

The Right Person for the Job

International Volunteering and the Australian Employment Market

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Executive Summary

If you need a highly skilled employee with broad-based experience, then someone who's spent the last two years in a developing country might be the right person for the job.

This study is the first in Australia to document the skills developed by Australians who volunteer overseas and examine how these skills match the needs of Australian employers. It shows that time spent volunteering overseas should be seen as an investment in developing critical skills, rather than a break from the workforce.

Twenty-four employer representatives and human resource managers from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors were asked to list the skills they most valued in prospective employees. More than 220 AVI volunteers were then asked to describe the skills they gained or enhanced as a direct result of their overseas assignments.

The following skills were both highly valued by employers and well developed in volunteers:

- > interpersonal, communication and teamwork skills
- > cross-cultural communication skills
- > organisational and management skills
- > initiative, resourcefulness and adaptability
- > problem-solving skills.

As one human resource manager insisted, these are 'tough skills, not soft skills', which are hard to develop and highly sought after in the Australian workforce. Due to the changes caused by globalisation and the emergence of a knowledge-based economy, employers value them even more highly than job-specific technical skills. International volunteers develop skills at an accelerated rate, due to the unique contexts and responsibilities of their assignments. Volunteers also acquire a broader perspective on their own and other cultures, which makes them ideally suited to culturally diverse workplaces.

Yet the experience of international volunteers is often misunderstood by Australian employers, who believe that a 'volunteer' assignment is irrelevant to paid employment, or that work in a developing country context is less demanding than work in global economic centres such as London or New York.

For this perception to shift, international volunteering must be recognised as **paid development work** rather than **unpaid social service**. Employers need to recognise that candidates with international volunteer experience are highly likely to possess the exact skills required in the new globalised economy. This study makes a case for both recognising the employability of returned volunteers and incorporating international volunteering into existing staff development programs.

This study has been a research partnership between Australian Volunteers International (AVI) and Monash University's International Development and Environmental Analysis Program, with funding by the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements.

What is international volunteering?

International volunteering is about sending people with the right skills to the places that can best use them.

Skilled professionals from Australia apply for international assignments advertised by volunteer sending agencies. These assignments come from a wide range of organisations operating in Asia, the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. They focus on development challenges such as poverty, education, health services, human rights and governance.

International volunteers effectively become staff of their host organisations, albeit with some financial and other support provided by the volunteer sending agency. They use their skills and experience to assist the host organisation by training staff, enhancing systems and processes, improving strategic and operational planning, fostering accountability or delivering improved services.

International volunteering covers an enormous range of occupations. Examples include:

- > an accountant designing a microfinance scheme for rural communities in Swaziland
- > a human resources officer working in an employment training centre in East Timor
- > an occupational therapist training staff of a Fijian disability support organisation in how to deliver home-based care
- > a management consultant assisting a humanitarian agency to review its structure and operational plan.

Volunteers live a similar lifestyle to their local colleagues and receive an equivalent income. They immerse themselves in the life of their host community, which leads to a better understanding of the local culture and the effective achievement of their assignment objectives.

International volunteering is a process of two-way learning. Volunteers acquire new skills and enhance existing skills at an accelerated rate, due to the unique nature of their assignments and responsibilities. The experience often results in a lifelong change in perspective and values.

Ultimately, international volunteering creates within Australia a constituency of individuals who are knowledgeable about other cultures, adaptable and well prepared to deal with a globalised workplace.



*International volunteering enables people to use everyday work skills a long way from the office! Adventure and a change of pace motivate many people to leave their office jobs behind for a while and experience a new location and culture. This project manager worked on sustainable tourism projects with a Vietnamese community development organisation based in Cat Ba island.
(Photo: Will Salter)*

Chapter One: Introduction

1. Skills for a Global 'Knowledge' Economy

Economic globalisation and the growing importance of the 'knowledge-based economy' have transformed the nature of work in Australia. A series of government reports have identified that employers and human resource (HR) managers are now finding it increasingly difficult to secure knowledgeable and adaptable workers with the skills suitable for a globalising economy (ACCI and BCA, 2002 and Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).

The increasing demand for employees with high levels of 'generic skills', those skills that are applicable to and transferable across different workplaces, is well documented in North America and the United Kingdom. In Australia, this skills shortage has been noted by the Karpin Report (1995) and more recently by Innovation and Business Skills Australia and the Department for Education, Science and Training (DEST). There is an identified demand for skill and professional development that is not currently being met, and hence a need to provide greater opportunity for employees to develop skills in general, and 'generic' employment skills in particular.

Generic skills are referred to as 'employability skills' in Australia, reflecting industry's appreciation of their importance in the workplace. Employability skills have received much recent attention with regards to the international nature of business and the need for Australia to foster a globally competitive economy. A recent report commissioned by Innovation and Business Skills Australia highlighted a key challenge for future Australian managers: as global commerce increases, they must have an international business focus that entails an ability to understand and communicate within and across diverse cultural contexts (Nicholson and Nairn, 2006). The Karpin report in 1995 also called for Australian managers to develop "world-orientation and international business skills" in order to conduct business in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Employability Skills Framework, developed in 2002 by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia, represents one of the most thorough and rigorous attempts to categorise the generic skills and capabilities that a broad range of Australian employers desire in their employees. Employability skills were defined as those abilities "required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions" (p.3).

According to the Framework the key employability skills are:

- > communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers
- > team work skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes
- > problem solving skills
- > initiative and enterprise skills that contribute to innovative outcomes
- > planning and organising skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning
- > self-management skills
- > learning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes
- > technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks. (ACCI and BCA 2002:7)

The Framework also identifies leadership skills such as "participating in and facilitating change and improvement" as highly desirable (ACCI and BCA 2002:48).

There is an identified demand for skill and professional development that is not currently being met, and hence a need to provide greater opportunity for employees to develop skills in general, and 'generic' employment skills in particular.

2. Australians and International Volunteering

Every year, thousands of Australians participate in voluntary work overseas. In general, Australian volunteers are qualified and experienced professional, business or trades people who are regarded as able to transfer skills and expertise to developing countries. In 2006, Australian Volunteers International, Australia's most experienced volunteer cooperation agency, managed 765 volunteers on assignment in 48 countries. Since 1951, AVI has assigned over 7000 volunteers.

AVI volunteers are highly diverse in terms of occupation, age and career stage. They range from recently retired workers with decades of knowledge and experience, through mid-career professionals and tradespeople, to youth who are studying or have just completed undergraduate degrees. Their assignments range in duration from a few weeks to several years.

Several other volunteer agencies operate in Australia, some funded by AusAID as part of the Australian aid program and others as independent non-government organisations. In addition, many Australians use their own contacts or networks to volunteer informally.

Australia's international volunteers are part of a growing global trend in voluntary service that is increasingly being recognised for its contribution to international aid and development. The British agency Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) supports about 1500 international volunteer assignments each year, the Peace Corps about 7000, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers about 2000, and United Nations Volunteers about 7300 (Sherraden et al. 2006). Most international volunteering involves movements of people from richer, developed countries to poorer, developing countries, but volunteering also takes place in the opposite direction as well.

Sherraden and her colleagues (2006:164) give a sense of the great diversity of international volunteering when they write that:

increasing numbers of people of all ages are traveling to other countries to perform voluntary service. They serve in many different capacities and for varying periods of time. Some travel abroad with local religious groups to build homes for the poor. Others join workcamps in other countries for a few weeks, building trails in nature reserves or restoring historic structures. Some professionals spend one to two years sharing their knowledge and skills in less-developed countries. Others work on disaster response teams in regions recovering from natural or human-made disasters. Still others take a year out from their studies (the so-called 'gap year'), volunteering and learning more about the world and themselves.

International volunteering is most often framed in terms of the volunteers' contribution to sustainable development and the transfer of knowledge and skills to developing countries (see Randel et al 2004, *Australian Volunteer Magazine*, 2005). The concept of 'capacity building', or 'capacity development', is a core element of the objectives of each volunteer assignment.

The long history and size of international volunteer programs means that there are now thousands of returned volunteers living and working back in Australia. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, there are very few accounts of returned volunteers who have used their overseas volunteering experiences to market themselves to potential employers, and almost no accounts of what happens to the careers of returned volunteers once they re-enter the Australian workforce.¹

AVI volunteers include:

*managers and administrators
journalists and media experts
scientists
teachers and educators
information technology experts
community development workers
librarians
architects
engineers
skilled tradespeople
business and marketing professionals
economists
health professionals
lawyers and police.*

¹ While organisations such as Student Partnership Worldwide and Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development actively promote career enhancement as a benefit, little attention has so far been paid to the skills volunteers actually gain through the exchange. The absence of such research has so far made it difficult to validate the perceived career benefits of volunteering for either returned volunteers or their employers.

3. International Volunteering and Higher Order Skills

Recent research in the UK confirmed that international volunteering is an effective way for people to develop the higher order skills demanded by professional and managerial jobs in the 'new' knowledge-based and globally-linked economy (Thomas, 2001).² The study, titled *Human Traffic*, examined the experiences and perspectives of British employers, international volunteers and international volunteer agencies, providing the first notable attempt to link the international volunteer experience to the demand for employees with developed 'higher-order' skills.

Thomas (2001) identified 10 higher order skills acquired by British international volunteers in her study:

1. **Global awareness:** Knowledge and experience of human, social and cultural diversity in international contexts.
2. **Adaptability:** Ability to cope with complexity and uncertainty.
3. **Interpersonal skills:** Skills that enable people to work effectively with others in teams and groups, such as empathy, verbal and non-verbal communication, networking and negotiation skills.
4. **Handling responsibility:** Willingness and confidence to step up to a higher level of responsibility within an organisation; leadership skills.
5. **Stress management:** Greater ability to cope with stress and harness it towards useful outcomes.
6. **Self-assurance** and self-confidence.
7. **Problem solving** skills and ability to cope with adversity.
8. **Exchanging skills:** Ability to learn a new language and knowledge, but also to train and teach others.
9. **Strategic thinking** and collaborative planning.
10. **A sense of humour** as an important aspect of working effectively with others and coping with adversity.
(Thomas 2001: 45-53)

Thomas discovered that the experience acquired by returned volunteers was often misunderstood, under-recognised and under-utilised by employers in the UK. She attributes this to two main reasons: a lack of understanding by employers of what international volunteering entails and, concomitantly, an undervaluing of the informal method of skills acquisition provided by international volunteering in comparison to traditional learning approaches.

Thomas concludes that there is a 'skills trap': returned volunteers, by virtue of their international experience, possess the skills that are in demand; yet employers do not recognise international volunteering as a source of these skills or as a legitimate way to develop a career. In an effort to address this 'skills trap', the *Human Traffic* research team also explored ways to ensure that the skills of returned volunteers could be recognised by employers and be better utilised in workforce development.

Research in the UK identified a 'skills trap': returned volunteers, by virtue of their international experience, possess the skills that are in demand; yet employers do not recognise international volunteering as a source of these skills or as a legitimate way to develop a career.

² The Thomas study was the major antecedent to, and inspiration for, the present research. That study employed qualitative in-depth interviews with 30 returned volunteers, 15 employers or human resource managers, and 15 expert consultants.

More recently, research by VSO and Chartered Management Institute (Cook and Jackson 2006) examined the experience of VSO business and management volunteers who completed overseas assignments, and the perceptions of British employers who were members of the Chartered Management Institute, primarily through quantitative surveys. The study found that 80 per cent of business and management volunteers "believed that they had gained skills they would not have acquired if they stayed in the UK" (Cook and Jackson 2006:4). The main skills that the returned volunteers identified were:

- > **Responsibility:** Being in a position of authority with accountability for results.
- > **Communication:** With all levels of management and different types of people.
- > **Creativity:** Having to be resourceful and find ways around problems.
- > **Commitment:** To projects and their work in general.
(Cook and Jackson 2006:4)

Cook and Jackson (2006) observed that UK managers had limited experience in dealing with returned volunteers and therefore failed to appreciate the skill-sets developed, while those skills gained through an MBA or through local volunteering (experiences much more familiar to managers) were more easily understood. Over 40 per cent of the managers surveyed felt that they would like more information detailing the professional development opportunities of international volunteering. Like the *Human Traffic* report, Cook and Jackson concluded that this lack of understanding created a major barrier to recognising and utilising the skills of returned volunteers.

There can be little doubt that overseas volunteering offers a learning opportunity for the volunteer. According to Thomas:

The people-based nature of their work, and the immense cultural and environmental adaptation required to do it, acts as a powerful catalyst in the acquisition of sophisticated levels of higher order skills. (2001:7)

Skills related to cross-cultural communication and flexibility are some of the most obvious attributes linked working in another country, and are cited in studies by Cook and Jackson (2006) and Thomas (2001). Randel *et al* (2004) consider that international volunteering also offers an opportunity to develop networking and organising skills.



Highly-skilled health workers are critical in assisting developing communities to manage the impact of HIV/AIDS. In Swaziland and other countries, AVI volunteer pharmacists provide training in the distribution and administration of anti-retroviral medications. (Photo: Gabrielle Brabander)

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

The present study explores the link between international volunteering and the development and recognition of employability skills in the Australian context. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data.

Research methods	Participants
27 interviews and 1 focus group	27 returned AVI volunteers from Melbourne and Sydney
1 focus group	7 returned AVI volunteers
3 interviews	3 expatriate employees of a large Australian-based international company
20 interviews	24 employer representatives, mostly HR managers from the public, private and not-for-profit sector
Email questionnaire	Completed by 221 returned volunteers

Employers and HR managers surveyed represented:

- > *insurance, banking and legal firms*
- > *large state government and public service departments*
- > *not-for-profit agencies ranging from multicultural services to humanitarian relief.*

Most interviews were face to face, with some conducted over the telephone. Anonymity was given to all interview and questionnaire participants to encourage candid discussion and opinions.

Questions for the email survey were developed following the focus group. Survey participants were predominantly AVI volunteers who had undertaken one to two year assignments, with some participants having volunteered through other agencies.

The emphasis throughout the study was to gather the opinions, stories and interpretations of returned volunteers and employer representatives, to build comprehensive pictures of the perspectives of these two key groups. Qualitative approaches were therefore emphasised; even the quantitative questionnaire included open-ended questions such as "Please list all the skills and abilities you gained or improved through your volunteer placement". Skills and abilities were only categorised after all responses were returned, to ensure that a wide range of volunteer perspectives and understandings could be elicited.

Chapter Three: Employer and Human Resource Management Perspectives

The 24 employer representatives and human resource managers participating in this study were interviewed to explore their views about the skills and capabilities they value in their employees and seek in prospective employees. They were also asked about their knowledge and attitudes to international volunteering.

The attributes and skills stressed by the HR managers overlap to a large extent with the ACCI and BCA Employability Skills Framework. While the managers acknowledged the importance of job-specific technical skills, they placed great value and emphasis on people skills and generic skills. Some mentioned a move towards recruiting candidates based more on personal values and attitudes rather than specific technical skills. Several said that job-specific skills can be developed in staff through on-the-job training, but that it is much more difficult to find staff with good interpersonal skills.

In our experience there's lots of jobs needing interpersonal skills which are very hard to find. We're doing some work with a department of another major bank where [they have] trouble finding staff for positions because they literally interview for attitude and interpersonal skills, and very rarely do people put [that] down in their skills summary, but when you're doing your resume do you think about putting down 'a highly positive attitude'?

(HR manager, banking sector)

... I am seeing more and more of that through my own career, but also my peers and people that I know working for somebody who has a lot of technical skills, but absolutely no people management skills, as in unable to develop a team, get some synergy going within a team and following through on people's needs, you know, the needs of their staff ...

(HR manager, non-profit sector)

Despite the value that HR managers and employers placed on employability skills, few employers linked these skills with international volunteering. The very small minority of HR managers who had some experience with international volunteers recognised and placed a high value on their skills and experience.

Many employers and HR managers exhibited a range of assumptions and perspectives that led them to explicitly devalue international volunteering as a form of skills acquisition. While conceding that overseas experience itself was valuable and made prospective employees stand out, these employers had little appreciation of the benefits that accrue from overseas work experience, whether paid or otherwise. Many did not even recognise international volunteering as a form of overseas work experience, which was most often associated with paid expatriate employment. For this reason the experiences of volunteers were commonly compared unfavourably to that of paid expatriate workers. There was even some evidence that employers did not value the 'expatriate' experience, revealing a preference for formal qualifications and domestic work experience over overseas work experience:

I hear also that expatriates are finding that their skills or experience aren't valued. So they're finding it very difficult to get back into the work place in Australia even though they've been, say, working in America and their technology might be five years ahead of where we're at, but it's not recognised.

(HR manager, university sector)

Desirable skills and attributes, as described by employers and HR managers:

- > a highly positive attitude
- > initiative, independence, confidence to make decisions independently/autonomously
- > confidence to speak up, voice their concerns with issues
- > broad-based experience; a well-rounded person
- > personal integrity
- > interpersonal skills; people skills; ability to develop and manage relationships with people; to display empathy with clients and customers; relationship management skills
- > team work skills
- > management skills, such as conflict resolution, project management and process management
- > cross-cultural skills for a diverse workplace and society
- > leadership skills/qualities
- > multi-tasking - ability to undertake and manage a range of tasks successfully
- > communication skills; ability to write well; to communicate, well in different settings
- > problem solving ability
- > analytical capabilities
- > research capabilities.

I think we're actually still a bit closed to it. I think we still look at jobs internally and say, well, have you got a CPA and have you done this, and do we actually look at it and say, oh, this person spent two years offshore and actually built that into their thinking, I'm not sure whether we're there.

(HR manager, banking sector)

It was clear that the majority of employers and HR managers we interviewed knew very little about the developing country contexts in which international volunteering takes place. They admitted that their lack of knowledge and awareness made it difficult to judge and value the employability and skills of international volunteers. Furthermore, they appeared to value experience in global economic centres such as London, Singapore or New York much more highly than experience in 'developing country' contexts. The economic centres of the developed world were seen as 'sophisticated markets' offering valuable experience and skills for Australians.

... if I saw that somebody had spent three years working in Fiji, would that actually make me think, oh, he'd be a really good candidate for the M & A role? Well, probably not. But if he'd been in London ... So it is very job market specific.

(HR manager, banking sector)

Key findings:

- > *Employers value higher order interpersonal skills as much as, or more than, job-specific technical skills.*
- > *Many employers did not recognise international volunteering as a form of overseas work experience.*
- > *Those employers who had interacted with returned volunteers emphasised their higher order skills, including assertiveness, leadership, relationship management and cross-cultural communication.*

... these are the guys you actually need to ask, to say, okay, how did your experience benefit you when you returned?, and in many ways, they may say it had no impact because they had to prove themselves again. You know, yes, they were successful in their role, but still they had to come back here and prove it because the Pacific is sort of mainly, I think a lot of it is Third World, isn't it? ... But, you know, if your resume had on there, you know, New York experience, London, any of those, that's a super bonus.

(HR manager, banking sector)

Importantly, HR managers and employers who do have knowledge and experience of returned volunteers were very clear and specific about what they saw as the benefits of international volunteering. They emphasised higher order skills such as the ability to be assertive and influence decision-making, interpersonal relationship management skills, and cross cultural skills.

One of the pieces of advice that I'd offer, is that when you're looking at identifying the skills and other capabilities acquired through volunteering, I think that we're being very specific about those [skills] influencing leadership, complex relationship management skills and never refer to them as soft [skills] ... [Volunteers encounter] much more complex things ... that I think makes them a better person to come into any organisation.

(HR manager, insurance sector)

... the feedback we've got from other companies is that they're looking for someone who can work more effectively with their diverse workforce. So cultural awareness, cultural understanding, ability to work with people from various cultural backgrounds is probably a skill, I would say probably a skill that's sought after by Australian companies.

(HR manager, government department).



AVI volunteers such as this English teacher in Indonesia immerse themselves in the lives and culture of their hosts and colleagues. They return with a 'broader perspective' that enables them to relate to people of other cultures, and gain a deeper understanding of their own culture and values. (Photo: Louis Porter)

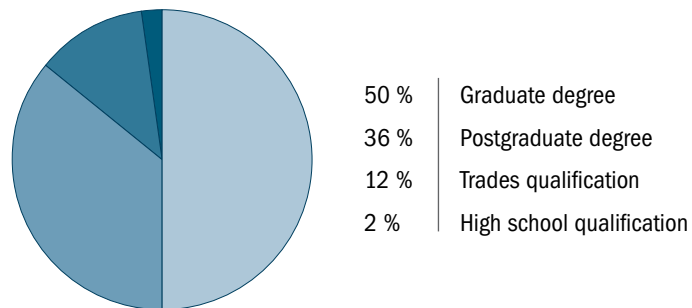
Chapter Four: Returned Volunteer Perspectives

221 returned volunteers on the AVI mailing list responded to a questionnaire about their motivations, the skills they developed on assignment, and the overall impact of the experience on employment and career development. All participants had completed an AVI assignment in the past 30 years. To include qualitative information and add depth, a focus group was conducted with seven returned volunteers, and interviews held with 27 returned volunteers.

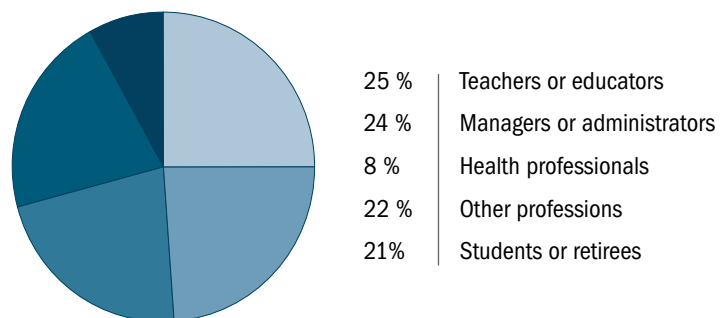
AVI volunteers surveyed

- > Business development officers
- > Circus director
- > Community development advisers
- > Election monitors
- > Engineers
- > Environmental scientists
- > General practitioners
- > Geographical information systems specialists
- > Government advisers
- > Horticulturists
- > Lawyers
- > Librarians
- > Management advisers
- > Nurses
- > Physiotherapists and occupational therapists
- > Teacher trainers
- > Trades instructors
- > Tsunami response team members
- > University lecturers
- > Urban planners

Educational qualifications of returned volunteers



Professional background of returned volunteers



1. Motivations and circumstances for volunteering overseas

Motivations for volunteering overseas

55 %	To help other people or do something useful
24 %	Adventure or travel
10 %	Need for change or try something new
5 %	Personal change
14 %	Career or professional development (coupled with other reasons)

While participants were motivated by a range of reasons to volunteer with AVI, their motives were often complex and multifaceted. For example, 14 per cent mentioned skill, career and professional development as part of their motivation, but these motives were always coupled with other dimensions.

I ... wanted to take my career to an international level.

First and foremost, I was keen to make a meaningful contribution ... taking on such a position [assignment as a lawyer] was also an opportunity to develop my professional skills.

Many participants traded the security of employment for the opportunity to live and work overseas. 44 per cent of participants resigned their positions to take up their AVI assignment. In contrast, 23 per cent took leave without pay. A large proportion, 20 per cent, either volunteered in a gap year after university study, or in between jobs.

55 per cent of AVI volunteers identified the desire to help other people as their motivation for volunteering their skills overseas.

2. Skill development through volunteering

Respondents were asked to list all the skills and abilities they acquired or improved through their AVI assignments. They were also asked if they would have developed these skills had they not volunteered.³

Number of skills developed

87 %	Gained or improved one or more skills
57 %	Gained or improved three or more skills
30 %	Gained or improved five or more skills

³ The questionnaire specifically asked: 'Had you NOT volunteered overseas do you think you would have developed this skill/ability? Y or N'. However, many respondents qualified their response by explaining that they would not have gained that skill or ability to the same extent or as quickly without the volunteer experience. Therefore these responses were quantified in the analysis.

3. Aquisition of Employability Skills

Skills developed through volunteering

44 %	Interpersonal and communication skills
43 %	Cross-cultural communication skills
35 %	New language skills
42 %	Profession-specific technical skills
33 %	Teaching and training skills
38%	Broader perspective
32%	Resourcefulness, adaptability, problem-solving
25%	Organisational and management skills
25%	Tolerance and patience
19%	Independence (self-confidence, self-sufficiency, resilience)

Skill categories were defined by analysing the broad range of skill descriptions provided by respondents.

Interpersonal and communication skills were most often listed by participants. Interpersonal skills included 'teamwork skills' and 'ability to work effectively with others'. Communication skills included spoken, written and non-verbal skills.

Apart from all the sort of practical skills that I developed as a teacher, I think that capacity to communicate with people on a variety of different levels ... and actually have meaningful working relationships with them is something ... that I use all the time.

Not surprisingly given the international setting of the assignment, 'cross-cultural communication skills' were listed by 43 per cent of returned volunteers. Examples include responses such as "capacity to work professionally in a cross-cultural setting" and "dealing with different cultures and cultural expectations".

As many participants clearly differentiated between 'cross-cultural communication' skills and 'language' skills specific to their assignment, language skills were categorised separately. Several participants mentioned learning specific languages such as Mandarin, Thai, Spanish, Indonesian and Vietnamese.

The AVI assignment sometimes provided the opportunity for volunteers to gain significant professional experience. 42 per cent of participants listed technical skills relevant to their profession, including computer and IT skills, medical, surgical and nursing skills, and technical and report-writing skills.

Distinct from the technical skills mentioned above, 'teaching and training skills' were cited by 33 per cent of returned volunteers. Volunteers from a broad range of professional backgrounds were called upon to transfer their knowledge and skills in formalised teaching or training contexts.

Many respondents described attributes or abilities that were broadly defined as a deeper and more mature understanding of human society and their place within it; a more ethical and values-based perspective on work and life; and the ability to see things from the perspective of other people and cultures.

An overwhelming 87 per cent of returned volunteers believe that at least one skill they gained or improved overseas has been useful in the workplace since returning to Australia. 53 per cent reported that at least four of these skills have been useful in the workplace since their return.

'Broader perspective' is the label given to these attributes, covering descriptions such as: "understanding of Indonesian society"; "understanding foreign people's views of Australia"; "a deeper understanding of my own culture"; "an alternate perspective"; "got to know what I was capable of and who I was, what I valued in life"; "knowing what it is like to be an 'outsider' in another country"; gaining a "new perspective on world issues". While many respondents struggled to find the words to describe these attributes, they were clearly important, with 38 per cent of respondents identifying attributes in this category.

'Resourcefulness and adaptability' were identified by 32 per cent of participants. These skills were either referred to directly or described as the ability to overcome a lack of technology and other resources. Alternative terms included "improvisation", "coping with uncertainty and being more flexible", "improved problem-solving", and "ability to work creatively with available resources".

Organisational and management skills were noted by 25 per cent of participants, including personal skills such as time management as well as management and supervision of people and projects.

Many returned volunteers identified personal and attitudinal changes. Attributes such as 'tolerance' and 'patience' were gained or developed by 25 per cent of respondents, and 19 per cent felt that they had increased their sense of independence. 'Improved self-confidence', 'self-sufficiency' and 'personal resilience' were also categorised as independence.

There's this part where it sort of changed me ... just patience, better patience and understanding and a much better awareness of how other cultures are and how they operate. I think some of these translate very well into the professional workplace as well. You know, the ability to get along better with people and try to understand where people are coming from ... those quasi-professional skills.

> 42 per cent of returned volunteers developed technical skills relevant to their profession during their assignments.

> Volunteers from a broad range of professional backgrounds were called upon to transfer their knowledge and skills in formalised teaching or training contexts.

> The majority of returned volunteers reported having a more ethical and values-based perspective on work and life.

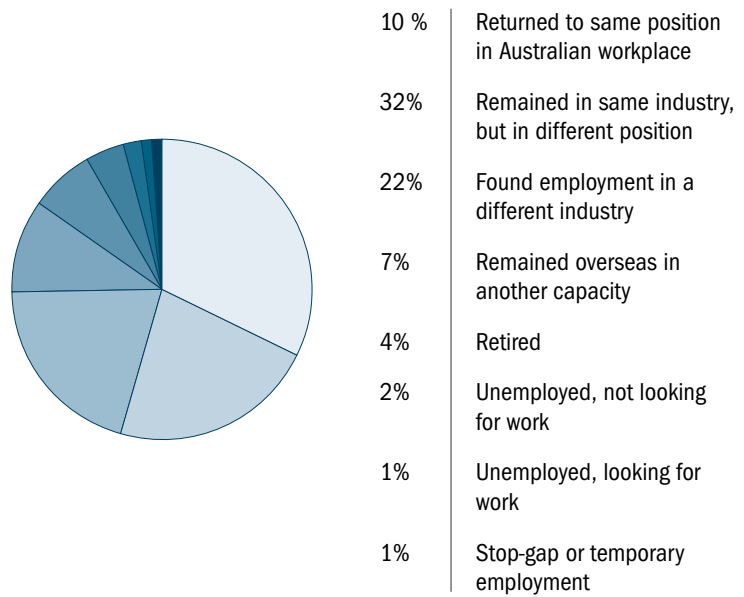
*Building the capacity of an organisation requires substantial leadership and negotiation skills. AVI volunteers such as this trainer in Indonesia must liaise with staff at all levels of management, including high-level political stakeholders, and often have a high level of responsibility during their assignments.
(Photo: Louis Porter)*



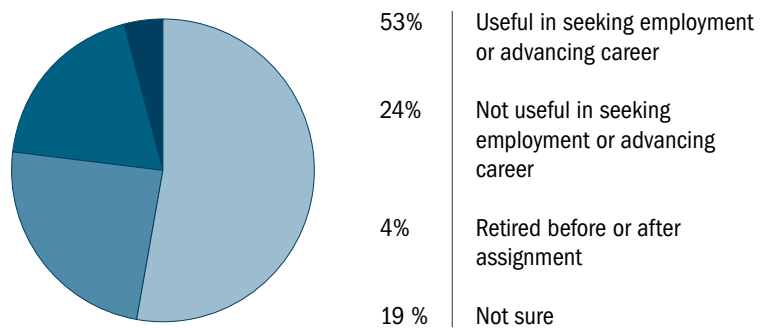
4. Impact of the International Volunteer Experience on Employment and Career

The majority of returned volunteers sought or were recruited to new positions within the first two years of return.

Employment status of AVI volunteers in the first or second year of their return to Australia



Was the international volunteer experience useful in seeking employment or career advancements?



Participants were asked to explain their answers to the above question. This generated a large amount of feedback demonstrating a variety of experiences in terms of career progression and life experiences post assignment. Their comments revealed the complex interaction between professional development and personal growth, and how that interaction is perceived by returned volunteers.

Some participants viewed personal and employment skills as distinct, but nonetheless specified that personal attributes contributed to professional development. Similarly, a broad range of definitions of 'career advancement' were offered. A number of participants, other than those now retired, stressed that they have not particularly sought career advancement.

Because each experience in life has had an impact on the way I work, it is hard to be specific. My overseas placements ... have been very significant in my life – they have immeasurably improved my skills and my current employers value those skills.

I could say that my experience as a volunteer has shaped my life in many more subtle ways than what is probably obvious, perhaps not so much in an exact job skill enhancement, but in other personal ways, which in fact does impact on ongoing employment positions.

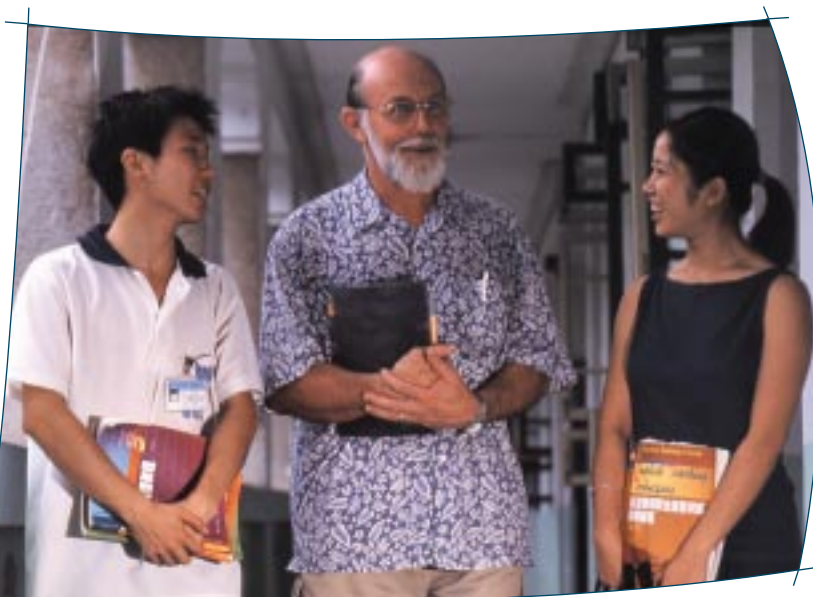
The international volunteer experience enables returned volunteers to demonstrate their skills to potential employers in a more unusual context than job applicants with only domestic experience. Some respondents believed that the volunteer experience was a point of interest on their resume and either hoped or had been told that it made their application stand out.

[The volunteer experience] in itself makes for an interesting resume and attracts attention by setting me apart from other people.

[The volunteer experience] helps in employment interviews because I can use it immediately as a reference of how I have teamwork and leadership skills.

I have had a couple of key interviews where I chose examples from my time overseas to really nail questions particularly on communicating, negotiating and dealing with difficult situations.

Returned volunteers can demonstrate their skills to potential employers in a more unusual context than job applicants with only domestic experience.



The great majority of volunteers, whether they are teachers or not, are called upon to transfer knowledge to their colleagues through formal or informal training. 33 per cent of returned volunteers surveyed said that they had developed training skills through their assignments. This AVI volunteer worked on conversational English techniques with trainee teachers in China. (Photo: Will Salter)

4.1 Working at a higher level of responsibility

International volunteering often provided an opportunity for people to be employed at a higher level than they had been working at previously in Australia, especially in advisory and training roles. Some respondents pointed to the high-level political stakeholders with whom they had regularly interacted, to illustrate that they had been operating at a level far above where they had worked in Australia.

Some respondents attributed their success in applying for higher-level positions directly to having worked at a higher level of responsibility during their assignment. Others identified more subtle impacts, such as increased confidence.

I had far more responsibility and worked in higher level positions. I've been able to apply for higher level positions as a result of my experience.

The placement of two years in PNG with higher levels of responsibility than I would have had in Australia, and with a requirement to be more resourceful, demonstrated independence and management skills to my new employer.

I am now working at a senior management level and would not have had the confidence or experience necessary for this role without that overseas experience.

I grew an amazing amount of self confidence and began to believe that when I put my mind to things, they are achievable.

Working for the Thai Government is not something many Australians can claim on their CV!

My confidence in my abilities, skills and knowledge is greatly enhanced since my return from Timor. I think the experience demonstrates above all to prospective employers that I have the ability to cope with a wide range of issues and achieve results under difficult circumstances.

4.2 Accelerated Skill Acquisition

Many participants referred to working in a developing country as an opportunity to acquire experiences they would have been unlikely to encounter had they remained in Australia. This unique context enabled volunteers to gain and develop skills more quickly and more extensively, in particular cross-cultural communication, flexibility and patience. That is not to say that those skills could not be acquired in Australia, but participants could not be sure that they would have developed skills to the same level without the volunteer experience.

A volunteer placement allows you to gain skills and a level of experience that could take 10 plus years to gain in a conventional work environment.

I would have learnt more in Malawi in the 18 months I was there than I would have here [in Australia].

Maybe eventually I would have developed some of those attributes, but it certainly was an accelerated learning process.

Some respondents attributed their success in applying for higher-level positions directly to having worked at a higher level of responsibility during their assignment.

The unique context of overseas assignments enables volunteers to gain and develop skills at an accelerated rate.

Accelerated and extensive skill development through international volunteering was mentioned explicitly in many of the interviews, while many survey respondents said that it was unlikely they would have gained a particular skill without the volunteer experience.

4.3 Challenges faced by returning volunteers

Returned volunteers note a general lack of knowledge among employers and colleagues about the context of international volunteering, and the skill level it demands. This poses a significant challenge as they reintegrate into the Australian workforce and seek recognition for their overseas experience.

I have generally found that most employers I have spoken to can't comprehend or don't understand what an overseas voluntary placement is or [how it] can add to the knowledge, skills and other attributes of employees.

This lack of employer comprehension caused some returned volunteers to feel that they were regarded as 'weird' for having volunteered for an extended period of time. Participants identified two elements to this misunderstanding. Firstly, some believed that the term 'volunteer' itself diminishes the value of their experience in the eyes of prospective employers, leading them to regard the volunteer assignment as irrelevant to paid employment back in Australia. Secondly, some employers devalued the location of the assignments. Some returned volunteers came across employers who valued Australian experience above overseas work; they believed this might be due to employers having insufficient knowledge about the employment context in developing countries, or having a bias towards experience garnered in more economically developed locations.

Returned volunteers used a variety of strategies to overcome these challenges, but some remained frustrated that employers did not appear to understand the context of their work. Some participants reported that they avoid documenting or talking about their international volunteer experience, or avoid using the word 'volunteer' when applying for jobs. This was either in response to receiving negative feedback about the volunteer experience from prospective employers, or occasionally as a pre-emptive measure.

... in regards to leaving [the] 'volunteer' descriptor off my CV, I can recall discussion with other AVIs, agreement from my parents that it may be a good idea to try, spurred by my own gut instinct.

... in fact I do not disclose that I was an Australian Volunteer on my CV, I just list the work I did over there ... I learned very quickly to tone down my experience in Vietnam and never mention the word 'volunteer' in order to get on in employment in Sydney.

... I have reduced this component [the volunteer assignment] in my resume. Accountants deal with [dollars] and that's what counts to them.

... I did leave it out [the word 'volunteer']. In fact I think my resume says a two year placement or something.

Other participants used a different strategy to ensure their experience received appropriate recognition: they drew attention to the rigorous recruitment process used by AVI to select volunteers. In highlighting the rigour of the recruitment process, returned volunteers intend to convey the high selection standards applied and the high level of accountability required by the role.

Common misunderstandings among Australian employers

- > *Some employers viewed the volunteer assignment as irrelevant to paid employment in Australia.*
- > *Some employers felt that work experience in 'developing countries' was less valuable than in London and or New York.*

Strategies used by returned volunteers:

- > *Leaving the word 'volunteer' off their CVs.*
- > *Explaining the rigorous recruitment and selection process used by AVI.*
- > *Constructing a CV that explained the context of the assignment, the skills developed and their application in the Australian workplace*

People who understand and support international volunteering play a vital role in reintegrating returned volunteers into the Australian employment market.

when you say I went to [Laos] as a volunteer, they just think you took yourself off with no recruitment process, with no selection process and just wallied about for two years. So I would be at absolute pains to say, you know, I was recruited through this organisation to do this ... you have to use all that language about AVI and you have to make it sound like a recruitment agency, which it is.

Some returned volunteers employed a simple strategy to avoid misunderstandings about international volunteer work. They constructed a detailed CV that clearly explained the context of the assignment, the skills developed, and their application to the Australian work place.

I think structuring your resume and working out how you can exactly speak about the role and ... do it in a way that doesn't alienate your audience.

Despite these strategies, a significant number of respondents reported dissatisfaction with how their volunteer experience had been received.

5. Volunteer Supporters in the Workforce

Returned volunteers reported that their successful return to the Australian workforce, with due recognition of their overseas experience, was often dependent on the role of certain individuals, or 'volunteer supporters'. The support of these individuals was predicated upon and facilitated by an existing knowledge of the volunteer experience.

Returned volunteers recounted stories of individuals, among both potential and existing employers, with whom they had connected over the volunteer experience. As a result the returned volunteer felt their experience to be legitimised and valued.

My manager ... she had a very broad social outlook. She very much valued what I'd done ... so I think that really helped [secure the job].

It just so happened that one of the people on the [interview] panel had spent some time in Fiji and ... I think because of her own personal experiences had a better idea of what sort of skills I was likely to come with.

He [the interviewer] was quite impressed. He was quite an altruistic kind of person and liked that whole [volunteering] idea, so they were keen to employ me.

I had kept pretty regular contact [with the head of finance] while I was on my career break and I knew she'd be a key ally and a friend and a sponsor and to help me find something interesting when I came back and she did. She was instrumental in many ways in me getting this work by sort of supporting me ... and promoting my capability.

The importance of people who value and understand international volunteering was a key theme of both the interviews and surveys. These supporters and their networks play a crucial role in the successful reintegration of returned volunteers into the Australian employment market.

The AVI Recruitment Process

Recruitment for Australian Volunteers International is a competitive process. It ensures that selected candidates have not only the professional and technical expertise required by the employer, but also the personal competencies necessary for success in a culturally different workplace.

1. Candidates apply for advertised assignments with specific selection criteria.
2. Shortlisted candidates participate in behavioural interviews to test personal competencies such as flexibility, problem-solving ability, empathy, resilience and stress management.
3. Personal and professional referees are interviewed to build a comprehensive picture.
4. The successful candidate completes a medical assessment and a police check to meet child protection standards and the legal requirements of the host country.
5. Before departure, AVI volunteers participate in a training program which equips them with ideas and tools to enhance their effectiveness in a cross-cultural environment. Topics range from cultural integration in the workplace to the role of the volunteer in international development.



*AVI volunteers learn how to work with fewer resources at their disposal. This makes them more resourceful and adaptable to changing circumstances. This is especially true of health workers such as this physiotherapist.
(Photo: Debra Plueckhahn)*



Marketing and business development skills can change lives. In countries such as Indonesia, AVI volunteers work with village producers or artisans to help them find international markets for their products. This greatly increases employment opportunities, makes local businesses internationally competitive and boosts local economies. (Photo: Louis Porter)

Chapter Five: Bringing the two perspectives together

Tough skills, not soft skills!

I've worked with returned volunteers through AVI and talked to companies about employing returned volunteers, and one of the wonderful skills I think that they bring is that they have a very highly developed skill in the area of influence because ... some of the environments they go to, they have to learn that because they won't get things done if they don't learn how to influence in that environment, which is different to the one they've come from... and that is a skill, a tough skill. It's not a soft skill. It's a tough skill. It's hard to learn and it's sometimes very difficult.

(HR manager, insurance sector)

Australian workplaces have been transformed by globalisation and the growing importance of a knowledge-based economy. Employers have come to value a range of knowledge, skills and attitudes in their employees that enable them to communicate and work well together and with customers, to be able to solve problems and learn on the job, and to demonstrate initiative, self-organisation and long term strategic planning. According to the Commonwealth Government, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, these 'employability skills' are the key capabilities that will enable employers to prosper in the global and knowledge-based economy (ACCI and BCA, 2002).

The employers and HR managers interviewed in this study overwhelmingly agreed: they added related capabilities such as confidence, leadership and ability to influence decision-making, and cross-cultural skills for a culturally diverse workplace and society. Indeed, many employers argued that such 'higher order' skills were more important and harder to find in staff and prospective staff than traditional job-specific technical skills. As one HR manager quoted above says, these are not 'soft skills' at all – they are hard to learn and develop, and often difficult to find in people. These are 'tough skills' and are increasingly being valued and sought after in Australian workplaces.

International volunteering programs are transformative experiences that develop and foster generic 'tough skills' in volunteers. The returned volunteers in this study acquired and enhanced a range of skills and capabilities that they found useful and valuable after returning to Australia. Many of the key skills they identified correspond with the generic employability skills highlighted by ACCI, BCA and the HR managers interviewed.

Many HR managers also mentioned the value of 'well rounded' employees with broad-based experience. In this regard, returned volunteers strongly indicated that the experience challenged them to reflect more deeply about their values and goals in life. In a range of ways they reported that they had developed a more ethical and value-based perspective on work and life.

Most returned volunteers felt that they would not have developed such skills – or not developed them as quickly – if they had stayed at home in Australia. In their new, culturally and organisationally different work contexts, they found they needed to acquire new skills much more quickly than they would in their Australian workplaces. Allied to this, many international volunteers were called upon to work in much higher positions and take on higher levels of responsibility than they had in Australia. Such experiences also contributed to developing capabilities and self-confidence.

International volunteering programs are transformative experiences that develop and foster generic 'tough skills' in volunteers. These skills are hard to learn and develop, and are highly sought after in Australian workplaces.

Key employability skills developed by returned volunteers:

- > *interpersonal, communication and teamwork skills*
- > *cross-cultural communication skills*
- > *initiative, resourcefulness and adaptability*
- > *confidence and independence*
- > *problem solving skills.*

This study suggests that international volunteers acquire considerable experience, knowledge and skills – valuable and sought-after employability skills – but there is evidence that such assets have not been appropriately recognised or utilised within Australian workplaces.

This study suggests that international volunteers acquire considerable experience, knowledge and skills – valuable and sought-after employability skills – but there is evidence that such assets have not been appropriately recognised or utilised within Australian workplaces.

There seem to be several, sometimes interrelated, reasons for this. Many employers assign more value and meaning to formal qualifications and experience, rather than informal means of gaining experience such as volunteering or working overseas. Yet, as they acknowledge themselves, most employers and HR managers know little about the nature, practice or contexts of international volunteering. Exacerbating this lack of knowledge was a common attitude that values experience gained in the ‘centres’ of the global economic system such as New York or London and, by implication, devalues experience and learning in the ‘Third World’. Conversely, the small proportion of HR managers who have knowledge and experience of international volunteering and returned volunteers, did recognise and place a high value on their skills and potential contribution to their enterprises.

Many returned volunteers have overcome the barriers identified above and have deployed their volunteer experience to negotiate and secure meaningful roles and careers for themselves. While only half of the survey participants felt that their volunteering experience had helped advance their career, a closer look at their responses reveals that the great majority thought that international volunteering had shaped their lives and their personal decisions in very positive ways. Clearly many were making a distinction between career as paid work and life decisions more broadly, finding international volunteering to be a life changing and personally transformative experience. Many felt that they had built a values foundation and ethical perspective that has guided their decisions and goals since.

The most useful and enriching part of my placement was the confidence it gave me to tackle other areas of my career and life, and the compassion to strive for a deeper level of understanding when working with others.

*Accountants, economists and auditors have vital roles to play in development projects. This volunteer is working on microfinance program in Swaziland that is aimed at improving livelihoods for rural communities. Other finance professionals assist non-profit agencies to manage and report on donations, or work on economic strategies with government departments.
(Photo: Gabrielle Brabander)*





Most AVI assignments focus on organisational development, including strategic and operational planning and implementing systems and processes. As a result, volunteers develop significant management and organisational skills. This volunteer worked with East Timorese women to set up a community centre in the province of Baucau. (Photo: Debra Plueckhahn)

Chapter Six: Recommendations

Translating personal value into employment value

For any organisation which is selecting staff, a candidate's CV which states that they have done overseas development work is likely to indicate that they have enhanced their personal skills, cross cultural communication skills, sense of self awareness [as] well as heightened and expanded their relevant technical skills.

(Hudson and Inkson 2006:318).

The interesting thing for me was that talking to a number of returned volunteers, it's not just with AVI, but with other organisations as well, all the volunteers that were coming back into the full time workforce, that they would leave their volunteering off their resume and create something to put in its place because they almost were making an excuse for what they had done. They could identify what value they had personally received from that, but couldn't translate it into the value for how it would apply to the corporate world or to the workplace, so I think one of the first most important things is to actually promote volunteering inside organisations themselves.

(HR manager, Insurance sector)

*It must be emphasised that international volunteering is actually **paid development work**, rather than **unpaid social service**, which is the common image of volunteering at home.*

At least **four key strategies** or approaches clearly emerge from this study:

1. Awareness raising

A much greater awareness is needed among Australian employers and human resource managers of the value of international volunteering in developing the skills, capabilities and attitudes that are needed and sought after in Australian enterprises.

Many employers, HR and corporate managers currently have very limited knowledge of international volunteering – of *who* volunteers, *how* they are recruited, *where* they go, what they *do* and what they *learn*.

To increase this knowledge, volunteer sending agencies need to translate the experience and skills of international volunteering into the language of employability skills and professional work skills that is meaningful to employers and HR managers.

It must be emphasised that international volunteering is actually *paid development work*, rather than *unpaid social service*, which is the common image of volunteering at home. International volunteering differs in many very significant ways from domestic volunteering, and in fact should be seen as international development work. AusAID has recently identified it as a key dimension of Australia's international aid and development program (AusAID, 2004).

Indeed, some returned volunteers avoided the words 'volunteer' or 'volunteering' in their CVs, instead presenting and discussing their experience as overseas development work.

2. Corporate volunteer programs

Australian organisations in the public, private or not-for-profit sector could consider international volunteer programs as a means of building the employability skills of their current staff. Such programs could provide leadership training and professional development while demonstrating corporate social responsibility on an international scale.

Corporate volunteer programs could include:

- > A law firm sending secretaries or articled clerks to a legal aid commission in the Pacific, to set up legal libraries and train staff in client relationship management or financial practice.
- > Staff of an Australian government department working on a public sector training program with local government in Cambodia.
- > An accounting firm assisting in the development of a microfinance scheme for disadvantaged women in Vanuatu.

Employers should work with recognised international volunteer agencies to develop such programs. These agencies can identify a suitable overseas partner organisation and ensure that the program offers demonstrable benefits to the overseas community. They can also help select and prepare candidates for the program.

3. Career enhancement strategies

Returned volunteers have not been passive in building their careers, and have actively drawn upon their international experience and skills in pursuit of career goals. Their career paths, however, could be enhanced and accelerated with better resources and support.

Returned volunteers would benefit from assistance in developing CVs and strategies that express and articulate their skills in language meaningful to employers and HR managers. As HR managers emphasised, these strategies include being able to relate specific examples and accounts from their experience to demonstrate specific capabilities.

Career enhancement strategies could include workshops with returned volunteers on employability skills, as well as online learning materials. The American-based Peace Corps has a selection of careers manuals for their returned volunteers that specifically address the challenge of returning to the workforce (Peace Corps, 2006). Within these career manuals the different requirements for each career-field are described, followed by a quote from a returned volunteer that describes how their experience has helped them to succeed in the job.

Networking, both during and after the volunteer assignment, should also be promoted as a key element of career enhancement. Whether returning to an existing job or seeking new employment, returned volunteers stressed the importance of staying in touch with their networks and mentors in Australia. Commonly this approach was seen as practical advice received or passed on, but some stressed that it was the responsibility of the person being repatriated to actively maintain their networks to ensure a smooth transition back to the workplace. The support of existing contacts and employers before a volunteer's departure often translated to some sort of assistance on their return, even when a volunteer returned to different employment.

Career enhancement strategies for returned volunteers include:

- > *expressing and articulating their skills in language meaningful to human resource managers*
- > *participating in workshops on employability skills*
- > *networking widely before, during and after their assignments.*

4. Increase evidence base

This research data will be used as the basis for further studies into the skills gained by international volunteering and their relevance to the Australian employment market. A research project with the University of Sydney is currently underway to link the specific activities of volunteers on assignment with the skills they gain as a result.

Detailed, qualitative case studies would also advance the case for employability skills through international volunteering. Such case studies would document work experience and learning processes in international development work, the skills and capabilities acquired and improved, and contributions and career trajectories upon return.

*As workplaces change and develop, there is a growing demand for volunteers with business skills. Information technology has become a key area for volunteer recruitment. IT volunteers such as this one help set up databases and systems, and train staff in their use.
(Photo: Bree Manley)*



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Jennifer Brook, Bruce Missingham, Russell Hocking & Dimity Fifer



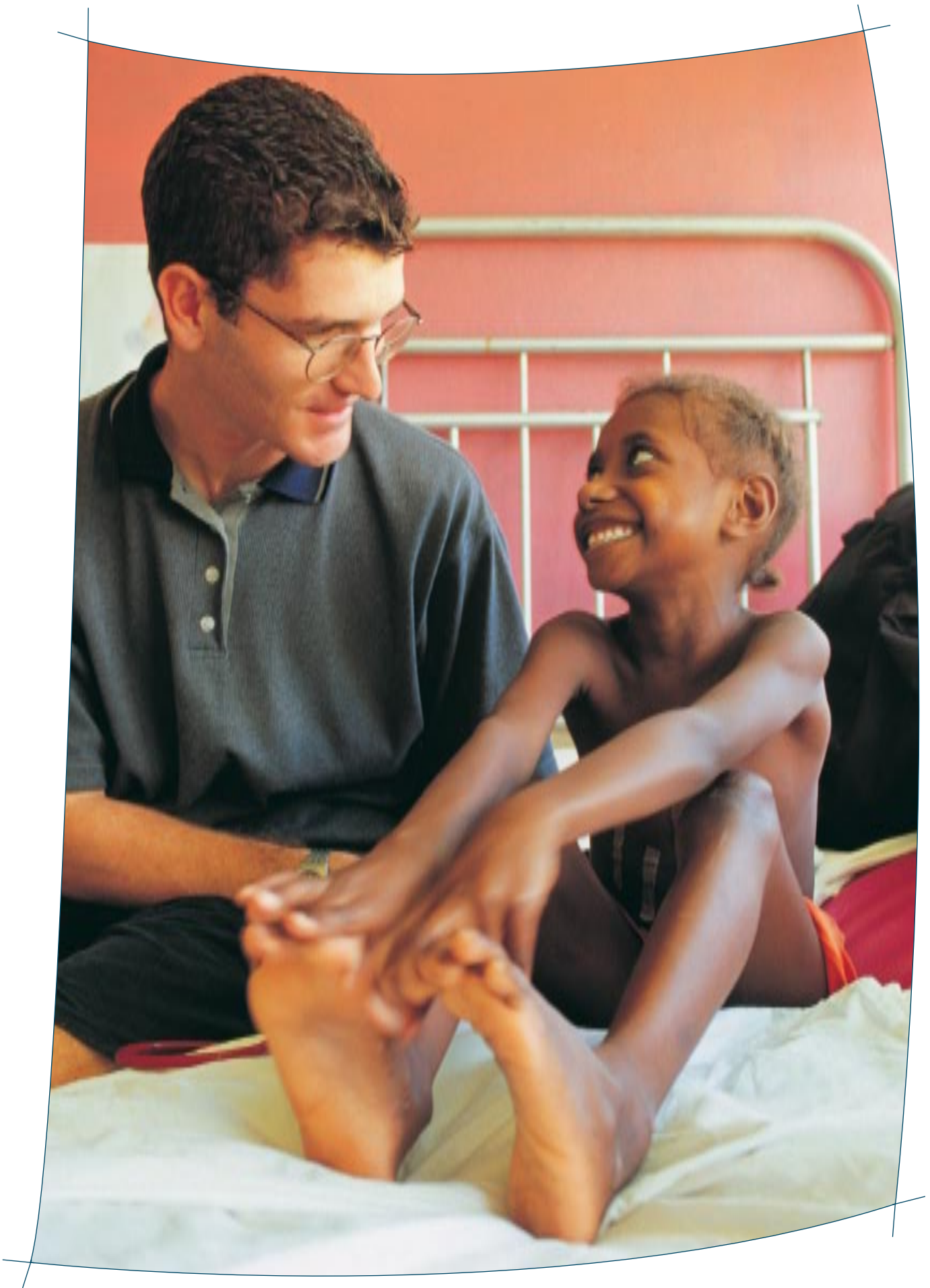
Substantial problem-solving skills are required to make solutions work in different cultural contexts. This AVI volunteer, working on environmental conservation in Pakistan, had to find a way to encourage villagers to stop clear-felling the forest areas they lived in. "How do you ask people to think about their grandchildren's future when they have to keep their children warm in winter?" she asked.

(Photo: courtesy Kate Crossing)

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AVI volunteers in the health sector gain significant professional experience through their assignments. This experience is gained through a 'back to basics' approach to service delivery, and designing and implementing health systems that work in a developing country context. Many AVI doctors reported that volunteering greatly increased their experience in diagnosing and treating a range of conditions not generally found in Australia. (Photo: Debra Plueckhahn)

How Australian employers can benefit from international volunteering

1. Develop a staff volunteer scheme

- > Talk to AVI about a volunteer program that combines professional development with personal contribution.
- > Encourage your staff to participate in an AVI volunteer assignment by offering them leave without pay.
- > Your staff could also support a volunteer already on assignment, through a workplace giving program.

2. Support and recognise returned volunteers

- > Recognise the unique qualifications of returned volunteers who apply to your organisation.
- > Advertise jobs at your organisation through AVI's returned volunteer network.
- > Assist returned volunteers to reintegrate into the Australian workforce by participating in AVI debriefing workshops and networking events, or contributing to careers manuals.

3. International recruitment through AVI

- > AVI's comprehensive recruitment processes are available to help your organisation find the right candidate for an overseas assignment.

4. Use AVI cultural effectiveness training

- > AVI offers a range of tailored training programs for staff relocating overseas, or staff coming into Australia. All programs are designed to make staff operationally and culturally effective within a new work environment.

Contact AVI Business Development to find out more.

Phone +61 3 9279 1726

Email bd@australianvolunteers.com

www.australianvolunteers.com/partners

The Right Person for the Job

International Volunteering and the Australian Employment Market

Every year hundreds of Australians leave behind a secure job and a comfortable lifestyle to volunteer their skills in developing communities all over the world. When they return to Australia, however, the nature and importance of their work is often unrecognised by potential employers.

This study, the first of its kind in Australia, reveals how the unique context and responsibilities of an international volunteer assignment enable volunteers to gain and develop skills at an accelerated rate. Through comprehensive interviews with both human resource managers and returned volunteers, it demonstrates how these skills closely match the skills needed by Australian employers in a rapidly-changing and globalising economy.

The study calls for greater recognition of both the contribution of Australia's international volunteer force, and the skills they bring back to the Australian workplace.

"... international volunteering is actually paid development work, rather than unpaid social service."

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