Impact: the community report

STEP to change: voices from Africa, America, Asia and Europe and exercises in participative analysis

Impact: the community report

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Introduction
The impact of International Voluntary Service

We appreciate and promote the value of International Voluntary Service as a tool for non formal and popular education, where learning is intended, organised, and can produce change for the individuals, communities and organisations involved. By looking at our volunteer programs and participants with the support of strategic research, we therefore aim at building a path towards the recognition of such value, which is reflected in the progressive and complementary achievement of three objectives:

- understanding our practices and the experiences of the participants, and how they influence each other, creating new knowledge, skills and attitudes about and towards themselves and the society;

- improving the capacity of the organisations, communities and individual volunteers involved in our projects to positively take into account these accrued competences and become conscious actors of change;

- valorising the unique processes and results that stakeholders create together thanks to the invaluable interactions of international voluntary service, giving them wider visibility across the institutional and public spheres.

The research approach of the STEP project relied in particular on two key definitions: the idea of *change*, as developed collectively by the partners of the first "Changing Perspectives" project, coordinated by Solidarités Jeunesses France, for the specific field of International Voluntary Service:

Impact as CHANGE

> *A change or an effect on individuals, collectives or environments in the short, medium and long term.*
> *Produced by interaction between individuals, communities and environments in the context of International Voluntary Service actions.*
> *Perceivable, and as such could lead to social recognition or personal acknowledgment.*

And the idea of impact assessment, which looks at the correspondence between our goals and objectives and the actual results we manage to achieve, and is exemplified here by the definition given by Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman in *Evaluation: A Systemic Approach* (2004):

Impact as ASSESSMENT

> *Impact assessments are undertaken to find out whether programs actually produce the intended effects.*
> *A program effect, or impact, refers to a change in the target population or social conditions that has been brought about by the program, that is, a change that would not have occurred had the program been absent.*
> *[…] establishing that the program is a cause of some specified effect.*

Methodology

Methodology
A participative approach

Based on the general goals described in the introduction, several methodologies and tools were developed by the movement between 2012 and 2016, in order to conduct impact research on International Voluntary Service, both at the level of the volunteers and the communities involved. At the community level, the method chosen consisted in semi-structured interviews with representative individuals related to the projects (local associations, public institutions, group leaders, beneficiaries of the actions,...). Such interviews, initially implemented in 23 host communities in 12 Asian and European countries, constituted the core element of the STEPS project, extending the geographical scope and socio-cultural diversity of the samples - often *respondent-driven* - to 63 more community representatives in 20 different countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and America.

The interviewers were IVS professionals who were trained by the project in the specific methodology, and approached one of the flagship projects of their organisation to perform several interviews to relevant community members. The choice of directly involving professionals within each organisation was taken for different reasons, but one major outcomes of this approach was that most of them stated afterwards that the interviewing process allowed them to deeply reflect and discuss with community members about the experience of the IVS projects, its effects and challenges to an extent and depth that went beyond the usual practices.

For the interviews analysis, necessary to identify and assess the actual impact evidenced within the interviews, again an "original" choice was made: that the reading, coding, clustering of the texts would be done collectively - following all rules of orthodox analysis, for which additional training was also provided during the regional events - by the group of professionals who made the interviews. While the process also ensured in every phase a constant triangulation with the external professionals and experts leading the overall project and ensuring the reliability of its research outcomes, the choice of *community-based participatory research* and in particular of *participatory analysis* was lauded by Prof. Benjamin Lough of partner University of Illinois.

Impact research: interviewing, analysing, discussing the interviews, brings understanding

One of the empowering measures foreseen (or unforeseen) within the impact assessment process, has been to have the professionals and activists in the movement involved in the research and analysis. This has brought insights and learning for them. The tool, the method -not only the data raised- produces deeper understanding: Tamas (Egyesek, Hungary, and board member of CCIVS), shared that reading the interviews has allowed him to understand better how things work in the different regions, which are the common points and the variety of strengths and weaknesses in each region; which could not be achieved by the existing regular meeting of IVS representatives from Africa, Asia, America and Europe, were things and issues are spoken, but somehow not witnessed.

Results from the 2012-16 experience were further shared and analysed during the regional trainings, and the feedback from the professionals involved brought to the design of a third element for the impact research implemented during STEP. Such third step of the methodology was experienced in Holloko, Hungary, during the last meeting of the project in June 2018. It consisted in an in depth analysis by the leaders of the partner organisations and of the IVS movement, through reading interviews, having long conversations in depth about what they understand from reading such documents, and extracting personal and collective conclusions from such readings and discussions. Here the goal was not to identify evidence of specific impact, but to get inspired and challenged by the realities exposed in the interviews. The whole experience has been video-recorded by volunteers in Holloko, so the audiovisual support of such process is now also a key tool for pedagogical, critical analysis and communication purposes.

This method to research, assess, discuss on the impact of international volunteering has allowed to produce interesting results, which come not only from the texts, the transcribed conversations with community members: the method itself is a source of learning, of a deeper understanding of IVS, its dynamics and needs. The report therefore highlights in the blue boxes the different aspects of the method and its consequences to the larger IVS reality, as reflected by the STEP participants: these accompany the voices coming directly from the communities, which were the core of

the research experience and stimulated such in depth analysis providing provided invaluable insight to continue in a more participative way the work of the movement on understanding, improving and valorising impact.

Communication: the interviews contain all the stories we need

In his same intervention, Tamas was also stating that, after such long discussion in the movement on how to build a narrative that is eloquent and attractive of what IVS is (and what is not), the texts of the transcriptions are containing all those stories which we are seeking for ("these are the stories!"), and that they should be at the center and basis of our narrative, of our storytelling.

It is worth to underline, maybe necessary, that these are items of great value, exactly because the interviews are pieces of honest communication among partners, and they don't have a gram of marketing: they are pure reflections of the experience of life through the IVS projects and the community.

Alfred (Volu Ghana) exposed the interest of using the results of the impact research with external partners or strategic actors with whom a future or further relation is aimed to develop. Whilst agreed by everyone, Tamas replied that he was in fact inspired towards the contrary (though compatible) perspective. That the tool allows to understand the importance of having local partners involved in the whole process of understanding the IVS system, network, methodology.

And Sam (SCI Hong Kong, trainer in the STEPs process) shared that in those stories we find a motivation to move on, and a tool to let a volunteer understand what s/he is going to contribute to.

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The fourfold aim of community work

Based on the idea of impact as change and assessment, an essential element of the interview process in STEP was to confirm the key areas of intended results that all partners involved shared as characteristic of their common approach towards working with local communities through International Voluntary Service, implementing and adapting projects in very different geographical, economic and socio-cultural contexts within the wider and agreed framework of the IVS movement.

As such, the semi-structured interviews that guided the conversations with the representatives of community members in the four continents and 20 countries concerned by the STEP activities focused around four interrelated aims that program stakeholders consider constitutive of the common efforts to build a culture of peace: cultural and intercultural competency; active citizenship and participation; conflict management; and technical work. The quotes extracted from the over 500 pages of interviews with local communities in 22 different languages, as well as the reflections coming from the participative analysis performed individually and collectively by the IVS professionals, thus restitute the importance of these four key aspects of IVS work at the community level, and illustrate the challenges and achievements of communities around the world through their own voices, reflections and ideas.

Cultural and intercultural competency

Respondents think that IVS projects help to create and cultivate positive intercultural relationships within and outside the community, and stimulate the awareness and valorisation of the community's own cultural diversity and values

98%

Active citizenship and participation

Respondents consider that IVS projects inspire and encourage greater participation and involvement of community members, and provide a safe and constructive environment enabling them to contribute actively to answer local challenges

83%

Alternative Hypothesis

$$H_a$$

36%

Conflict management

Respondents believe that IVS projects stimulate the development of capacities and dynamics that privilege and support a non-violent and transformative approach to conflicts

100%

Technical work

Respondents highlight how the specific work implemented by IVS projects in the community contributes directly to the its development plans and supports the life and work of the associations and civil societies in the field

The alternative or experimental hypothesis reflects that there will be an observed effect for our 'experiment': qualitative research and analysis helped us understanding whether the work implemented actually produced the outcomes agreed with all stakeholders, and most importantly what such changes mean in the life of the communities we work with.

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Intercultural learning

Our cultures, people and values

98% of interviewees mentioned ICL as positive outcome of IVS

A new understanding of diversity is often the first result of a continuous process of discovery and self-discovery brought by the need to adapt to new, uncertain situations created by the cultural encounters of IVS. Coming initially as a challenge, the interaction between global and local cultural diversity relies on the equal status among all participants, which in turns often supports the re-appropriation and valorisation of community cultures, people and values that through the confrontation with others become more evident and appreciated in their unicity: volunteers and communities share and adjust to each other's as they advance to the common goals of the projects.

"One of the biggest challenges has been maybe to be open to volunteers, as they come from a different country, try to know about their culture, how they live and also try to adjust to them and they to us."

- S.I., Teacher, Ecuador

"I think the most important thing is we should learn each other's culture. Thais also have to know their culture, then they should know some Thai culture as well, it's the basic need to get along with other people in the community. "

- J.T., School Principal, Thailand

Cultural diversity as a key issue across the whole system of relationships

Interculturality and the development of cultural competences are at the center of the experience of IVS, not only the volunteering experience, but also the relations between the community and the international volunteers. As such, even when the totality of projects evidence positive impact on this issue at the community level, we may in some occasions have taken for granted that the aspect of interculturality and cultural diversity, as a goal and as a challenge, are present in the whole chain of stakeholders which involve the IVS system.

Of course, the international networks relations are a proof, and still a constant learning for all members (and maybe especially across continents). But also the consideration of the intercultural issues among national-IVS organisations and local partners and communities, whom usually live in different life conditions, urban-rural settings, and sometimes language, beliefs or ethnicities.

When we consider our permanent need of developing our expertise on intercultural relations (together with our will of developing horizontal relations between different levels of partnership) we need to take into account that we should count, besides the horizontal relations within the networks, among countries, between volunteers and communities, also the horizontal and inclusive relations in the diversity of local and national actors involved in the IVS.

This may even be one of the most forgotten and key aspects of the whole method. Though being able to ensure that such relations are built on a principle of justice and cooperation, it is needed to revise to which extent everything is done to include the whole range of needs and values of our local partners, and to which extent all their efforts are valorised within the system and communicated to the outside.
This would become of central interest also when taking the approach of decolonisation debates, in order to ensure that we contribute in each of our dimensions to the increase of empowerment and autonomy of each community, each person related and each collective at stake with our local and global networking.

IMPACT - Intercultural

Such changes in perception can stimulate long-term effects and influences that are echoed both in the words of the community representatives and in the reflections of IVS volunteers and professionals, and reach deep into *individual, interpersonal and even historic relationships* to produce important changes in perspectives:

"It is very interesting for the children to know other cultures, as well as for each volunteer, as there are volunteers from many countries and *everyone can share information about their heritage*. [...] things that the kids did not know, and they wanted to know, it got them interested. [...] Overall as *influences*, they know other cultures and with that also other food, music. But *there is an exchange above all*, the kids also show us their country, *what their heritage means to them*."

- F.C., Volunteer, Mexico

"I feel that volunteers bring something inside of them, something to give everything they know, academically speaking but also in the social area, it seems to me, because they attract kids, youth, and teenagers. *Their presence here opens children's mind* about visiting other countries. Because they think: I would like to be like them to travel when I become a professional. They have told me."

- C.M., Teacher, Ecuador

Not all impact is in the interviews: they trigger new conversations and reflection

Up to this cycle of assessment, the whole research worked around the evidence, the only material that could be used externally. Because evidence shows, with no subjectivity or partiality from the promoters of the research, that the impact exists as such, at least according what community members have observed and lived.

Once such elements have been identified, and valuable materials shared and contrasted with external stakeholders, still many suggestive elements were found in the interviews. Those, whilst not being specific proof of an impact, show interesting elements, dynamics, stories that clearly indicate elements of change and possibilities for improvement that, within the movement, can be analysed and taken.

An example of this can be given through the testimony by Sophat (CYA Cambodya, and representative of the NVDA network in the seminar). Whilst discussing, about an interview held in his country, he shared the effect on khmer local people to see young international volunteers come on their own from so far away. Matina (SJ France, expert in the project) asks if that effect goes beyond just admiration, because there is nowhere in the text which would prove this. Sophat gives the example of his hometown, where (inspite of no statistics or proof) after such an exchange with international volunteers, parents have started allowing more and more their children to go to high-school or higher education, which for them before was seen as something dangerous that the children could not do on their own.

This is not written in the interview, but having an analytic conversation around those experiences allows the partners to understand better the effects and realities of each organisation and their projects. Therefore, this can be an inspiring exercise and a way to deepen communication around projects and partnerships.

"At first people used to think that for one to associate with a white person you need to have a very high social class. But now they know it is normal...The residents, at first they used to think the white volunteers are just going to give them, but now they will also support them because everything they come to do, is to help the community. At first even though the language was hard for them, whenever they saw a white person, they saw money and opportunity. [...] Since they discovered that most of them who come are students who even first save their money to come and help, the community view has changed."

- N.L.K., Community leader, Uganda

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"To see the world despite of not going anywhere, this is very interesting for me, to get to know people. There is a person, sitting in front of you, Spanish or Russian or South-Korean, a real person, not coming from Mars, not an alien, this can help a lot in understand the international situation"

- F.B., Local organiser, Hungary,

While recognising the positive and long-lasting impact of IVS in terms of intercultural learning, local partners are also increasingly aware of the need for preparation and for a long-term approach, both at the community and the volunteer level, in order to live diversity successfully beyond the challenges of interacting with new people, cultures and environments:

"I think that the impact was good, both for volunteers and for the community itself. For the volunteers because the truth is that they had to *adjust to an environment* they were not prepared for, maybe they had never had the chance to work in a marginalised area. [...] I think that volunteers should be trained also about the environment where the project is going to be, tell them something more about the situations they're going to face here, and thus how things are here. Because it's not the same."

- C.M., Teacher, Ecuador

The importance of the introduction (induction) of volunteers to the community and vice-versa.

Both Ingrid and Cynthia [Siijuve Mexico, ICYE representative at the seminar] insisted in their conclusions after analysing the conversations that special attention should be put to explaining well to all sides, hosting communities and organisations, and of course to volunteers, "what a volunteer is and what a volunteer isn't" so that the project can be successful.

Ingrid underlined that, despite in workcamps such a role would be implemented by the campleader, sometimes in LMTV projects we take for granted that such an understanding exists, or that the process of understanding will be self-facilitated. It does not necessarily happen this way, which has an important effect on the the success in the project and the long-term impact of our projects.

"It is also important to develop long term projects, that's the ideal process, because people can see the change more clearly, they can appreciate these changes and what the perspective of the volunteers brings. We have always believed that volunteers who stay and are committed to an educational process, are also educators, there is no difference between an educator and a volunteer. "

- S.S., Local organizer, Mexico

More than 4 out of 5 projects mention the direct involvement of local volunteers attracted by the IVS

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Active citizenship

New dynamics and solidarities

The importance of engagement dynamics that reach out to the community and beyond is an essential aspect of IVS, with local and international volunteers deciding to serve beyond territories and boundaries, often supporting their own communities or those thousands of miles away with the same understanding of interdependence. The presence of a center of activity in the community, around the work done by the different stakeholders of IVS projects, constitutes a unique trigger capable of transforming curiosity into solidarity, participation and engagement. From the commitment and contribution of children's families to the physical work of local youth and the creation of income-generating activities dedicated to expand the outreach of the projects, giving back to others what the project brought to them, the active involvement of local communities presents all the characteristics of global citizenship.

"Welcoming foreigners is far-reaching: in addition to receiving people from other countries - exotic - also people from Buenos Aires join the volunteers and, a meaningful point, people from the neighbourhood join them. This community made of diverse persons appeals the neighbours 'curiosity. Thereby the mothers of the children of the neighbourhood visit us, and this is a decisive point."

- J. & B., Local organisers, Argentina

"There were youngsters from our side, the ones who worked with us and ones who were involved from other villages around, and ones who are totally not in connection with us, but they came because there is a voluntary project. Some kids, the youngsters, are not so spontaneous if it's about volunteering (laugh), they were just around and popped by, but they were not necessarily volunteers, they were around. [...]
Then they helped, then they started to paint themselves."

- F.B., Local organiser, Hungary,

"I can say that all money came from our cooperative of villagers. We have been doing a charitable activity called Ride for Children. It's a project which encourages people to ride a bicycle and donate some money for the school in order to support Its activity. We had recently earned 70,000 baht for supposing our school. It's for volunteer's accommodation and extra English teachers."

- J.T., School Principal, Thailand

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"By growing something, a lot of lessons can be taught. You can earn and learn a lot. First of all, we grow them and can happily eat the fruits. For children, growing something helps them a lot to understand the nature, by understanding the cycle of the nature, with the seed being planted, sprouting, blooming flowers, bearing fruits, being picked, going through the dormancy in winter and so on. Also, while taking care of the plants, you are emotionally settled. Then, you also share it with someone else. While eating the fruits together, the children get to understand the meaning of sharing. In addition, we harvest them and sell them for a good purpose, to support the children who have been here before to more easily adapt to the society. For example, we support their living expenses. When the children were here, we could feed them and give them clothes and so on, but when they leave here for universities, we can no longer do that. Then the children have to do these by themselves, but it is really difficult and painful in the Korean society. So, till late at night, at late night, or all night long, they have to work part-time, and then go back to school. They are in this painful routine. So, if we can give them some help, despite being little, it can contribute to their having courage and support. Therefore, we grow and sell the Aronia and will support them. It is not just for the university students, but for graduate schools or vocational training, or even those who are not in university, nor vocational training, but on the way to find their future too."

- P.K., Project coordinator, Korea

The importance of the local organisation and local community involvement

Once the role of the person in charge of the group is clarified while the project is going on, it is the moment to underline the more fundamental relation in the building of a good project within a community, namely the local group or organisation that promotes or leads the project locally. IVS is the product of a network of actors, which start at a local organisation who aims at a local change and is willing to host volunteers to support such goal.

Of course the origin is different in every case, but the fundamental role of a host organisation in a positive project in the long term, was observed in many of the interviews and spoken out in many of the group discussions. Vicky [CCIVS director] points to the central role of the host organisation in ensuring a good communication between IVS and the community, and at achieving the involvement and valorisation of the community members in the project. In her conversation with Kola, Rakesh and Matina she explained the example of workcamps in Argentina, where the local youth group took over the responsibility and follow-up of all aspects of the camp, thus encouraging a greater level of involvement of other members of the community.

The question raised is that this is probably one of the most central aspects and value of IVS. One which distinguishes our movement from practices like voluntourism. However, with the habit of repeating camps, ongoing projects, etc. the day-to-day challenges take all the space in conversations and planning with partners (placement, accommodation, technical information,...), leaving aside the fundamental social issues related to the camps, and the achievement of central aims as the involvement, valorisation and participation of the local community.

We may get to the point where we forget such central aims, and therefore why we are doing all these projects. In fact, the impact assessment process through interviews has revealed the importance of renewing and revisiting the relations with local organisations, which proves to be a key issue.

Impact

Education in and for conflict

Mediation and transformation

Whether it is in the kitchen of a workcamp or at the border between divided communities, IVS projects approach conflict as a source of deeper understanding and an opportunity for cooperation, leveraging the transformational potential of small and bigger sources of disagreement and clashes. Relying strongly on the idea of equal status beyond economic, social and cultural differences, the projects promote collaboration and participative decision-making from the smallest choices of a camp diet, to the involvement of local and national governments, always in a spirit of education to empower individuals and communities to recognise, mediate, transform and reconcile conflicts.

"The main idea is to do the project, not to be patriots divided ethnically: so we didn't had big conflicts, but the first thing, like the first reaction from people is in ethnicity...So we tried to fit in the community, if they're Serbians put the banner in Serbian not Albanian or Macedonian or another language, in other places we try not to put all in Serbian to make sure everything is okay. And then in the end we get a call from them, because there are three municipalities divided, we had a meeting with all of them and with the main actors and they saw that it's the same project in every community, it's like an equal cooperation, so they also started to cooperate with us and among them"

- V.S., Project Coordinator, Northern Macedonia

> **1 every 3 projects presents a strong and positive component of conflict mediation and resolution**

Involving government structures

In such system of relations, the government actors are, however, always in a position of influence, sometimes decisive, though quite often not necessarily involved or interested. Sam [UPA Uganda] had discussed formerly with Tamas such issues through the interviews in Uganda and in Hungary. At the global scope of IVS, governments may be decisive on whether volunteers travel or not, some countries are part of an empowerment programme or they are excluded, etc. But at the national and local level, they may be also decisive on whether a project is feasible or not -either in terms of permits, financial support or contribution in kind or networks for the project.
Of course, on a wider scope, governments influence highly community development in any community where we act.

However, such governmental structures do not always recognise the value of the work done, and often they don't position themselves fairly to such value, by giving very little support, but taking most of the credit and sometimes crucial decisions that affect the project.
In face of such a reality, the question is how to build the proper engagement of government structures with the projects we run.
The balance for this will of course be dependent of each country's reality, though beyond this, and beyond the clear role of networks like the CCIVS in creating a backup strength in terms of global advocacy, empowerment and support, the organisation needs to solve the way public support is guaranteed to the projects.
And such a balance, as Cinthya would remind, needs to put into the equation the need of also challenging the authorities, in the way they make their decisions and questioning in order to build fairer conditions wherever a project takes place.

"We have this kind of point of view, which is not to put focus on running programs perfectly. When we go for the goal, the program itself is not the goal. We are trying to reach the goal through the programs, through this program, but the program itself is not the goal, I mean. So, I ask the volunteers when they arrive. "Please do not try to make it perfect. It is because if you try to make it perfect, the children get tired and so do you." In order to make the program perfect, they need to ask the children a lot of things and they will also get pressure to make it perfect. So I ask them to lead the program just well enough to make it helpful and closer to the goal. It can make our program very slow and even stuffy. Still, through this slow process, we are getting to the goal that we planned."
- P.K.., Project coordinator, Korea

The relevance of the role of the campleader in the achievement of goals with community

In their conversation about the Cambodian experiences, Sophat and Matina reflect upon the crucial role of the campleader as a bridge between the community and the group. Sophat shares that when, at the beginning of CYA, he was leading the projects, the flow between the international group and the local community was very smooth, as he would take care of that. However, now other people are leading the camps, so the difference is sometimes evident. Matina talks about the anecdote of the local community saying that due to weather circumstances, work cannot start in time but some hours later, and the campleader pressing, because this is not possible, the group needs to follow the schedule. This indicates one of the key skills that the campleader needs to develop (the organisation should train or monitor such capacity), which is to ensure a match of the needs between volunteers and communities, a smooth communication, an understanding and adaptability of plans according to such intercultural and diverse encounter that the camp provides and provokes. Otherwise, when campleaders or camp coordinators act as a barrier between volunteers and communities (even when it is intended to be a protecting barrier), misunderstandings happen and it is more difficult that both groups find ways to interact and find solutions together, that the real exchange happens.
However, as Rakesh [FSL India, CCIVS board member] indicates, sometimes some prevention is needed (to avoid risks in the relationship between the two groups). Therefore, it is about a sense of leadership, of building an appropriate balance and relationship that allows community members and volunteers to enter a positive process of relationship.
Matina brings the question on the need to build a methodology to develop such a model of leadership for the camps.

Impact
Technical work

ALL the interviewees mentioned positive impact of IVS in regard to the work realised

"And the most important and basically the most visible and most productive thing was the work itself, that it is done. The fence of the cemetery is painted and the wall of the shop is painted. Actually this was the main goal, to do some work."

- F., Local organiser, Hungary,

At the center of all IVS projects, the technical work performed together by volunteers and community members is the catalyst around which intercultural learning, active participation and conflict management are - literally - built every day in workcamps and long-term volunteer programs around the world. Previous research had showed how for the volunteers themselves, the *perceived*

"If we take only the example of the school toilet, we can see the numerous advantages that it brought for the students in particular and the community in general. Cleanliness in the school and around has become a reality; farm owners no longer came to complain about students coming to their farm to satisfy themselves. The impact here is very substantial. We can also mention the solar panel project which had a very huge impact. That project made it possible for the students to come and study in the evening in the classrooms."

- G.T., School principal, Togo

meaningfulness of the work performed in the community was a major influencing variable positively influencing seemingly unrelated personal competences, from self-awareness to communication, problem-solving and cultural openness. Similarly, all interviewees discussed how the sense of achievement from realising important work based on the needs of their community, confirming the crucial role of practical, often manual labor as the physical manifestation of the common commitment towards *a shared aim* by the communities, organisations and volunteers.

Understanding IVS and volunteering at all levels of partnership

In several passages and conversations it is seen as a critical element the level to which stakeholders involved in the project understand IVS, volunteering and the network which is involved in the process. With a low level of understanding, roles of each actor are not clear, hosts and volunteers find it difficult to manage the relationships and understand the differences and potential conflicts. Many critical elements are related to a clear and shared understanding of the IVS and project dynamics among all stakeholders.

"The nearest school from here was in seven miles. So we started building our own school with workcamps. And it was all constructed through only workcamps."

- N.L.K., Community leader, Uganda

IMPACT - Technical Work

Conclusions
A culture of peace in practice
Further reflections from the participants in the STEP final seminar, Hungary

This helps us to make better projects; however we need to dig deeper into what we know

The revision of texts, the process of interviewing, and the discussion of results with partners allows, and encourages us to revise the way we run projects, we plan them, how we build and sustain the relations with partners, how we train our campleaders or we accompany the relation between key stakeholders in a project.

Having said that, an impression is that, in order to perform such an improvement, we still have a task to dig deeper into what we understand and take from the interviews, as Jiyhun [BW Korea, and CCIVS board member] underlines. There is a job consisting on bringing such a need to the organisation (and networks), organising a process of reflection and learning from the own interviews and the results; and another job consisting on increasing the follow-up, the constant communication with community members and stakeholders, in order to understand better and improve the whole process and management of projects.

A permanent process with the whole stakeholders network

At this stage, Alfred would share how revealing it has been to go through the process of the interviews, so this is clear that this should be done systematically, and he would launch the question: how often, should this process be undertaken. Kola, in his conversation with Matina, Vicky and Rakesh pointed out that this cannot be performed as an individual actor, or a bilateral relationship, but the need to take all actors along in the process. What they would together see as a collective conclusion was such approach of a continuous stakeholders fora, where needs assessment, project design, implementation and evaluation are worked as a network, putting together the needs and values of all diverse actors, and building and sustaining the project together. This may be the idea that we have of IVS as a collective and participatory process of diverse actors. However, this can only be made real with a permanent awareness and effort that this is what we aim, and setting the mechanisms to keep such a dynamic alive.

A permanent and systematic work with hosts and local community actors

Francesco [expert in the project] recalls the experience of VSA Thailand, which he came to know during the interviews process. VSA has built a process by which every month they dedicate one week to visit the local partners; this means they do this 12 times a year. And, as Francesco explains, this means that every time they need to work on one specific issue or introduce IVS to an actor, everybody knows perfectly well what is IVS, its aims, and how this works.

Sophat, would add to this that it would be the main conclusion for him of the whole impact assessment process: that it is necessary to go back and communicate more with local partners, get to know each other deeper, strengthen the relationship and revise the aims and goals of the project, as things surely change since the project was initially established.

Only through the long term we see impact

One of the issues that motivated originally the start of the research on impact of international workcamps was the extended questioning from key stakeholders that short-term projects really could have an impact, make a real change. We know, and have managed to prove, that not only due to the groups working, which produce a bigger effect in a shorter time than a single volunteer; but also, and mostly, due to the fact that a short-term project is a part of a long-term process with continuity over time, international workcamps or short-term IVS projects are able to produce a remarkable impact on hosting communities.

However, of course, and quite coherently, we find in the texts of the interviews foreseen and unforeseen impacts which have happened in the long term. Sam of SCI Hong Kong reflected, during his personal conclusions, on how in both the projects he analysed (in Hong Kong and India) the involvement of the local communities in taking care of their environment was visible only after several years of international service, as the change of mindset came little by little until local groups were organised to do the work that international volunteers started doing.

This would be the same case for the evolution of Hong Kong community who started hosting a group of volunteers in the school and years after a youth club, integrated by those who initially hosted, had been established and both the teacher and the pastor who had been in charge, with the years became volunteers abroad.

On the other hand, Kola reflected deeply during his interventions on the fact that in Nigeria, many long-term effects of the action they had started (and stopped) several years ago, were completely unforeseen by them (growth of the village, urban development, rise of prices,...), and also unexpected when they found them in the interviews. On this respect, Kola and Ingrid discussed about this issue, bringing it back in several of their latter conclusions: Kola underlining the need to keep the contact and assessment with partners, and Ingrid suggesting the adoption of tools that could embrace and assess such impact in the longer term.

Long-term, short-term impact and responsibility

In such a perspective, the first question to address is to take the long-term into account when planning the project. And this will mean to take it into account together with the local partners. Not only because the planning will be more accurate, but mostly because we need to team up for those possible effects in the long term to be positive, and to (avoid but) address the possible negative consequences that may come up in the future. This is also a factor where the setting of a good and increasing network of actors within the community takes relevance, as when the project evolves, it needs to evolve in accordance to the different actors of the community, those

who will be affected need to participate in the design and management.

This way, taking the Nigerian case, when years after VWAN may have left, the network of stakeholders should address the urbanistic growth, the related services and plan ahead how those social changes will be addressed in positive, and not through an uncontrolled development. And, in the case we would still be present, we need to discuss the changes with the community actors and see new steps with them; as a matter of fact, our position is not a leadership one, but a facilitating one for the decisions and projects they would propose.

In a different case (Cambodia, mangrove tree planting), also discussed among the group formed by Vicky, Matina, Kola and Rakesh, the effects of the project may change the interests of the local community. (In the project discussed, the mangrove project improved the economy of the village, which was now receiving tourists, and local hosts couldn't contribute with their cooking to the volunteer project). That should not be a problem, as long as an agreement for a productive and positive cooperation with shared values for the village may be reached again. As Matina said, " We cannot stand to our initial idea as if nothing would have happened. We are aiming for changes and we need to address those changes!".

Annexes

Annex 1. Interviews for the community members

Adapted for STEP from the formats used in the projects "ImpAct" and "Changing Perspectives"

Some basic approaches for the interviews:

1. "Interview" means to talk with somebody

One important basic rule

- Interview = Talk = getting information from an unknown person in a certain time
- Interview IS NOT a questionnaire
- Mind the other person with respect for feelings, emotions, etc
- Mind the two levels:
    - Emotional level
    - Content level

2. Planning and preparing the interview

- Step 1: General goal/s of Interview: main subjects as a compass through
- Step 2: First draft:
    - List of questions
    - List of themes
- Step 3: Running order of the interview: Adapt to the person,
    - Follow the chapters of the interview
    - Find a good starter
    - Find a good end
- Step 4: Try the interview with somebody!

3. Doing the interview

Setting: Emotional preparation!

- Start giving an overview
- Describe the roles: interviewer, interviewee
- NOT the specific questions

The talk

- Use your questions as a guiding tour
- You manage the interview (don't be lost by your interviewed)
- Address emotions and disturbance
- Let the person finish the answer
- Avoid monologues from both sides
- Give examples "Imagine …"
- Ask in your own habit / attitude of language / talking
- Don't complicate!
- Avoid generalisations
- Be precise!

Making an interview as a researcher: General advice

- Try to find a comfortable space and ambience for both you and the interviewed
- Cooperate with a native speaker (if you are not) when doing the interviews! We strongly recommend that interviews are done by/in cooperation with native speakers
- Show respect towards the person you are interviewing!
- Adapt yourself/the interview to the specific situation, find the way that it all makes sense and at the same time we achieve the necessary results.
- Take care that you have all your research tools available (questionnaire, batteries, recorder, notebook, pens)
- Reflect on your prejudices, stereotypes and barriers! (And try not to project them to your interviewed)
- Be open minded and flexible towards different points of view!
- Inform yourself well about the background of the project and about the

The method needs a good implementation: it affects the results and the reliability

Gianni (expert, ex-SCI and ex-CCIVS board member) has insisted during the whole process in the need of a correct and improved implementation of the methods: the way we make interviews, the way we prepare them, even the way we analyse them or train the future interviewers affect decisively the final results, thus also our capacity to use them or showcase them.

There are questions relative to the guidelines for the interviews, other have to do with a good enough preparation of interviewers [to which extent they deeply understand the purpose and approach of the interview they are going to perform; and how much they are able to transmit that to the interviewee, so that the conversation can be plain, honest and deep enough; or how to ensure the appropriate selection of interviewees]. Finally, there are some related to the performance or the setting of the interview: how much has it influenced in this round of STEPs interviews the presence of a STEPs expert in the easiness of the conversation for some of the interviewees? (In the reading of some specific texts, or the actual experience *in situ*, it seems evident that certain interviewees may have been more impressed by the presence of a foreigner, or a potential "evaluator" to whom positiveness or specific messages needed to be addressed; than they would have been with the mere presence of a *national partner*. Despite the attempts to explain well, and the creation of a comfortable setting, in some cases it seems this has remained).

Of course, this needs to be put in a context in which the basis is solid -both academically and methodologically-, where results are useful, and enlightening in several dimensions. So the need is to revise critically in order to improve and strengthen, not to question or *rebuild*.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Demographic Data

> Location of the project
> Type of location (rural/urban/sub-urban)
> Name
> Nationality
> Age
> Gender
> Occupation and role in the community
> What Project/work here? For how many years has this project been implemented?
> Your role/relation in/with the project?

I. Starting the interview (QUESTIONS TO SITUATE AND make your interviewed feel AT EASE)

Hosting International Volunteers

> 1. When did you host the first international volunteer(s)? a) Year: b) How many international volunteers you hosted?
> 2. What was your "initial" motivation to host international volunteers?
> 3. What are the challenges faced in hosting international volunteers? How were you able to deal with those challenges? Please give concrete examples.
> 4. How does the presence of international volunteers influence the relationship between different local community stakeholders (authorities, sponsors, local government, media, etc)?

II. Questions about how the IVS project touches/ has an outcome on/for the local community

> 5. What do you think about the project? (what's your general opinion, the stronger points, the challenges)

> 6. How do you think the project has an impact on the community members?
> -> Can you share any examples of impact this project has had on the community members? / has the project brought any changes to the community? (Changes in daily routine, lifestyle, intercultural exchange, technical skills...)

More in depth:

6a.   as the project produced any change on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of the local community?

6b.   any change regarding the outlook/perceptions of members of the local community with reference to people with different origins/cultures

6c.   any change regarding the outlook/perceptions of members of the local community with reference to their own community

6d.   did members of your community participate in THIS PROJECT? (in which ways?) can you share any examples?

6e.   did members of your community participate IN ANY OTHER international programmes as a result of this project?

6f.   do voluntary service projects contribute to any crucial challenges of your community? (which ones, how?)

7. What is the technical result of the volunteers' work? In a single project /As a result of the several projects of last years (if it is the case)

8. According to your perspectives, what are the (positive and negative) impacts on:

8a.   Environment and sustainability (improvement by the work done; effect of their presence, raising awareness on environmental issues, long term actions, three levels of sustainability; social, economic, environmental)

8b.   Heritage and cultural diversity (renovation/ awareness raising heritage; any effect on intercultural relations?; with local non-autochthonous community?)

8c.   Human rights and peace (more information on peace and human rights, different vision of this area, relations between different people different backgrounds)

8d.   Social inclusion and active participation (gender and equality/ greater participation of people in activities, in interest in activities, skills for personal development)

8e.   Poverty reduction and health promotion (greater awareness on; food sovereignty (the right of people to define their own food systems)/ HIV AIDS, healthy/clean environment to live in, new skills for professional development)

8f.   Local economy (examples: spend money in village, more visits to heritage by ...; regional investment; jobs supporting project life,...)

Final Questions

9. Did any new initiatives start in the community influenced by the camp?

Conflict management

10. Did the camp bring any conflict? How was it managed and with which result

11. Did this affect on the way people approaches conflicts in your community?

12. What's the most significant change this project brought?

13. What is your suggestion for the improvement of the project in the future?

   Eg: What are the things that the local community can do to support the IVS project? What can the IVS organisation do to support the local community?
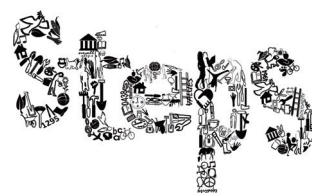
Annex 2. Grid for interview analysis

ORG / Interviewee	Mention NO Impact	# occurences How many	Paste sentences that mention NO IMPACT here	Mention NEGATIVE Impact	# occurences How many	Paste sentences that mention NEGATIVE IMPACT here	Mention POSITIVE Impact	# occurences How many	Paste sentences that mention POSITIVE IMPACT here
Cultural/intercultural competences What's the cultural impact of the project in the community? How is it in terms of: > intercultural learning? > Does it change anything within the community? > On the self-image? > On the image of others?									
Citizenship and participation What's the impact regarding > active participation within the community (higher involvement), or > in IVS projects or other international opportunities? (participate or think to participate)									
Conflict management Did it (and how) affect the way the community members/collectives deal with conflicts? (personal, interpersonal, social,...) > where there any conflicts > did they find specific ways to deal with them?									
Technical work Which is the level of impact of the technical work developed?									
Thematic actions Did the project have an impact in any of the Thematic actions defined in the White Paper as priority for IVS? *Environment and sustainability* *Heritage and Cultural Diversity* *Human rights and peace* *Social inclusion and active participation* *Poverty reduction and health*									
Local economy Does the project contribute to the Local economy in any sense?									
Other findings (not include in the above) *please specify*									

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