money invested in global issues (through education) eases some of the criticisms of short-term work. Barbara Heron explains that even though the focus of the overseas placement is for experiential learning, it will likely help that person down the road in establishing ways in which they can contribute positively on an international level. She claims that this is not problematic in principle, for the simple reason that having this experience “will not put you ahead in the Canadian market” (personal communication, February 9, 2010). Where there are criticisms of sending coop students overseas, universities have tried to mitigate the negative light by requiring vigorous courses and pre-departure training before allowing students to go abroad (personal communication, February 12, 2010). Without more empirical research on the outcomes of such short-term experiences however, we will not be able to adequately dictate the consequences of this shift. Are students in these international development programs more likely to continue onto social justice work upon their return than are
previously non-exposed citizens going overseas and learning about world issues for the first time? There is an overwhelming claim that short-term placements increasingly provided by NGOs and tourist operators, are a way of creating ‘global citizens’. Whether participants become a global citizen upon their returns however, is still an untold story (something that Barbara Heron and Rebecca Tiessen are currently trying to assess). While most of the bad publicity is being projected onto NGOs which are providing these types of placements, one must not negate the fact that many voluntourism placements are sought out through tour operators, not the non-profit sector. In this case, there needs to be a distinction between the providers and the work carried out rather than associating both as equal for the simple fact that they are increasingly operating within the same context.

The Future

The exponential rise of short-term development experiences abroad has led to significant considerations to the future of development. The redefinition of development, changing interests and demands, hidden government motives, and increased funding to organizations providing these types of experiences have all been major factors in the provision of greater short-term placements. While there is a limit to how short overseas experiences can be, there is little expectation that things will revert back to longer term positions. Focusing on the provision of long-term placements has become increasingly unfavourable to NGOs due to a realization of falling demand for such placement durations. They are instead turning towards market demands for programs offering short-term, exciting, ‘pay-to-volunteer’ services. While a return back to longer term placements may be unlikely in the overall context, there is reason to believe that there will be an expansion in people targeted for overseas work. Rebecca Tiessen claims that the area to watch out for lies in the corporate world. Corporations have recently extended the limits of their employees’ leaves of absence, from a few weeks up to six months, which may allow for greater numbers of professionals taking on the development mantel. Whilst some areas continue to show diminishing placement lengths, it is unlikely that the average placement duration will continue to decrease as NGOs have generally reached the limits of short-term placement durations (personal communication, February 24th, 2010).

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13 Barbara Heron and Rebecca Tiessen are currently conducting research on a study titled "Creating Global Citizens? The Impact of Learning/Volunteer Programs Abroad", set to conclude in 2011
Participating in overseas placements traditionally meant a commitment of two years abroad. The shifting nature and definition of placement duration has contributed to a significant decrease in placement durations. This has been propelled by changing attitudes and motivations to participate in overseas experiences, with a recognition that desired benefits of participation can be achieved within a few months. Four trends have characterized the shift towards shorter term placements: the redefinition of development, changing interests and demands, government motives, and increased funding. Changing development discourse has resulted in a greater focus on the participants’ self-discovery and has transformed the development experience into one that is purchasable. The changing definition of development has also been coupled with changing demands to go abroad where there are decreasing desires to travel abroad for long durations. This has been driven by a realization of deteriorating conditions abroad and of increasing economic vulnerabilities at home, which has made short-term experiences a safer and more attractive option. Government motives have also promoted sponsorship for short-term opportunities abroad as a way to forward Canadian values, push foreign policy objectives, and enhance country links for trading prospects. Increased funds supporting these programs have thus been made available as a way for the government to achieve international political goals. Whether or not the promotion of such a shift has led to negative consequences in the field are still widely debated. Most scholars argue that these types of fast-paced, profit-seeking initiatives have contributed to implementation of inappropriate development projects in the Global South. This has been further intensified by the generic application/hiring process and training provided by NGOs. While the frequency of inappropriate projects necessitates serious consideration, the cost of running such programs may outweigh the potential negative impacts of their work. Increased sponsorship by governments and the provision of expenses by the participant may simply offer NGOs cheaper volunteer options. Diminished monetary factors however must not be considered without a further look at the psychological cost of hosting these volunteers born by the partner organization. While some argue that short-term volunteers are more work to maintain, in some cases, unskilled short-term volunteers may be desired as they are less invasive and provide organizations with generic labour to pursue their objectives. Interns coincidentally may provide a medium ground between unskilled labour and professional volunteers. There to benefit from a
reciprocal experience, student interns may positively contribute to development goals while maintaining more open minds for the way things should be done or be implemented.

The provision of short-term and long-term placements (representing both internship and professional volunteers) has been an important component of NGO development strategies. The following will explore the workings of two of Canada’s biggest volunteer sending organizations (WUSC and CECI) to set up for the context of this research’s proceeding case study.
PART IV: Context

WUSC

History

World University Services of Canada (WUSC) is a network of individuals and post-secondary institutions with a mission to “foster human development and global understanding through education and training.”\(^{14}\) The origins of the organization date back to the 1920s, when a group of students worked in solidarity to raise funds and resources to provide for the basic needs of post-secondary students in post-war Europe. This organization, which would later be known as International Student Services (ISS), continued to assist students throughout the 1930s and expand its aid to refugees fleeing oppression. As the organization’s reputation enhanced with the implementation and rising popularity of its programs (i.e. study tours, seminars, work camps, and conferences), the formation of new committees began overseas with the first Canadian committee established at the University of Toronto in 1939. In 1950, ISS changed its name to World University Service in order to reflect the shift in focus of operations from Europe to the Middle East and Asia and to better encompass the involvement of the entire university community in its relief and rehabilitation efforts.

With the onset of the 1960s, WUSC began to experience instability with increasing student radicalism leading to the ultimate termination of its main activities by 1968. In an attempt to rejuvenate its on-campus presence, WUSC in the early 1970s began promoting its activities within post-secondary circles. This decade also saw the revitalization of some of its major programs (such as its International Seminar) and an expansion of operations into Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean with the first group of volunteers sent overseas to the Comoros Islands in 1977. By 1978, the birth of WUSC’s flagship program emerged – the Student Refugee Program – which provided support to students fleeing war or persecution through offering them an opportunity to study in Canadian post-secondary institutions.

For the next few decades, WUSC succeeded in building up its popularity and expanding its activities throughout Canada. In 2004, it partnered with the Centre for International Studies

\(^{14}\) All information on World University Service Canada was retrieved from the WUSC website on February 18, 2010, unless otherwise specified (http://wusc.ca/en/alumni/our_history)
and Cooperation (CECI) to form Canada’s largest international volunteer cooperation program—Uniterra. Two years later, the Students Without Borders program was adopted allowing students to apply their scholastic knowledge to a practical work term in the developing world for academic credit. Today, local WUSC committees across university and college campuses represent the largest of its kind in Canada which has led to the emergence of WUSC and its Uniterra partnership as one of Canada’s leading NGOs, fostering human development and global understanding through the power of education.

Activities

With a domestic staff of 63 personnel and ten additional overseas staff, WUSC runs multi-million dollar projects around the world and last year worked with a total annual budget of 35.5 million dollars\(^\text{15}\) (WUSC, 2009). WUSC functions in collaboration with other NGOs, local partner organizations, public and private institutions, and governments to increase its development capacity through education as the driving force for change. There are two main streams in which WUSC channels its operations; through students and staff on university and college campuses, and through overseas development volunteering opportunities.

The first represents the efforts of over 80 university and college WUSC committees across Canada. Through these groups, students, staff and faculty work together with institutional support to foster three main initiatives. The first is the support of the Student Refugee Program through the fundraising and maintenance of new students to their campuses. The second is the promotion of volunteerism within local communities to help bridge the gap between theory and practice. The third major initiative is aiming to foster global citizenship by encouraging students to build awareness of development issues and promote the belief that change can be made through advocacy and actions. All three activities are meant to mobilize students to help target the Millennium Development Goals\(^\text{16}\) through ‘education, advocacy and volunteering’. The largest endeavour by post-secondary WUSC committees is the Student Refugee Program. Established in 1978, it has enabled over 1,000 students facing war or political repression to

\(^{15}\) Annual revenues for the 2008 fiscal year totaled $35,584,267 with total expenditure totaling $35,465,388 (a net revenue of $118,879) (WUSC, 2009)

\(^{16}\) The Millennium Development Goals are a UN global partnership initiative to halve extreme poverty in all its forms by the year 2015
relocate to Canada as permanent residents to pursue post-secondary education. Through this program, WUSC committees provide vital services and financing to the sponsored student for durations of no less than 12 months. Today the popularity and success of this program has enabled the sponsorship of over 60 students per year to study in university and college campuses across Canada.

The second main channel of WUSC operations is through sending volunteers overseas to facilitate and implement development projects. This is seen as the key to WUSC operations as it focuses on building partnerships with local organizations and sending volunteers to provide support and technical assistance to achieve development goals. WUSC’s major volunteer sending operations are run through the Uniterra program (discussed in a later section) and are implemented in collaboration with CECI.

**CECI**

**History**

The creation of CECI dates back to 1958 with the development of the Centre d’études missionnaires (CEM) which trained members of religious communities to serve as catholic missionaries. Operating as one of Quebec’s first trainers in international cooperation, CEM was turned over to a non-profit corporation of volunteers in 1968 and dropped its religious affiliation to become the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation. The year 1968 also saw the first signing of a contribution agreement with CIDA which helped fund the organization’s first overseas operation a year later. With slow and steady growth throughout the 1970s, an expansion of CECI operations took full force in the 1980s. These years saw a move towards greater decentralization resulting in the establishment of overseas offices in ten focus countries, and in 1982 the expansion of operations to Burundi, the Ivory Coast, and Haiti. In 1989, CECI sought to work beyond its traditional scope, implementing the first youth internship initiative and securing the first non-CIDA funding by the World Bank. By 1990, the organization had operations in numerous countries abroad and was sending over 300 volunteers overseas per annum. Throughout the 1990s, CECI operations expanded further with the implementation of

17 All information on the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation was retrieved from CECI’s website on April 9, 2010, unless otherwise stated (http://ceci.ca/en/about-ceci/history-of-ceci/timeline/#_msocom_1)
new projects centered around democracy, human rights, and women’s issues. The organization also saw great appraisal for its accomplished work throughout institutional evaluation processes and resulting reports. While praised for its managerial system, CECI took on major reorganization efforts in 2000, resulting in the creation of two unique centres: a centre for cooperation and a centre for training, research, and consultancy. By the mid 2000s, CECI began seeking the possibilities of forming partnerships with other global NGOs. In 2004 this resulted in a strategic partnership with WUSC (forming the Uniterra program) and a second agreement with the Société de Coopération pour le Développement International and Union des Producteurs Agricoles – Développement International (forming the Agricultural Alliance for Africa). Most recently, CECI has shifted greater focus to evaluation and prevention initiatives, with the deployment of two regional humanitarian assistance teams in Asia and the Americas/Caribbean.

Activities

CECI functions with a paid staff of 65 Canadians and over 300 local representatives around the world (personal communication, April 19, 2010). In 2009, total operation expenses amounted to over 36.4 million dollars\(^{18}\) with collaborative efforts undertaken with 120 Global South partners. CECI’s main focus is to strengthen individuals and partner organizations in order to achieve equitable and sustainable development. It also places a large emphasis on capacity building by developing projects that are focused on development and partnership, are driven by in-depth analyses of sectoral, political, and socioeconomic contexts, and are results-based. The organization’s approach to development is bottom-up, driven by the extrapolation of development goals by Southern partners, and applying volunteer cooperants to assist in the accomplishment of these goals. The function of the volunteer is twofold; the first is the drive to increase the expertise and knowledge of local partner organizations and networks in order to increase their capacity in their respective sectors. The second is to harness the support of Canadians at home to take on international mandates to help achieve the former goals, as well as to become ambassadors of international solidarity upon the completion of their experiences abroad. Overall, the emphasis is placed on partnership (with local partner organizations on the ground, and with WUSC for the implementation of overseas placements) as well as a focus on

\(^{18}\) Annual revenues for the 2009 fiscal year totaled $36,502,430 with overall expenditure totaling $36,421,045 (a net revenue of $81,385) (CECI, 2009)
adaptability and the need to adjust projects and goals based on changing contexts in the Global South.

Like WUSC, most of CECI’s current operations are run through the joint collaborative effort – Uniterra. The following section will look at the evolution of the Uniterra program as well as the collaborative projects that have been implemented within its framework, as it represents the main focus of this study’s analysis.

**Uniterra I**

**History**

Prior to 2003, most volunteer cooperation programs funded by CIDA (the main source of NGO funding) were mandates of two years\(^\text{19}\). A few years earlier, some NGOs began to consider the merits of short-term volunteer programs and submitted proposals to CIDA for short-term funding on the basis that short-term experiences could be used as a way of promoting the development of North-South partnerships. CECI was one of those organizations with the development of the ‘Pick Up’ program in 2000 which sought the mobilization of short-term volunteers for the purposes of building partnerships abroad. With interesting results, WUSC and CECI in 2003 began discussing the possibility of creating a joint venture for a five year development initiative called Uniterra. Presented to CIDA a year later, this proposal outlined major international cooperation trends and sought to improve their development initiatives through more focused projects. One common trend in the NGO world at the time was the increased recognition of the importance of focusing development initiatives in fewer countries of concentration. CECI and WUSC itself had been functioning in 21 countries collectively and sought to move their attention to 13 countries of interest\(^\text{20}\). A greater concentration on sectors was also emphasized and a limit of two sectors per country was implemented in their proposal. A further suggestion was an increased recognition (and sponsorship) of short-term volunteer mandates by CIDA which the organizations would use to build sustainable partnerships between southern and northern NGOs (through greater face-to-face initiatives). Forty percent of the

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\(^{19}\) All of the information on the evolution of the Uniterra program was taken from a personal communication on February 24, 2010 (unless otherwise specified)

\(^{20}\) The 13 countries of focus in the Uniterra I program are: Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam (Uniterra, 2009).
proposed 400-per year volunteer assignments were projected as short-term mandates and included the development of newly designed programs that could help achieve short-term development goals. The call for shorter term placements was both a recognition by the organizations of falling interest by Canadians to go overseas for long durations and of the demands expressed by southern partner organizations for shorter term volunteers to meet specific needs. CIDA accepted the proposal, and in 2004 agreed to sponsor the Uniterra I initiative through a $5.5 million funding scheme over a five year period.

Activities

The Uniterra I program took off in July 2004 and went full force with an ambitious mandate of seeing the placement of 400 international volunteers per year (personal communication, April 19, 2010). Completed in June 2009, the program saw a total of 1,857 international volunteers serving 2,200 organizations around the globe (Uniterra, 2009). Besides general Uniterra volunteers (which often have a professional background), there are three sub-programs under the Uniterra umbrella which give particular emphasis on short-term and experiential opportunities: Leave for Change, Students Without Borders, and Quebec Sans Frontière.

Uniterra I is Canada’s largest international volunteering program. Working to reduce poverty, Uniterra I focuses its activities on improving education and health, developing sustainable livelihoods, and enhancing good governance. Through the Uniterra I program, Canadian citizens (or landed immigrants) are provided opportunities for overseas development placements ranging from one month to two years in length. With a target of persons aged 18-70, volunteers are recruited on the basis of their strength of character, professional skills, and prior experience. They are also expected to provide long-term follow-ups with their activities and practice through sharing their experiences with others and advocating Canadian citizens to take action. Programs have also been developed under the Uniterra I initiative to target specific volunteer characteristics. On the one hand professionals able to implement fast and effective tangible skills are sought through the Leave for Change program while on the other a focus on

21 Details of each program (including age restrictions, length of placement, and costs) are listed in Figure 2
providing students with international experiences are expressed through two internship programs – Student Without Borders and Quebec Sans Frontière-.  

**Leave for Change** is a partnership with Canadian companies and organizations that allow employees to spend some of their annual vacation time in a two to four week volunteering assignment in a developing country. These volunteers represent professional individuals that have very specific skill sets which can be transferred to members of local partner organizations on the ground. Since its start, Uniterra I has formed partnerships with 17 companies (9 of which are from the private sector) seeing a total of 66 employees sent abroad on volunteer mandates. From the employer’s perspective, supporting such a program allows them to strengthen the capacities of their employees, increase their competitiveness as a Canadian company, and helps them promote a positive image through social responsibility and public engagement. Employees on the other hand get the opportunity to travel abroad and expand their personal and professional understanding. Programs in this sector are designed to achieve rapid and tangible results-driven development projects through the work of highly skilled individuals.  

**Students Without Borders** (SWB) offers hands-on learning experiences to university and college students during an academic term. Since 2005, 300 students (16% of total volunteers sent abroad) have participated in initiatives that have allowed them to apply their classroom knowledge through growth and the experience of a new culture. This program is meant to provide better understanding of world issues, cultural sensitivity, an appreciation of diversity, and greater personal skills and capacities that will help individuals secure jobs in the future. There are three placement streams offered under the Student Without Borders program: International Community Service Learning, Co-op placements, and Internships, all of which focus to various extents on experiential learning. Programs usually extend three months in length and may include the granting of academic credit. In most cases, the costs of participating are born by the volunteer and can range from $4,900 to $7,000 depending on the country location.  

**Quebec Sans Frontière** (QSF) was established in 1995 as a joint effort between le Ministère des relations internationales du Québec and l’Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI). Open to Québec residents, this program provides internship opportunities for youth aged 18-39 in West Africa and Latin America. The main focus of the program is to create strong North-South partnership links and sustainability. It also seeks to provide the opportunity for youth to discover new cultures, participate in solidarity fieldwork,
play a role in tangible projects, and develop personal and vocational skills. Funding for this program is provided by the Quebec government while the participating organizations are responsible for developing the project, and deploying, organizing, and overseeing participants’ work through partner organizations. There are five types of projects within the Quebec Without Borders program. They are: Universal Initiatives, two to three month group fieldwork projects for 18-30 year olds; Specialized Initiatives, two to three month group fieldwork projects for 18-30 year olds within a specific sector related to participants’ education or work experience; Support Initiatives, support for leaders of universal or specialized initiatives; Reciprocity Initiatives, two to three month fieldwork in Quebec for youth aged 18-39 who are actively involved in a South partnership organization that have links with Quebec Without Borders; and International Cooperation Organization Initiatives, three to seven month paid fieldwork with an international cooperation organization in Québec open to former Quebec Without Border participants between the ages of 18-35 (mri.gouv.qc.ca).

Figure 2: Uniterra I’s Program Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Uniterra</th>
<th>Leave for Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18-70</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>Professional skills, Prior experience, Strength of character, Canadian citizen or landed immigrant</td>
<td>Employee of Leave for Change partner employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>1 month - 2 years</td>
<td>2-4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Employers provide $5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>Monthly living allowance</td>
<td>Unicorp pays all costs beyond the $5,000 contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring process</td>
<td>Apply online, interview, local partner selects candidate</td>
<td>Employer signs 1yr partnership agreement, programs presented to employees, recruitment and selection field assignment, post-field public engagement in the workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1 week pre-departure, in-country orientation, Language training</td>
<td>Standard pre-departure training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Students Without Borders</th>
<th>Quebec Sans Frontière</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18-39</td>
<td>18-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>University/College student or recent graduate, 1 school term (~3 month)</td>
<td>Quebec resident, 2-3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>$4,000-7,000 (depending on country) by participant</td>
<td>Sponsored through the Quebec government, n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Monthly living allowance</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring process</td>
<td>Online DFAIT intercultural course, Pre-departure and orientation session, In-country orientation, Post-placement briefing</td>
<td>Apply online with CV, application form, and letter of motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>60 hours with minimum 20 hours for health/safety training</td>
<td>Standard pre-departure training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Volunteer Costs

While the extraction of total revenues and expenses for each of these programs is beyond the scope of this study, a general inquiry reveals particular differences between the costs associated with the different types of volunteers. Here the inquiry is distinguished into three basic categories: Uniterra professional volunteers (both short-term and long-term), Leave for Change participants (short-term), and Interns (represented by the SWB and QSF programs which may be both short-term and long-term).

General volunteers in the Uniterra program (that do not fall into one of the subcategories above) are generally people with some to a great deal of professional experience. They are targeted for their knowledge in the field and are said to be the biggest drivers of capacity building. They may function in both short-term and long-term placements, with mandates averaging between six months to one year in length (personal communication, February 24, 2010). All costs are covered by Uniterra, including pre-departure training, return airfare, health insurance, and a monthly allowance for each month spent overseas which is determined on a country basket of goods.

Leave for Change participants on the other hand are employees who take paid vacation time to volunteer abroad for a few weeks. The employer is thus the actor which contributes the greatest portion of the costs of sending the volunteer overseas to a maximum of $5,000 (depending on the employer agreement). All costs past this limit are then paid for by the Uniterra I program. These volunteers receive similar pre-departure training and are given a CIDA funded per diem for each day spent overseas.

Lastly, internships (both in the Students Without Borders and Quebec Sans Frontière programs), offer young Canadians the opportunity to travel abroad and participate in an international volunteering experience. In the SWB program, costs of participating are provided through a financial contribution of $2,000-3,000 by the sending university or college with the remaining expenses covered by the Uniterra I program. For the QSF program, costs are fully paid for by the government of Quebec who subcontracts organizations to provide experiential international opportunities to youth. Depending on the agreements between the university/college and Uniterra I (particularly with regards to pre-Uniterra historical links between WUSC and certain universities), students are offered a monthly allocation while on placement. They also receive the same type of pre-departure training and amenities by the
organization, and may receive further training from their sending institution (i.e. from the university).

There are two significant trends that can be posited from these results. The first is the greater expense of short-term volunteers versus long-term ones and the second is the greater costs of professionals versus interns.

In the first case, if we consider strictly professionals working in the Uniterra program, similar costs of preparing, maintaining, and bringing back the volunteer results in both short-term and long-term cases. Where a substantial difference does occur is when we consider the overall monthly cost of sustaining this volunteer abroad. Since general costs for short-term and long-term mandates are the same, a person who spends one year abroad will spread the total expense of that volunteer over a twelve month period. When we compare this to a short-term volunteer (let’s say on a two month placement), costs are spread over a substantially less amount of time. Given this, the longer the volunteer stays the less monetary burden they present to the organization (or the greater the benefit to cost ratio for having that volunteer). Other considerations are placed on the higher costs of short-term placements when we consider the energy and time spent in dealing with each. Short-term placements commonly require more energy, especially by partner organizations. Because they are constrained by time, local NGOs need to set aside time and resources to ensure that they accrue the benefits from having these volunteers present. This last point however, may provide justification for such placement durations as they are more likely to involve a greater time and energy spent by the partner organization in the extracting of benefits provided by the volunteer (than would time spent similarly with long-term volunteers). Thus, where specific demands and needs are called for, a short-term volunteer may offer the best potential for success.

In the second case, there is a significant difference in the allocations paid out to professionals and those paid out to students. If we consider the Student Without Borders program (not the QSF since the majority of the costs are covered by the provincial government), students receive much less in monthly allocations than do professionals sent abroad. If we also consider the contributions provided by the sending university/college, the costs born by Uniterra I are even less. There are many reasons for this divergence. In general, there is a common understanding by industry specialist that students do not encompass the same level of experience and expertise than do professionals. Thus because they may have less knowledge in the field,
they may be said to offer less in terms of capacity building. In this sense, they contribute less, and therefore they can be allocated less as a result (personal communication, February 24, 2010). There is also the understanding that students are not only there to contribute to development. One of the principle features of internships is the offering of opportunities for youth to gain skills through experiential learning. The focus of the internship is generally 50/50, with half of the time spent on ‘capacity building’ and the other half on learning various skills and understandings. Thus, this may further justify the divergence in monthly allocations given to students. And lastly, there are administrative reasons for the choice of whether or not organizations may choose to offer different allocations depending on the volunteer type. For Uniterra I, the large scope of the project enabled appropriate resources to manage the specific conditions under which different volunteers could function. For smaller organizations however, administrative constraints may not allow them to manage the complexities that two or more volunteering conditions (or allowances) may require. Thus it becomes more feasible for these organizations to apply one standard allocation for all volunteers functioning within their framework (personal communication, February 24, 2010).

The Context

West Africa

Economic, social, and political conditions in the West African region have historically fared poorly. This has made development work increasingly important as well as difficult under deteriorating regional conditions. International economic crises and food shortages have also heightened security concerns. Protests have become more violent, conflicts between cultural groups have persisted, hostage takings have emerged, and coup d’états have all cumulated in a socio-political environment where development is progressively more obstructed. Within such a context, the work of NGOs has remained imperative to the alleviation of everyday burdens faced by the regions poorest.

Having worked in six countries in the region, the Uniterra I program has concentrated efforts in three sectors: agriculture and rural development, health (HIV/AIDS and nutrition) and basic education. Within the agricultural sector, farmers have increasingly found it difficult to make a living amidst inflating input prices and diminishing returns. Needing to spend a greater
portion of their income on foodstuff, producers are finding it particularly difficult in countries that are dependent on imports. Foreign influence is further penetrating through the appropriation of arable land by domestic and foreign actors meant to produce goods to be exported to large western states. The exploitation of resources, especially mineral, has also diverted greater benefits outside the country. With minimal job creation, environmental damage, and little trickle down, tension between citizens and mining companies has intensified. Where so many negative outcomes have occurred, one positive effect of tougher social constraints has emerged. This has been through greater involvement and public engagement in holding governments accountable for setting and enforcing standards and laws for foreign companies.

The health sector is the second priority in the region. While some incremental improvements have been made, the conditions remain detrimental. Sub-Saharan Africa is still the world’s most affected HIV/AIDS region. It holds 68% of the world’s total HIV/AIDS victims, is home to 76% of the world’s HIV/AIDS deaths, and represented the location of 63% of the world’s new HIV/AIDS cases in 2007 (Uniterra, 2009). With little access to preventative measures and medical treatment, West Africa continues to be home to some of the world’s most impoverished countries, making the work of the non-profit organizations seemingly endless.

Lastly, Uniterra I works to ameliorate basic education in the region. Implemented projects focus on increasing enrollment, equality between genders, and developing teaching content and resource access. Basic education indicators have not fared well over the past few decades. Youth literacy rates (those between the ages of 15-24) have signaled continued incongruity in gender equality with male literacy rates of 76 and of 65 for females (Unicef, 2009). Similarly, while enrollment numbers have shown some progress in recent years, the ratio of children who physically attend school compared with initial enrollment is at a low 64% (Unicef, 2009). Attempts over the years to increase adult literacy have also shown little progress, with literacy rates attaining a minimal increase of 3% since 1995 up to a total of 60% in 2007 (Unicef, 1999; 2009). The minute improvements in basic education in the region have been due to many factors including a lack of government focus, insufficient resources, and high poverty rates, which have all played a role in diffusing the importance of an educational experience.

With little economic, political, and social improvements, the work of NGOs in the region has never been greater. NGOs continue to struggle under the constraints and limitations of
conditions in the region, yet persevere with a recognition of the dire need to drive development forward to assist the needy.

**Burkina Faso**

Uniterra I’s work in Burkina Faso is concentrated in the two sectors of agriculture and health (HIV/AIDS). This state presents an interesting case of a country that is quite stable despite its very high levels of poverty and low development. According to UN assessments, Burkina Faso ranks 177th out of 182 countries assessed on the Human Development Index\(^\text{22}\) (undp.org). Relatively stable democratic and civil rights conditions have facilitated development work, particularly with the formation of rural level communities across the country which has reinforced the power of locals and the role of organizations in promoting positive growth. The country’s poverty rates have also shown some improvements with rates falling from 46.4% to 42.6% from 2003 to 2007. Despite these advancements, however the country’s overall ranking and development has not improved. Increased migration from rural areas to cities has augmented urban poverty and led to a decrease in productivity in the rural sector. Unfavourable climate conditions, characterized by episodes of drought and flooding have also hindered crop yields and the ability of farmers to provide for the country’s needs. Food insecurity became a particular concern in 2008 with rising input costs and diminishing yields leading to greater civil strife in the country. This led to a divergence of some NGO operations to tackle rising tensions and promote the consumption of locally produced goods in order to mitigate the effects of poor environmental conditions. In some cases, this type of promotion provided new opportunities for certain agricultural producers (such patty farmers) to grow and sell their products locally.

Overall, Burkina Faso’s development status has not changed much throughout the last decade. Although encountering some slight improvements in absolute poverty levels, the increase in poverty issues and desperate populations coupled with budget cuts in public assistance to development has continued to hinder the capacity of NGOs to mobilize supplementary funds to pursue development operations (Uniterra, 2009). Despite these constraints, Uniterra I has managed to implement numerous development projects in the region. Uniterra I’s work in Burkina Faso presents the context for the following case study research.

\(^{22}\) The UN Human Development Index is an index which rates countries according to their level of achievements in three aspects of human development: health, knowledge, and living standard.
PART V: Case Study

Methodology

To determine whether short-term or long-term international volunteerism brings about the greatest benefits, the work of Uniterra I in Burkina Faso was used as a case study. Two surveys were conducted to extrapolate data: one directed to partner organizations and the other to participating volunteers.

The sample population was derived from directories of operating organizations and volunteers that participated in the five-year Uniterra I program in Burkina Faso. All of the 16 partner organizations in the directory were contacted for participation (within which 123 volunteers functioned). The volunteer directory included a sample size of 150 volunteers. Excluded from the sample population where twenty volunteers from the Global South (functioning as either international South-South volunteers or South-North volunteers). Thus, only international North-South volunteers (from Canada to Burkina Faso) were contacted for participation in the study. The resulting 130 volunteer count were contacted by email, of which 25 were undelivered, presenting a final volunteer sample size of 105.

Surveys were translated into the national language of French and sent out electronically and by post to each of the partner organizations. In addition volunteer surveys were set up online and sent out electronically in both French and English versions. The data collection process occurred between July to October 2009 for the partner organizations and from January to February 2010 for the volunteers. Three reminders were sent out for each survey with a final collection of seven completed partner organization surveys (representing a total of 58 volunteers assessed) and 37 completed volunteer surveys. This attributes a total response rate of 44% for partner organizations (or 47% of total volunteers functioning within them) and 35% for participating volunteers.

The surveys yielded information to assess the benefits and satisfaction of the volunteer’s work and time abroad. The partner organization survey was based on assessments of each of the volunteers that have functioned within their organization within the five-year Uniterra I program. The questions sought information on volunteers’ mandate characteristics, positive attitude
ratings, implemented activity features, and perceived benefits of the volunteers’ contributions. All of the questions asked were rated on a five point scale (from 1= in total disagreement to 5= in total agreement). For the volunteer survey, general information was attained on the volunteer characteristics, mandate length (both original and actual), changes in enthusiasm levels, amount of work, and assessed benefits of implemented activities. Both multiple choice and scale ratings were used, depending on the type of answer desired for analysis.

The extraction of study samples from Uniterra I’s Burkina Faso partner organization and volunteer directories were set up as a convenient control for variations in the context setting. A sample derived from a single country controlled for differences in political, social, and economic structure, which may play a role in a volunteer’s functions and/or benefits derived.

All statistical tests were taken as a comparison between short-term (ST) and long-term (LT) volunteers. Based on Uniterra’s distinction of ST placements defined as less than four months, and of LT placements as equal or greater to four months in length.

Two types of tests are used to check for dependencies and differences in the data. The first is the Fisher’s Exact Test (Fisher). Although a Chi-Square Test is commonly used to test for statistical significance, a Fisher is used in this study because it corrects for the small sample size and directly measures the probability of dependency. The Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon U-Test (MWW) is the second test used. The MWW checks for differences in sample distribution and medians. It was also chosen (in replacement of a standard t-test) because it is best for testing small sample sizes. In both cases, a confidence interval was established at 95% with a P value < 0.05. Given the small sample size, a probability < 0.1 was also considered as ‘approaching significance’.

**Findings**

Two surveys were used to assess the benefits of short-term versus long-term international volunteering. Attaining results from both the partner organization survey and the volunteer survey provides two advantages. First, the focus in analysis (ST vs. LT) is held constant in both surveys; thus, results could be cross-tabulated to see whether there are similarities in the answers provided. Second, if answers between both data sets differed on similar questions, these surveys
could be used to offer two unique perspectives on the functions and benefits of volunteers of both short-term and long-term durations.

To analyze the data, the two surveys were used to assess:

- The perceived benefits of international volunteers’ work according to the partner organizations hosting them
- The self-assessed benefits of activities and projects implemented from the perspective of the volunteer that undertook them

Assessing the data from two viewpoints allows a method of testing for consensus on similar issues.

**Partner Organization Perspectives**

A total of 7 organizations responded to the survey which provided individual assessments of 58 volunteers and a response rate of 44%. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the volunteers assessed. Overall, 64% of volunteers were short-term (n=37) while 36% of volunteers were long-term (n=21). Two thirds of those assessed were female (66%; n=25), of which 48% were short-term and the other 52% long term. Males represented 34% of the sample size (n=13) with 31% in short-term placements and the other 69% in long-term ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Organization Survey – Characteristics of Volunteers Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteer and Mandate Characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Placement Duration (Days)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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</table>

Mandate characteristics were investigated to see whether placement duration affects the nature of the mandate description. The rationale is that shorter placement durations should limit the scope of potential activities implemented and require greater specificity in mandate descriptions. Results show that short-term volunteer mandates are more often specified to a
specific sector (97%, n=35). In contrast, 78% of long-term mandates are concentrated in a given sector (n=14). Partner organizations agree that short-term mandates are better defined. The agreement scores for short-term placements show a narrow distribution in favour of agreement. On the other hand, partner organizations showed less consensus in agreeing that long-term placements are confined to specific sectors (see Figure 3). Finally, the precision of mandate descriptions and activities are more focused in both short-term (100%, n=37) and long-term placements (98%, n=19).

**Figure 3:** The volunteer’s mandate and activities are focused in a specific sector. *Left:* Volunteer mandates are dependent on placement duration (p<0.05, Fisher). The majority of specific mandates occurred in short-term placements while the majority of non-specific mandates occurred in long-term placements. *Right:* A graphical representation of the median and distribution for short-term and long-term placements. Short-term mandates had a higher agreement score, while long-term placements showed greater variability across scores (p<0.05, MWW).

To see whether short-term or long-term volunteers have activities that are more financially demanding, this study investigated the financial burden of the volunteer’s implemented work. Long-term volunteers are said to have greater assignment scope, thus should have more financially demanding activities. The data shows projects implemented by long-term volunteers as more financially demanding (81%, n=13). Short-term volunteers show a wide distribution between those having financially demanding activities (44%, n=14) and those showcasing low demands on funding (56%, n=18) (see Figure 4).
Figure 4: The activities implemented by the volunteer were financially demanding. Left: ST activities are least dependant on financial resources. In contrast, LT activities are highly dependent on funding. Right: A graphical representation of median and distribution shows a significantly higher median for short-term placements. LT also shows a greater frequency in agreement while ST agreement scores are more widely distributed (p<0.05, MWW).

Volunteer characteristics were investigated to see whether the volunteer’s enthusiasm levels are affected by placement duration. The expected result is that short-term placement volunteers should show higher levels of enthusiasm throughout. At the start of a mandate, both short-term (100%, n=37) and long-term (95%, n=19) volunteers have a positive attitude. A Mann-Whitney test reveals a slightly higher median for perceived positive attitude in ST volunteers (p<0.05, MWW). The maintenance of a positive attitude throughout the placement duration is more common among ST volunteers (100%, n=36) than in LT volunteers (83%, n=15). In fact, the maintenance of a positive attitude is dependent on placement duration (p<0.01, Fisher). Changes in positive attitude (Δp) were also assessed by dividing the ‘starting’ positive attitude to the positive attitude ‘throughout’. There are three possible outcomes: where Δp<1, volunteers are more positive at the end; where Δp=1, volunteers have an unchanged level of positivism; and where Δp>1, volunteers are less positive towards the end. Short-term volunteers more often have unchanging enthusiasm levels (92%, n=33). Long-term volunteers demonstrate greater changes in attitude with only 55% showing unchanging levels (n=11). Those that demonstrate a change in positive attitude are slightly more likely to report a decreases in positive attitude (25%, n=5) than an increase in positive attitude (20%, n=4). Following the Fisher’s Exact Test, changes in positive attitudes show a dependence on duration with a greater
likelihood that positive levels will change within the LT group than within the ST group (p<0.01, Fisher) (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5:** The changes in a volunteer’s positive attitude from the start to the end of their mandate. *Left:* Changes in positive attitude are dependent on placement duration. The majority of ST attitudes were constant throughout the placement. LT volunteer attitudes are more likely to diverge, with slightly more showcasing a more negative attitude towards the end. *Right:* A graphical representation of the median and distribution for ST and LT placements. Medians show no difference between both groups. LT placements show a slightly wider distribution in agreement scores.

Benefits were evaluated through questions assessing: (1) the volunteer’s efficiency, (2) the volunteer’s ability to meet the organization’s short and long-term goals, (3) the volunteer’s ability to go beyond mandate expectations, and (4) the volunteer’s contribution to the betterment of the targeted population. These questions are important in analyzing the impacts of volunteers’ work. The hypothesis is that short-term volunteers are more efficient (due to time constraints), while long-term volunteers are better equipped to achieve the organization’s goals and positively impact society.

To test whether ST volunteers are better able to manage their time and workload, the volunteer’s efficiency was analyzed. Data shows that ST volunteers are more efficient managing their workloads (97%, n=33) than are LT volunteers (75%, n=4). A distribution and median assessment portrays a slight difference in median with LT agreements rating higher on the agreement scale. No differences between distributions were seen despite a greater cluster of high agreement scores in the ST (see Figure 6).
**Figure 6:** The volunteer was efficient in managing their time and workload. *Left:* Volunteer efficiency is dependent on placement duration, where shorter durations suggest more efficiency ($p<0.01$, Fisher). Greater efficiency occurs in ST volunteers while greater inefficiency occurs within the LT group. *Right:* A graphical representation of the median and distribution for ST and LT placements. Both ST and LT agreement scores showed large variability, with no significant difference between both sets.

Do short-term volunteers’ abilities to work more effectively also suggest that they are more likely to achieve the organizations short and long-term goals? Long-term volunteers should have a greater ability to achieve organizational goals given their time to build relationships and target evolving needs. Results show that the organization’s short-term immediate goals are more often achieved by ST volunteers (100%, $n=36$). Long-term volunteers contribute less to the organization’s short-term goals (79%, $n=15$). On the other hand, the organization’s long-term goals are achieved by ST volunteers 97% of the time ($n=36$) and by LT volunteers 89% of the time ($n=16$). Partner organizations agree that ST volunteers more often achieve the organization’s short and long-term goals than do LT volunteers. Agreement scores for ST volunteers show narrower distributions in favour of agreement. Local organizations also show less consensus in agreeing that LT contribute to the association’s goals (see **Figure 7**).
Figure 7: The volunteer’s activities and work helped achieve the organization’s short-term and long-term goals. Left: A median and distribution graph for short-term goals achieved. ST volunteers show greater agreement scores while LT volunteers show greater variability. Both have similar medians and show no significant trend. Right: A graphical representation of long-term goals achieved. ST agreements scores are slightly narrower on the agreement side while LT scores show greater spread across scores. A Fisher and Mann-Whitney test showed a dependence and difference in distribution approaching significance (p<0.1, Fisher; p<0.1, MWW).

Short-term volunteers are seen as more often accomplishing the organization’s short-term and long-term goals. Are ST volunteers also perceived as more often going beyond mandate expectations? This question was asked to test whether placement duration predicts the over-achievement of goals. This is important as it may elucidate to the perceived success of a volunteer’s time within the organization. It is expected that the greater achievement of organizational goals by ST volunteers would also signal their greater ability to go beyond mandate expectations. Data shows that LT volunteers more often go beyond expectations (70%, n=14). ST volunteers are less likely to go beyond mandate expectation (35%, n=11). The agreement scores for both ST and LT volunteers show wide distributions with little consensus in either grouping. The median score for ST was much lower than that of LT volunteers (see Figure 8).
Figure 8: The volunteer’s work and implemented activities went beyond mandate expectations. Left: The likelihood of volunteers going beyond mandate expectations is dependent on placement duration. The majority of LT volunteers are said to go beyond mandate expectations while the majority of ST volunteers are less likely to go beyond their mandate (p<0.05, Fisher). Right: A graphical representation of the median and distribution for ST and LT placements. ST has a lower median score than LT. Both have very little consensus in their agreement scores.

Lastly, a general inquiry on the benefits of the population served was acquired. Here, evaluations of the volunteer’s ability to help populations be better off was evaluated to see whether these rankings are affected by placement duration. The data shows that ST volunteers are more likely to contribute positively to the betterment of populations served (97%, 36). LT volunteers are less likely than ST volunteers to contribute to the advantage of beneficiaries (11%, n=2). Dependence and distribution/median tests reveal no significance between placement duration and the capacity of volunteers to contribute to the betterment of society.

Volunteer Perspectives

One hundred and five volunteers made up the sample size for this study, of which 37 completed the online survey, attributing a response rate of 35%. Table 2 shows the characteristics of the participating volunteers. Overall, 44% of respondents functioned as short-term volunteers (with an average placement duration of 47 days) while 56% of respondents functioned as long-term volunteers (with an average placement length of 280 days). Two fifths of participants were male (39%), of which 29% took on short-term positions (n=4) and 71% took on long-term positions (n=10). The remaining 61% of females were made up of 55% short-term
volunteers (n=12) and 45% long-term volunteers (n=10). The mean age for both groups was similar with an average age of 30.3 years for short-term volunteers and of 33.3 years for long-term volunteers.

**Table 2: Volunteer Survey – Volunteer and Mandate Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer and Mandate Characteristics</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>Long-Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Placement Duration (Days)</td>
<td>(n=37)</td>
<td>(n=21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (average years)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.31</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times Volunteered in Own Community (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never/A few times</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes/Often</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for Volunteering (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School coop/internship</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give Time to a Global Issue</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain Skills/Experience</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try Something New</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Volunteer Work in Developing Country (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition in Country (%)</td>
<td>(n=14)</td>
<td>(n=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good - smooth</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad - difficult</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Country Prior to Entering (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bit</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Work per Week (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-20 hours</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40 hours</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Involvement by Beneficiaries in Project Design and Implementation (%)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Involvement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some involvement</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full involvement</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Personal Satisfaction</th>
<th>(n=16)</th>
<th>(n=20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data surveyed is grouped into the following evaluations: mandate duration (original, actual, and overall change), level of enthusiasm (start, end, and overall change), activity specifics, and best perceived mandate duration.

The change in mandate length was investigated to see whether placement duration affects the change in final mandate length. The rationale is that longer term placements should show a greater divergence in time spent overseas as a comparison to original mandate length. The mean mandate length for short-term volunteers was 1.84 months (original) versus 1.77 months (actual). For long-term volunteers, the mean mandate duration was 9.4 months (original) versus 9.03 months (actual). To establish whether there are differences between ST and LT volunteers in change in time spent overseas (Δm), the ‘actual’ mandate length is divided by the ‘original’ mandate length. This derived three possible results: where Δx>1, the volunteer stayed longer than their original mandate length; where Δx=1, the volunteer completed their original mandate length; and where Δm<1, the volunteer left their placement early. ST volunteers are more likely to complete their original mandate length (93%, n=14). However, LT volunteers are more likely to show divergence in original mandate length with an equal distribution between those that left early, completed the original length, and stayed longer. The number of months spent overseas for LT volunteers reflected 4-300% (i.e. up to 3x) the original mandate length, while for ST volunteers original mandate length was completed with a range of 75-100% (see Figure 9).
The volunteer’s level of enthusiasm (at the start, end, and overall change) was evaluated to see whether placement duration plays a role in enthusiasm levels. It is expected that enthusiasm levels will decrease for LT volunteers. Both ST and LT volunteers show similar changes in enthusiasm. ST volunteers are more likely to show fixed levels of enthusiasm (63%, n=10). On the contrary, LT volunteers are more likely than ST volunteers to show a decrease in levels of enthusiasm (45%, n=9). Only one LT volunteer in the study sample showed an increase level of enthusiasm. The most common reasons given for falling enthusiasm levels are a lack of support, and the feeling that they lack the ability to realize meaningful change. A test revealed no dependence between both variables suggesting that enthusiasm levels are not dependent on placement durations. The distribution in the ‘start’ and ‘end’ enthusiasm levels does show some variations. For starting enthusiasm levels, the ST median was slightly higher than that of LT. However, a Mann-Whitney Test did not show any significance in the distribution. For ‘end’ enthusiasm levels, a wider distribution occurs in both ST and LT groups. The difference in medians also shows little variation between both, suggesting little difference between the two groups (see Figure 10).

**Figure 9:** Change in mandate length from original to actual number of months spent abroad. Left: The divergence from original mandate length is dependent on placement duration. The majority of ST volunteers fulfill their original mandated length. LT volunteers are more likely to diverge from their original placement duration (p<0.01, Fisher). Right: A graphical representation of median and distribution for ST and LT shows similar medians within both groups. The ratio of mandate length completed shows a wider distribution for LT and a more clustered distribution for ST.
Figure 10: The change in the volunteer’s enthusiasm level from the start to the end of their placement. Left: a graphical representation of enthusiasm levels at the start of a placement mandate. ST and LT volunteers show similar agreement scores, while ST scores show a slightly higher median. Right: A distribution and median representation of enthusiasm levels at a mandates end. Agreement scores for both ST and LT showed wider distributions with a slight convergence of median scores.

Mandate characteristics and activity constraints were analyzed to evaluate whether placement duration affects mandate clarity and activity limitations. The rationale is that clearer mandate goals and fewer restraints to a volunteer’s work will result in greater benefits. The study shows that clarity of mandate goals are absent the majority of the time for both ST (50%, n=8) and LT volunteers (65%, n=13). The level of work was also investigated by asking volunteers to rate whether the amount of work given to them was too little, appropriate, or too much given their allocated time. The majority of ST volunteers claim that they are given an appropriate workload (69%, n=11), while LT volunteers are less likely to claim an appropriate workload. LT volunteers are also more likely to claim being given too much work (35%, n=7) than are ST volunteers (13%, n=2).

Lastly, the ability to successfully implement activities is considered with a look at financial constraints. ST volunteers claim greater access to funds (88%, n=14) than do LT volunteers (65%, n=13). A larger percentage of LT volunteers stated a lack of access to financial resources for their project implementations (35%, n=7) than did ST volunteers (13%, n=2). A Fisher’s Test for dependence and MMW Test for differences in distribution and medians revealed no significance within the data.
The question of the best placement duration was posed to volunteers. The purpose was to see whether a volunteer’s placement duration dictated which duration they perceived as being the best. Long-term volunteers overwhelmingly selected LT as the best placement duration (89%, n=17). While short-term volunteers chose ST placements as the best (64%, n=7). Clearly, best placement duration is dependent on actual placement duration (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: A volunteer’s perception of the best placement duration length. Left: Best perceived mandate length is dependent on placement duration. The majority of ST volunteers perceived short-term placements as the best duration to bring about positive benefits while most LT volunteers perceived long-term positions as best (p<0.01, Fisher). Right: A graphical representation of distribution and median of ST and LT volunteer perspectives. Distributions show a mirror representation, where volunteers claim their own mandate duration as the best placement length (p<0.01, MWW).

A major role of the volunteer survey was to extract the types of activities implemented by volunteers during their time overseas. The listing and self-assessed benefits of implemented activities by the volunteers would provide the groundwork for understanding the types of activities undertaken by volunteers and the resulting benefits of each. A categorization of the types of activities achieved could help determine whether short-term or long-term volunteers are more likely to implement certain types of activities, and whether or not there are differences in the perceived benefits derived by both groups.

One hundred and thirty nine activities were listed and rated by volunteers on a five point scale (with 1 representing ‘very useless’ and 5 representing ‘very beneficial’). Eleven categories were developed to encompass all of the activities listed (evaluation, research, reports,
reorganization, tool development, improving, training, reinforcing, accompanying, opening new facilities, and media). Due to the small sample size in some categories, a new set of six categories were developed to collapse related categories together. The new categories included: assessment, restructuring, tool development, reinforcing, training, and media (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3: Activity Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Category</th>
<th>Category Description (associated activities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Evaluation, Analysis, Needs Assessment, Improving Existing Methods, Research, Survey, Funding Proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring</td>
<td>Reports, Business Plans, Writing Documents, Archiving, Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool Development</td>
<td>Innovation, New Machinery/Manuals/Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcing</td>
<td>Counselling, Partnership Formation, Supervision, Assisting, Observing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Technical Assistance, Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Brochures, Websites, Radio, TV, Articles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Activities Implemented and Average Scores by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Categories</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>Long-Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(average ranking)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(average ranking)</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool Development</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(average ranking)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcing</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(average ranking)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(average ranking)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(average ranking)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Long-term volunteers more often implement activities in tool development, reinforcing, and training. Short-term volunteers more often implement activities in assessment and restructuring. After checking for statistical significance, only one category – ‘restructuring’ – showed meaning. Greater benefits in restructuring activities are derived when implemented by LT volunteers (p<0.05, Fisher) (see Figure 12). While differences in average activity ranking (on a five point scale) emerged between ST (2.6/5) and LT (3.5/5), there was no difference in medians. A greater consensus among LT volunteers did occur for ratings of restructuring activities (as beneficial). For ST volunteers, only half of the restructuring activities implemented were stated as being beneficial.

Figure 12: The self-perceived usefulness of ‘restructuring’ activities implemented by ST and LT volunteers. *Left:* LT volunteers are more likely to perceive their restructuring activities as beneficial. ST agree 50% of the time that their restructuring activities were beneficial. *Right:* A graphical representation of median and distribution for ST and LT volunteers. Both groups show variation in benefit scores, with the median of LT ranked benefits as slightly higher than that of ST ranked benefits.

‘Reinforcing’ activities are also perceived as having some dependence between perceived activity benefits and placement duration. Average reinforcing activity scores are higher for LT (4.5) than for ST (3.4). A Mann-Whitney Test shows that the data is approaching significance, with a greater frequency of beneficial ratings amongst LT volunteers (see Figure 13).
Figure 13: The self-perceived usefulness of ‘reinforcing’ activities implemented by ST and LT volunteers. *Left:* LT volunteers implement successful reinforcing activities 100% of the time. *Right:* A graphical representation of the median and distribution for ST and LT placements. Both show wide distributions. LT has a higher median benefit ranking than ST. The differences in distribution and median are seen as approaching significance (p<0.1, MWW).

Considering all activities together, short-term volunteers implemented 56 activities with an average benefits rating of 3.6/5 while long-term volunteers implemented 84 activities in total with an average rating of 3.8/5. While average ratings were very similar between both, an approaching significance revealed that long-term volunteers were slightly more likely to rate their activities as more beneficial than were short-term volunteers (p<0.1, Fisher).

**Discussion**

This exploratory study sought to derive the benefits of short-term versus long-term international volunteerism. Through the use of two distinct studies, partner organization and volunteer perspectives were attained to formulate opinions on the perceived benefits of volunteers based on placement duration. The following is a discussion of the main findings distinguished within three unique categories: mandate and work, volunteer enthusiasm, and goals achieved.
Mandate and Work

Within the partner organization survey, volunteer mandates were shown to depend on placement duration. This was the case for mandates directed to a specific sector as well as for the details in mandate descriptions. Short-term volunteers are more often assigned to a given sector while both ST and LT volunteers are stated as having specific mandate goals. Short-term volunteers are also shown to be better at managing their workload. From the volunteers’ perspective, LT volunteers are more often given ‘too much’ work relative to their placement duration. The ability to implement projects is also shown to have greater constraints on LT volunteers who state their projects to be more financially demanding, yet have more limited access to funds.

Perceptions of mandate specificity showcase that the majority of both ST and LT mandates are well defined. According to the volunteers however, mandates were well defined only 35-50% of the time, signaling a large discrepancy in what is considered ‘well defined’. This is important because it demonstrates differences in job perceptions by both hosting organization and acting volunteer. An explanation may be differences in cultural understanding of what a well defined job description is. In a developing country context, defined roles and job descriptions may not be kept habitually. Thus, the writing of a job description and responsibilities, no matter how minimal, may represent a great deal of specificity. However, volunteers who are accustomed to comprehensive job descriptions in Canada may feel as though goals are not clearly defined, thus will claim that mandates are ill-defined.

Mandates that are specific to a given sector are more often the case for ST volunteers than for LT ones. This is important as a narrower focus and orientation can provide a greater attention and work in particular activities and thus produce greater benefits. For LT volunteers, a broader scope in mandates can affect their focus and ability to appropriate meaningful results in implemented activity. Long-term volunteers in this case may be unfairly seen as providing less benefits. It is important therefore to keep mandate characteristics in mind when assessing the perceived benefits of short-term versus long-term activities achieved.

The ability to manage time and workload also saw greater agreement for ST volunteers than for LT ones. Level of work however, was more often perceived as ‘appropriate’ or ‘not enough’ within this same group. LT volunteers comparatively are more likely to state being
given ‘too much’ work. In tandem, although ST volunteers are said to be more efficient, they are also more likely to have less work to accomplish. A conclusion that ST volunteers are more effective would thus be inappropriate given that they are also more likely to report that they are given less work.

The constraints on activity implementation play a larger factor in constraining the activities of LT volunteers. Understanding these limitations is important as greater constraints on activity implementation for one group can affect the perceived success of their actions. Long-term volunteers more often have financially demanding activities. Long-term activities are more demanding of resources, yet are also shown to have less access to funding for their project implementation. It may be that short-term volunteer activities have a smaller scope and thus necessitate little to no funding. Long-term volunteers on the other hand may be given tasks that are more financially demanding because they can be implemented (and the costs diverged) over a longer period of time. There may also be an assumption that given their longer placement duration, a LT volunteer has time to find alternative sources of funding (i.e. through friends and family back home, funding proposals). Short-term volunteers may thus report a greater access to funds as their needs for funding may be minimal in comparison to the demands of long-term activities. It may also be the case that organizations are more inclined to support less financially demanding activities, especially when there is a focus on the quantity of activities implemented rather than the quality of projects put in place.

Volunteer Enthusiasm

The volunteer’s enthusiasm at various periods throughout their time abroad was an important factor in gauging the level of satisfaction from the volunteer’s placement. Given the differences in the mandate and work characteristics, enthusiasm can be assessed to determine whether the presence (or lack of) successful results can be explained by a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the volunteer.

Two perspectives in the assessment of volunteer enthusiasm were evaluated. The first, from the partner organization’s point of view, both ST and LT volunteers show positive attitude
levels at the start of their placement. Throughout the placement duration, LT volunteers show a greater divergence in positive attitude with more LT volunteers demonstrating decreasing levels of enthusiasm by the end than ST volunteers. In the second assessment, volunteers stated similar or falling levels of enthusiasm by the end of their placement. Only one volunteer (LT) stated an increase in positive attitude. Differences between both surveys dictate that partner organizations more often perceive enthusiasm levels to be steady or rise within both groups, while volunteers are more likely to claim steady or diminishing levels of enthusiasm. A higher frequency of falling enthusiasm levels among LT volunteers is expected as longer placement durations often exhibit higher emotional strain. Here, the contrast between the ST ‘honeymoon phase’ (the stage where everything is new, exciting, and fun) and the LT ‘culture shock’ (the rollercoaster of emotions that volunteers may experience as a result of changes in culture, surroundings, and lifestyle), play a great role in a person’s emotional response. The greater emotional strain experienced in the latter, may play a major role in explaining the changes in perceived enthusiasm levels.

Data also suggested that a volunteer experiencing a decrease in enthusiasm level was also more likely to terminate their mandate early. Long-term volunteers were both seen as showing decreased levels of enthusiasm and as more likely to terminate their mandate early when compared to ST volunteers. This comparison is important as it represents a significant factor in the volunteer’s choice to complete their original mandate length. The effects of changes in enthusiasm may be attributed to the ‘honeymoon’ and ‘culture shock’ experiences. In the former case, a short-term volunteer wanting to terminate their mandate early might choose to ‘tough it out’ as the remaining time left in their placement may be minimal. For a long-term volunteer, a similar experience may leave them to decide to terminate their mandate early since enduring the remaining time may represent a considerably lengthy commitment.

**Goals Achieved**

Goals achieved by volunteers during their mandate implementation were assessed. According to partner organizations, ST volunteers more often succeed in accomplishing the organization’s short-term and long-term goals. Populations are similarly seen to be better off
through the work of shorter term volunteers. The types of activities implemented did not show any significant variance (with the exception of restructuring activities), between those derived by ST volunteers and by LT volunteers. As a final assessment, a general inquiry of the best perceived placement duration showed a great divergence, with ST choosing short-term placements as the best and LT volunteers stating long-term placements as the best duration length.

Short-term and long-term volunteers both help achieve the organization’s short-term goals. Regarding the organization’s long-term goals, they are more often achieved by ST volunteers than by LT volunteers. Assessing the achievement of goals implemented by both groups is important as it suggests which placement duration is better for accomplishing goals on the ground. These findings were interesting as LT placements are traditionally viewed as accruing the greatest benefits, and were therefore expected to show greater success rates than were ST volunteers. There are two possible explanations for this. First, goals evaluated may be those depicted in the volunteers’ mandate. Thus with greater specificity in mandate goals, ST volunteers can successfully implement the organization’s activities better than LT volunteers. Second, ST mandate goals are better defined (as seen previously) and their accomplishment may thus be more feasible than the activities found in LT mandates. Long-term volunteers may be given some of the organization’s biggest tasks, which may not be practical under the constraints of time and resources. Thus, ST volunteers are more often shown to achieve organizational goals perhaps for the simple fact that they are better equipped to take on their assigned tasks. Goals that are more stringent and demanding may be given to LT volunteers, therefore their successful implementation may in itself be more difficult to achieve.

Serving and benefiting the targeted population also showed greater benefits derived by ST volunteers. Short-term volunteers were more likely than LT volunteers to contribute to the betterment of populations served. This presents evidence against the popular claim that ST volunteers function with a more ‘hit and run’ development style. This is significant as it presents arguments against the popular notion that ST volunteers participate in overseas opportunities more to gain personal experience than to contribute to any substantial change in society. Possible explanations may be that there is a greater focus of activities working alongside the population in
ST mandates than in LT ones. A greater interaction with the population can therefore affect the opinions of the perceived benefits.

While organizational goals and contributions to society are better achieved by ST volunteers, a look at whether volunteers go beyond their mandate expectation shows greater likelihood in the LT volunteer group. This question is significant as it points to the overall satisfaction of the partner organization with the work of both short-term and long-term volunteers. Long-term volunteers are more likely to go beyond mandate expectations than are ST volunteers. How can we explain the fact that long-term volunteers are less likely to achieve organizational goals, yet are more likely to succeed in going beyond their mandate expectations? Possible explanations are that long-term volunteers may have the opportunity to development new goals along the way that assess NGO needs but were previously unincorporated within the volunteer’s mandate. Perhaps initial goals set out where not plausible, thus new goals were generated in light of assessed needs and demands. In this case, original goals would be considered unaccomplished, but greater and unexpected goals would on the other hand be achieved.

The categorization and self-assessed benefits of implemented activities by volunteers showed little differentiation. Assessing the types of activities and their rankings is important as differences between ST and LT activity scores may point to certain activities being better achieved within a particular placement duration. Only one category (restructuring activities) showed any significance with LT ranking scores higher than those assessed by ST volunteers. What was surprising was the lack of correlation between any other types of activity category. This suggests that there are no major differences in the benefits derived of particular activities implemented by either short-term or long-term volunteers. The lack of divergence may be explained by the intensity or scope of such activities. Further research may reveal that similar types of activities may be more intense or span over a longer period of time for a LT volunteer than for a ST one. In this case, we would expect to see similar benefit ratings because difficulty in activity implementation is relative to time allocated.
Lastly, the overarching question of ‘which volunteer placement duration is best’ was asked. This question was significant in understanding the perceptions of the best placement duration by volunteers who have functioned overseas. Results show that ST volunteers claim short-term mandates to be the most effective while LT volunteers suggest that long-term placements are best. These findings were slightly unexpected, as greater ST volunteers were anticipated to have a greater appreciation for longer term placements (in the case where they did not achieve all of their goals and would have benefited from extra time). An explanation for this may be that ST volunteers surveyed were able to accomplish all of their goals, thus increasing the number of months abroad would not have contributed to any greater profit. Long-term volunteers may similarly believe that their work could not have been achieved in less than four months, thus perceived LT durations as better suited.

**Limitations**

There were many considerations in the findings of this study. One of the greatest considerations was the small sample size. Because the sample was derived from a specific program and country source, the potential study sample was limited. Once exclusions were factored in (based on previously described criteria), the sample size was considerably decreased. Although some correlations in the data were found, trends within this limited study may receive criticisms of not accurately reflecting trends within the greater population. This said, the sample was derived with this in mind and mitigated these criticisms by ensuring that the sample size reflected a fair representation of the larger population.

Limitations in the methodology must also be considered. The need to keep questions concise may have resulted in differences in interpretations in survey questions. Basing a survey on questions of opinion thus presents a consideration for differences in perspectives and understandings of similar questions. The scale rating used in the organizational survey may have also given rise to variations in perceptions of the difference between i.e. ‘in total agreement’ and ‘in agreement’. With this in mind, the survey was developed to avoid such discrepancies by ensuring that questions were simple and succinct.

This research sought information on participants of the five year Uniterra I program, which was in its final phase during the data collection process. The rating of volunteer
contributions may have differed according to the time past between the end of the volunteer’s mandate and the filling out of the survey. For example, the evaluating organization may have a better memory of the benefits generated by a volunteer who had just finished their mandate, than of a volunteer who participated in the program five years ago. Divergences in perceived volunteer benefits may thus be a result of a greater recollection of a given volunteer’s work. The proximity of the evaluator to the volunteer may also present a drawback to the study’s findings. Here, an evaluator may have had a closer contact or working relationship with one volunteer over another, so they might feel that that volunteer accomplished more, simply because more work was done in their presence. Volunteers that may have functioned more independently or closer to targeted populations, may thus be at a disadvantage since their work may not have been as well recognized or seen.

The categorization of activities was compiled by the researcher, thus presents some level of bias. While careful consideration was taken in the development of these categories, they remain a product of the researcher’s opinion. In the future, two alterations can be taken into consideration to mitigate these effects. The first is providing categories in the survey in which volunteers can themselves place their activities. This allows the participant to distinguish themselves which category is most suitable to their listed project. The second is the requirement of more detailed activity listings which would allow for greater precisions in the categorization of activities by the researcher during the analysis phase.

Diverging answers between similar questions posed in both partner organization and volunteer surveys points to another consideration for understanding the results found. This may suggest that answers provided in one survey were more accurate than the other or it may simply point to very different perceptions of volunteer characteristics and functions by both organization and volunteer actors. To alleviate these considerations, future research would be needed that extends the sample size, increases the precision of questions posed, and includes similar questions across both partner organization and volunteer surveys in order to test for similarities across answers.

**Conclusion**

This case study sought to understand whether there are greater benefits accrued by short-term or long-term volunteers. This was conducted through two distinct surveys which were used
to extract two different perspectives on perceived benefits. Survey findings depicted that for short-term volunteers, mandates were more often concentrated to a specific sector and funding was more easily accessible. Short-term volunteers were also perceived to be more efficient in managing their workload, more likely to fulfill their original mandate length, and more likely to contribute positively to the attainment of the organization’s short and long-term goals. For long-term volunteers, activities were more likely to be financially demanding and volunteers were least likely to have access to funds. They were also more likely to claim that they were given ‘too much’ work, yet were seen as more often going beyond mandate expectations. From the partner organization’s perspective, mandates were claimed to be well defined for most cases, while volunteers stated a lack of definition in expected goals and job descriptions in both short and long-term mandates. Volunteers were also more likely to state similar or falling enthusiasm levels than were partner organizations which claimed that only long-term volunteers showed decreasing levels of enthusiasm towards the end. An assessment of implemented activities and their associated benefits suggested little variance in activities employed by short-term and long-term volunteers. The only significance was found in restructuring activities, where long-term volunteers attributed higher ratings to implemented activities than did short-term volunteers. Lastly, the perceptions of the best placement duration according to volunteers showed the greatest divergence, with short-term volunteers claiming short-term durations as the best placement length and long-term volunteers claiming long-term placement durations as the best.

These findings suggest that there are no major correlations between the duration of placement and the associated benefits. Where short-term volunteers were seen as most beneficial, long-term volunteers were seen similarity in other aspects, thus a claim on the benefits of one as outweighing the other cannot be made with any confidence. What this study does provide is the groundwork for future research. The data collected and analyses provide a basis for important questions and focus for future studies in assessing short and long-term international placement benefits. Understanding the limitations in this study will help future researchers avoid potential roadblocks and focus greater attention on areas which showcased interesting findings, but lacked correlative measures due to a limited sample size.

In retrospect, although there are some limitations in the data collected, there is still great meaning to be derived from this study. Overall, it points to undistinguished greater benefits between short-term and long-term volunteers. This suggests that short-term volunteers provide
similar amounts of benefit as do long-term volunteers. These findings are important as they point to an interesting turn in common claims in the literature that long-term volunteers continue to offer the best placement duration for achieving development goals. A greater focus on studies of this nature may help to elucidate the validity of traditional understandings of the best development practices.
PART VI: Conclusion

Summary of Findings

Short-term international volunteers have been the source of much development debate over the past few decades. In most cases, the promotion of short-term volunteer opportunities has been criticized for its disregard of traditional development practices and objectives. Once encapsulated by traditional motives of altruism, the proliferation of short-term programs in recent years has been primarily in response to changing demands for going abroad by both development worker and new generation youth. The question of whether this shift has contributed to positive or negative changes in perceived benefits however, has been the topic of recent debate, and reflected the main area of focus of this research paper.

This paper began with an introduction and historical assessment of the trends in overseas development positions. An historical investigation of the roots of volunteerism dates back to 4,000 BC, with the first documented case of non-profit thinking. Throughout the following centuries, prominent figures such as de Tocqueville and Truman popularized development concepts such as volunteer, aid, and underdevelopment. As a result, the popularity of non-profit work expanded and experienced great variation throughout the twentieth century. In the earlier period, organizations were seen as separate from the state, providing in areas where the government lacked effectiveness. Increasingly NGOs and governments alike saw the benefits of working collaboratively to provide social services. Governments could utilize the specialty and reach of NGOs to implement its programs while NGOs saw the benefits of working with powerful political figures to advance their cause.

With decreased support during times of economic recession, NGOs began to expand their support base as they could no longer depend on government sponsorship. Not wanting to lose the benefits of the sectors’ work, governments instead offered benefits to those who donated funds to NGOs, through such mechanisms as tax deductions. The initial boom of post-WWII rebuilding contracts saw a steady rise in overseas placements which was further popularized by the implementation of programs such as Work Camps and the American Peace Corps. By the 1970s, ‘top-down’ development in the Global South saw a declining presence. It was increasingly
realized that the imposition of western-style development strategies reflected inappropriate development practices. Organizations began to retract their presence in the Global South while focusing greater attention on grassroots initiatives. This led to a major identity crisis in the NGO world which lasted a decade until UN revitalization in the early 2000s. Increasing media coverage heightened support for NGOs, and organizations responded with the development of new programs attracting a new generation of development workers. Many organizations also saw the financial benefits of tapping into a rising niche market of youth willing to pay for overseas experiences. This led to a re-emergence of shifting identities within the NGO world, where the concepts and understanding of development and volunteerism were being constantly questioned. Definitions of what it meant to be a volunteer were also seeing a shift from ‘pure’ to ‘broadly defined’, reflecting the falling altruistic nature of volunteer work. This also generated the development of less philanthropic development opportunities through such programs as the gap year, volunteer-tourism, and service-learning practicum.

These opportunities were not just in response to new generations seeking exciting volunteering opportunities abroad. Shifts were also occurring within development circles, with decreasing desires to commit to long-term development contracts. An increasing understanding that similar overseas experiences could be had through a shorter time commitment became an attractive option to most actors pursuing development opportunities. Besides changes in interests and demands for going abroad, three other factors - a redefinition of development, government motives, and increased funding - all contributed to the sector’s transformation.

This shift has harnessed both critiques and promoters. On the negative side, there is a perception that newer programs (especially the pay-to-volunteer programs) have shifted the way in which organizations practice development. This has contributed to fears of a development increasingly led by profit-seeking initiatives where volunteers become the drivers of placement goals and characteristics. Shorter term placements may also encourage project implementations that are ill-placed and inappropriate given the context. The hosting of short-term volunteers are also said to place greater burdens on partner organizations as they require greater psychological exertion than do long-term volunteers. On the positive side, proponents argue that past criticisms of short-term development may be mitigated by an increasing realization for the potential benefits accrued through short-term, intense knowledge transfers. Shorter term placement may also provide greater opportunities for professionals to go abroad and share efficiently driven
tangible skills. Supporters of this transformation claim that the proliferation of short-term placements has not been completely negative. They suggest that one must not refute the positive impacts that interim positions may provide in the developing world.

A case study was used to evaluate these claims. By focusing on the WUSC/CECI collaborative Uniterra I program, this study sought to quantify the benefits derived by international volunteers functioning over the program’s five year period in Burkina Faso. Directed through partner organization and volunteer responses, placement duration was tested for dependence on a range of other variables to evaluate which placement length was perceived as most beneficial. Overall, the findings suggested that short-term volunteers are more efficient and more often accomplish the organization’s short and long-term goals. Long-term volunteers on the other hand were more often seen as going beyond mandate expectations. The conflicting results emerging out of the evaluation of volunteer benefits suggest one of two possibilities. First, that there are no existing correlations between the benefits accrued by short-term and long-term international volunteerism. Second, that there are differences between both groups. This may either be as a result of poor survey precision/data or as a result of general differences in perceived benefits by participating volunteers on the one hand and by hosting organizations on the other. Without further research on the subject however, little conclusions can be confirmed for which placement duration offers the most benefits in the developing world.

The research findings did suggest particular benefits derived by both short-term and long-term volunteers, respectively. Where organizational goals and skills desired are very concise, short-term volunteers may provide the best placement duration. Where goals are more vague or have a greater scope, long-term volunteers are needed as they can take advantage of time to achieve the organization’s objectives. Overall, this study provided an elucidation of many important factors that play a role in affecting volunteer outcomes. It can thus serve as a valuable basis for future research on the topic.

**Recommendations**

This study addressed criticisms in the literature towards shorter term volunteer placements. It did so in an attempt to test the validity in claims that short-term placements have
contributed to negative impacts in the Global South and that long-term volunteers remain the best placement duration for affecting positive change.

This study is of specific interest to NGOs that have played a large role in the proliferation of shorter term opportunities abroad. Understanding the consequences of this shift is thus imperative to the justification and continued promotion of new experiential learning opportunities. Without concrete results however, it remains to be seen whether or not short-term placements fall below long-term volunteers in their ability to promote sustainable change.

Representative of a new trend, the full consequences of this shift in development focus is unlikely to be known for some time. What can be assessed in the present, are evaluations of short-term programs (such as this study of the five year Uniterra I program) which may point to areas of improvements. Focusing on small scale improvements can help mitigate the potential risks commonly elucidated to in the literature. Criticisms aside, short-term placements have had greater focus on attracting highly skilled professionals in recent years. Short-term placements may provide the best (and the only) way for skilled individuals to participate in development, subsequently providing a great resources of skills and knowledge for partner organizations. Thus, in light of arguments in the literature and of results assessed through this case study, it is not recommended that there should be a reversion back to longer term placements. The benefits of short-term placements are evident in the partner organizations’ evaluations. The digression back to increased mandate durations should therefore not be pursued as a favourable option. Instead, organizations and their associated projects must be carefully planned and executed in order to mitigate for potential negative criticisms and outcomes.

There may be greater benefits to short-term placements than originally expected. The initiation of long-term overseas placements in the Third World once suffered a similar identity crisis. Here, issues of top-bottom development were at the forefront of critics’ disapproval. Today, we are seeing similar criticisms directed towards development practices, this time with the types of volunteer actors sent abroad in the spotlight. The emergence of new issues and questions of appropriateness has been a feature of development discourse for centuries and is unlikely to change. This shift towards shorter term placements will continue to persist irrelevant of the projected fears by scholars of its negative effects. The focus should therefore be on project evaluation and improvement in order to ensure that the increase in short-term placements continue to provide successful development outcomes. It is perhaps not the shift in development
volunteer that is of biggest concern. Increasing focus should be on the changes in the NGO sector as a result of this transformation (i.e. less extensive hiring processes, decreased and universalized training). Further research may show that the consequential effects of short-term volunteers are not as a result of the pool of potential candidates seeking the experience, but as a result of NGO selection of the candidates chosen and trained to go abroad.

**Areas of Future Research**

Due to the limited scope of this paper, the case study analyzed provides just a glimpse of the potential research in the benefits of short-term versus long-term international volunteerism. This study sought to analyze a new program that had just completed its first cycle. Evaluations of the program are therefore quite new. This study offers an innovative way of assessing project benefits by focusing on volunteer durations as a way to calculate achieved outcomes. To increase the validity of findings, a broader scope which incorporates all of the Uniterra I volunteers (over all 13 countries) would provide a much greater pool for deriving inferences.

What may also posit an interesting area of focus is distinguishing between the types of volunteers: professional versus student interns. A greater sample size could provide the data that would allow for a comparison between the benefits accomplished by short-term professionals versus short-term interns and between long-term professionals versus long-term interns. Such a study could provide an interesting assessment with regards to differences in levels of skills and experiences.

To take this even further, an evaluation of associated costs of short-term and long-term volunteerism (differences in start-up, maintenance, and monthly allocations costs) could be assessed alongside benefits. The incorporation of a cost-benefits analysis could provide an interesting look at the monetary value of volunteers’ work and suggest which provides the greatest benefits according to the costs of having them.
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