

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FORUM DISCUSSION PAPER 2013: MEASURING AND CONVEYING THE ADDED VALUE OF INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING



Photo courtesy of: Australian Volunteers International (AVI). AVI volunteer and colleagues, Indonesia.

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International Forum for Volunteering in Development
Forum International du Volontariat pour le Développement

www.forum-ids.org

Measuring and Conveying the Added Value of International Volunteering

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Objective

This study amplifies voices from the Global South to better understand how International Volunteer Cooperation Organisations (IVCOs) may effectively convey the complimentary value of international volunteerism to development.

Assessing the Value of International Volunteering

International volunteer service is theoretically distinctive from other forms of technical assistance in its means to development cooperation. Current donor priorities that focus primarily on measuring progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other socioeconomic development outcomes have not been able to adequately capture the full value of international service. Refocusing priorities would help to balance the principles of results management with the principles of community ownership and mutual accountability, as championed by the Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness (Accra) and the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 4 (HLF-4). These balanced outcomes may be particularly beneficial for the post-2015 development agenda, as they are more likely to frame human well-being at heart of progress and development.

Approach

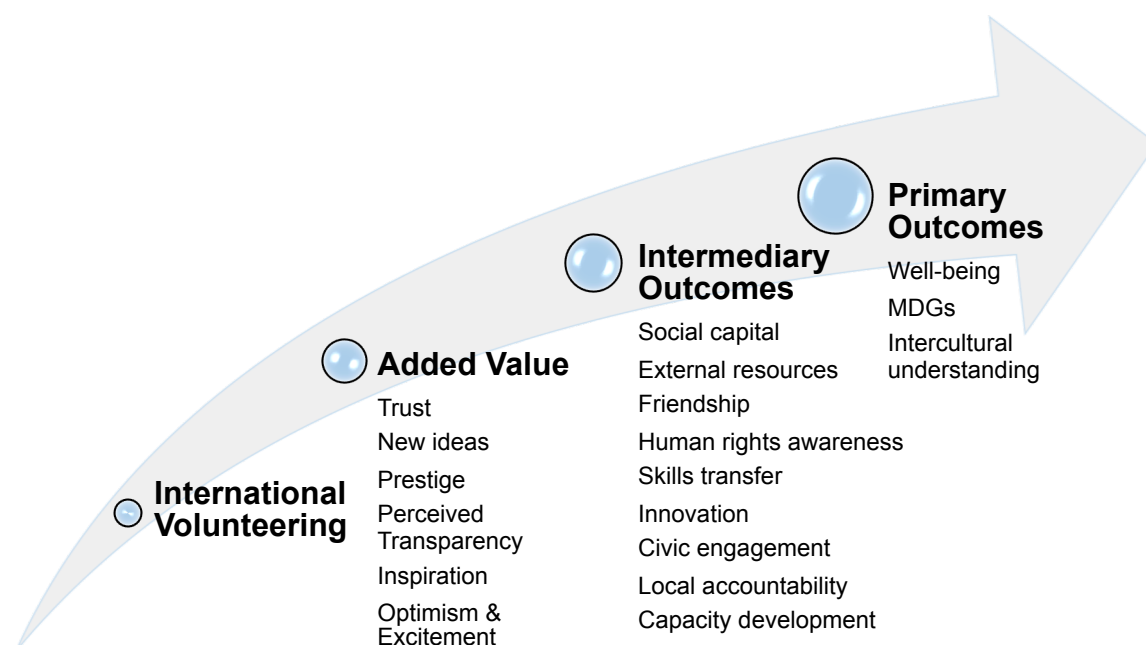
This paper uses multiple research methods, including qualitative and quantitative analyses of primary and secondary data. First, it reviews 19 published studies that used primary field research with host communities. These findings are compared with qualitative analysis of primary data from field research conducted in Peru and Kenya with 38 partner program staff members and 89 community beneficiaries of volunteers' projects and programs.

Findings

Respondents report that international volunteers provide important complimentary contributions such as innovation and ingenuity, trust, prestige, diversity, optimism, friendship and other non-instrumental relationships. These contributions are associated with intermediary development outcomes, including external resources, capacity building and skills transfers, social capital, civic engagement, transparency and

accountability, and human rights awareness. It is via these intermediary outcomes that international volunteers reportedly contribute to primary outcomes such as UN Millennium Development Goals, peace, governance and well-being.

CAPTURING THE NARRATIVE PROCESS OF INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING IN DEVELOPMENT



Discussion and Implications

In order to adequately capture the value of international volunteerism to development, volunteers' roles in the process and system of change must be better articulated and measured. Causal theories that include relationship-based processes are needed to capture a narrative agenda that more persuasively links volunteer engagement to development outcomes. Going forward, IVCOs and other stakeholders need to re-conceptualise metrics in ways that more fully communicate the contributions of international service to human relationships, solidarity, empowerment and the process of change. As theory-based links are supported, IVCOs can use evidence-based logic to inform policy-making and advocacy for programs that utilise international volunteers.

Conclusion

As stakeholders discuss aid effectiveness in the eve of the post-2015 development era, we anticipate with confidence that goals of well-being, inclusion, human solidarity, governance, and social relationships will increasingly be highlighted. Although international volunteers can contribute substantially to "hard" development outcomes, IVCOs tend to undersell the unique contributions of volunteers because they fail to

articulate and measure the less visible contributions of volunteers to the process of systemic change. As the differentiated responsibilities of international volunteers and other technical advisors are measured and communicated, stakeholders will gain a better understanding of the complimentary attributes and qualities that volunteers bring to development projects.